

I. Introduction and Background

Would it be nice if you could hop onto your bicycle and take a leisurely ride to a sporting event or shopping area in a nearby community? What if you could travel on your bicycle and to connect to a nearby transit or bus hub to commute to work? Can you imagine having the option of being able to commute to work without dealing with traffic congestion, long commute times, and overly aggressive drivers? How would you feel if you could use your bicycle to travel to many destinations across the region? If bicyclists from the north shore and north west suburbs want to have the freedom of being able to travel to virtually anywhere they desire throughout the region, then why are so few of them doing it?

The Northwest Municipal Conference recognizes that bicycle travel is an integral component of the transportation system. The need for a variety of transportation options in Northeastern Illinois has increased significantly. The region's road network system is plagued with congestion and nears gridlock. Clearly, more transportation alternatives are necessary to keep up with ever-increasing travel demands. Developing alternatives that would allow people to travel without the use of motorized vehicles would contribute greatly to reduce congestion.

Studies have found that people are willing to take bicycles when better bicycle facilities are provided. According to the 1990 Census, 2.0 percent of all work trips were made on bicycles. If more people are provided with the means to take trips on bicycles or especially to transit and bus stations, the travel paradigm will shift and the roadways could serve people without escalating traffic congestion and vehicle emissions.

In order to make bicycles a viable transportation choice for bicyclists across the region the NWMC is recommending the following solutions: First, priority should be placed on completing the construction of highways and arterials. Highways are the key component to a regional bicycle network because they supply the connection between one municipality to the next. Completing the highway system will provide the framework for developing bikeways that will encompass the regional bicycle network. A feasibility study of existing highways should be conducted to determine what type of design and engineering improvements are required to safely accommodate bicyclists.

Secondly, provide more options for people to link bicycle trips to transit. It's a proven fact that if you provide people with transit options people will use transit. In 1996, Metra opened the North Central line to provide commuter rail service between Antioch and Chicago. According to a 1999 study, the NCS attributes to an estimated 487,000 to 670,000 total number

of auto trip diversions. As a result of excessive ridership, Metra plans to construct a second mainline track to accommodate increased service needs. If you provide people with access to transit stations and support facilities, bicyclists are sure to take advantage of this option. The key to increase bicycle usage is convenience. The Chicago Transit Authority already allows bicyclists to take bikes onto commuter trains and Metra offers this service on weekend routes. In 2002, Pace mounted bicycle racks on the front of all of their buses. Since then the number of users has almost doubled!

Thirdly, improvements need to be made along strategic local roads throughout communities. This is extremely important because the local roadways provide connections between communities. On-street bicycle routes are designed on local roads. Therefore potholes, flooding, and roadwork make travel on on-street bikeways difficult and dangerous. If bicyclists are not able to travel freely within their communities attempting to travel across the region would be somewhat impossible. To make bicycle travel on local roads safe for bicyclists on-street paths should be installed on smooth, even surfaces, free of debris and hazardous materials.

Finally, implementing the increasing number of local bike plans developed throughout communities would increase bicycle usage across the region. Schaumburg, Wilmette, Mount Prospect, Arlington Heights, Highland Park, Libertyville, Lincolnshire, Palatine, Morton Grove, Rolling Meadows, St. Charles, Streamwood, Elk Grove Village, Skokie, Roselle, Winnetka and Glenview are examples of communities who already have either existing bicycle routes and/or have developed local bike plans. Local bike plans are a great way to promote bicycling in communities and to encourage people to use bicycles to travel short distance trips. Local bicycle networks provide a structure for children to safely ride bikes to schools, parks, and other local recreations facilities. Also, a bicycle trip to the local supermarket can be easy and enjoyable rather than traveling a few short blocks to the store in a car.

Transforming bicycle travel throughout the region into a transportation system would provide definite advantages to local bicyclists. Bicyclists would be able to commute to work, school, and recreational areas. In addition, bikers and non-bikers would be able to enjoy a better quality of life. A regional bicycle network would promote exercise and cleaner air which will ultimately lead to healthier, happier people and children. Bicycling is a source of physical activity for improving personal health. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of heart disease, controls weight gain, and strengthens muscles and joints.

Getting more people on bicycles rather than driving to short distances will help to reduce harmful emissions released into the air. In 1991, Congress passed the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act which

established a link between transportation and air quality. It is anticipated that increased bicycle usage will help to reduce traffic congestion and improve the air quality across the region.

