

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

According to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) State Long-Range Transportation Plan 2005-2030, non-motorized transportation is one key element to an integrated transportation system and MDOT is working to best incorporate non-motorized initiatives in future projects. To meet this objective, MDOT has coordinated a state-wide initiative partnering with local regional planning agencies to develop regional investment strategies for non-motorized travel that state and local officials can use when planning for future road construction or re-construction projects. In 2007 the MDOT provided funding to the three planning regions of the Upper Peninsula: the EUP Regional Planning and Development Commission (EUPRPDC), the Central UP Planning & Development Region (CUPPAD) and the Western UP Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR) to collaborate on the Superior Region Non-motorized Transportation Plan & Investment Strategy (Strategy).

The Strategy covers the 15 counties of Michigan's Upper Peninsula including: Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw and Ontonagon in the Western Upper Peninsula; Alger, Delta, Dickinson, Marquette, Menominee and Schoolcraft in the Central Upper Peninsula and Chippewa, Luce and Mackinaw in the Eastern Upper Peninsula. The purpose of the Strategy is to identify non-motorized gaps and serve as a guidance tool that State and local agencies and groups can use to incorporate non-motorized facilities into their future planning and construction. The Strategy supports the goals and objectives of the people of Michigan's Upper Peninsula but also coordinates with the neighboring regions in the northern Lower Peninsula and neighboring northern Wisconsin communities.

The Strategy is a living document that represents the current non-motorized transportation needs in the Superior Region and will need to be updated periodically as sections of roads and trails are built, other potential trail connections are established or the needs of the community change. Complimenting other statewide non-motorized efforts, the Strategy incorporates findings from Connecting Michigan-A Statewide Trailways Vision and Action Plan prepared by the DNR in collaboration with MDOT and Michigan Trails at the Crossroads: A Vision for Connecting Michigan developed by the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance which addresses key issues of funding for trail acquisition, development and maintenance; tourism marketing and promotion; trail design and standards; connections and state interdepartmental cooperation.

1.2 Study Area

The study area includes the entire Upper Peninsula of Michigan with consideration for non-motorized connections into the State of Wisconsin, Lower Michigan and Canada. (See Map 1-1: MI Department of Transportation Superior Region and Upper Peninsula Planning Regions.) Most of the study region is rural containing one-third of the land area of Michigan (16,452 square miles) but just three percent of the population (308,319 persons as of 2008 Census Bureau estimates). The peninsula's largest cities are Marquette, Escanaba, Sault Ste Marie, Menominee, Houghton, and Iron Mountain. It is bounded on the north by Lake Superior, on the east by St. Mary's River, on the south by Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, and on the west by Wisconsin. It has about 1,700 miles of continuous shoreline with the Great Lakes, about 4,300 inland lakes, the largest of which is Lake Gogebic, and 12,000 miles of streams. About one third of the peninsula is government owned recreational forest land, including the Ottawa National Forest and Hiawatha National Forest. The economy has been based on logging, mining and tourism.

By working within each of the planning regions, non-motorized connections have been reviewed by local partners and governments providing the best insight into local conditions and challenges. For the Strategy, the Upper Peninsula was reviewed by planning region as follows:

