



Walk Friendly Communities

COMMUNITY REPORT CARD AND FEEDBACK:

Minneapolis, Minnesota
August 29, 2011

Introduction

Thank you for submitting an application to the Walk Friendly Communities program on behalf of Minneapolis, Minnesota! A Walk Friendly Community is a city or town that has shown a commitment to improving walkability and pedestrian safety through comprehensive programs, plans and policies.

Each application was evaluated by at least three reviewers to provide a fair assessment of your community and provide technical feedback on how to improve the walkability of your community.

After thorough consideration of your application, we are designating Minneapolis as a Gold Walk Friendly Community. In reviewing the application, there were several areas that we were particularly impressed with, including:

- Minneapolis' planning initiatives, including the Complete Streets plan, parking policy, trails plan, and form based codes, are comprehensive in nature and indicate the commitment to planning for pedestrians on all levels, while the substantial staff commitment also ensures that pedestrian issues are not neglected.
- Sidewalks, the backbone of any Walk Friendly Community, are clearly very important in Minneapolis, judging by the excellent sidewalk coverage in the city, the commendable sidewalk and curb ramp inventory process, and the exemplary accommodation of pedestrians on bridges.
- The crosswalk policies and the presence of pedestrian-supportive geometric features, such as median crossing islands and curb extensions, are impressive in Minneapolis.

Minneapolis has shown a great commitment to planning for pedestrians, and has rounded out those plans with high-quality infrastructure measures and planning initiatives. The community has clearly prioritized walkability and pedestrian safety as core values, and continues to build upon its success.

Despite those positive elements, we have noted several areas in which your community can improve its policies, programs, and standards. Please continue to build upon this foundation to

work to improve your Walk Friendly Community designation. This report card provides detailed feedback on how your community can take it to the next level; take the time to review the feedback and contact us with any questions.

Primary Recommendations

This section identifies and provides suggestions for the most vital areas of improving Minneapolis's overall walkability. Additional details are provided in the following sections. **We recommend that you read these areas thoroughly and develop clear goals, benchmarks, funding sources, and an implementation schedule for reaching these goals.**

- One aspect that is lacking in this application is the presence of a **traffic safety officer**. By prioritizing traffic safety through a traffic safety officer, Minneapolis can reduce the rate of pedestrian crashes and enhance officers' understanding of pedestrian laws.
- An **ADA transition plan** is the guiding force behind providing accessible facilities and access for all populations, not just individuals with disabilities, and should be created in Minneapolis. Creating a stand-alone ADA transition plan with a time line for implementing improvements will improve accessibility not only for people with disabilities, but for all pedestrians.
- **Traffic calming**, as well as **innovative pedestrian treatments** such as HAWK beacons and Leading Pedestrian Intervals, can improve the safety of the pedestrian environment substantially and should be considered in Minneapolis.

Feedback by Section

This remainder of this report card will provide detailed feedback and suggestions for each section in the community assessment tool. Feedback will include research to support the importance of this question as well as tools, guides, and case studies of successful implementations in other communities.

Each section received an overall score as defined below:

- **Walk Friendly:** The responses in this section indicate that your community is particularly strong in this area with great efforts being made towards improving walkability. Even so, there are always areas within this section where improvements and growth could be made.
- **On the Right Track:** This score indicates that your community does not exhibit the characteristics to be truly walk friendly in this section, but that there are still good existing programs or new programs that could be expanded. Please review our suggestions on how you could improve the walkability in this area.
- **Needs Attention:** This score indicates that your community does not yet demonstrate strong programs, policies, and results, characteristic of a Walk Friendly Community based on the responses in this section. Please review our suggestions carefully on how you can create positive change in your community with both short- and long-term objectives.

Community Profile

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- It is encouraging to see a good amount of time being dedicated to pedestrian issues by staff and an advisory committee. It would be worth investigating whether there are any other local advocacy groups dealing especially with pedestrian issues.

Status of Walking

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- The percent of walking and other non-single occupant vehicle use is very impressive and indicative of a great walking environment. However, Minneapolis should endeavor to arrest the declines in the walking and public transit mode shares.
- The crash rate is significantly higher than desirable, though the fatality rate is quite low. This suggests that a large number of these crashes are occurring at lower speeds and as a result of pedestrian exposure, as evidenced in the mode share data. However, it is still an area that can be greatly improved. Minneapolis should identify a target crash rate and should work toward achieving this goal.
- It is great to see that walking volumes have remained steady, while injury rates have decreased. Also, Minneapolis should continue to fund and support walking initiatives to increase volumes. They should also support and implement countermeasures to decrease vehicle speeds and discourage dangerous driving practices and also include engineering treatments supporting bicycling and walking at locations with high pedestrian/vehicle conflicts.