Generally, bicyclists feel safer bicycling within their own communities. For those who have attempted to travel across the region to reach their destinations may have realized that the journey was quite an undertaking. Bicyclists have to carefully plan how to overcome barriers, identify routes to avoid, and rely on their own judgment to identify the best possible route to connect from community to the next.

Bicyclists are faced with a number of obstacles when they attempt to travel across multiple jurisdictions. In a survey of local bike riders, respondents expressed several safety concerns in regards to bicycling throughout the region including aggressive/inconsiderate drivers, poor signage, difficulty crossing busy roadways, lack of education about sharing the road, and a need for safer routes and paths for commuting. Moreover, many roadways throughout the region are not equipped to handle bicycle activity. In addition, there are many physical barriers that make bicycle travel difficult and in some cases impossible. Bridges, interstate highways, railroad tracks are just a few of the barriers that impede bicycle travel across this region. Also, the lack of sufficient bicycle parking is another reason that deters bicycle travel. Many bicyclists prefer traveling to destinations where they can securely park their bicycles rather than risk leaving them unattended.

II. Regional Bicycle Network

The foundation of this plan is the designation of a regional bicycle network that connects bikeways along streets and highways across multiple jurisdictions throughout the Northwest suburban communities. The regional bicycle network would provide better access to the region's transit network and activity centers. The network would also encourage greater use of the bicycle as an alternative transportation mode. The regional network would also promote multi-modal travel. For longer commutes, bicycles instead of cars become a viable alternative to access transit and bus hubs.

The NWMC Bicycle Facilities inventory was developed in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Illinois Department of Transportation, and the Chicago Area Transportation Study. The plan received input from representatives from each of the NWMC communities. NWMC staff gathered data on existing and planned bicycle facilities and submitted the data to the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation who developed the base maps for the entire NWMC bikeway inventory. As of June 2000, the NWMC bikeway inventory consists of 542 miles of

When Wilmette Village President Nancy Canafax received tickets to attend a Schaumburg Fliers baseball game, she decided to ride her bike the short distance to the game. Without a cohesive system of bike trails and a comprehensive bike map to guide her, Mayor Canafax ran into several problems along way. After traveling for several hours, Mayor Canafax finally arrived in Schaumburg only to realize that she still had a few more miles to travel before she reached the baseball field. Since the Village of Schaumburg had an extensive system of signed bike lanes, the Mayor was able to complete her journey to the ball field with ease.

existing bikeways; 332 planned bikeways, and 22 bikeways under construction.

The regional bicycle network would include a system of regional signage that will be uniform across the region. The signage will be designated by a logo that identifies bike paths as part of the regional bicycle network. The signs will also provide directional information to popular destinations. A regional cycling map that highlights existing and planned bikeways across the region will be developed and distributed to the bike riding public.

III. Mission, Goals and Policies

NWMC has identified a set of goals and policies that would need to be implemented to make regional bicycle corridors a reality. These goals and policies work in conjunction with local municipal planning departments to improve the efficiency of bicycle travel in this region by connecting existing and future bicycle facilities into a comprehensive system of bicycle corridors that would provide continuous travel across the region. The goal is to develop a series of bicycle corridors that would allow bicyclists to travel from one community to the next. This would be achieved by identifying gaps within the system, identify barriers that impede travel, and ultimately identify possible bikeway corridors.

Mission Statement

The NWMC Regional Bicycle Facilities plan ensures that bicycles are a viable means of travel throughout the northwest suburbs by encouraging bicycles as an alternate means of traveling to employment centers, shopping areas, bus and train centers, recreational and cultural attractions and schools located not only in their own communities but in communities throughout the region. The Northwest Municipal Conference aims to connect existing and future bicycle facilities into a regional bicycle network that allows bicyclists to travel across the region to reach their destinations and use a regional bicycle map and signage as a guide to get them there. In addition, users will be able to enjoy a better quality of life as a result of the health, social, economic, and environmental benefits associated with bicycle travel.

The NWMC recommends that the regional bicycle network address the following six goals:

- 1. Create Regional Network and Facilities**
- 2. Planning/Implementation**
- 3. Multi-Modal Transportation**
- 4. Promotion**
- 5. Education/Safety**
- 6. Funding**

Goal 1 - Create Regional Network & Facilities***(1.1) Define a regional network*****Action(s)**

- Develop a comprehensive system of bicycle corridors that provides continuous travel throughout the region
- Comprise the network of four different levels:
 - (1) **Super Regional** – connection of Grand Illinois Trail, forest preserves, and regional greenways to local bikeways
 - (2) **Bikeway Corridors** – connection of bike lanes, routes, and multi-use paths across municipal boundaries throughout the region
 - (3) **Multi-jurisdictional Bikeways** – examine local bike plans to identify bikeway connections between neighboring communities
 - (4) **Local Bikeways** – identification of existing and proposed bike lanes, routes, and multi-use paths within each individual community

