

CHAPTER 1:

Introduction



Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission

The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVRPC) has served the planning needs of the Miami Valley in Southwest Ohio since 1964. MVRPC serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for Greene, Miami, and Montgomery Counties, plus a portion of northern Warren County. MVRPC policies guide agency interactions in many areas including the implementation of project funding, public participation in the planning process, public records retention and access, and non-discrimination.

Founded upon the principles of regional collaboration, cooperation, and consensus building, the MVRPC serves as the common ground where area partners come together to work toward a shared vision across the Region. Together, public and private partners develop and implement innovative and sustainable strategies that enhance the Region's quality of life and economic vitality. The agency's strategic plan guides the implementation of this vision.

The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVRPC), as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Miami Valley Region, is responsible for development of regional plans for surface transportation in the Dayton metropolitan area, and for allocation of federal funding to support implementation of the projects, programs and policies in the regional transportation plans.

The plans take many forms, including:

- » Human Services Transportation Coordination, which fosters communication and coordination among the many public and private entities that provide transportation services to older adults, people with disabilities and low income individuals.
- » Regional Bikeways planning, which envisions a regional network of multi-use paths, along with connecting local routes (both on- and off-street), that form a comprehensive non-motorized transportation system.
- » Transit system planning, conducted by separate agencies in each county that provide reliable public transit services in a variety of forms.
- » Freight planning, which supports truck and rail transport and the growing logistics industry in the Miami Valley.
- » Highway planning, the focus of the MVRPC Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which provides direction for the on-going development and maintenance of arterial roadways in the Miami Valley.

All of the above transportation plan components are included in the LRTP, forming a comprehensive transportation framework for the Region.

Active Transportation Plan

The Regional Active Transportation Plan (AT Plan) for the Miami Valley updates and expands on past planning work for regional bikeways by including, for the first time, examination of walking infrastructure and also how walking and biking infrastructure serves residents accessing public transit. It is the intent of this plan to study the connectivity and accessibility of infrastructure supporting non-motorized modes and to recommend projects, policies and approaches to develop a system of facilities that achieve the AT Plan Vision:



Active Transportation Plan Vision:

The Miami Valley's Active Transportation network provides safe and equitable walking, biking and transit connections which enhance access to opportunity, well-being, environmental benefits, and quality of life for all.

The inclusion of pedestrian infrastructure in the AT Plan broadens the populations directly served by the outcomes of this plan. The previous bikeway plans served only individuals who ride bicycles. The AT Plan serves everyone, because virtually all trips, even those primarily taken in a private automobile, will include walking.

Increasingly in medium and large cities, a new technology is available to the public for making short trips and last mile connections to public transit services: “Micromobility.” Systems of shared bicycles and scooters are offering short-term rentals of personal vehicles as a form of quick and convenient transportation within prescribed geographic areas. Bike sharing (Link Dayton Bike Share) and shared scooters (Spin and Bird) have been available in the Miami Valley Region beginning in 2015.

Micromobility offers benefits to the communities they serve. An analysis of anonymized personal trips by INRIX concluded in 2019 that as many as 48 percent of car trips could be served by micromobility in congested urban areas.¹ While not all potential micromobility trips are realized, each trip that replaces a car trip results in congestion, air quality, and local economic benefits. Bike Miami Valley, the operator of Link Dayton Bike Share, has reported an average of over 24,500 bike share trips and 4,000 users per year between 2015 and 2021. Spin reported over 52,800 scooter trips in Dayton by over 14,500 users in 2021.

However, shared micromobility operations have led to operational and policy concerns. Common issues raised include concerns of where vehicles may operate (bike infrastructure, motor vehicle lanes, pedestrian infrastructure) and where they may be parked (docks, hubs, or virtually anywhere). In locales where micromobility operations are permitted, they are almost universally allowed to use bicycle infrastructure and are very often prohibited on sidewalks. Micromobility devices are best understood as a form of “bicycle” and therefore the development of connected, safe, and convenient bicycle infrastructure will improve the safety and utility of micromobility trips where operations are permitted. More connected and safe bike lanes may serve to draw future micromobility usage off sidewalks, where an Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) study indicated nearly 60 percent of scooter crashes occur.² Aesthetic, safety and accessibility concerns have been raised concerning parking micromobility devices on public sidewalks, sometimes in a disorderly way that may impede an accessible path.

