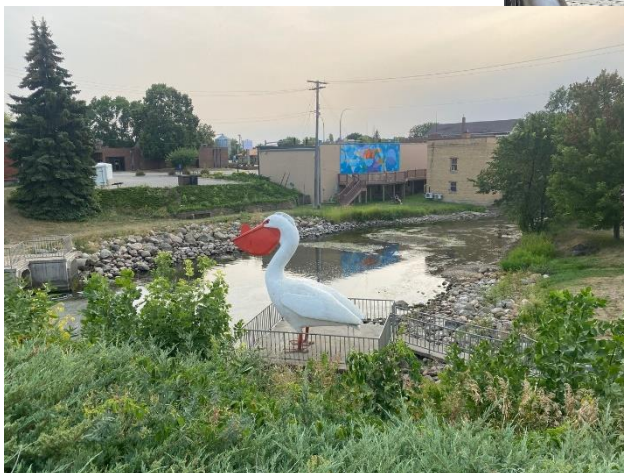


CASE STUDIES OF BICYCLING & WALKING IN SMALL COMMUNITIES: *PELICAN RAPIDS, MINNESOTA*



February 2022

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COVER IMAGES

Front Cover Top: Pelican Rapids, Minnesota's City Hall sign

Front Cover Middle: A bicycle with a trailer seen near a business in downtown Pelican Rapids

Front Cover Bottom: A pelican statue near the Pelican River, once considered the largest pelican statue in the world

The back cover presents a photo collage of people walking and bicycling in Pelican Rapids, Minnesota, as observed by the case study researchers while on-site.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Background of the Community	1
County Typology.....	2
Community History	2
Timeline.....	6
Evolution of <i>Planning</i> for Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure.....	6
Safe Routes to School Plan	7
Perham to Pelican Rapids Regional Trail Master Plan.....	8
Complete Streets Concept for US59 & MN108	9
Community Action Plan for Pelican Rapids, Minnesota: Local Foods, Local Places Technical Assistance Plan	11
Pelican Rapids Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan	11
Existing Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure.....	13
Bicycle & Pedestrian Map	15
Supporting Programs for Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure.....	16
Bikeable Community Workshop.....	17
Partnerships to Plan & Implement Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure	17
Funding for Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure	18
Lessons Learned	19
The Future of Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure in the Community.....	20
Key Points.....	21
Successful Strategies to Apply in Other Small Communities	21
References	22

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this case study was to identify bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and programs in Pelican Rapids, Minnesota that would be of interest to other peer communities. The majority of infrastructure that exists in Pelican Rapids is primarily focused on the walkability of the community. However, a multi-use trail at the south end of the community supports both walking and biking. Residents, primarily children, have been found to bicycle on the low-volume local roads and in some cases the sidewalks. The numerous bridges over the Pelican River, including the Mill Pond Suspension Bridge that connects E.L. Peterson Park and the community's campground improve the walkability of the community that could have otherwise been severed by this natural feature. In addition, there are numerous defined crossings of US59, including at least one location near the high school that has a rectangular rapid flashing beacon (a sign with flashing lights). This appears to be the outcome of a 2007 Safe Routes to School infrastructure grant. The community also has many additional assets that it could leverage to encourage walking amongst visitors, including pelican statues found throughout the community. In addition, the community has many future opportunities, including the state project that is expected to provide greater connectivity and walkability along US59 and State Road 108, as well as a multi-use pathway that will connect Pelican Rapids to Maplewood State Park, and in the future to Perham, Minnesota. Part of this pathway is expected to be constructed in 2022.

INTRODUCTION

Walking and bicycling have become increasingly popular modes of transportation and the existence of dedicated infrastructure to support active modes offers benefits to a community and its residents. While examples of active transportation infrastructure found in larger communities are well documented, this infrastructure can look different in rural communities and documented examples are lacking. This research effort aims to address this gap. Case studies from fifteen communities with fewer than 10,000 residents were developed. The case studies feature existing rural bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure located across five states, to include: Arcadia, LaBelle, and Taylor Creek in Florida; Calvert City, Corbin, and Morehead in Kentucky; Pelican Rapids, Pipestone, and Walker in Minnesota; Ruidoso, Silver City and Truth or Consequences in New Mexico; and Fair Haven, Morristown, and the Town of Hartford in Vermont. Communities were selected using a prioritization process developed through a cooperative effort between the state departments of transportation and the researchers. More details about the research project, Case Studies of Communities of Less Than 10,000 People with Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure, as well as additional case studies can be found at:

https://westerntransportationinstitute.org/research_projects/case-studies-of-communities-of-less-than-10000-people-with-bicycle-pedestrian-infrastructure/

Case studies provide a detailed description of each community including a discussion of recent planning efforts related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, supporting programs, and partnerships. Site visits, approximately one day per community, were conducted from June through December of 2021. During these visits, researchers collected spatial data and photographs to document existing infrastructure. Within this day visit, researchers also captured photos of people walking and bicycling in the communities, which can be found on the back cover of each case study. They also reached out to local advocates and community leadership. Lessons learned and best practices were documented from reviewing the planning documents and speaking with advocates and community leadership. The case studies aim to provide peer communities with the knowledge and encouragement to support additional implementation of active transportation infrastructure in rural communities across the US.

This case study focuses on Pelican Rapids, Minnesota.

BACKGROUND OF THE COMMUNITY

Pelican Rapids, Minnesota has approximately 2,461 residents (2019), and has experienced a 1.1% population increase since 2010. It is located in Otter Tail County, in west-central Minnesota. The community's boundaries encompass 2.7 square miles, which is a very walkable and bikeable distance.

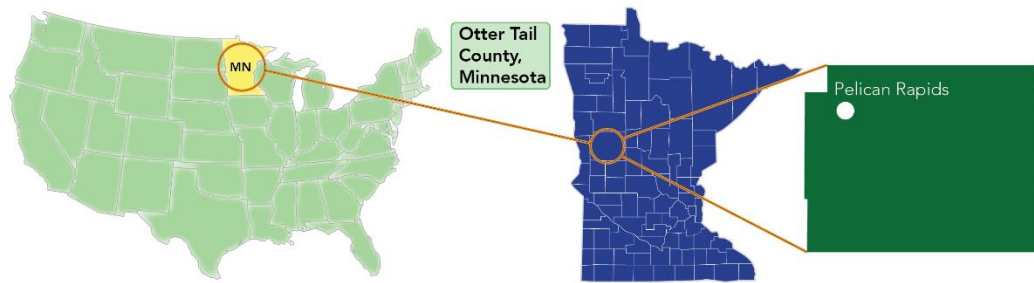


Figure 1: Location of Pelican Rapids, Minnesota of Otter Tail County in west-central Minnesota.