(1.2) Improve connectivity of bikeways across municipal boundaries**Action(s)**

- Identify gaps in the network and overcome barriers that impede travel across bridges, overpasses, and expressways
- Develop a uniform system of regional signage for bicycle facilities to improve travel throughout communities to public transportation hubs and major activity centers
- Monitor highway improvements by state, county, and other agencies to ensure that bicyclists' needs are accommodated where possible

(1.3) Encourage the development of support facilities for bicycling**Action(s)**

- Encourage municipalities to adopt development guidelines that require bike parking facilities such as racks and lockers at major trip destinations where possible

Goal 2 - Planning/Implementation

Secure continuous expansion of the regional network that incorporates growth in local bike plans.

- (2.1) *Ensure that data on the existing regional network is updated on a bi-yearly basis*

Action(s)

- Update regional bike plan regularly in coordination with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to respond to changing circumstances
- Update Geographic Information Systems (GIS) shape-file database of the entire NWMC bikeway inventory on a two-year cycle
- Meet with municipal representatives, bicycle organizations, advocates, and citizens on a bi-yearly basis to review the existing network and make revisions to the map

- (2.2) *Follow nationally accepted design standards listed in the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)*

Action(s)

- Recommend the use of AASHTO design standards as a guide for developing bicycle facilities
- Recognize that following AASHTO guidelines is necessary for securing federal funding such as Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)

- (2.3) *Provide opportunities for the public to participate in the planning process*

Action(s)

- Hold workshops that would engage participants (municipal representatives, bicycle organizations, cycling clubs, bicycle advocates, and citizens who frequently use existing bikeways) in discussions on identifying gaps and barriers within the network and how to overcome them

- (2.4) *Develop performance measures to monitor the progress made to achieve the goals and polices outlined in this document*

Action(s)

- Identify methodologies that will be used to measure the outcome of each policy
- NWMC staff

(2.5) *Coordinate the development and implementation of bikeways and facilities with municipalities and other stakeholders*

Action(s)

- Encourage municipalities to adopt the policies listed in this document as part of their local bike plans
- Recommend that communities conduct annual inspections of bicycle facilities
- Coordinate bike planning efforts with state and local transportation agencies, surrounding counties, Forest Preserve Districts, and Park Districts

Goal 3 - Multi-Modal Transportation

Recognize bicycle travel as a significant component of the transportation network.

(3.1) *Develop and enhance opportunities for cyclists to access other modes of transportation*

Action(s)

- Improve bicycle access to transit hubs and bus stops by means of bikeways and regional signage
- Facilitate cooperation with regional and local transit agencies to accommodate bicycles on transit and ensure that adequate space is available for their storage

(3.3) *Coordinate bicycle travel along the regional network with local transportation agencies*

Action(s)

- Utilize PACE and Metra service areas as a means of improving connectivity of bikeways across municipal boundaries

Goal 4 - Promotion

Raise public awareness on the benefits of cycling and available bicycle facilities.

(4.1) Increase public awareness of existing and planned bicycle facilities

Action(s)

- Develop regional bike map that highlights commuter routes, multi-use trails, bike lanes, and other resources such as rest areas, bicycle events, and contact information for government agencies, bicycle organizations, bicycle maintenance shops, and bicycle trails
- Distribute map through village halls, bicycle organizations, bicycle shops, and municipal websites

(4.2) Encourage municipalities to work with health care providers

Action(s)

- Emphasize the health benefits of cycling i.e.) exercise

(4.3) Encourage and promote activities and techniques designed to generate interest in the regional network

Action(s)

- Provide easily accessible information on municipal websites and cable access networks regarding education programs on bicycle safety, how to locate specific bikeways or trails, and where to purchase bike maps or racks
- Foster relationships with media contacts (newspaper, radio, TV) to generate interest in the regional bike plan and promote bicycle events and programs
- Encourage communities to organize special events such as "Bike to Work Day (Week or Month)", "Bicycle Rodeos", and bike rides with elected officials that would highlight bicycle issues and allow for discussion on those issues

(3.2) Encourage bicyclists to use bikes as part of their daily trips

Action(s)

- Utilize bicycle travel to reduce the number of auto trips

Goal 5- Education/Safety

Ensure the safety of cyclists through education and enforcement.

