

West Michigan

RTT- 2010 CAMPAIGN FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Connecting People and Communities

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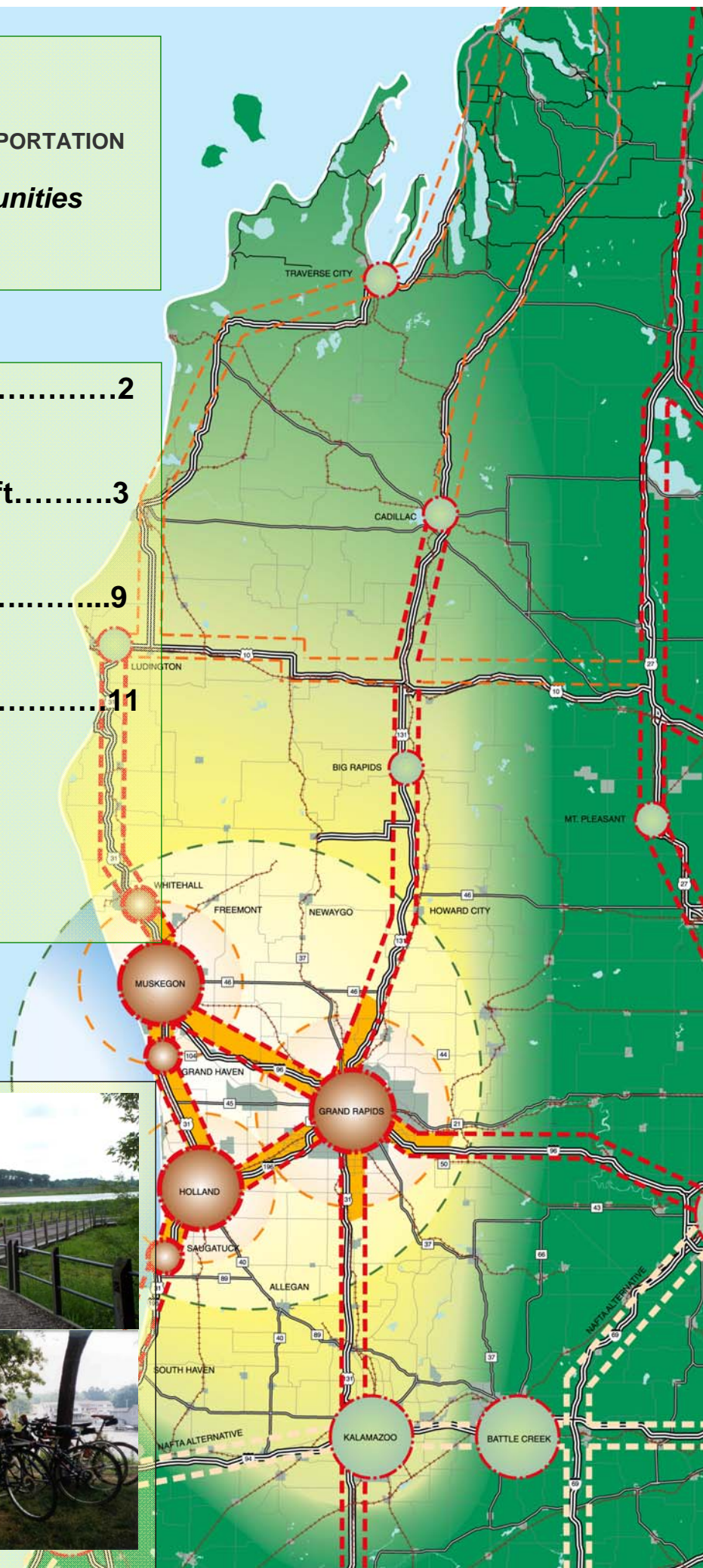
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THE GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN METROPOLITAN AREA

RTT- 2010 CAMPAIGN FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Connecting People and Communities

The Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area is one of the fastest growing metropolitan regions in the Midwest. Much of our growth is due to our amenities such as aesthetic beauty, high quality of life, strong family values, a diverse economic base, and a reasonable cost of living. These great amenities are the reason Grand Rapids has become one of the Upper Midwest premium destinations. Many people are coming to Grand Rapids to work, live, learn, attend conventions, visit world headquarters of the top three office furniture companies, enjoy festivals and events and for the exceptional quality of life.