The following paragraphs provide demographic and socioeconomic data about the community, so that peer communities can better understand similarities and differences between their community and this case study community.

The average age of Pelican Rapids residents is 35.7 years old (2019). Approximately 8.5% (2019) of homes in Pelican Rapids are vacant which includes seasonal housing, vacant housing for rent/sale, and vacant housing held off the market.

Approximately 57.4% (2018) of Pelican Rapids residents are employed within the community; a statistic which may provide a level of understanding regarding residents' commute distance and potential interest in walking or biking to work. Pelican Rapids has a 1.5% (2019) unemployment rate. Pelican Rapids' median household income is \$43,971 (2019), with 12.7% of households earning less than \$10,000 and 1.3% earning more than \$200,000. Approximately 25.5% (2019) of Pelican Rapids' population lives in poverty, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget's Statistical Policy Directive 14.

According to the 2019 American Community Survey, 19.5% of people in Pelican Rapids walk and 1.1% bicycle to work for their daily commute. The relatively large percentage of people walking is reported by locals as reflective of a large percentage of the population that may not own a vehicle and/or have a driver's license. Locals note many senior citizens, immigrant, and refugee populations in the community.

COUNTY TYPOLOGY

According to the rural classification methodology used in *Emerging Technology and Opportunities for Improved Mobility and Safety for Rural Areas*, Pelican Rapids is located within a county that was designated as a Micropolitan County Type. A Micropolitan County Type is defined by having one or more urbanized areas with a population over 10,000 but less than 50,000 people or are adjacent to and linked economically with such a county.

COMMUNITY HISTORY

Located in west-central Minnesota, Pelican Rapids has almost 1,000 lakes within about a fifty-mile radius of the community. The lakes draw some visitors in the summer who often stop in the community to shop for groceries before heading to their lake homes. Visitors and residents alike enjoy swimming and fishing in these lakes, as well as more general

water recreation (i.e. boating). In addition, nearby is Maplewood State Park, considered by some to be the “crown jewel” of the Minnesota State Park system. Pelican Rapids is also home to a turkey processing plant, which was built in the 1950s. At the core of the community, US59 and Minnesota Highway (MN) 108 overlap for about three blocks. US59 runs north-south, whereas MN108 runs east-west. As a driver travels both northbound and southbound into the community on US59, the posted speed limit drops from 60 mph to 30 mph.

A unique aspect of Pelican Rapids is the diversity of the community. Part of the diversity is reflected by the myriad of employees at the local turkey processing plant, including immigrants and refugees. Through every conversation with community members, it is clear that the community values its diversity. It is also reflected in the Multicultural Committee that was formed to help newcomers feel welcome in the community. The committee worked to have each new town member viewed as an individual with a unique story rather than as being representative of a group. The committee also helped to create the International Friendship Festival, a celebration that started in 1998 and continued through 2019 (it was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020). The festival holds naturalization ceremonies as well as food, music, and flags from around the world. The community is comprised of a diverse mix of people speaking eleven different languages (English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Laotian, Ukrainian, Russian, Sudanese, Arabic, and Kurdish). The diversity is also reflected in the diversity of grocery stores within the community.

Within the core of the community (near US59 and MN108), two ethnic grocery stores (Dawo Halal Market and La Mariposa Market), Pelican Rapids Public Library, a local pharmacy, a bank, the post office, and a food shelf are all within walking distances of apartment complexes and the core of residences (Figure 2). In addition, most restaurants that can be found in the community are within this central block. Recently, as a result of a Local Foods, Local Places grant, a farmer’s market has been offered in the core of the community too.