- (5.1) *Encourage communities to work with law enforcement agencies to develop programs that enforce bicycle safety*

Action(s)

- Utilize uniform bicycle police officers to enforce traffic laws and educated cyclists and motorists who violate the laws
- Provide incentives such as prize giveaways to cyclists who wear bicycle helmets

- (5.2) *Encourage and support programs that educate cyclists and motorists on bicycle safety*

Action(s)

- Promote bicycle education programs in local schools
- Develop education programs that could be used by communities to educate cyclists of all ages and experiences levels as well as motorists about bicycle safety i.e., sharing the road

Goal 6 - Funding

Secure sufficient resources from all available public and private funds to achieve the goals identified in the plan including financing and technical assistance such as developing maps and grant writing.

- (6.1) *Establish a funding system for the implementation of the regional network*

Action(s)

- Identify funding from federal, state, and local sources including grant programs
 1. Surface Transportation Program (STP) including Transportation Control Measures (TCM's)
 2. Illinois Transportation Enhancements Program (ITEP)
 3. CMAQ
 4. Illinois Bicycle Path Grant Program
 5. Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grant
 6. Regional Technical Assistance Program (RTAP)
 7. National Highway System (NHS) funds
 8. Federal Lands
 9. Scenic Byways
 10. Federal Recreational Trails Program
 11. Access to Transit Capital Improvements Program

- 12. Operation Green Light Capital Improvement Program (OGL)
- 13. CorLands

(6.2) *Encourage communities to work cooperatively with business owners and other municipalities to reduce costs of bicycle facilities*

Action(s)

- Promote public/private partnerships between local business owners and communities in the development, implementation, operation, and maintenance of bicycle facilities
- Recommend that individual communities pursue joint-purchasing contracts with other communities to offset the costs of purchasing the maps and bicycle signage
- Seek out sponsors from local businesses to develop the maps and possibly sell them for a profit

(6.3) *Encourage federal transportation agencies to set-aside a specific amount of CMAQ funding for bicycle facilities and education programs*

Action(s)

- Encourage municipalities to lobby state officials for increased funding for planning and implementation of local and regional bike plans

(6.3) *Encourage developers to work with municipalities to accommodate bicyclists' needs as part of new construction projects where possible.*

Action(s)

- Provide incentives to developers

The Northwest Municipal Conference envisions that a regional bicycle network would provide bicyclists with the options of making three types of trips: long (30 + up minutes), medium (10-30 minutes), and short (1-10 minutes). An example of a long trip would be riding a bicycle to a baseball game taking place three towns over. A bicyclist would be taking a medium trip if they commuted from their home to a shopping center located within a neighboring community. A short trip is described as traveling along bicycle routes to the neighborhood video store. These types of trips can be attainable if significant bikeway improvements are implemented such as develop regional bicycle corridors, improve connectivity across borders, expand local networks and provide support facilities.

Regional Bicycle Corridors

A regional bicycle corridor is a continuous system of bikeways that would allow bicyclists to travel across multiple jurisdictions to reach their destinations. Regional bicycle corridors are bicycle routes that channel bicycle activity to specified areas of the region. If developed, the corridors would provide better connectivity to communities, activity centers, central business districts, and bus/transit systems.

Regional bicycle corridors would offer bicyclists the ability to safely travel longer distances and access major destinations across the region including but not limited to recreational trails, schools, parks/forest preserves, and employment centers. The regional corridors would grant access to regional and to sub-regional destinations from local networks. For example, a bicyclist could travel along Golf Rd in Rolling Meadows heading west towards New Wilke Rd and continue east to White Oak Street and connect to Lincoln St. to reach Mt. Prospect High School. On the North Shore a bicyclist could travel along a multi-use trail in Skokie heading north and connect to Wilmette, Glenview and North Branch Trail via Glenview Rd.

Implementation of the regional corridors is dependent upon assessing the feasibility of potential corridors that were identified in previous planning workshops. The planning workshops were designed to gain input from people who frequently travel along bicycle routes across the region. Input from the bike riding public was critical into this process because their familiarity of the current bicycle system allows them to easily identify problem areas and bicycle conditions.

The objective of this plan is to develop a regional system that meets the needs of local bicyclists. This requires extensive research and analysis of travel patterns, exploring commonly traveled routes, and locating major barriers that hinder travel. Design and engineering studies are needed to determine the feasibility of making the potential regional bicycle corridors

a reality. Assistance from design and engineering experts is needed to examine how to safely accommodate bicyclists along the regional corridors. If traffic volumes or speeds are too high along the identified regional corridors, then alternative routes would be explored. Additionally, physical barriers such as bodies of water, interstate highways, and railroad lines are obstacles that limit travel across the region. Improvements such as bridges and underpasses are alternatives to removing physical barriers. These types of improvements can be rather expensive for local communities. However, eliminating physical barriers has potential to significantly increase the number of bicycle trips.

