



## Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning at ARDC

The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) is a leader in the planning of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in Minnesota. Since seeing the emphasis on peds and bikes in 1991's Federal transportation funding bill (ISTEA), ARDC has helped communities in northeast Minnesota to build trails and sidewalks, and has advocated for the inclusion of bike and ped facilities in transportation investment planning. ARDC's planning activities include:

### Enhancement Funding Administration

ARDC is under contract with the Minnesota Department of Transportation District One (Duluth) to solicit eligible projects and recommend Federal funding investments in the category of Transportation Enhancements. Enhancements funding pays 80 percent of the construction costs for projects that include paved bike trails, scenic improvements to roadways, wayside rests, shoulder widening (for walkers), historic transportation facility restoration, and streetscapes (decorative light, benches, sidewalks) on highways. Each year, ARDC solicits project applications from local governments and guides a citizen task force in recommending which projects will receive that year's Federal funding. See [www.nemnatp.org](http://www.nemnatp.org) for more information.

### Trail Planning

ARDC has led Northeast Minnesota's many efforts to build paved, non-motorized trail systems. ARDC led a citizen group in 1999 to plan the Gitchi-Gami State Trail. The Minnesota DNR has taken ownership of that trail, and has about 25 percent of the trail's 84 planned miles completed along the North Shore of Lake Superior. ARDC has also planned major trails in Aitkin County and has assisted in the development of the 132-mile (when completed) Mesabi Trail.

In 2005, ARDC completed a major trail plan for the City of Two Harbors. The City has a vision of having pedestrian and bike connections in every neighborhood of the City, benefiting both residents and tourism. The City's efforts have been buoyed by the support from Congressman James Oberstar, who has secured over \$1 million in trail funding for the community.

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Currently, ARDC is focusing planning efforts on connecting neighborhoods and tourist areas in the Arrowhead Region to the existing trail systems. The St. Louis River Trail will connect the residents of Cloquet, Scanlon, Carlton and the Fond du Lac Reservation-a population of nearly 15,000 people-to the Willard Munger State Trail. The trail has been planned and ARDC has also helped to secure \$1.2 million in construction funds for the connection. ARDC has a grant from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources to identify other needed connections in the region. That process has resulted in five priority trail connection planning processes being underway in Esko, International Falls, Hibbing, Mountain Iron, and Hoyt Lakes.

### Active Living

ARDC has formed a partnership with the Northeast Minnesota Obesity Prevention Project (NEMOPP) to promote Active Living in the Arrowhead Region. Active Living is the idea that people can become more active, and therefore healthier, if they can incorporate physical activity into their daily lives. An example of Active Living would include walking to go to work or shopping instead of driving. ARDC and NEMOPP first completed an Active Living pilot project in the City of Two Harbors in 2005 by engaging the community in a “walkability workshop” which identified physical and policy barriers to walking and biking in that community and recommended ways to eliminate them. The project resulted in the City forming a Trail Commission and developing subdivision policies that require developers to provide connections from their project area to the City’s trail system.

ARDC and NEMOPP have now teamed up to contract with Prevention Minnesota, a Blue Cross, Blue Shield initiative, to assess and engage communities in the Fond du Lac and Grand Portage Reservation and in Carlton, Cook, Lake, and St. Louis Counties in Active Living. The project will determine those communities’ current levels of Active Living and will engage community leaders in Active Living principles. The ultimate goal of the project is to work with the communities to adopt the Active Living principles into their comprehensive plans. ARDC and NEMOPP are being assisted in this effort by Active Living by Design, a non-profit group from North Carolina.

### Safe Routes to School

ARDC has followed Congressman Oberstar’s lead in the Safe Routes to School (SR2S) program. This program analyzes school sites and policies and then recommends ways to get more children to be able to walk to school safely. ARDC has secured Federal funds to complete a plan in Hill

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City, Minnesota and is working with the Esko, International Falls, and Hibbing schools to begin plans in those communities.

### Metropolitan Interstate Council

ARDC houses the Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC), the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin. The MIC receives federal funds every year to do transportation planning in these communities. In recent years those funds have paid for plans addressing Safe Routes to School in Superior and Duluth, a trail connection from the Willard Munger State Trail to Duluth's Lakewalk, and an on-road bicycle route system in Duluth and Superior. The MIC has also advocated for the construction of sidewalks and better curb cuts for people with less mobility.

More information on all of ARDC's current projects can be found at [www.arrowheadplanning.org](http://www.arrowheadplanning.org).