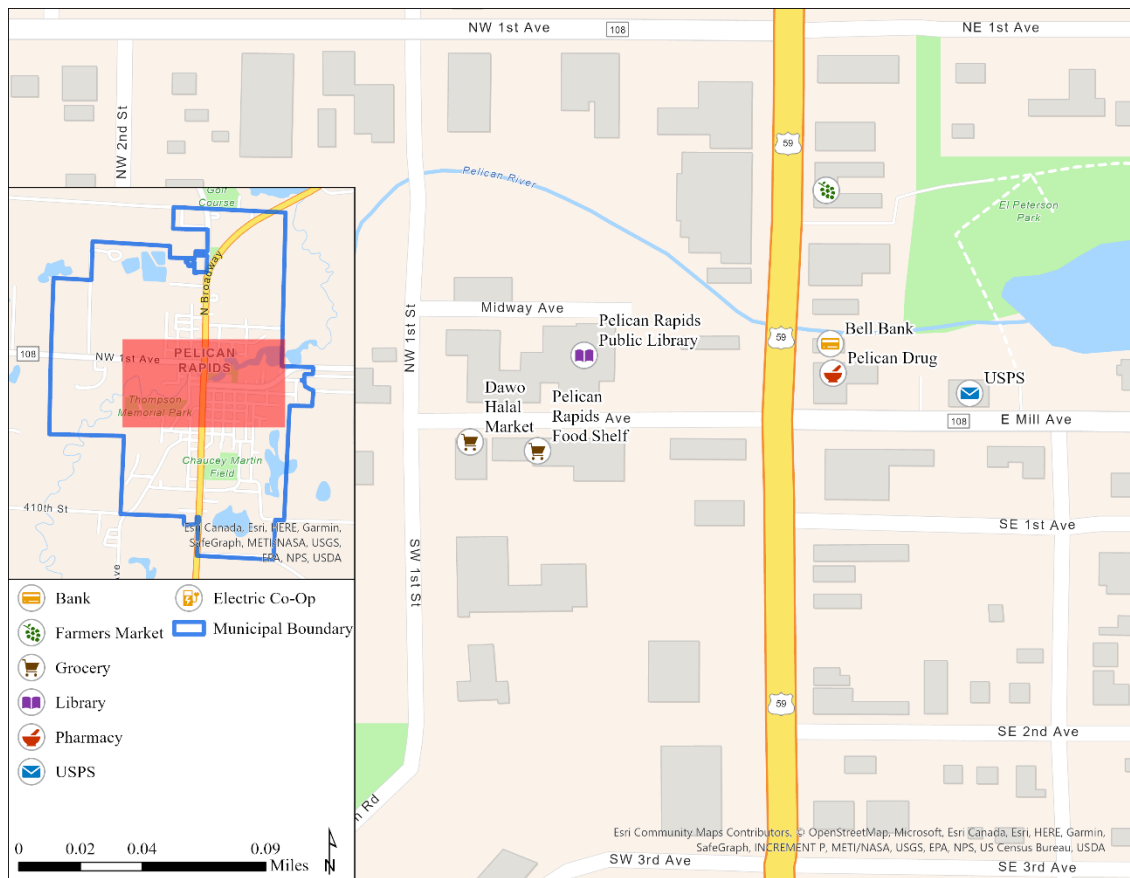


Figure 2: City map of the downtown core of Pelican Rapids, Minnesota showing boundaries and services in the center of town.

At the south end of the community are dollar stores, a larger grocery store and a bank (Figure 3). A sidewalk that turns into a multi-use trail provides a connection between all these essential services and to the Lake Region Electric Cooperative.

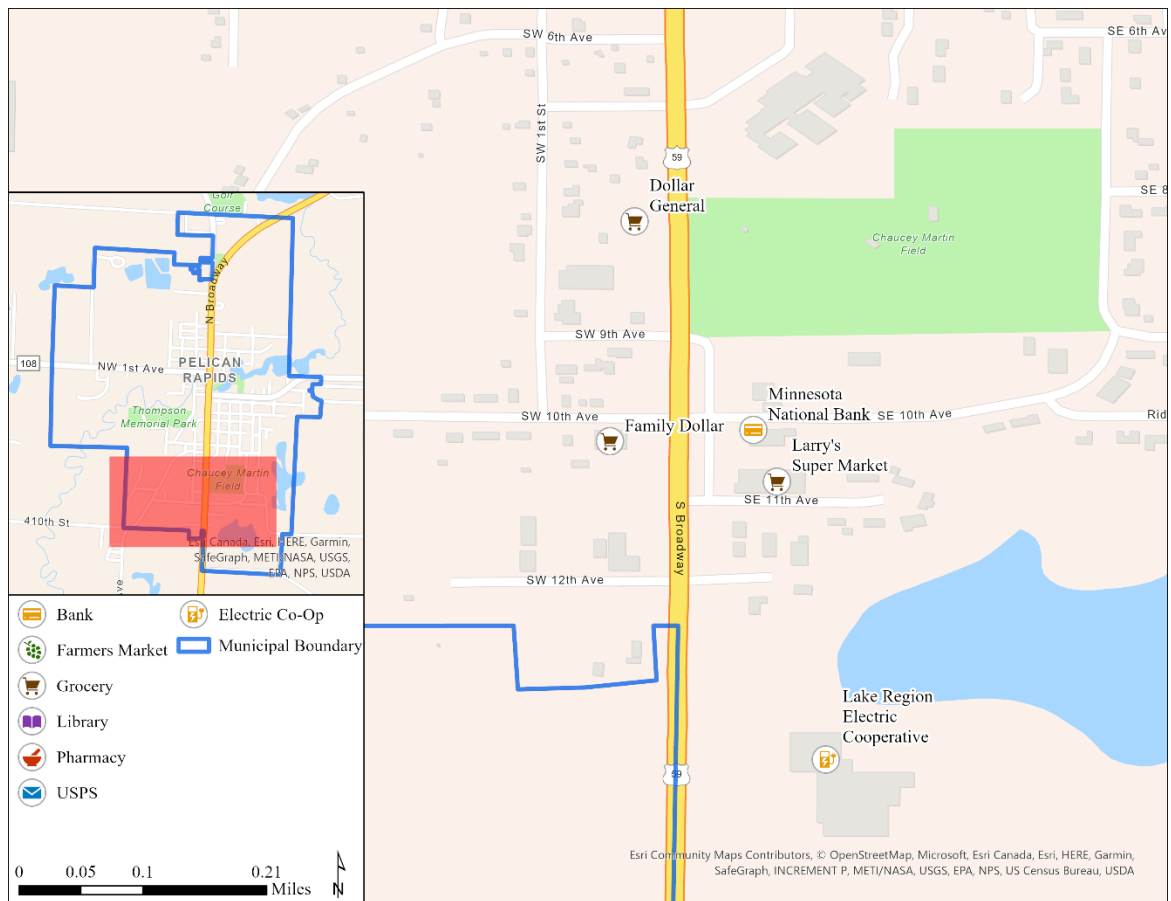


Figure 3: City map of southern Pelican Rapids, Minnesota showing boundaries and services in the southern part of the community.

TIMELINE

A timeline of events is provided in Table 1 to describe major milestones for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure development and supporting programs in Pelican Rapids, Minnesota.

Table 1: Timeline of major milestone events for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Year	Event
1975	A pedestrian bridge is installed over the Pelican River connecting E.L. Peterson Park to the community's campground
2007	The City of Pelican Rapids received the Governor's Fit City Award
2009	A Safe Routes to School Plan was developed for Pelican Rapids
2014	Lake Runners Trail Association (snowmobiling) installs a bridge across the Pelican River near First Street NW and Midway NW
2014	Four Public Open Houses were held (12/16/13, 12/17/13, 2/10/14, and 6/17/14) to support the development of the Perham to Pelican Rapids Regional Trail Master Plan
2014	Perham to Pelican Rapids Regional Trail Master Plan is completed
2018	Minnesota Department of Transportation, District 4 Bicycle Project Design Meeting was held on November 8, 2018
2019	Four advisory committee meetings were held (3/5/19, 3/27/19, 5/16/19, and 7/11/19) for the Complete Streets Concept for US59 & MN108: Pelican Rapids, MN plan
2019	Three open house meetings were held (4/25/19, 5/23/19, and 7/18/19) for the Complete Streets Concept for US59 & MN108: Pelican Rapids, MN plan
2019	A final presentation was given to the Pelican Rapids City Council on September 10, 2019, for the Complete Streets Concept for US59 & MN108: Pelican Rapids, MN plan
2019	The plan, Complete Streets Concept for US 59 & MN 108: Pelican Rapids, MN, was completed on September 10, 2019
2020	An in-person Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Committee Meeting was held February 3, 2020, at Pelican Rapids City Hall
2020	On-line Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Committee Meetings were held on April 2, July 20, and October 20
2020	On-Line Public Input Meetings (6/23/20, 6/29/20, 9/15/20, 9/22/20, 9/23/20, 11/16/20, 11/18/20, 11/19/20) were held to facilitate development of the bicycle and pedestrian plan
2020	The Community Action Plan for Pelican Rapids, Minnesota: Local Foods, Local Places Technical Assistance Plan, was completed in October of 2020
2021	The Pelican Rapids Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was completed January 29, 2021