Local bicyclists recommended several possible corridors that would permit uninterrupted travel from one area of the region to the next. The regional corridors that were identified are viewed as priorities for improving bicycle conditions across the region. These improvements require completion of the current network by constructing bikeways that would supply connections to major regional and sub-regional bicycle paths. These connections would allow bicyclists to link to bikeways paths within the City of Chicago, Lake County, Kendall County, and Dupage County.

Improved Connectivity Across Borders

The next component needed to develop a regional bicycle network involves improving the connections between local networks. The local networks are planned and existing bikeways that allow bicyclists to travel from one community to the next. The local networks consist of bikeways that are developed along local streets. Since the majority of bicycle travel exists at the local level improving the connectivity along local roadways is very important.

The local networks would make it possible for bicyclists to take medium length trips to work or shopping areas. A medium trip is an eight to ten mile excursion across multiple jurisdictions. Improving connections throughout local networks allow exploring attractions located in neighboring communities probable. In addition, bicyclists would be able to take advantage of multi-modal travel options. If possible, a bicyclist who lived in Arlington Heights could travel downtown to the Metra station, board the train with the bicycle, travel to Northbrook and ride additional two-miles to work.

Improving the connectivity of local networks can be accomplished by identifying gaps between the local systems, improving coordination between municipalities, and identifying joint funding options. Planning and coordination between local municipalities is important in order for communities to identify possible connections that would allow bicyclists to travel across jurisdictional boundaries and to increase accessibility to

The Village of Elk Grove installed a multi-million dollar bridge to provide access to pedestrians and bicycles over I-294.

The Village of Schaumburg has an extensive bicycle network that consists of an 85-mile network of both on and off-street paths.

neighboring communities. Ideally coordination should occur before the construction of new roadway projects. This will ensure that bicycle access is considered for all new road projects and reduces the need to retrofit the roadway to accommodate bicyclists after the road was constructed. Municipalities would not only have to coordinate local bicycle planning efforts but also discuss funding alternatives. Joint funding strategies are an ideal way for communities to split the local funding match that is required to receive state and federal funds for bicycle projects. Joint funding strategies would help offset the costs of developing and implementing bikeways, improve lighting along sidewalks, construct bridges and overpasses, and install regional signage.

Local Networks and Supporting Facilities

The final component to the regional networks involves around the development of the local bicycle networks. The local networks are comprised of bicycle paths, routes, and trails that are designed to enhance and/or improve bicycle circulation within a community. The local networks provide connections to popular community destinations as well as connections to bikeways in neighboring communities. The local networks are essential to the regional network because the majority of bicycling takes place within the community. Local networks also include supporting facilities such as bicycle parking, signage, showers, lockers, and cycling maps.

Bicycle parking and signage are key components to the local networks. Bicycle parking provides a means for bicyclists to secure bicycles from thieves or vandals when they are not in use. Examples of the most commonly used bicycle parking facilities include bicycle lockers (secured shelters used to store bicycles) and bicycle racks (non-enclosed racks designed to secure the bicycle by locking the wheel onto the rack). Bicycle parking should be located throughout the community at local businesses, recreation facilities, schools, shopping areas, and any destination that is desirable to bicyclists. Bicycle parking makes long and short-term parking easy and convenient for bicyclists. Additional bicycle amenities include shower and locker facilities (shelters that provide showers, changing space, and lockers to meet the needs of bicyclists commuting to work). Shower and locker facilities are great for people who travel long distances, or cycle in wet or hot temperatures and may need to shower or change clothing once they reach their destinations.

In 1998, the CATS Councils of Mayors received CMAQ funding for its bike rack & locker purchase program. Since then a total of 349 bike racks have been sold to communities across the region.

Bicycle signage is as essential to bicyclists as signage is to motorists. Regional signage would be developed to denote regional bicycle routes and support facilities. The regional signage would not replace existing local bicycle signs but serve as directional, advisory, and warning purposes. There are several types of signs that are commonly used for bicycle networks. Traditional bicycle route and bicycle lane signs identify

connecting routes. Directional signs help guide bicyclists to their destinations. Destination signs provide accurate information about how many miles a bicyclist will have to travel to reach their destinations.