In the Miami Valley, communities can be categorized in three different approaches to micromobility operators: Bans, regulations, and not yet addressed. As of fall 2022, the communities of Beavercreek and Oakwood have banned such operations within their limits. Dayton, Kettering and Xenia have adopted ordinances that allow and regulate such operations. Other communities, when contacted, had not taken any position on this issue. With divergent approaches across the Region, it is premature for this Active Transportation Plan to recommend a single regional approach to shared micromobility devices. As communities begin to address policy on these services, MVRPC can share examples of code language either banning or regulating these operations.

It should also be noted that “pedestrian” infrastructure also serves residents who do not “walk” in the strictest sense of that term. Accessible sidewalks serve individuals who ambulate by means of a mobility assistance device, such as a scooter or motorized chair. They also benefit those using a stroller or personal shopping cart.

Active transportation as defined in this AT Plan includes walking, travel by means of a mobility device, and bicycling for reaching destinations and/or for accessing transit. Specifically, this plan addresses the presence, connectivity, and accessibility of sidewalks as facilities for pedestrians and people with disabilities, serving their mobility need to reach destinations. This plan also addresses the presence and connectivity of bicycle facilities, including signed and sharrows routes, bike lanes of various designs, and multi-use paths, acknowledging that some, but not all of these facilities also serve pedestrians and people with disabilities. Finally, these bike and pedestrian facilities are assessed for their utility in providing access to the public transit systems in the Miami Valley Region.

The presence and quality of active transportation infrastructure at both ends of a transit trip are important factors in the utilization and patronage of transit as a transportation choice.

The interaction of walking and biking infrastructure with public transit services is critical to transit operations. Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority (GDRTA) reports that as many as 30 percent of all paratransit service riders require this specialized service because of the lack of an accessible path between their home or destination and the nearest access point for the fixed route transit system.

The inclusion of transit access in the AT Plan provides a more complete evaluation of the accessibility of the regional network. Many past bikeways plans have assessed bicycle access to the Miami Valley Trails network. New to this plan is an assessment of the connectivity and accessibility of fixed and flex transit routes to pedestrian and bike infrastructure.

30% of paratransit riders require specialized service because of lack of accessible paths to access transit.



What is Included in the Plan

In general terms, MVRPC's transportation plans are limited to the agency's designated MPO area: Greene, Miami, and Montgomery Counties, plus municipalities of Springboro, Franklin, and Carlisle, and Franklin Township in northern Warren County (Figure 1). At a practical level, most infrastructure for non-motorized travel is located within the urbanized area, the more densely developed portion of the Region. Even more specifically, MVRPC's planning and funding authorities cover only certain classifications of roads – the busier arterials and collector roads within the Region. There are many safe and attractive places to walk and bike in our communities which are not on roads MVRPC has any planning and/or funding role. Rather, they are planned, maintained and improved by local jurisdictions.

Also, biking and walking are inherently local activities. The Miami Valley Trails network makes it possible to walk to work between for instance Troy and Piqua, but it is unreasonable to expect that many would. It is conceivable that some may make that commute by bicycle. But where pedestrian and/or bike networks connect commuters to transit services, one can begin to see a practical, non-motorized transportation system that serves the needs of a broader portion of the people in the Miami Valley. So, while recognizing the limited overlap between MVRPC's planning geography and the locations of non-motorized infrastructure, it is intended that this AT Plan, in coordination with local planning and projects by MVRPC member jurisdictions, will foster a robust, safe, convenient and accessible system for non-motorized transportation throughout the Miami Valley.