EVOLUTION OF *PLANNING* FOR BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Five plans are discussed within this section: the 2009 Safe Routes to School Plan, the Perham to Pelican Rapids Regional Trail Master Plan, the Complete Streets Concept for US59 and MN108, the Community Action Plan for Pelican Rapids, Minnesota: Local Foods, the Local Places Technical Assistance Plan, and the Pelican Rapids Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PLAN

A Safe Routes to School plan was completed for Pelican Rapids in 2009. The plan's scope covered the entire city. It identified two issues with the existing sidewalk: gaps and a state of disrepair. Vehicle turning movements and pedestrian counts were conducted at three locations in May of 2009: 4th Avenue S and 1st Street E (45-minute count from 2:45-3:30pm); 5th Avenue S and 2nd St E (45-minute count from 2:45-3:30pm); and US59 and 5th Avenue S (1-hour count from 7:30-8:30am). Each location identified at least nine pedestrians crossing one leg of the intersection, with the greatest number of pedestrians identified (ten) at the 4th Avenue S and 1st Street E intersection, crossing on the west leg. Only one leg had zero pedestrian crossings (the west leg of the US59 and 5th Avenue S intersection). The consultants reviewed five years of crash data and identified one bicycle/pedestrian related crash within the community. (The data was not provided.) It occurred at US59 and 2nd Avenue S. In 2007, the Pelican Rapids school system had applied for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) infrastructure funding to install flashing school zone beacons at US59's intersections with 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 7th Avenues S. The proposed project would also convert the curb at 3rd Avenue S to support bicycle traffic. The estimated cost was \$21,075. Figure 4 shows the 5th Avenue S crossing of US59 in 2021.



Figure 4: Mid-block crossing at 5th Avenue S and US59.

In the application for funding, challenges for school crossings were identified as large vehicles traveling on the roadway (from the turkey processing plant, the electrical cooperative, and a freight shipping and trucking company), large traffic volumes, and

speeds that change from 40 mph to 30 mph near the schools. It cited surveys that identified the “excessive speed of cars” on US59 as a concern for parents. The application also identified that Pelican Rapids had received the Governor’s Fit City Award in 2007. The report highlights the benefit of SRTS funds, suggesting that it is the “only non-local funding source that can address pedestrian facility needs off the County and State highway systems.” The plan suggests removing on-street parking near crossings to increase the visibility of pedestrians crossing the street near the high school. The plan also identifies students who participate in the “sixth grade school patrol.” These students help younger students cross US59. A teacher who runs this program highlighted a letter written by one of her students in class who wrote a persuasive argument in 1997, ten years before the proposed installation of crosswalk improvements. The letter identified a child that had been hit crossing the roadway and asked for road improvements to be implemented.

PERHAM TO PELICAN RAPIDS REGIONAL TRAIL MASTER PLAN

The Perham to Pelican Rapids Regional Trail Master Plan was completed for Otter Tail County in 2014. The development of the plan was a cooperation between Otter Tail County, the City of Perham, the City of Pelican Rapids, the West Central Initiative, PartnerSHIP 4 Health, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The impetus for the plan was a regional need for non-motorized outdoor recreation opportunities for both residents and visitors. It also supported three goals: 1) contributing to the goal of 1,300 miles of bicycle trails by 2035 as identified by the Minnesota DNR Parks and Trails Legacy Plan, 2) filling a critical gap for rural bicycle commuters, and 3) connecting Pelican Rapids to Maplewood State Park (located roughly 8 miles east of Pelican Rapids on State Route 108).

The plan was created, in part, to enable state and federal funding to be accessed. It proposed several route alternatives for an off-road, paved trail connecting Pelican Rapids to Maplewood State Park, and Maplewood State Park to Perham. Maplewood State Park would define the connection between the two ends of the off-road paved trail.

The County Assessor’s Office identifies about 9,710 parcels within the county as seasonally occupied, meaning the town population grows during the warm summer months. The plan identifies statistics from the Minnesota DNR that reports that more than fifty percent of trail users are adults that range in age from 41 to 65. When fully constructed, it is estimated, based on numbers identified from other trails in the region, that the trail will receive about 60,000 to 90,000 annual visits and bring an additional \$1.62 to \$3.51 million to the region.

The proposed trail would be ten feet wide, made of asphalt, and would be constructed primarily within existing county right-of-way. The plan also proposed that artwork be incorporated within the trail, noting that, “Public art can enhance the trail’s relationship to the landscape by exploring the region’s culture, history and environmental character and showcasing the talent of regional artists.” The plan also identifies a need to address a few challenges, including a structurally deficient bridge, farming operations that include animals which may not appreciate the presence of trail users, and a crossing of an active rail line.

The trail was identified as being designed with a 100-year life span. The estimated cost is \$14,186,000 (2014 dollars), with an additional \$1,500,000 needed to install a trail-specific bridge (although reconstruction of the existing bridge with provisions for trail users was also identified as an option). The plan also noted that since the trail will be in proximity to existing roadways, additional officers are not needed to monitor the trail; it can be overseen with existing monitoring.