Whether its short trips to school, parks, and/or recreational facilities bicycling is a great way to travel throughout the community. Bicycling in local communities links people to neighborhoods, jobs, and to other modes of transportation. Essentially bicycle travel begins at the local level. Developing and implementing local bike plans encourages bicycle travel within each community. If improvements are made within the local networks then travel outside of the community and connecting to adjacent communities is possible.

Developing the local networks and providing supporting facilities can be accomplished through local planning and adoption of municipal ordinances. Essentially, development of the regional network begins at the local level. Municipal planners and engineers from adjoining communities will have to come together, examine local bicycle plans, determine where possible links exist, and explore the feasibility of connecting those links. In addition, model ordinances would have to be adopted by municipalities to establish a commitment from communities to fully support the implementation of the regional network. The model ordinances should be crafted to include language regarding regulations on bicycle parking, commuter facilities, regional signage, and maintenance responsibilities within each jurisdiction.

Additionally, bicycling ought to be incorporated into local planning of other modes of transportation. Bicycling is increasingly being viewed as a multi-modal transportation option. More and more people especially in urban areas are recognizing bicycling as an option to access transit systems and other networks. Therefore, coordination and planning with transportation service providers is essential to developing a multi-modal transportation network. Solutions for improving conditions should address providing bicycle parking and storage facilities at station locations, improving on-board storage for bicycles, and exploring station access and development. Transit stations and bus hubs could provide bike racks, lockers, and showers. Ridership on transit may increase by enhancing support facilities at station locations to make them more bicycle-friendly. Integrating bicycling into transit plans, bus networks, and roadway systems can make bicycle travel a viable transportation alternative in this region.

IV. Promotion

Promotion is an effective tool to make bicyclists across the region aware of the regional network and to amplify bicycle usage. It is our vision that the regional bicycle network would be utilized by all types of users:

employees, commuters, transit riders, shoppers, kids, avid cyclists and pedestrians. The system will provide mobility for people who are too young to drive and people who do not own a vehicle. For that reason, various marketing strategies would be employed to address the bicycling needs of all types of users.

Establishing relationships with transportation providers would be the best approach to market the regional network to transit and bus riders. Ideally, information about bicycle support facilities that are located at transit stations would be incorporated into marketing materials of transit service providers. Local school systems would also be an appropriate place to educate children and teens about bicycle safety and the benefits of the regional bicycle network. Emphasis would be placed on educating teenagers bicycling safely to popular destinations such as schools, parks, sporting and recreational facilities, after-school jobs, and malls.

Finally, the marketing campaign will target the local business community. The business community will learn how the bicycle network would provide access to shopping areas and how providing supporting facilities would encourage bicyclists to travel to shopping districts and grocery stores. This strategy could potentially persuade local business owners to install bicycle parking facilities at their own expense.

Several types of initiatives would be used to market the regional network to intended users of the regional network. Regional bicycle maps, signage, and bicycle events are examples of tactics that can be used to promote the regional network to commuters, transit riders, business, shoppers, kids and others to promote bicycle usage. Developing a regional bicycling map is the best device to endorse the regional bicycle network. The map will provide bicyclists and non bicyclists with accurate information about bicycle routes throughout the region. The map will also serve as tool to guide bicyclists to destinations including recreational trails, transit hubs, parks, and schools. The regional bicycle map will be made accessible to the bike riding public via NWMC website and municipal websites. In addition, the maps would be sold for a small fee at local bicycle shops, bicycle organizations, and municipal departments.

Secondly, regional signage would be another method to market the regional network. The regional network would be made visible to the public by installing a system of uniformed signage in communities throughout the network. The regional signage would include a logo and verbiage to inform people that they are traveling along a regional bicycle network. Thirdly, bicycle events would be a method to make people aware of the network and to encourage bicycle usage. Several communities already participate in events such as "Bike to Work Week", event that encourages employees to try bicycling to work and "Safe Routes to Schools", a national event that encourages children to bike to school.

The Village of Schaumburg pioneered a land-use ordinance that requires developers to install bicycle parking facilities at retail, office, restaurants, and recreational developments.

These types of events would be planned in conjunction with communities and occur on a regional level to market the network to the bike riding public. Bicycle events are a great way to get people familiar with the bicycle network and to make them feel comfortable traveling along the system.

In addition, marketing strategies would be implemented to educate users about the goals of the regional bike plan. Information about the regional bike plan would be disseminated to the public via informational pamphlets and municipal cable access channels. The NWMC will also dedicate a section of its website to the regional bicycle network. The webpage will provide information about bicycle trails across the region, bicycle events, safety tips, and status updates of the bike plan as it proceeds to develop.