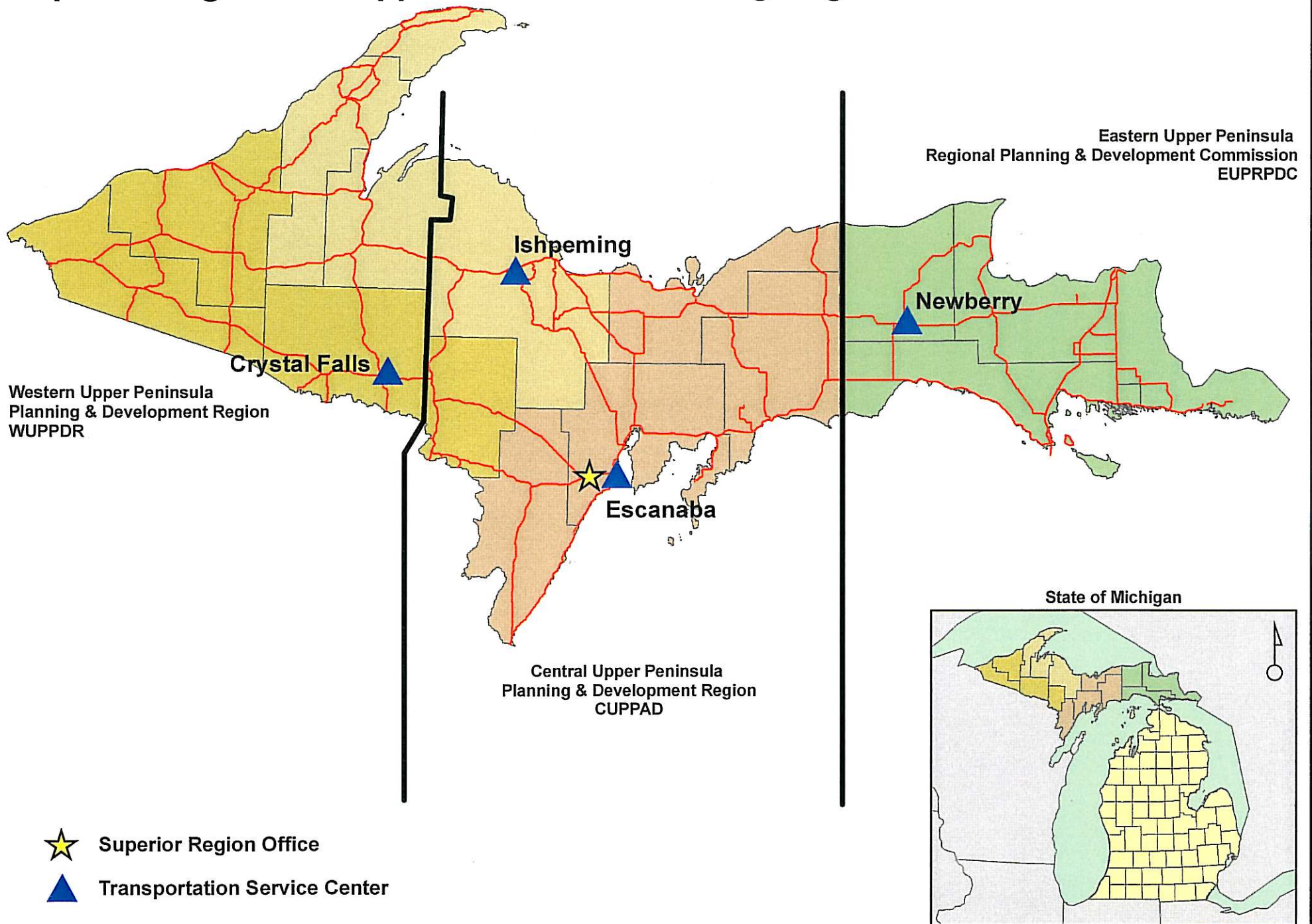
- **Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development Commission (EUPRPDC)** covering the counties of Chippewa, Luce and Mackinaw;
- **Central UP Planning & Development Region (CUPPAD)** encompassing the counties of Alger, Delta, Dickinson, Marquette, Menominee and Schoolcraft;
- **Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR)** including the counties of Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw and Ontonagon

1.3 Facility Types

Non-motorized travel is fast becoming a choice for many people across the country as they are faced with high fuel prices and other environmental issues affecting the planet. Non-motorized facilities can be grouped in two general types: On-Road or Off-Road. According to the MDOT these two groups can be broken down into more specific types and/or uses:

- **On-road Bicycle facilities** can be marked and designated, or marked and undesignated, or simply unmarked. On-road facilities can be as simple as a wider than normal travel lane, or a wide paved shoulder. Narrow, striped lanes, specifically dedicated to bicycle use, are becoming more common on the roadway. However, the provision of dedicated left-turn lanes for bicyclists is still rare.
- **Sidewalks** are the most common pedestrian facility. They might be adjacent to the roadway, or separated from the travel lanes by green space, parking, or a utility and furniture zone. Most sidewalks are included as part of the street right-of-way.
- **Shared-use off-road paths** frequently follow green space, abandoned rail beds, or might be adjacent to natural features like rivers. Due to their separation from vehicular traffic, they provide a popular alternative means of travel for many types of users. Typical

Map 1-1: MI Department of Transportation Superior Region and Upper Peninsula Planning Regions



users of hard surface paths include bicyclists, pedestrians, rollerbladers and wheelchairs. While typical users of unpaved/natural paths are mountain bikers, hikers and equestrians. In the Upper Peninsula, these same paths allow for cross country skiing and snowmobiling in the winter months when there is sufficient snow cover.