COMPLETE STREETS CONCEPT FOR US59 & MN108

In 2019, the plan, Complete Streets Concept for US59 & MN108: Pelican Rapids, MN, was initiated by PartnerSHIP 4 Health, who contracted a consultant to assist with facilitating the public process for the plan. As a part of the plan's development, a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was formed. Three open house meetings were facilitated to aid with input from the public. The following eight objectives were identified for the project:

- 1) "Reflect the needs and desires of the community.
- 2) Address the needs of large truck and agriculture vehicle traffic in streetscape design.
- 3) Create comfortable pedestrian environments with safe crossings and defined spaces for different user groups.
- 4) Maintain sufficient parking spaces of adequate size in the downtown area for pick-up trucks and other vehicles to park close to their destination.
- 5) Provide dedicated space for bicycles to travel.
- 6) Enhance the aesthetics of the community with vegetation, decorative railings and pedestrian amenities.
- 7) Provide safe connections to public facilities including schools and parks, and local businesses for pedestrians on foot and bicycle.
- 8) Plan for connections to future trail connections in the regions such as the Perham to Pelican Rapids Trail."

The community expressed a desire to retain the current downtown mid-block crossing at its current location between Mill Street and 1st Avenue (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Mid-block crossing of Mill Street and 1st Avenue.

However, the plan proposed adding curb bump-outs and a rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB). Overall, the plan suggested that maintaining twelve feet travel lanes and ten feet parking lanes are preferred. A significant number of comments indicated that residents were concerned with implications of snow removal. In addition, while street trees were proposed, business owners and residents expressed concerns with them obstructing businesses as well as the maintenance required to have street trees. The consultant proposed the Bismarck (North Dakota) Street Tree Guide as a relevant resource that could provide appropriate street tree options for the region. The plan includes in the appendix comments received by the public. A few are highlighted below:

- “Why do bicycles need to go right through downtown?”
- Many community members do not own cars and rely on non-motorized forms of transportation.
- I want to see bike options on the main routes because I like to access businesses by walking and bike riding.
- ...no bump outs at intersections for easier turning and snow removal.
- 108 west – sidewalk out to residential/apartment.
- I don’t want bike lanes going through downtown.
- Bike traffic drives dollars...
- Study kid biking routes...
- ...trucks and farm equipment are too dangerous for downtown.
- We do not need more parking spaces. We need safety and progress for future generations.
- ...how [will] deliveries work in downtown with the narrower road.

- ...Many parents would not allow their children to bike with traffic on US59.
- ...who will plow the new trails.
- We must have bike lanes downtown for tourism, accessibility, and consistency.
- ...concept of having bike paths on the street...unsafe for young bikers..."

The comments show some diverging opinions. These conflicts were expressed in the discussion of the plan findings. In addition, the graphics appear to show pick-up trucks and delivery trucks, vehicle types which were highlighted in the plan.

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN FOR PELICAN RAPIDS, MINNESOTA: LOCAL FOODS, LOCAL PLACES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PLAN

The Community Action Plan for Pelican Rapids, Minnesota: Local Foods, Local Places Technical Assistance Plan was completed in October of 2020. While primarily focused on the production of food, the plan also highlighted in several places the need for access to food. In addition, it identified that the Local Foods, Local Places program also encompasses "healthy, walkable, economically vibrant communities." Action 1.1 indicates that the community wants to "Define a space for a physical market in downtown Pelican Rapids." In the summer of 2021, this market was present within the core of the community (Figure 6). The plan also identified a desire to create an orchard which would be in proximity to the trailhead that the community hopes to develop as part of the Pelican Rapids to Perham trail plan (at 108 Midway Avenue). More specifically, related to Action 4.2: Conduct extensive public engagement to integrate food language into local planning processes and documents, two measures of success were identified as "Language in area trail plans that connect recreation with local foods," and "Goals in local transportation plans that address food access."



Figure 6: Pelican Rapids market.

PELICAN RAPIDS BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN

The Pelican Rapids Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was initiated in response to many community-wide bicycle and pedestrian issues highlighted during the planning for US59/MN108. The plan was completed with primarily virtual bicycle and pedestrian committee meetings and public outreach meetings held in 2020. It was intended to obtain community input at the numerous festivals held in Pelican Rapids: Pelican Fest, the International Friendship Festival, and Art in the Park; however, the coronavirus pandemic changed the plan.

The plan focused on the six "E's": equity, engineering, education, encouragement, engagement, and evaluation. To develop the plan, a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Community Advisory Committee was created. The plan acknowledges that segments of the community

face more challenges with walking and bicycling. The plan identifies four opportunities that can improve the walkability and bikeability of the community: 1) the reconstruction of US59 and MN108, 2) the new trailhead (located at 108 Midway Avenue), 3) the removal of the Pelican Dam in 2021, and 3) construction of the Pelican Rapids-to-Perham Trail (segments connecting to Perham have begun with construction for Pelican Rapid segments expected to take place in 2022).

The new trailhead is expected to include restroom facilities, a drinking fountain, bike racks, picnic tables, benches, a self-service bike repair station and a piece of art. To provide information about bicycle safety, the community is including bicycle safety videos in three different languages (English, Spanish, and Somali) at the electronic information kiosk that is available outside of the Pelican Rapids Public Library. The plan proposes including the Walk! Bike! Fun! Curriculum in the schools. It also includes sending a local educator to take the training for this curriculum. In addition, the plan suggests distributing the Smart Cycling materials developed by the League of American Bicyclists throughout the community (churches, mosque, turkey plant, library, schools).

The plan identifies that even though Pelican Rapids is slightly off the current Adventure Cycling Route Northern Tier, cross country cyclists stop in the community. (Note: While staying at a place of lodging in the community, the author was told this by the owner as well.) The Minnesota Department of Transportation is currently defining alignment for the new US Bike Route 20; the plan suggests that Pelican Rapids advocate for inclusion on this route.

Some additional “encouragement” action items that were identified include: incorporating children riding bikes in the annual parade; promoting annual national and international bike events (i.e. National Bike Month); encouraging businesses to apply to become Bicycle Friendly Businesses (a designation through the League of American Bicyclists); convene a regularly scheduled community ride; offer adult learn to ride classes; and offer a bicycle library at the Pelican Rapids Public Library. The plan also proposes adding additional bicycle parking. Furthermore, it suggests identifying a winter and street maintenance plan for bikes.

EXISTING BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Table 2 summarizes bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure identified across all case study communities, noting which ones were observed while on-site in Pelican Rapids, Minnesota.

Table 2: Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure found across all case study communities, with those found in Pelican Rapids noted.