Bicycle Safety

Education, enforcement, and outreach to bicyclists and motorists is necessary to ensure everyone's safety. Education programs should emphasize learning the rules of the road and obeying traffic laws. The primary theme of the education component is that bicyclists who travel on public roadways have the same rights and responsibilities as motorists. For this reason, education programs will target users of all ages and experience levels to encourage bicycle safety. Motorists would be educated on the concept of "sharing the road" and bicyclists would be educated on bicycle safety and helmet use. However, it is not enough to educate people on bicycle safety but also to encourage enforcement of traffic laws. To that end, the education component would be an ongoing process tailored to meet the needs of children, young adults, motorists, and senior motorists.

A safe bicycle route is a one where traffic volume, speed, and widths are suitable for bicycling. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, collector and arterial streets should have a four foot width stripped bicycle lane. Wider lanes are necessary in locations with parking, curb, gutter, and higher/faster traffic volumes. The most commonly used bicycle facilities are on-street and off-street bikeways. On-street facilities are bicycle lanes and routes that are designated alongside a roadway. Off-street bicycles facilities, also known as bicycle paths, can be classified as bikeways that travel alongside its own right-of-way and is separated from road and street motor vehicles. Off-street paths are usually shared by bicyclists, pedestrians, skaters, joggers and others while on-street routes are designated primarily for bicyclists.

Creating a bicycle network to safely accommodate bicyclists along bicycle routes across the region is the vital element of this plan. It is alarming that every six hours a bicyclist is fatally injured and forty-nine percent of all bicyclist related-deaths occur to children age 16 or younger. Our primary

focus is not only to enhance opportunities for bicycle usage but to also create safe bicycle routes. Typically, bicyclists feel comfortable traveling along bicycle routes that are designed on roads with wide shoulders and low traffic volumes. The design of regional bicycle corridors will be guided by the American Association of State Transportation Highway Officials (AASHTO) standards for developing bicycle facilities. The goal is not only increase the number of bicyclists who travel across the region but also reduce the number of bicycle-related accidents. This is a formidable challenge but can be achieved by educating the bike riding public regarding bicycle safety tips and provide outreach materials to communities that encourage enforcement of traffic laws and punish scofflaws.

IV. Final Steps

In order to make a regional bicycle a reality several factors have to be examined including: technical planning assistance, funding, and local commitment. Project implementation is depending upon securing additional research needed to examine the feasibility of developing the regional corridors that were identified by the bike riding public. NWMC Staff is limited in the resources that are needed to develop an actual network. Essentially, this plan was designed to serve as a framework for consultants and municipal planners who possess technical expertise to assess the NWMC bicycle inventory and recommend what is needed to make this network a reality. This plan provides an overview of what is required to build a connected system of bicycle routes and support facilities to improve the efficiency and convenience of bicycle travel across the region. Extensive research and data collection is needed to update the current bicycle inventory to include bikeways that have been developed within the past three years. Analysis of traffic counts, journey-to-work data, bicycle counts, and accident data would be useful to gain understanding of bicycle usage and travel patterns. Secondly, engineering studies are necessary to explore alternatives for accommodating bicyclists across highways, bodies of water, and railroads. Finally, development of criteria for selecting regional corridors would help to prioritize improvements and justify inclusion of the bikeway as part of the regional network.

Funding is needed for planning and implementation of the regional network and support facilities. There are several barriers that impede travel across the region and the costs to develop pedestrian bridges and overpasses are considerable. In addition, installation of bicycle signage can reach up to \$200 per sign. Funding sources need to be identified to cover the costs of marketing, promotion, regional signage, bicycle maps. As funding is already scarce in the region, the transportation needs across the region outweigh available resources. Elected officials and bicycle advocates can urge state and federal legislators to promote legislation that

would allocate additional funding for exclusively for bicycle planning. However, in most cases communities would have to be willing to pay a local funding match. In 2000, the Northwest and North Shore Council of Mayors acquired a Unified Work Program grant to secure funding to implement sub-regional bicycle planning. It is anticipated that grant funding sources will be sought to fund consultant services needed to implement the regional network.

Essentially the success of this plan is dependent upon the commitment from local communities to take the lead by 1) encouraging bicycling by developing and implementing local bike plans, 2) adopting municipal ordinances, 3) working with neighboring communities to complete the gaps in the system, and 4) passing resolutions to participate in funding the local match needed to implement improvements to develop the regional network. A regional network is not possible without the continued development of local bicycle plans. Communities have to make a commitment to make bicycling a priority in local transportation planning initiatives. The commitment would require investing funding to develop and expand the local bike plans and investing funding to implement necessary infrastructure improvements that would allow travel over bridges and highways. This commitment would also involve working in conjunction with the NWMC to execute a marketing campaign to inform the bike riding public of the regional networks and to promote bicycle usage across the region.

