



The Corporation of the  
City of Sault Ste. Marie

## COUNCIL REPORT

April 29, 2025

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council  
AUTHOR: Jonathan Kircal, Intermediate Planner  
DEPARTMENT: Community Development and Enterprise Services  
RE: Draft Active Transportation Master Plan

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to inform Council that staff will be holding public engagement sessions to present the Draft Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP), and to gather final feedback. Following this, the ATMP will be submitted to City Council for endorsement at its June 23, 2025, meeting.

### **Background**

The Sault Ste. Marie Cycling Master Plan was approved by City Council on August 27, 2007.

At its August 9, 2021 meeting, Council authorized staff to issue a Request for Proposals to undertake a comprehensive Active Transportation Master Plan study. This was subsequently awarded to WSP consulting firm.

### **Analysis**

Staff, in consultation with WSP, a multinational consulting firm with expertise in active transportation planning and engineering, developed the draft Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP). A number of in-person and online public engagement sessions were held to present the general policy framework and infrastructure network map. However, the comprehensive ATMP policy document has not yet been presented to the public, as it was still under development. It is now complete in draft form, and staff intend to conduct a final round of public engagement.

### ***What is an Active Transportation Master Plan?***

Active transportation refers to any form of human-powered travel that involves physical activity, such as walking, cycling, skateboarding, and the use of non-electric scooters.

The Draft Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP) is a long-term strategic plan that outlines the goals, policies, and investments needed to enhance active transportation in the community. While infrastructure is a key component, the plan

also includes strategies to influence culture and behaviour, encouraging broader adoption and long-term sustainability of active transportation.

***Objectives of the Plan:***

Developing an Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP) is a strategic step towards improving mobility, sustainability, and overall quality of life. As the City grows and becomes home to a more diverse population, the demand for safe, reliable, and accessible multi-modal transportation options will increase. A well-connected active transportation network not only enhances mobility, but also strengthens the City's appeal, making it a more attractive place for residents, workers, and families to call home.

The four objectives of the Plan are:

***1. Create Connectivity:***

This objective addresses gaps in the transportation network, such as missing sidewalks, bike routes, pedestrian signals, and multi-use trail connections. It ensures seamless access to key destinations, including schools, parks, shopping areas, and the John Rowswell Hub Trail.

***2. Enhance Safety and Accessibility:***

The Plan prioritizes safe and comfortable travel for all users, regardless of their mode of transportation. This is achieved through features such as bike lanes, wider sidewalks, pedestrian crossovers, and traffic calming measures. These improvements create inclusive streets that promote active transportation and improve overall connectivity.

***3. Advance Transportation Equity:***

Not everyone has access to a car, and many individuals face barriers due to financial limitations, age, or mobility challenges. This objective ensures that all residents have access to safe, reliable, and inclusive transportation options by addressing issues such as difficult intersection crossings, missing curb cuts, and inadequate pedestrian infrastructure.

***4. Education and Encouragement:***

Promoting a culture of walking and cycling is essential to increasing active transportation use. This objective supports education and awareness initiatives such as cycling safety lessons, promotional events, and campaigns such as the "share-the-road" campaign. These efforts build confidence, encourage participation, and enhance overall transportation safety.

***Key Highlights of the Plan:***

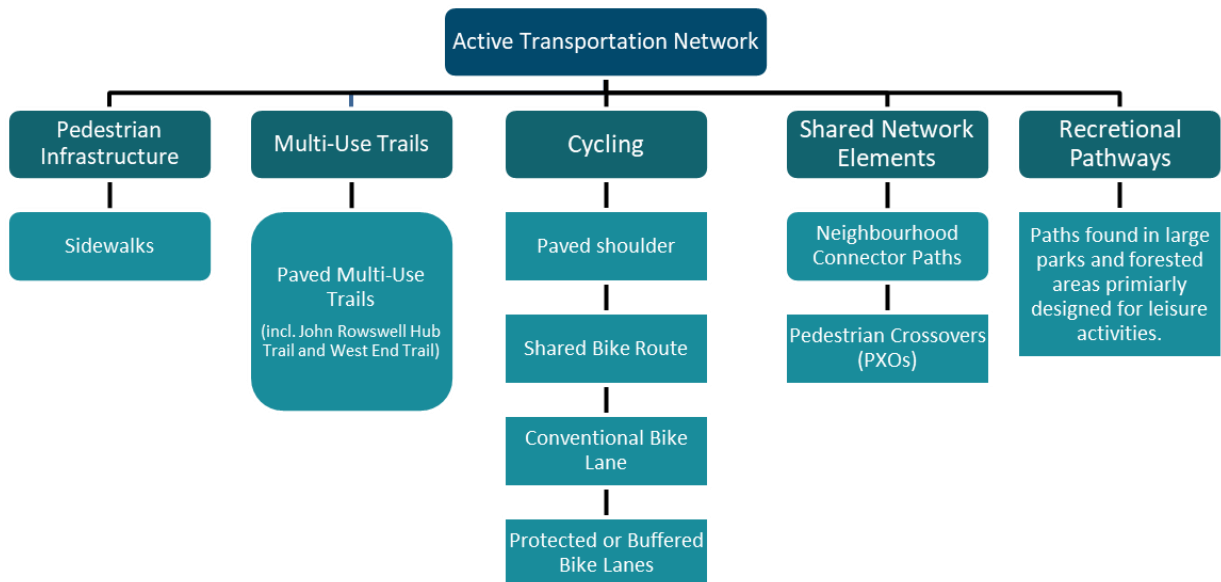
***1. Background Review***

The introductory chapters of the Draft Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP) outline the extensive background research conducted by WSP to inform the