Bicycle and/or Pedestrian Infrastructure in Case Study Communities	Presence in Pelican Rapids
Bicycle Lane	X
Bike Rack	X
Shared Lane Markings	
Sidepath	
Defined Bike Route (by signage)	X
Multi-Use Pathway	X
Trail (soft surface)	X
Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) Crossing	X
Mid-Block Crossing	X
Crosswalk	X
Sidewalks	X
Bridges that enable walking or biking	X
Underpasses that enable walking or biking	
Parklet	
Benches	X
Repair Station/Air Pump	
Speed Bump/Speed Table	
Speed Feedback Sign – Permanent	
Speed Feedback Sign – Portable	
Signage	
<i>Bike/Ped Crossing Sign with light emitting diode (LED) lights</i>	
<i>Bicycle May Use Full Lane</i>	
<i>Share the Road</i>	X
<i>State Law, Yield/Stop for Pedestrian in Crosswalk</i>	
<i>Steep Grade</i>	
<i>Drive Slow in Residential Areas/Please Slow Down</i>	
<i>Traffic Calming Area</i>	
<i>Weight Limitations</i>	X
<i>Interpretative/ Wayfinding Information</i>	X
<i>Walking Routes</i>	X
<i>Entertainment District</i>	X

Overall, locals describe the community as walkable because of the relatively flat terrain and a compact grid development. In addition, with the Pelican River running through the heart of town, locals describe it as a pleasant place to walk. A multi-use pathway runs along the east side of US59, heading south out of town (#1 in Figure 8). It is intended that this segment will connect to the Pelican Rapids to Perham, Minnesota multi-use trail.

The local elementary school has numerous bicycle racks for students' bikes (#2 in Figure 8); additional bicycle racks were also reportedly being installed in the summer of 2021 using grants from PartnerSHIP 4 Health and the West Central Initiative. There are several defined

crosswalks along US59, including this school crossing that also has the in-road stop for pedestrians sign in the crosswalk (#3 in Figure 8). Hidden from view from the main highway, the existing walkway over the dam allows pedestrians to see several murals (#4 in Figure 8 and see mural beyond the pelican in the bottom picture on the cover page). As noted in the Perham to Pelican Rapids plan, art can enhance one's relationship to a space.

While a bit narrow, the Mill Pond Suspension Bridge, spanning the Pelican River, provides a convenient, well-utilized connection between the E.L. Peterson Park and Sherin Memorial Park (Figure 7 and #5 in Figure 8). During the International Friendship Festival, flags from around the world are displayed in holders along the bridge.



Figure 7: Mill Pond Suspension Bridge interpretive sign.

Numerous residents were observed using this facility (see second photo down on the left on the back cover). In fact, one individual with a motorized wheelchair was seen crossing the Mill Pond Suspension Bridge. In addition, there are several other bridges (#7 and #9 in Figure 8) that provide a pedestrian connection across the Pelican River, including the one (#8 in Figure 8) funded by the Lake Runners Trail Association, a snowmobiling club. A bicycle rack is present at the community's library (#6 in Figure 8). Throughout the community, one can find numerous pelican sculptures created as part of an initiative in 2006 (#10 in Figure 8).

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN MAP

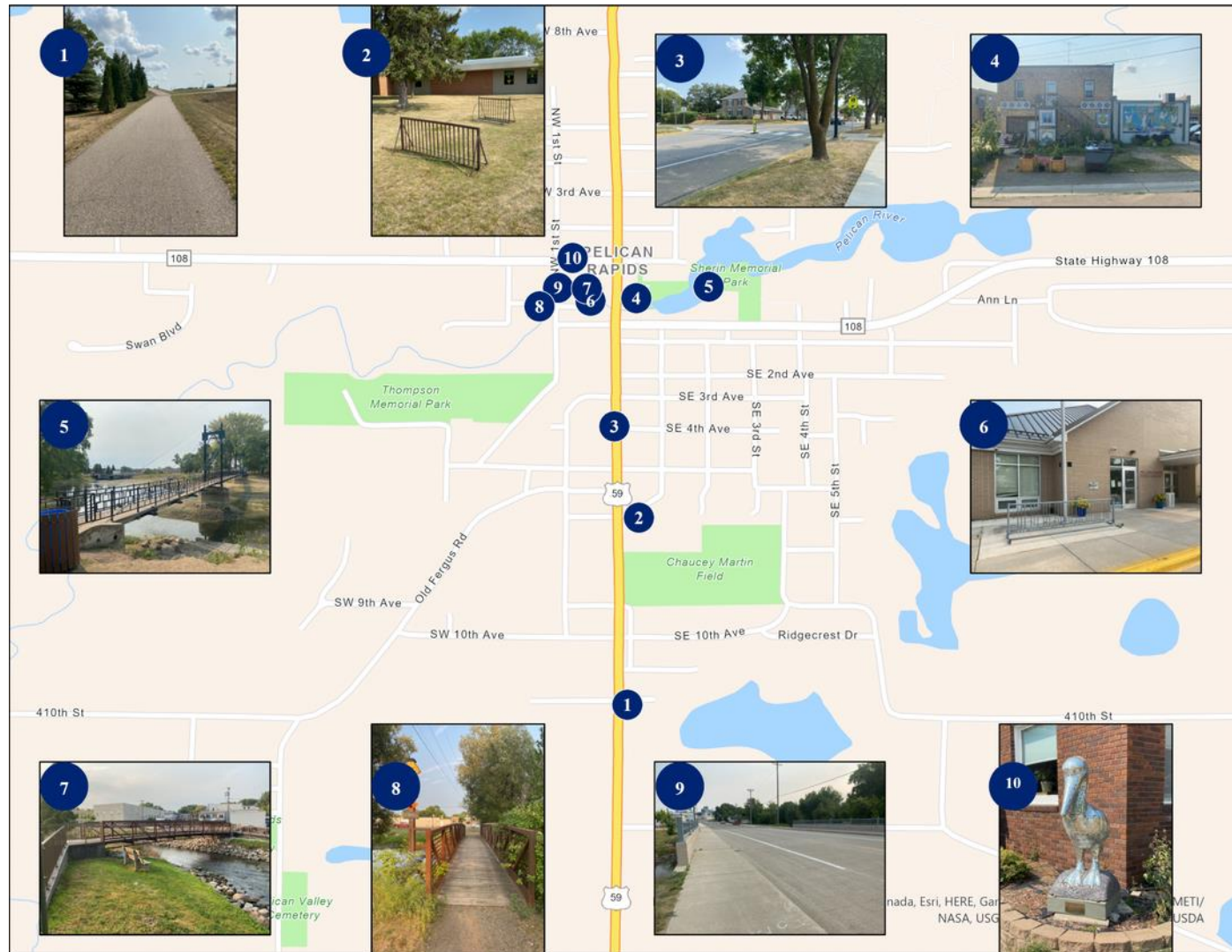


Figure 8: Pelican Rapids Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure Map.