Bicycling is the most efficient form of transportation. It is a self-powered machine that is easy and cheap to use, provides exceptional health benefits, and does not rely on gasoline that releases toxic fumes into the air. For those reasons and many more, bicycling is an ideal way to travel across the region. Developing a regional bicycle network would provide safe and convenient transportation options for people to travel from one end of the region to the next. Bicyclists would have endless possibilities of where they could travel to and from. A regional network would link people to neighborhoods, parks, jobs, and other modes of transportation.

The northwest suburbs has been recognized for having several quality bicycle trails including Busse Woods, Buffalo Creek, Fox River, Poplar Creek, and Cuba Marsh. Bicyclists from all over the region flock to these trails to either enjoy the beautiful scenery or to access routes to get from Point A to Point B. If the northwest suburbs intends keep up with growing popularity of bicycle travel, then the future of bicycle travel in this region must provide safe routes to schools, connect bicycle paths to local developments and transportation hubs, and provide a means for people to take their bicycles instead of cars for one-mile trips.

Appendix A - Bicycle Definitions

Listed below are definitions of commonly used bicycle terminology that can be found throughout this document. These definitions are based on the vocabulary used in the AASHTO guide and will serve as a tool for establishing uniform word usage.

Bicycle Facilities – a general term denoting improvements and provisions made by public agencies to accommodate or encourage bicycling, including parking and storage facilities, and shared roadways not specifically designated for bicycle use.

Bicycle Corridor – A generic term used to describe a linear network of bikeways that stretch across several municipal boundaries that allow for continuous travel from one community to the next.

Bike Lane – A portion of a roadway that has been designated by striping, signing and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists.

Bikeway – A generic term for any road, street, path, or way, which in some manner is specifically designated, for bicycle travel, regardless of whether such facilities are designated for the exclusive use of bicycles or are to be shared with other transportation modes.

Roadway – The portion of the highway. Including shoulders, intended for vehicular use.

Shared Roadway – A roadway that is open to both bicycle and motor vehicle travel. This may be an existing roadway, street with wide curb lanes, or road with paved shoulders.

Shared Use Path – A bikeway physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier and either within the highway right-of-way or within an independent right-of-way. Shared use paths may also be used by pedestrians, skaters, wheelchair users, joggers and other non-motorized users.

Appendix B - Overview of Planning Process

In May 2002, the NWMC regional bicycle facilities planning effort was launched. The goal of the plan was to connect future and existing bicycle facilities into a regional network that would allow bicyclists to travel continuously from one community to the next. The plan's framework for improving bicycling conditions includes identifying the gaps within the system, overcoming barriers, and ultimately identifying a series of bicycle corridors.

The process for developing this plan was guided by three NWMC mayors who co-chaired the effort, Schaumburg Village President Al Larson, Wilmette Village President Nancy Canafax, and Mt. Prospect Village President Gerald "Skip" Farley. A bicycle planning Policy Committee comprised of representatives from Schaumburg, Wilmette, Skokie, Rolling Meadows, Streamwood, and NWMC staff also guided this effort. The Committee met regularly to establish direction for the plan and to develop a set of goals and policies.

Public participation and guidance was sought throughout the duration of the planning process. A kick-off meeting in May 2002 was held to inform the general public about the framework, goals, and objectives of the regional bike plan. Mass mailings went out to NWMC mayors and managers, local planning departments, park districts, forest preserves, and local bike clubs and organizations inviting interested people to learn more about the planning effort and to provide their input into the process.

Next, public involvement workshops were held in September 2002 with local bicyclists to ascertain travel patterns across the region to reach their destinations. Members from the bike riding public and local planners attended this meeting to examine GIS maps of their respected cluster area and identified bikeway corridors within their cluster region that stretched across at least three municipal boundaries. Ultimately, planners examined how the corridors that were identified within their own individual clusters could possibly connect with corridors along neighboring communities to form a continuous network of bikeways.

The input received from the public involvement workshops was used as a starting point for local planners to assess the feasibility of developing the bikeway corridors that were identified by local bicyclists. Planning workshops were held with municipal planners and engineers to examine existing and planned bikeway facilities throughout local networks and identify possible bikeway connections and gaps that impede travel.