The City of Grand Rapids is a main hub for West Michigan, with its strong employment opportunities, large and intimate entertainment venues, and excellent educational opportunities at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Community College and Kendall School of design. Grand Rapids is also the largest population center for the approximately 1.3 million people who live in West Michigan. It is home to an internationally acclaimed medical research facility, the Van Andel Institute, four hospital complexes and supporting facilities, The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, Gerald R. Ford International Airport and home to the first LEED certified art museum in the United States. Grand Rapids also has the highest number of LEED certified buildings per capita in the U.S.



Van Andel Institute
Medical Research & Education

With popularity and growth come opportunities as well as challenges. Like many large cities in the United States, over the past 10 years Grand Rapids has experienced major transformations from industrial factories and warehouses to vibrant and active centers for live, work and play. Also like many other communities Grand Rapids faces challenges dealing with traffic, parking and safe pedestrian movement.

The provision of safe and efficient multi-modal transportation facilities are a part of improving the quality of life for an area, and many studies have shown that the more transportation options available to a community, the higher the level of quality of life that community enjoys. Grand Rapids has quality multi-modal transportation opportunities currently available, but there is ample room for improvement, in mass transit, bicycle access and safety, pedestrian movement, access for persons with disabilities, and creating mode shifts from cars to cleaner and healthier modes of transportation.



Additionally planners in the Greater Grand Rapids area recognize the economic benefit the development of a comprehensive network of connected trails, sidewalks, bike paths and safer routes for pedestrian movement. By increasing the number of methods for people to reach destinations we will see an increase in opportunities for entrepreneurial initiatives. Bicycle sales and repairs and related accessories have

increased significantly. Local manufactures of bicycle related products (bike lockers, bike racks) are already experiencing substantial increases in orders. Further benefits include increased access to tourist destinations and linkages to a 600 mile network of trails being connected throughout eight counties including a network traversing the shoreline of Lake Michigan in three counties. Tourism brings approximately 60 Billion dollars annually to the State of Michigan. This is third only to Automotive at 80 Billion and Farming at 63 Billion.

The convergence of non-motorized and transportation “mode shift” initiatives by MPO’s, Non-profits, Governments and individuals in West Michigan is well timed. As the urgent need for alternatives to our “historic” modes of travel become more prevalent, Grand Rapids and the surrounding communities are well positioned to address and implement solutions to establish West Michigan as a great place to Live, Learn, Work and Play.

The RTT – 2010 Campaign for Active Transportation has brought together 23 interest groups, an MPO, Non-profits, planners, business owners and government representatives to share local projects and to develop a plan to connect and fill gaps for an additional 136.92 miles of paths, trails, sidewalks and bridges in the Greater Grand Rapids area. The committee is excited for opportunities to leverage “Federal Funding” with local and state public funds with private sector investors and partners. One of the key trail organizations, The West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition, already raised \$6,000,000 during their 2007 capital campaign for trails.

Additionally, West Michigan is reaping tremendous benefits by participating in the RTT 2010 Campaign process by having the first comprehensive compilation, cataloging and storage of nearly the entire Greater Grand Rapids network of regional trails, paths, and sidewalks.

The following section illustrates the progress our RTT-2010 partners and committee members are making in infrastructure and programming to create a mode shift from automobile trips to walking and biking.