SUPPORTING PROGRAMS FOR BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Pelican Rapids has implemented several programs that support walking and bicycling within the community that were observed while on-site or documented in reports (Table 3).

Table 3: Bicycle and pedestrian supporting programs in case study communities, with those found in Pelican Rapids noted.

Bicycle and/or Pedestrian Supporting Programs in Case Study Communities	Presence in Pelican Rapids
Demonstration/Pilot Projects	X
Art Walks/Historical Walk/Children's Walk/Health Walk	X
Sculpture(s)/Statue(s)	X
Mural(s)	X
Little Free Library	X

A Little Free Library modeled after the local Faith Lutheran Church can be found in front of the building (Figure 9).

In the past, the local police department had offered bicycle rodeos, where children were taught how to ride a bicycle.

As a part of the upcoming US59/MN108 Complete Streets project, the Minnesota Department of Transportation provided a demonstration of what changes to the parking space width and roadway may look like.

Locals also report an informal offering by park board members to assist with repairing bicycles. The support was originally offered behind a hardware store and has evolved to being offered in various neighborhoods within the community. This change was brought about by realizing that the assistance may be better used when it was brought to those who may need it. This assistance is offered once a month. This initiative was reportedly the result of concern of community members in ensuring that children were riding on safe bicycles and reportedly because the volunteers love bicycling.

Three committees have been present at some point within the community: a Project Advisory Committee for the US59/Hwy 108 MnDOT project, the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Advisory Committee, and the City of Pelican Rapids Park Board. The Park Board committee appears to be the only sustained committee. It is leading the development of the trailhead facility within the old senior center located in the core of the community (108 Midway Avenue).



Figure 9: A Little Free Library, located at and designed to look like the Faith Lutheran Church.

A neighboring community had reportedly donated approximately fifty bikes to the children of Pelican Rapids from a local civic group.

PartnerSHIP 4 Health facilitated Pelican Rapids' application to become a Bicycle Friendly Community through the League of American Bicyclists in the fall of 2020. They were notified in December of 2020 that they received an honorable mention. PartnerSHIP 4 Health hopes to help facilitate a future application once the Minnesota Department of Transportation US59 and MN108 project and the Pelican Rapids to Perham trail have been completed.

BIKEABLE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

A Bikeable Community Workshop was held in Pelican Rapids in April of 2019. As part of the workshop, participants bicycled within the community. An outcome of the Bikeable Community Workshop was enthusiasm about establishing a trailhead where the senior center had previously been located (108 Midway Avenue). It also spurred the development of the community's bicycle and pedestrian plan, as well as an interest in incorporating Complete Streets within the US59/MN108 project.

PARTNERSHIPS TO PLAN & IMPLEMENT BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

The future has many opportunities for Pelican Rapids, in part because there are many enthusiastic partners working to support the community's interests in making it more walkable and bikeable. The City of Pelican Rapids has leveraged support from Otter Tail County, the West Central Initiative, PartnerSHIP 4 Health, and Sanford Health Pelican Rapids Clinic.

PartnerSHIP 4 Health is funded by the Minnesota Department of Health. The local representative that has been assisting Pelican Rapids is employed by neighboring Clay County. In addition to supporting Pelican Rapids, this individual assists other communities within Otter Tail, Clay, Becker, and Wilkin Counties. PartnerSHIP 4 Health can provide funding for minor infrastructure, like bicycle racks and bicycle maintenance stations.

Otter Tail County is taking a lead in developing the trails that connect amenities (Maplewood State Park) and communities throughout the county. In addition, as the Minnesota Department of Transportation does not allow communities of fewer than 10,000 people to administer their own Transportation Alternatives (TA) grants, Otter Tail County has been willing to serve as the local sponsor. Otter Tail County has developed two plans, a county-wide trails master plan and a Perham to Pelican Rapids master plan, both of which reportedly focus on the needs of the Pelican Rapids community.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation's District 4 has been offering a lot of support in implementing a Complete Streets project for US59 and MN108. However, they have been

experiencing some pushback from some locals. Advocates for bicycling and walking facilities in the community acknowledge that locals are resistant to change. They suggest that the state support locals who are advocates for bicycling. It is important to understand context. An example that was given by locals was the way the changes were depicted. A mock-up by a consultant working on behalf of MnDOT had placed Priuses next to the bicycle path. The local indicated that since pick-ups were primarily driven by locals, the mock-up was out of place. The local suggested that such diagrams be shared with local advocates prior to distributing to the broader community, where some resistance might be met.

The West Central Initiative is a regional development commission. In addition to supporting the Minnesota Department of Transportation with allocation of the Transportation Alternatives funding, the regional commission has been working with communities to develop Safe Routes to School plans. The West Central Initiative notes that a benefit of having the regional commission support the local plans is that they are invested in the communities. They can provide follow-up after the plan is complete to continue to move the recommendations forward. As a specific example, the West Central Initiative notes that they continue to collect annual student travel tallies.

FUNDING FOR BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

The City of Pelican Rapids reports historically preferring to fund projects on their own, like the Mill Pond Suspension Bridge. They also report that previous grant applications were not always successful, and it resulted in them giving up. This has changed in recent years where they have been successful, leveraging grant writing assistance from PartnerSHIP 4 Health and the West Central Initiative.

Thus far, the city has primarily focused on replacing sidewalks that are in poor disrepair as a part of their capital improvement planning. They have not prioritized expanding the sidewalk network on the local streets using such funds.

In 2008, the Minnesota Department of Transportation awarded Pelican Rapids \$20,000 through Safe Routes to School funding for a non-infrastructure project. The award resulted in the development of a Safe Routes to School plan for the community.