Planning

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- The pedestrian plan is a well-conceived document that can provide excellent guidance on planning projects. The policies are thoughtful and the implementation items are thorough, though including an implementation schedule with concrete deadlines would be helpful. It would be advantageous to include more quantifiable items, like establishing target mode shares, though it is great that Minneapolis has established a safety goal. Additionally, as the plan appears advisory in nature, it would be helpful to establish a comprehensive evaluation program for short, mid, and long-term pedestrian goals.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires public agencies with more than 50 employees to develop and implement an ADA transition plan. The plans should be regularly updated so that communities continue to ensure the accessibility of publicly maintained facilities. In addition, requiring ADA compliance with all new development and creating an evaluation schedule will help to prioritize maintenance and new construction. The resource, [Checklist for Accessible Sidewalks and Street Crossings](#) can provide more information. This [resource](#) could also be helpful.
- It is great to see that Minneapolis includes the public in many stages throughout the planning process, though it would be helpful to determine how public outreach efforts are initiated. The Core Principles of Community Engagement are exemplary.

- Minneapolis has done a good job of including implementation standards with regard to connectivity in its Pedestrian Master Plan document. Perhaps considering a stand-alone policy would make this policy more enforceable and draw attention to the need for connectivity. More information about connectivity can be found [here](#). The Victoria Transport Policy Institute also provides [guidelines](#) on connectivity policies.
- While creating a separate trails plan is almost always preferable, the bicycle and pedestrian plans both include stipulations for trail construction and are comprehensive in calling for increased high-quality trail investment. Minneapolis could consider using zoning and incentives to increase the number and mileage of trails in the region. Both of these tools can have large effects on private trail construction, trail connectivity, and can create opportunities for increased recreation.
- Overall, Minneapolis does an excellent job in terms of providing transit options to city residents. It is particularly impressive that 98.2% of city residents reside close to transit and that most bus stops are ADA compliant. The only area that could use improvement is the percent of bus stops that have wheelchair accessible shelters.
- Excellent parking standards! Your initiatives with respect to parking are representative of Minneapolis's push for a more walkable city overall. There is strong evidence of good design standards and consideration of important items like shared parking, priced public parking, and park and ride lots. The city of Minneapolis could consider implementing parking cashout incentives as another method of encouraging alternative modes of transportation. For more information, the San Francisco Metropolitan Transportation Commission has produced a Best Practices [resource](#) that can provide further guidance about this.
- Minneapolis has excellent policies to ensure that the pedestrian environment is enjoyable, stimulating, and attractive. One area that is not addressed in this response is the presence of sidewalk furniture. Providing guidelines for the placement of amenities in the right of way would be beneficial. Street trees, lighting, benches, public art, and more, as evidenced in Minneapolis's response, can really enhance the pedestrian experience, promoting more walking and improving safety.
- It is clear that Minneapolis has done a fabulous job of creating a pedestrian supportive environment through planning. With a few minor improvements, Minneapolis will be a model for the nation in terms of how to support walking through city planning documents as well as through other initiatives.

Education & Encouragement

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- The Safe Routes to School programs are great ways to encourage walking and will contribute to a culture of walking in Minneapolis. It is great to see that some schools are already participating, though a higher percentage of participating schools in both events and programs would be great to see in the city. Efforts should be taken to improve the programs across the school system, and increase program/event frequency. Information about school programs can be found at the [National Center for Safe Routes to School](#).
- It is great to see that school staff and public works staff receive training, particularly pedestrian safety training, though more city officials should be involved in training. By educating public officials communities can help ensure that ordinances and policies that support walking are actually implemented. Also, it is important to educate not only public officials, but others including the police and public health officials. Minneapolis

- should consider adding training opportunities for the police, planning and engineering departments, and other related departments to the current training opportunities. The PBIC offers some training [courses](#) and [webinars](#).
- It is wonderful to see that a variety of education and encouragement programs are being implemented in Minneapolis. While the City does a good job in terms of providing some public health campaigns, Minneapolis could consider environmental campaigns as another way to encourage walking.