SUPPORTING MODE-SHIFTS THROUGH INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING

GRAND VALLEY METRO COUNCIL (GVMC)-MPO NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Our region’s MPO, The Grand Valley Metro Council, (GVMC) which includes the City of Grand Rapids and 13 other communities, is in the process of updating their non-motorized transportation plan and they are gearing this plan specifically to the non-motorized transportation network for the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area. The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan will be a component to the area’s Year 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan. *The Long-Range Transportation Plan’s purpose is to explore and analyze conditions of all modes of transportation in the area, of which, nonmotorized transportation is an integral part.*

The provision of safe and efficient multi-modal transportation facilities are a part of improving the quality of life for an area and many studies have shown that the more transportation options available to a community, the higher the level of quality of life that community enjoys. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are an integral part of the transportation network and GVMC’s plan has a serious emphasis on a non-motorized transportation network for the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area.

Representatives from City of Grand Rapids Planning and Parks & Recreation Departments, Kent County Parks and Road Commission, regional trail organizations, businesses, non-profits, disability advocates, and planners and administrators are pursuing some of the following actions:

- Promoting the benefits of non-motorized transportation as a healthy and efficient form of transportation.
- Providing an integrated network of non-motorized facilities for efficient travel.
- Identifying breaks in the current networks that discourage connectivity.
- Identifying projects that will contribute to the connectivity of the non-motorized network.

- Encourage the use of safe and consistent construction/design standards for new nonmotorized facility development while continuing to maintain current non-motorized facilities according to safe standards. All facilities shall conform to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Provide a way for non-motorized interests to bring their priorities and concerns to area transportation decision-makers.
- Continue to update the area inventory of existing and planned pedestrian/bicycle facilities.
- Work toward the establishment of a regional non-motorized network that connects all non-motorized facilities and connects those facilities with other modes of transportation.

PLANNING IN THE CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell is one of the nation's leading proponents for green community initiatives including LEED Construction: new, existing, schools, neighborhoods and reducing the City of Grand Rapids' carbon footprint. Mayor Heartwell is nationally recognized as a leader in sustainability, stewardship of resources and collaboration and is a regular keynote speaker at local, regional and national events based on "green" initiatives.

In addition to GVMC non-motorized transportation plan, Grand Rapids is updating their Master Plan and Recreation Plan. They are using some very interesting techniques and methods to gather information from citizens.

With the strong leadership and support of Mayor Heartwell, *"The Green Grand Rapids"* process is underway to engage citizens in the creation of a new master plan and updated zoning ordinances. The City is required to update its Master Plan and Parks and Recreation Plan every five years. Instead of passing a short bureaucratic resolution to update the plans, the City of Grand Rapids Planning Department and Parks and Recreation Department view this as an opportunity to initiate a citywide green infrastructure master planning process called *Green Grand Rapids* that will focus on quality of life and the physical development of community infrastructure as it relates to greening, connectivity, natural systems, the Grand River, recreation and public health.

Grand Rapids is building community by connecting residences, retail and commercial centers, educational facilities, recreation areas, and other assets via trails. Highest concentration of opportunities to connect would be in densely populated areas.

Overall Scope of "Green Grand Rapids":

- Greening and green space: parks; streetscape; public space; rooftops; publicly accessible private space; trees; beautification
- Planning department is already requiring that bike parking be included in all new projects.
- Connectivity: transit; trails; sidewalks; shared use roadways and bike lanes
- Grand River: river restoration; riverwalk extensions; recreation opportunities; floodway mitigation
- Recreation: access; programming (with an emphasis on health); community gardens; farmers markets
- Financial sustainability for capital investments, operations and maintenance
- Partnerships: joint use facilities (GR Public Schools); services; funding; implementation strategies
- Provide safe places free of traffic for children and others to learn bicycling skills.
 - Neighborhood parks, paths, open space and amenities near residential development
 - Do the paths traverse properties near schools, parks, gathering places?
 - Improve equity by providing accessible transportation choices for children, the elderly, disabled populations and low-income groups.
 - GRATA buses with bike carriers, GRATA buses using alternative fuels
 - Walkable, accessible neighborhoods- Future D&W downtown location, bike racks, bike lanes.