The City of Pelican Rapids has leveraged the Local Foods, Local Places grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide fresh produce in the core of the community. As a part of the plan, the USDA will develop a concept for the redesign of the old senior citizens club building, which will include restroom facilities for bicyclists.

Funding for the Perham to Pelican Rapids Regional Trail Master Plan was provided by Otter Tail County, the City of Perham, the City of Pelican Rapids, and PartnerSHIP 4 Health.

For the upcoming Complete Streets project that is led by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), at a \$20 million cost, as a result of improvements to be made to

US59 and MN108, the City of Pelican Rapids is going to pay for their portion of the project (city water and sanitary improvements costing approximately \$6 million) by using bonds. More recently, working cooperatively with MnDOT and engaging the PartnerSHIP 4 Health for grant writing assistance, the City of Pelican Rapids has successfully been awarded, \$550,000 from the Transportation Alternatives (TA) program to pay for the active transportation aspects of the US59/MN108 project. The TA program is very competitive, as it has limited funds when compared with the demand. Therefore, this award is a significant success for the community.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was in the process of removing the Pelican Rapids Dam in 2021. The top of the dam previously served as a walkway over the river. As a result, the community has applied for a DNR Outdoor Recreation grant to build a bridge where the dam had previously been located.

The 2021 Pelican Rapids Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was conducted with funding from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, Center for Prevention funding.

LESSONS LEARNED

Pelican Rapids has found both successes and challenges in working to create a more walkable and bikeable community.

Previously, the community had primarily taken on projects that they could pay for. The community found that this often allowed for lower costs. In addition, because of applying for but not receiving some funding in the past, the community knew that grant applications require a lot of time with limited success. However, more recently the community has found significant success leveraging assistance from local entities with grant writing, where they have received funding to create the Local Food, Local Places plan and to obtain TA funding.

The community needed to replace failing storm and sanitary sewer. They were aware that MnDOT was going to resurface US59 and MN108. As a result, they approached the state to try to integrate the two projects. Being able to leverage multiple needs (fixing underground infrastructure, fixing roadway surfaces, addressing the need for improved facilities for walking and bicycling) at one time, the community has been able to leverage state and federal grants while addressing needs identified for the community (addressing the more than ten percent of the community members who walk to work).

One recommendation provided by community members is that while support from regional and state entities is appreciated, they recommend that regional and state entities leverage locals that are supportive of such efforts to ensure that local context is better understood (i.e. Prius versus pick-up truck mock-ups).

THE FUTURE OF BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE COMMUNITY

The Minnesota Department of Transportation is planning to rehabilitate the state roads (US59/MN108) running through the core of the community, with a Complete Streets design. This is expected to happen within the next three to five years. From a public perspective, some residents are in favor of the proposed changes while some are vehemently opposed. As a part of this project, the gap in connectivity from the core of the community, north along US59, to the turkey processing plant would be addressed. Locals describe this upcoming project as a huge improvement for people walking and bicycling in the community. As an example, the project will help address the mobility needs of community members, which are currently not being met, as demonstrated by the social path that exists on US59 near the turkey processing plant (Figure 10).



Figure 10: A social path on US59.

Tucked off the main street is a building that previously served as a senior center. It was recently reallocated to the city, which plans to use the space to continue to support its Meals on Wheels program while also redeveloping a portion of the building to serve as restrooms for bicyclists and pedestrians as part of a Pelican Rapids to Perham trailhead. The community is working with PartnerSHIP 4 Health to identify grants to create signage identifying the trailhead as well as to install a bike repair station and bicycle racks.

Otter Tail County has developed a plan which would create an off-road multi-use trail that travels from Pelican Rapids through the Maplewood State Park to Perham, Minnesota. A piece of the section between Perham and Maplewood State Park has already begun. In August of 2021, the State of Minnesota funded the portion of the trail from Pelican Rapids to Maplewood State Park. Construction is expected to take place in 2022.

With the current Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Plan being more than ten years old the West Central Initiative hopes that the community will apply to update the plan soon. The recently completed bicycle and pedestrian plan for the community also expressed the need for a SRTS update. It is expected that an updated SRTS plan would identify additional project needs to support walking and bicycling within the community. However, the existing SRTS plan provides value in that it had documented counts of people walking and bicycling. Being able to count those walking and bicycling is currently a challenge across the U.S.

In the more distant future, and after the numerous proposed investments are implemented within and beyond the community, there is an interest in again applying to be designated as a Bicycle Friendly Community.

KEY POINTS

The following are key points identified as a result of this case study:

1. Change comes slowly: not every resident within Pelican Rapids is excited about creating a more walkable and bikeable community. However, the continued discussion and engagement will result in infrastructure that balances the collective. This can be demonstrated by little details that matter, like showing a pick-up truck instead of a Prius in mock-ups of proposed changes.
2. Accept assistance from those willing to help: the community has found success by working with regional partners to apply for grant funding.
3. Thinking about bicycling and walking in terms of health can leverage additional programs and sources of funding. Partnering with PartnerSHIP 4 Health has allowed the city to leverage their grant writing support as well as smaller grants for bicycle racks. Local Foods, Local Places funding has enabled them to receive support for architecture design modifications of the old senior center.
4. There are benefits to community-implemented projects: the community reports that with funding from federal sources, the cost for a future bridge installation is astronomical compared with some of the facilities that have been driven and implemented by the community (i.e. the Mill Pond Suspension Bridge).

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES TO APPLY IN OTHER SMALL COMMUNITIES

The Minnesota Department of Transportation Complete Streets project originated with MnDOT indicating that they were planning to repave, and the community responded to MnDOT that they would like to concurrently address aging water and sewer infrastructure. However, in addition to addressing this aging infrastructure, the community saw the benefit of concurrently making the community more walkable and bikeable by improving the sidewalks, crossings, and where possible, adding bicycling infrastructure. Therefore, the Pelican Rapids example would suggest integrating provisions for bicycles and pedestrians when other infrastructure improvements are needed.

Pelican Rapids will continue to improve their pedestrian and bicycle network. To date, a lot of the initiatives that are expected to result in significant benefits to the walking and bicycling network in the community are the result of partnerships with the state department of transportation, the regional planning entity, the county, and with advocates

looking at the benefits of walking and bicycling from a health lens. As a result, a successful strategy that Pelican Rapids has employed is to engage and allow partners to help them.

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