Engineering

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- The sidewalk coverage is indicative of Minneapolis' commitment to creating a safe pedestrian environment, though those streets without sidewalks should, over time, undergo new sidewalk construction. In addition, Minneapolis should be actively determining where sidewalk gaps are located and should take steps to pave more sidewalks. It is disheartening to see that only .05 miles of sidewalks were paved last year, but the goal of paving 1.75 miles of sidewalk in the next three years is indicative of Minneapolis' ongoing pedestrian program and is realistic and attainable.
- It is clear that Minneapolis has put some thought into improving signals to support walking, but still has a great deal of work to do. In particular, continuing to retrofit pedestrian signals with countdown signals and adding APS at certain locations would increase pedestrian safety in crosswalks. However, it is great to see that the average walk speed is 3.5 or even 3 feet per second as opposed to the usual 4 feet per second speed. One helpful [resource](#) could provide more insight into best practices for signalization, while the PEDSAFE [Guide](#) could also be helpful.
- Crosswalks are extremely important for pedestrian safety. Marked crosswalks serve to highlight the right-of-way where motorists can expect pedestrians to cross. The city should begin moving away from parallel lines in favor of more effective crosswalk patterns, as parallel lines are the least visible and require more maintenance than other patterns. Also, if the city decides they are suitable, Minneapolis could begin installing advance stop/yield lines. An advance stop/yield line placed 6 to 15 m (20 to 50 ft.) ahead of the crosswalk can greatly reduce the likelihood of a multiple-threat crash, as this encourages drivers to stop back far enough so a pedestrian can see if a second motor vehicle is not stopping and take evasive action. In most other aspects, however, Minneapolis' crosswalk practices are excellent.
- Depending on the area in question, providing an innovative treatment such as a HAWK beacon, rectangular rapid flash beacon, leading pedestrian interval, or a pedestrian scramble/all red interval could provide substantial upgrades to the pedestrian environment and improve pedestrian safety. Your community should consider soliciting public input or calling a meeting of the pedestrian and bicycle advisory committee and determining if these and other treatments could be implemented/would be applicable. The PBIC has some [resources](#) that provide more guidance.
- Traffic calming is one of the most important features that encourage pedestrian travel by reducing vehicle speeds. Minneapolis should adopt a policy as soon as possible and could consider road and lane diets, speed tables, raised intersections, chicanes, mini-circles, raised pedestrian crossings, or chokers among others as possible traffic calming devices, especially in neighborhoods. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

also provides some helpful [information](#) on this subject, while this [resource](#) could also be helpful.

Enforcement

On the Right Track

- While Minneapolis does have a number of police officers in enforcement, though this could also be improved, including a dedicated Traffic Safety Officer in the police force could have a large effect on enforcement and safety. By prioritizing traffic safety through the employment of Traffic Safety Officer, your City can reduce the rate of pedestrian crashes and enhance officer's understanding of pedestrian laws.
- Enforcement efforts can have a large effect on motorist yielding behavior. By informing the public about where and when enforcement activities will be, the police can create public support and offset the complaints of those breaking the law. One particularly effective method, particularly at locations with a documented crash problem, is the crosswalk sting or pedestrian decoy technique. Using this in conjunction with [progressive ticketing scheme](#) allows officers to educate drivers more than penalize them. Also, using speed feedback signs can have a substantial effect on speeding and hammers home the point that speeding is dangerous and illegal. More information can be found [here](#).
- Great citation numbers! Minneapolis has done an excellent job of using enforcement to ensure that pedestrian supportive laws are respected. Also, the volume of parking on sidewalks or too close to intersections or crosswalks tickets is very impressive. It is very rare to see such a high number of citations. This demonstrates that Minneapolis really takes ensuring pedestrian safety seriously. Minneapolis could consider using photo enforcement technology as well, which can have a large effect on yielding rates. More information [here](#).
- Adult school crossing guards play an important role in the lives of children who walk or bicycle to school. While the primary role of an adult school crossing guard is to guide children safely across the street, children also remain responsible for their own safety. There are many model crossing guard programs in existence. At minimum, crossing guards should be vetted by the community, trained by certified training programs, provided with class 2 reflective vests and hand held stop paddles. The Adult School Crossing Guard Guidelines might be a helpful [resource](#). Minneapolis should consider strengthening their policies towards crossing guards and outfitting them with the appropriate equipment.
- Minneapolis should conduct regular road safety audits to evaluate pedestrian concerns. The law enforcement officers should join this audit team to identify concerns. Law enforcement in Minneapolis can have a major role in making the city safer for pedestrians and addressing those locations that are especially dangerous by implementing a strategy for determining which locations are most in need of attention and coordinating with other departments to find the best countermeasure.

Evaluation

On the Right Track

- While Walkability Checklists are a really helpful tool, there are also other tools that can enhance the understanding of the built environment from the perspective of pedestrians. [Pedestrian Intersection Safety Indices](#), [Pedestrian Road Safety Audit Guidelines and Prompt Lists](#), and [Health Impact Assessments](#) could be helpful.

More Information

If you have questions or comments regarding this feedback, your community's initiatives and programs, or the application process in general, we'd like to hear from you. Please contact:

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You can also send general inquiries to info@walkfriendly.org