In addition to the public sector support there is a clear demonstration of strong public and private collaboration in West Michigan. Four Grand Rapids based foundations and the Downtown Development Authority contributed over 70% of the funding for the \$383,000 Green Grand Rapids Initiative.

KENT COUNTY PARKS

Kent County, through its Parks Department, has long been a strong supporter of interconnected trailways. By building lasting partnerships with local municipalities and community organizations, Kent County Parks has become a proven leader in the trail movement in the county and beyond.

Starting in the mid to late 1980's, Kent County Parks played a key role in development of Kent Trails, the region's first multi-use trail. Kent Trails is a 15 mile, non-motorized trail resulting from a collaborative planning effort between the Kent County Parks Department, the cities of Grand Rapids, Grandville, Walker and Wyoming and Byron Township. Kent County Parks is the managing agency among the six units of government and is responsible for the design, development and maintenance of the trail. Relying on a patchwork of former rail corridors, easements and other public rights of way, the trail crosses multiple jurisdictions and has become a model for trail development in the region.

In addition to Kent Trails, Kent County Parks has been involved from the very first meetings in the development of the 90-mile White Pine Trail State Park, the 25-mile Musketawa Trail, and the 42-mile Paul Henry Thornapple Trail. Each of these multi-use trails is aligned as a spoke approaching the fringes of Grand Rapids from outlying communities and counties. As such, these trails provide a bank of outstanding resources that is ripe for the development of critical connections and enhancements to promote transportation mode shifts.

Kent County Parks is already working to improve the value and utility of these trail resources to the community. The Department is leading in the development of lateral connections between the major trails and finding the means to make such projects happen. Two HPP projects currently under development include the M-6 Trail and the Four Mile Trail connector. Together, these new trails will link four of the major regional trails together.



Path contiguous to a stretch of M-6 that carries approximately 37,000 cars daily.

KENT COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION

The Kent County Road Commission (KCRC), as a component of agency's overall mission, promotes a cooperative role with local governments to implement improvements to the county's multi-modal transportation system. Examples of this effort and participation include seeking out and sponsoring Transportation Enhancement Program projects, providing engineering services and technical oversight to local communities in pursuit of improving pedestrian and non-motorized transportation, and participating in regional non-motorized planning efforts at the MPO level.

As in many cases throughout the Midwest, Michigan township governments are restricted from receiving state or federal transportation funding assistance for local initiatives. Similarly, the county parks department is also restricted from receiving direct TEA funding for transportation programs. Therefore, KCRC acts as an agent on behalf of township and county government to manage programming and construction of shared-use pathways, bridges, drainage structures, and streetscapes. Frequently, these non-motorized facilities are permitted within county right-of-way, which reduces the cost of property acquisition. This represents a strategic relationship that has proved successful in improving, not only the transportation networks of the county, but the overall quality of life for residents, business, and visitors to Kent County. Key examples over the past decade include:

- Streetscapes have been implemented on over 6 miles of urban county roadways; these projects have improved pedestrian access and safety, as well as assisted the business climate along some of the county's busiest corridors. This represents over \$3 million in federal, state, and local investment.

- KCRC has sponsored construction of over 25 miles of shared-use pathways, linking residential areas to major centers of employment and recreation. In addition to the existing network, more than 15 miles of shared-use pathways within county right-of-way are in the planning or design stage. These projects represent over \$10 million in federal, state, local, and private investment.
- Through strategic relationships with property owners, KCRC Engineering has acquired numerous acres of land for construction of trailheads, pathways, street furniture, and pedestrian lighting. KCRC also has a proven track record in working with railroad organizations, MDEQ, MDNR, and private utilities for permitting, easements, and property acquisition.

ADDITIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORTING EFFORTS

In an effort to make West Michigan a great place to “live, learn, work and play” some very unique partnerships and initiatives have been developed among the region’s nonmotorized interest groups. These partnerships and collaborations are bringing representatives together from 219 governmental bodies in 8 counties to work on economic development, green infrastructure and work-force development among other issues. Grand Rapids is in the center of the 8 counties, is a hub for West Michigan and is therefore a logical location for connecting a multitude of nonmotorized initiatives.

THE WEST MICHIGAN STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

The Alliance’s **vision** is to *be a catalyst for regional collaboration*. Its **mission** is to *make West Michigan the best place to live, learn, work and play in the Midwest*.

The West Michigan Strategic Alliance (WMSA) was formally organized in 2000 by a diverse group of community leaders concerned about the effects of rapid population growth and urbanization on the quality of life in the greater Grand Rapids, Holland and Muskegon region. Over the next two-years, WMSA brought together hundreds of businesses, governmental units and institutions in our seven county (Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Muskegon, Newaygo and Ottawa) region to address common issues and recognize the benefits of adopting an interdependent plan for collaborative action.

In 2002, WMSA published *The Common Framework: Information and Maps for Decision Makers*. *The Common Framework* identified six Priorities for Regional Collaboration (PRC) and has been the foundation for many partnerships fostered by WMSA to date. As of May 2008 WMSA is assisting with collaboration in 8 in West Michigan counties. They focus on:

- Creating a Regional Mindset
- Fostering a Prosperous Economy
- Ensuring a Sustainable Environment
- Developing a Triplex (Muskegon, Grand Rapids, Holland) Growth Strategy
- Revitalizing our Urban Centers
- Strengthening Community through Diversity

WMSA-GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVE (GITF)

In 2003, the Green Infrastructure Task Force, resulting from the work on the “Common Framework” was convened to address WMSA’s priority to “Ensure a sustainable environment”. Their charge was to “construct a 25-year vision for permanent protection of open space in West Michigan”. Members of the GITF worked for 10 months holding local listening sessions, engaging the Governor’s Land Use Leadership Council and constructing the Natural Connections Map, which illustrates a “first cut” at identifying our region’s green infrastructure network of forests, wetlands, farmland, trails, greenways, rivers, lakes, shoreline and protected land.

In November 2003, the summary report, entitled West Michigan Green Infrastructure Strategy was published. Six regional priorities were presented to guide the region's Green Infrastructure Initiatives:

- Protect critical areas of **biodiversity**
- Protect **shoreline and dune** ecosystems
- Implement **watershed management** and planning
- Promote regional **farmland preservation**
- Develop a regional **trails and greenways** network
- Integrate green infrastructure into developed and **urban** settings

Like the Alliance, the Green Infrastructure Initiative's geographic focus area includes eight counties: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo and Ottawa. A Leadership Council consisting of representatives in local government, education, business, NPO's and conservancies assists in coordinating outreach strategies designed to impact local land-use planning.

WEST MICHIGAN TRAILS AND GREENWAYS COALITION - WMTGC

The WMTGC started in 2000. Their focus is on improvement of quality of life achieved through natural resources conservation and community development. The goals of the program include developing sustainable communities, encouraging prudent development, and managing and conserving natural resources.

By 2002 over 40 organizations were working on completing an existing network and planning for connections of over 600 miles of trails throughout West Michigan.

The WMTGC is dedicated to: *Creating important community connections by helping local trailway groups in the planning and development of their trails and greenways. They help to create new trailways groups as new trails are established, establish new funding to accelerate land acquisition and trail development, and they work with local communities to gather input for the development of the Fred Meijer West Michigan Trailway Network.*

In 2007 WMTGC completed the first Phase of a multi-year fund development campaign by raising over \$6,000,000. The goal for phase one is to build 150 miles of new trails in West Michigan. This money will also be used to leverage \$6,000,000 in local funds, \$21,000,000 in state and federal grants, creating a total investment of \$27,000,000.