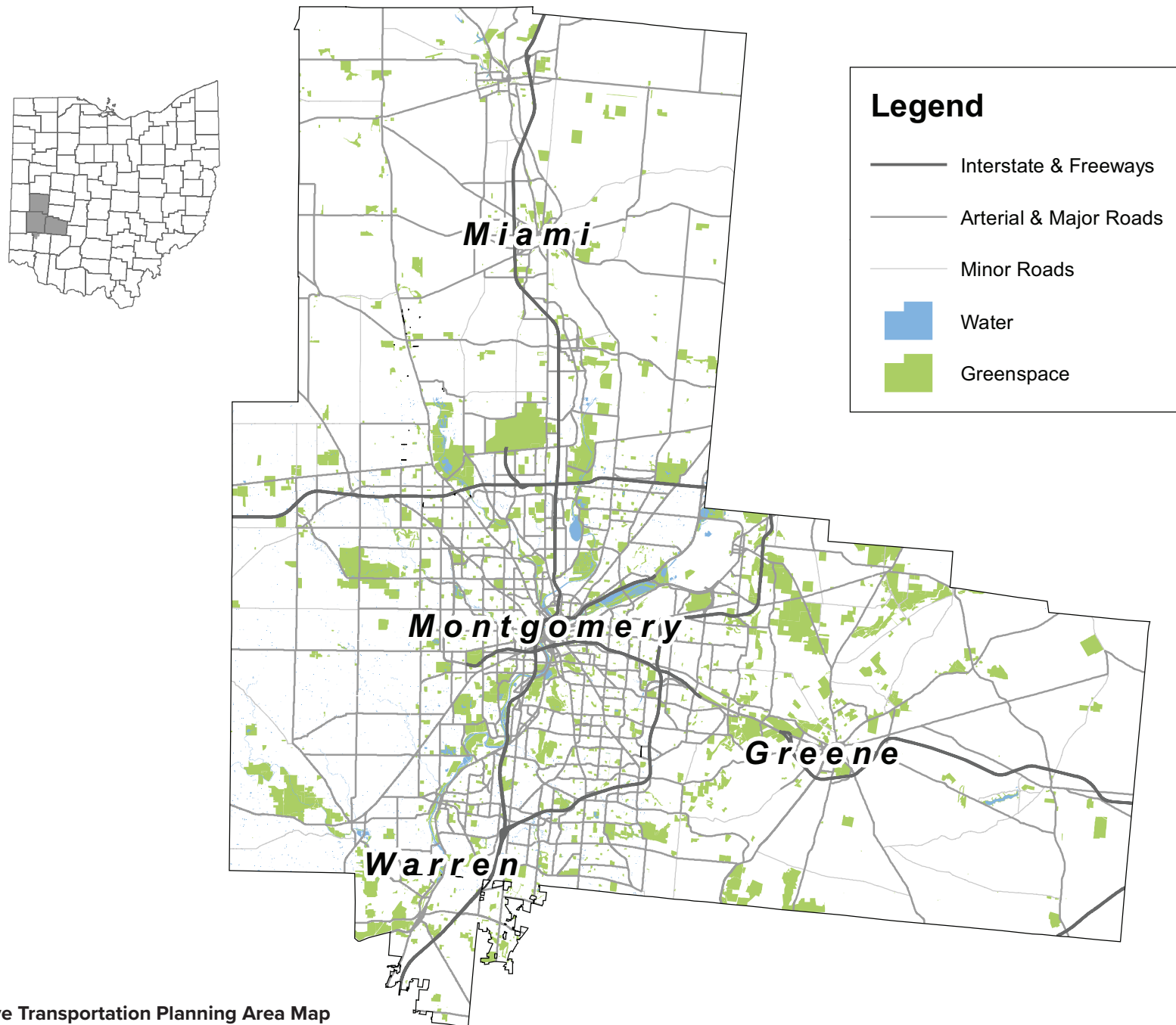


Figure 1: Active Transportation Planning Area Map

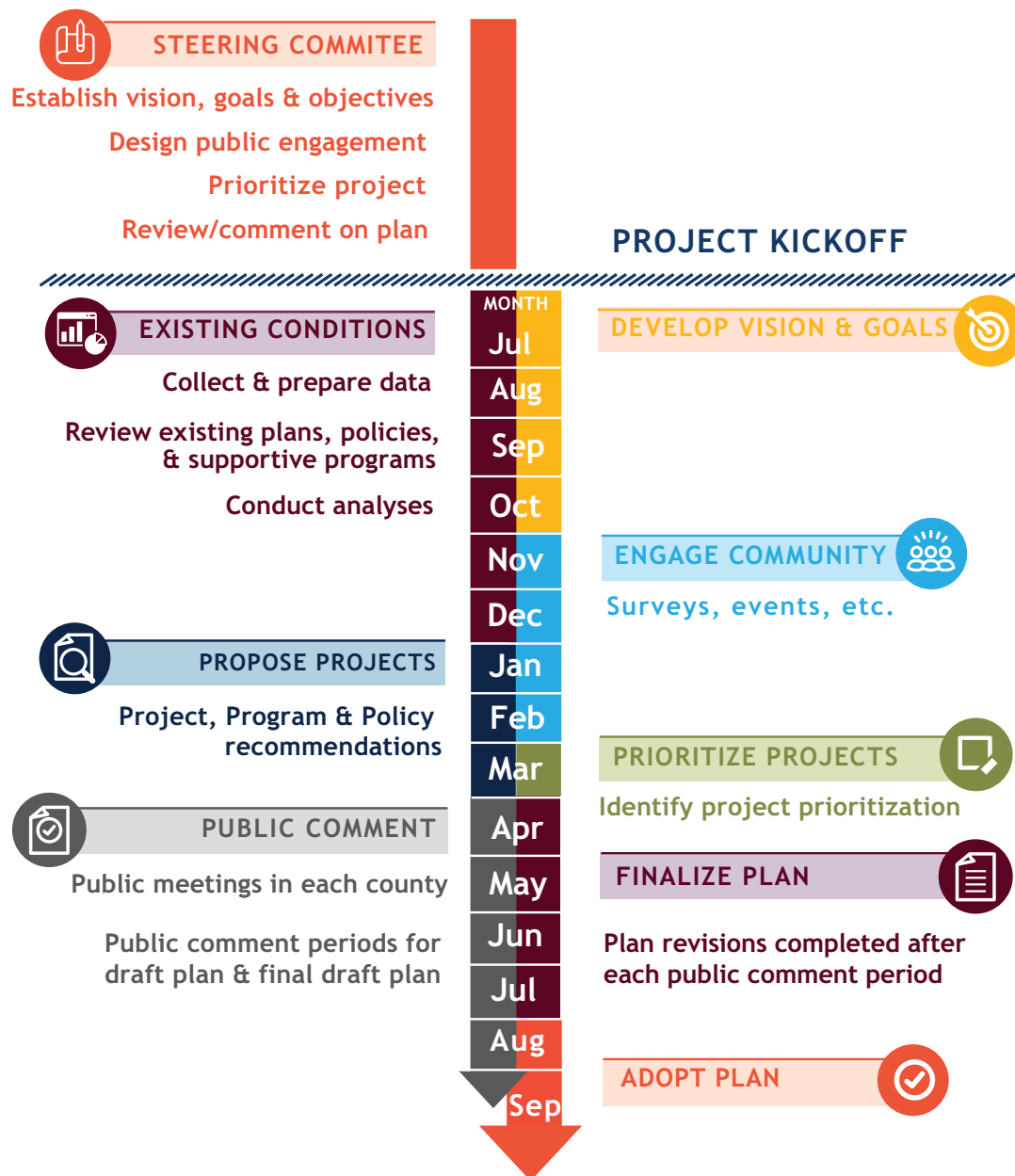
Project Timeline

The AT Plan was developed with guidance from the Steering Committee which represented various perspectives and voices of the regional active transportation system. The Steering Committee assisted with the following tasks:

- » Establishing the vision and goals of the plan
- » Designing the public engagement process
- » Shaping the project prioritization process
- » Reviewing and commenting on the draft and final versions of the plan report

The AT Plan development process kicked off in the summer of 2021, with an assessment of existing conditions and a review of other relevant plans and studies. Public input and technical analysis provided a foundation for proposed projects and the Steering Committee assisted with the prioritization of the plan recommendations.