- **Side paths** are another type of shared-use off-road facility but are only appropriate in areas with minimal conflicts from driveway access and intersections. These off-road paths are typically designed for two-way traffic and are seldom part of the road infrastructure but often are built in proximity to major road networks.

1.4 Process and Community Participation

The planning process was started in each of the three planning regions with the development of Road and Trail Bicycling Guides beginning in 2005. These map guides were created to provide bicyclists knowledge of the road and trail conditions available in the Upper Peninsula. The Superior Region East, Superior Region Central and Superior Region West were just three of the many regions that created these guides across the State of Michigan. The maps indicate where wide shoulders are (4-foot or wider paved) and general traffic volumes of paved roads, trails and parks, state and federal lands, as well as places of interest. Map insets show the various communities within our region and where points of interests are located. There is also resource information on state parks and trails, tourism agencies, as well as biking and safety considerations. Using the map as a starting point, the next step in creating this Strategy was to evaluate routes and connectivity, followed by the identification of goals, objectives and implementation plans and methods.

As a first step in the planning process, each region developed a Biking and Trail Survey which asked a variety of questions pertaining to the biking and trail interests appropriate to their region. The EUPRP&DC distributed paper copies of the survey at 2008 Home/Spring Shows, to local groups, as well as to bike groups who were touring through the area. A web page was designed and developed for the project. The survey was made available on-line for downloading or to be completed on-line at the website (www.eup-planning.org). News releases were sent to local newspapers throughout the region to provide more information on the project and survey. In the Central region, a community survey was made available on the website (www.cuppad.org) for downloading and also distributed at public meetings to identify public focus and needs. WUPPDR focused on existing needs by surveying the local communities to identify established facilities and recognized gaps in the region.

All three regions then researched and created a database of potentially interested agencies, units of government, individuals, and groups throughout the region. The database of stakeholders includes local officials from village, city, township, county, state and federal government, businesses and groups, as well as individuals. A Trail Summit was held in each region during September of 2008 where the stakeholders were invited to learn more about trail development, different options for non-motorized transportation facilities, projects other

groups are pursuing in neighboring areas, and the MDOT funding programs that are available to assist with trail development.

Staff then met with local communities and groups, recreation committees, government officials, road commissions, state and federal departments within the region to gather information on goals, objectives, desires, and wants. Research of recreation plans and transportation plans was incorporated into the planning process. After the initial “information gathering” local maps were generated showing existing facilities and proposed future trail initiatives.

Several workshops were set up across the regions with invitations sent out to stakeholders. These workshops were announced in the local media asking for public input. At the workshops the attendees were asked to review the maps and give input on route corridors and non-motorized facility needs. They were instructed to look at connections with major facilities, connections to recreation areas, and connections between population centers. The recommendations and ideas gathered from the workshops have been incorporated into this plan.

The Strategy lends support and justification for funding requests by local units of government, collaborative partnerships and transportation agencies. In nearly all sources of funding from state and federal programs to foundations and philanthropic organizations, trail projects that are part of a regional trail network and in an adopted regional plan are looked upon in a favorable light. Municipalities and trail advocates should utilize this plan to seek funding support and other assistance in their trail development and improvement efforts. This Strategy will also serve as a guide on where to locate information and resources needed to build non-motorized facilities and help answer questions on implementation, funding and maintenance so that our regional non-motorized system is equitable and sustainable.

1.5 Organization of the Strategy

The following chapters of the Strategy are designed to first provide overviews and analysis in each of the regions, followed by collaborative goals and actions, design considerations, and funding and resources for the entire Superior Region as follows:

- Chapter 2: Eastern Upper Peninsula
- Chapter 3: Central Upper Peninsula
- Chapter 4: Western Upper Peninsula
- Chapter 5: Goals and Actions
- Chapter 6: Design Considerations
- Chapter 7: Funding and Resources