THE RAPID – TRANSIT SYSTEM

The RAPID is aggressively pursuing ways to improve transportation services throughout the Greater Grand Rapids area, improve the quality of their fleet and to improve their facilities.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

The RAPID/GR was recently notified by the Federal Transportation Administration that the region has been authorized to enter in project development of a bus rapid transit system. This is the first "New Starts", high capacity public transit system in Michigan and will traverse 9 miles and multiple jurisdictions that serve the area with the highest commuter volume in the region. The BRT will serve hospitals in and around downtown, research facilities on "Medical Mile", five college campuses, and downtown venues such as DeVos Place and VanAndel Arena.

Rapid Transit All Electric Transit Streetcar System Analysis/Feasibility Study 2007/2008

"We believe a streetcar system downtown would be one of the first steps toward changing the paradigm of one person to one car," according to Peter Varga, director of the RAPID.

Hybrid Electric Buses

On April 23, 2007, The Rapid introduced its new hybrid-electric buses into the fleet and will include a total of 5 buses by the end of 2008.

Environmental Responsibility

In June 2006, The Rapid began using ultra-low sulfur diesel (ULSD). They have also installed bike racks on all buses.

Community Sustainability Partnership

The Rapid is a member of the Community Sustainability Partnership, a diverse network of community organizations in West Michigan that embrace and support sustainability guiding principles in their planning and operations and are striving to make a positive impact in our community.

LEED Certification

Rapid Central Station is the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified transit facility in the country. Central Station represents cutting-edge technology paired with solid design to provide passengers with a transfer hub that is both functionally sound and environmentally responsible.

RAPID WHEELMEN-BIKE CLUB

The club was organized in April, 1970 in the back room of a local Schwinn Cyclery then located in Grand Rapids. Early activities centered around club rides, meetings, picnics and camp-outs. The club hosted its first invitational ride the "One Hundred Grand" in 1973. 1973 was also the year of the first Arab oil embargo which led to a shortage of bicycles and a boost in membership.

Over the years the club has branched out into racing, mountain biking, additional invitational rides, safety education programs, advocacy for cyclists' rights and facilities, and fund raising for charities. The club dedicates its activities to all cyclists and continues to focus towards future activities and new trends in cycling.

DISABILITIES ADVOCATES OF KENT COUNTY (DAKC)

DAKC is the federally recognized center for independent living in the Grand Rapids area. Its mission is to *"advocate, assist, educate and inform on independent living options for persons with disabilities and to create a barrier-free society for all."*

DAKC exists for people with and without disabilities.

DAKC are who they serve--69% of board and 73% of staff and most of their volunteers are persons with disabilities.

DAKC are cross-disability serving those with physical, cognitive, and mental challenges

Focus on giving the person with a disability all the options and empowering them to make the decisions that impact their lives, just as those without disabilities.

Having representation from DAKC provides us with resources for broad community planning. Even though the majority of our plan is geared towards traditional commuters, DAKC helps us understand the challenges that all people face when they encounter unsafe or possibly poorly planned locations where people and traffic intersect. DAKC is also assisting us in identifying gaps between transportation systems, i.e. paths and sidewalks that don't connect to bus or other transit and inadequate facilities for transit, like bus shelters or proper signage.

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION

In order to expedite the identification and selection of projects for the RTT 2010 proposal, all committee members were presented the concept of developing a plan that would help Grand Rapids create a significant mode shift from automobile trips to walking and biking. Each member was presented with a draft plan illustrating an abundant network of trails, paths and sidewalks in the Greater Grand Rapids area. Along with this illustration it was pointed out that although the area has an excellent system, many of the individual jurisdictional networks were not connected to contiguous systems.

An evaluation process was developed to guide committee members through the selection of projects. If projects met all three tiers they were given "highest priority".