1. Develop plan vision and goals
2. Review of existing conditions by collecting data, reviewing existing plans, policies and programs
3. Engagement with the community through public surveys, meetings, events, etc.
4. Development of project, program, and policy proposals
5. Prioritization of project, program, and policy proposals
6. Finalize plan through public comment periods for draft and final plan
7. Adopt plan



Alignment with Other Plans

Like the Miami Valley Trails network, the vision for the development of the active transportation network in the Miami Valley is expected to occur over the course of many years. Most MVRPC planning documents consider a twenty-year planning horizon. The segmented nature of transportation projects can result in piecemeal development at first as the components of the system are implemented. This AT Plan is no different, envisioning implementation over the next 20 years, with recommended updates to this plan occurring every five years.

There are several inter-agency alignments made possible through this evolution of MVRPC's bikeways planning process. At the local level, an AT Plan can be leveraged to directly support the work of our transit agency partners: Greene CATS Public Transit, Miami County Public Transit, Warren County Transit Service, and Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority (GDRTA) to carry out their missions as providers of transportation services throughout the Miami Valley. The AT Plan is also aligned with the state-level bicycle and pedestrian plan, Walk.Bike.Ohio (WBO), which was developed and adopted by the Ohio Department of Transportation in 2021. It is also aligned with Miami Valley Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan and Council as it supports first and last mile connections to public transit systems. Finally, this AT Plan will better position the Miami Valley Region to secure funding for bicycle, pedestrian and transit access that will become available under the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 - this includes development of a "Complete Streets Prioritization Plan" as described in this legislation.

The intention with this plan is to better align MVRPC planning and project selection with the goals of the WBO policy plan. There are six WBO goals which are designed to guide state investments in bike and pedestrian transportation infrastructure and programs and seeks to ensure that the benefits of non-motorized transportation are available to all Ohio residents to benefit their health, safety, and overall mobility. The six WBO goals are: equity, network utilization, network connectivity, safety, livability and preservation.

Longer term, this AT Plan will result in better alignment with the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Roadway Safety Strategy (NRSS)³. Announced in January of 2022, the NRSS adopts a "Safe System Approach" to reduce roadway fatalities and serious injuries to zero. The federal actions called for in the NRSS will take years to achieve and more years beyond that to be felt on the ground, but many proposed actions can be expected to have beneficial effects for active transportation.

Key goals related to active transportation in the NRSS include:

- » Encourage states and MPOs to use planning funds to develop Complete Streets policies and prioritization plans.
- » Updates to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) “to promote the safety, inclusion, and mobility of all users and provide for the protection of vulnerable road users.”
- » Incorporate Complete Streets criteria in Federal grant opportunities.
- » Incorporate lighting as a key design factor for roadway upgrades into Complete Streets implementation.
- » Involve transit providers in Complete Streets implementation activities to support safe walking, biking, and rolling to stops and stations.
- » Revise FHWA guidance and regulations to take into account the safety of all users by encouraging the setting of context-appropriate speed limits and creating roadways that help to “self-enforce” speed limits.
- » Develop and improve the information available for setting speed limits through Proven Safety Countermeasures and the MUTCD, providing a range of methodologies depending on the context of the roadway.

Over time, the Safe System Approach will change the default planning and design approaches and result in safer, complete streets. Ideally, the Miami Valley Region and individual local governments will be better positioned to meet new federal requirements emerging from the NRSS and access federal funding with the priorities and policies recommended in this AT Plan.



Walk.Bike.Ohio

Walk.Bike.Ohio (WBO)⁴ is Ohio’s first statewide pedestrian and bicycle plan, which provides a roadmap for overcoming challenges and capitalizing on opportunities as the state moves towards creating a more walkable and bikeable Ohio. WBO documents the current performance of Ohio’s transportation system with respect to active modes of transportation (walking and bicycling) and outlines goal areas that set the stage for increased collaboration between the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and its partners. For the first time, this plan defines short-term activities (strategies and actions items) that ODOT will provide resources and leadership in advancing, impacting transportation policies, investments, infrastructure and programs for years to come.

