

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The purpose of this Transportation Plan is to evaluate existing and future transportation needs and provide the framework for decisions regarding the nature of infrastructure improvements necessary to achieve safety, accessibility, mobility, and performance of the existing and future transportation system. This Plan includes established local policies, standards, and guidelines to implement the future transportation system vision that is coordinated with respect to the City's land use plan, as well as county and state plans. The content of this plan intends to enhance quality economic and residential development opportunities within the City of Northfield, while maintaining the rich heritage, historic charm, and environmental stewardship the community embraces.

1.1 TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

Like many communities across America, Northfield has struggled with transportation related issues for many years. Americans as a whole are traveling more than ever and are using personal vehicles more than any other form of ground transportation – 98 percent of all passenger miles were traveled in automobiles, motorcycles, and light duty trucks in 2001.¹ Our country is only beginning to realize the implications of this overreliance on public health and safety, infrastructure needs, and the environment.

Northfield is a bit different than most cities its size in Minnesota. While three-quarters of the population drive alone to work in other Minnesota Cities, only about half do in Northfield. In addition, more than one quarter of the work force in Northfield (2,446 out of 8,820) walk or bicycle to work, while less than one tenth do in other Minnesota Cities.² Perhaps it is the influence of two private colleges, the historic and vibrant downtown, or the appeal of the Cannon River. Whatever the reason, this community is extraordinary, right down to its transportation system.

¹ Federal Highway Administration, National Transportation Statistics, 2002, April 2003.

² <http://www.city-data.com/housing/houses-Northfield-Minnesota.html> Retrieved on July 6, 2008.

1.2 TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To help set the course of the Transportation Plan development, a transportation advisory committee was commissioned to establish a clear statement of goals and objectives. This diverse group, comprised of City public works and community development staff, a planning commission member, chamber of commerce representation, a non-motorized task force member, and consultant staff, dissected the goals and objectives established by the 1998 Transportation Plan. The advisory committee refined the goals and objectives relative to current considerations and priorities. The Goals and Objectives for development of this Transportation Plan described below were adopted by the City Council on January 7, 2008, and are used to guide implementation of the Transportation Plan and day to day transportation related decision making.

GOAL 1 – EFFECTIVELY MANAGE THE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF A VIBRANT, GROWING TOWN AND THE SURROUNDING AREA FOR RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, AND VISITORS

Objective 1.1 – Develop and implement corridor design guidelines that enable safe and efficient travel for all modes of transportation within the context of the natural and developed environment.

Objective 1.2 – Ensure adequate access into the downtown area for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles to support public activities and events, private business uses, and residences.

Objective 1.3 – Maintain, and where possible improve, access to business concentrations that enable successful business practices, while managing safe traffic operations.

Objective 1.4 – Promote multi-modal transportation uses and principles throughout the City.

Objective 1.5 – Establish bicycling as a sustainable, safe, and convenient year-round mode of transportation in Northfield.

Objective 1.6 – Enhance and expand public transit services to ensure mobility for all residents and visitors.

Objective 1.7 – Require Local Street and trail connectivity between adjacent residential neighborhoods and other land uses for newly developing areas.

Objective 1.8 – Create opportunities to improve existing Local Street and trail connectivity between adjacent residential neighborhoods and other land uses.

GOAL 2 – FACILITATE THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE, GOODS, AND SERVICES WITHIN AND THROUGH THE CITY ON A SAFE, CONVENIENT, COORDINATED, AND FISCALLY-RESPONSIBLE NETWORK OF ROUTES USING A VARIETY OF TRANSPORTATION MODES.

Objective 2.1 – Provide a transportation system for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians balancing safety and fiscal resources.

Objective 2.2 – Establish a balanced roadway network based on the principals of roadway functional classification.

Objective 2.3 – Provide adequate roadway and intersection capacity to accommodate anticipated growth of the community and resulting forecasted traffic volumes.

Objective 2.4 – Establish a pedestrian walkway system connecting residential, educational, commercial/retail, employment, and recreational destinations throughout the City.

Objective 2.5 – Establish trails and on-street bikeways for the use of bicycles as a year-round mode of transportation.

Objective 2.6 – Determine and enhance designated public service routes to provide priorities to emergency, civil, and transit services.

GOAL 3 – BALANCE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS WITH THE LAND USE PRINCIPLES IDENTIFIED IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

Objective 3.1 – Establish a transportation system vision to provide the necessary transportation network to support the density and type of existing and future land uses.

Objective 3.2 – Enhance the small town character of the City through multi-modal transportation choice and context-sensitive corridor design.

Objective 3.3 – Balance the transportation system needs with the potential impacts and affects upon the natural features of the community.

Objective 3.4 – Enhance the community by providing convenient access to natural features and opportunities to support active and healthy lifestyles.

Objective 3.5 – Encourage interconnected development patterns to create more convenient travel options for residents, foster a sense of neighborhood, and maintain acceptable traffic volume levels.

GOAL 4 – IMPLEMENT THE TRANSPORTATION VISION THROUGH STRATEGIC FUNDING AND OBJECTIVE AND DEFINITIVE DECISION MAKING WITH THE COLLABORATION OF SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS.

Objective 4.1 – Establish concentrated and consistent support for local and regional political leadership to achieve components of the transportation system vision.

Objective 4.2 – Empower City staff to pursue state and federal transportation funding and evaluate non-traditional transportation funding mechanisms.

Objective 4.3 – Establish an area transportation advisory committee with the state, Rice and Dakota Counties, Dundas, and surrounding townships to coordinate and strategize regional transportation planning initiatives (e.g. TH 19 between Northfield and I-35, Cannon River Crossing/CSAH 1 Preservation, Northwest Corridor).

Objective 4.4 – Plan for and preserve opportunities for necessary transportation system improvements.

Objective 4.5 – Achieve necessary transportation system improvements in a cost-effective, timely fashion.

Objective 4.6 – Establish momentum in the pursuit of the transportation system vision by periodic recognition of basic accomplishments and celebration of milestone achievements.

Objective 4.7 – Encourage business owners, residents, and community groups to be active participants in seeking funding by contacting local, state, and federal decision makers in support of transportation funding.

1.3 RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANNING DOCUMENTS

This Transportation Plan is a standalone planning document for the City of Northfield, serving as the basis for the summary chapter provided in the City's 2008 Comprehensive Plan. This document is intended for planning and engineering staff use to help guide day-to-day decision making, and guide staff in making recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council consistent with the overall plan. The City's Parks, Open Space, and Trail System Plan was developed in concert with this Plan and recommendations relative to transportation have been folded into this Plan.

The City of Northfield, Rice and Dakota Counties, Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), and various townships own and maintain roads within or adjacent to the City. This Plan recognizes these jurisdictional authorities, their roles in the planning, maintenance, funding, and implementation process, and the need for the City's transportation system to integrate with other jurisdictions' systems. The City also recognizes their responsibilities in implementing regional planning initiatives.

Several other transportation studies have been completed in and around the City of Northfield over the years by various entities. The planning process associated with the development of this Plan evaluated and considered the findings of those previous efforts. This Plan incorporates the relevant findings and conclusions from earlier studies that are substantiated by the comprehensive review of the transportation system as a whole and the overall direction provided in the City's 2008 Comprehensive Plan. Previous study findings relevant to this Plan are summarized in Section 3.5. As a result, this Transportation Plan, as may be amended over time, will be the sole document to guide future transportation decisions.