Tier 1

- Mode Shift:** Greatest potential to reduce traffic congestion by providing a transportation alternative?
- Connectivity:** Will the project provide regional connections/access to major employment, business, shopping, civic and education centers?
- Continuity:** Does the project provide a missing link in the system or eliminate a barrier that inhibits use?
- Safety:** Does the project mitigate a known safety hazard? Does the project design minimize conflict points between vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles?
- Joint Construction:** Can the project be piggybacked with other major projects, such as a road widening or land development project?

Tier 2

- High Use:** Will the project result in a likelihood of use (i.e. satisfy demand, expand existing use)?
- Local Support:** Is there strong public support for the project or is the project supported by two or more jurisdictions?
- Feasibility:** Is the project ready to be implemented (i.e. right-of-way acquired, preliminary engineering completed)?
- Cost Effectiveness:** Does the project represent a good value for the investment?
- ADA Access:** Does the project provide improvements for persons with disabilities?

Tier 3

- Social Equity:** Does the project provide transportation for a disadvantaged/underserved community?
- Aesthetics:** Does the project include a landscape feature or provide access to a scenic feature?
- Facility Type:** Does the project provide for a continuous, uninterrupted facility type (i.e. paved, unpaved, bike lane)?

PROJECT ILLUSTRATIONS AND BUDGETS

PROJECT ESTIMATES

The plans being submitted are estimated at \$50,000,000 for the 2010 Campaign for Active Transportation. This is part of an overall plan in the Greater Grand Rapids Area estimated at \$97,505,000

ILLUSTRATIONS ATTACHED

1. **FLOW ANALYSIS**
This illustrates a regional network approach encompassing in-fill of gaps within urban areas, major connections to recreational trails near suburban populations and connections to employment, educational centers and shopping.
2. **NONMOTORIZED PROJECTS BY TYPE**
This illustrates connectivity and filling gaps in various networks
3. **PROPOSED BICYCLE ROUTE PROJECTS**
4. **PROPOSED BICYCLE LANE PROJECTS**
5. **PROPOSED SHARED USE PATH PROJECTS**
6. **PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE PROJECTS**

PROJECT BUDGETS ATTACHED

7. **PROJECT SHORT LIST BY TYPE**
8. **PROJECT SHORT LIST BY JURISDICTION**

RTT- 2010 CAMPAIGN FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Committee Members

Roger	Belknap	Kent County Road Commission	Transportation Planner
Rae	Bower	Disability Advocates	
Rick	Chapla	The Right Place Inc.	V.P. Urban Redevelopment
Tim	Cochran	City of Wyoming	Planner
Scott	Connors	City of Walker	City Engineer
Andrea	Dewey	Grand Valley Metro Council	Planner
Jim	Ferro	Ada Township	Planning Director
Dale	Fitz	City of Grand Rapids	Planning Department
Ken	Freestone	West Michigan Strategic Alliance	Project Mgr-Green Infrastructure
David	Heyboer	Friends of the White Pine Trail	Vice Chairman
Steve	Kepley	City of Kentwood	Director-Engineering/Inspections
Travis	Mabry	City of Walker	Staff Engineer
Carissa	McQuiston	City of Grand Rapids	Traffic Safety
Nick	Monoyios	ITP - The Rapid	Planner
Sharon	Nunnelee	West Michigan Trails/Greenways Coalition	Executive Director
Joe	Pung	City of Kentwood	Assistant Planning Director
Steve	Redmond	Michigan Dept. of Transportation	Transportation Planner
Roger	Sabine	Kent County Parks & Recreation	Director
Norm	Sevensma	West MI Environmental Action Council	Chair Transportation Work Group
Megan	Sharp	Gaines Charter Township	Assistant Planner
Jay	Steffen	City of Grand Rapids	Director of Parks & Recreation
Keith	VanBeek	City of Kentwood	Assistant to the Mayor
Mike	Zonyk	Grand Valley Metro Council	GIS Transportation Planner

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