recommendations of the plan. This research includes a review of socio-economic patterns and transportation trends in the city, an assessment of existing active transportation infrastructure, and a jurisdictional scan of policies from municipalities with comparable populations and climates to Sault Ste. Marie.

## 2. Active Transportation Network Hierarchy

The active transportation network consists of a number of different infrastructure elements that are identified in the Active Transportation Network Hierarchy image below:



The proposed network primarily consists of sidewalks, multi-use trails, cycling lanes, shared network elements, and recreational pathways. A series of maps have been created to show the current locations of these elements, as well as areas where staff and WSP recommend infrastructure expansion.

It's important to note that the ATMP is not a capital plan but rather a strategic roadmap that outlines a vision for the future of active transportation in the community. Only when the City is ready to proceed with a specific infrastructure project will a comprehensive technical analysis be conducted to evaluate its financial, technical, legal, and public-support viability. Depending on the results, modifications to the infrastructure and routes may be necessary. For example, if a road is found to have significant drainage issues that prevent the establishment of a cycling lane, a nearby parallel road may be considered as an alternative. Both the public and City Council will be kept informed of any changes.

One of the more significant proposed investments in the draft ATMP is the '**West End Hub Trail.**' Active transportation infrastructure is currently limited in the west

end of the city, and expanding the John Rowswell Hub Trail into this area is a priority.

This proposed trail would form a second type of 'hub' and run along the perimeter of the urbanized area, utilizing corridors such as Peoples Road, Rossmore Road, Korah Road, the creek network owned by the Conservation Authority, and Wallace Terrace. A series of existing and proposed intervening bike lanes (i.e. 'spokes') will connect the community with this trail system. The City has already begun the first steps to develop this initiative by constructing new multi-use trail segments at the intersection of Peoples Road and Second Line East.

Additionally, a multi-use trail between the rail line and Trunk Road running between the downtown area and the eastern city limit is under consideration. This trail would provide a continuous, uninterrupted, and safe route for active transportation users, allowing them to better navigate a major transportation corridor that accommodates significant retail and residential areas. Opportunities to address connectivity issues between neighbourhoods and retail establishments on either side of the rail line would also be explored. Staff are in preliminary discussions with the rail authority. This is an example of a long-term strategy due to its complexity and construction costs.

### *3. Programming and Social Infrastructure*

The successful implementation of an ATMP is not just about physical infrastructure, it also involves fostering social infrastructure that raises awareness and interest in active transportation.

Social infrastructure refers to the "soft touch" elements of active transportation, including programs, events, and community partnerships that encourage active transportation. Examples include regularly organized community walks or bike rides, open street events that temporarily close roads to cars to create space for pedestrians and cyclists, wayfinding maps and signage, bike valets at community events, "bike-to-work" initiatives, and bike shop learning sessions.

A number of such activities already exist in the community due to the efforts of committed community members and organizations that regularly coordinate and host these events. This 'social infrastructure' is essential for creating a culture that views active transportation as a legitimate and desirable mode of transportation, integrating it into everyday life.

An Active Transportation Coordinator, as discussed in more detail below, would help coordinate these activities, work with community organizations, and strengthen public engagement to raise the cultural profile of active transportation.

### *3. Advisory Committee and AT Coordinator*

Establishing an Active Transportation Advisory Committee is recommended. Advisory committees are created by City Council and are composed of members

of the public with specialized knowledge, supported by staff and one or two Councillors in a non-voting capacity. These committees do not have decision-making powers, but they can provide recommendations to Council and are often influential due to their knowledge.

Ideally, an advisory committee would include voices from residents, cycling groups, accessibility advocates, and other stakeholders, including different city departments, helping to broaden the city's perspective on planning and maintaining active transportation infrastructure. Committees also play a key role in institutionalizing community engagement, ensuring that active transportation decisions reflect the needs of users and the community as a whole.

Based on successful models from other cities, advisory committees assist municipal staff and Council by offering recommendations on project prioritization, safety improvements, and funding opportunities while ensuring alignment with broader municipal policies and plans. The committee would also serve as a liaison between the City and the public, gathering feedback and advocating for active transportation initiatives. Additionally, advisory committees monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented projects, helping to refine strategies and ensure that active transportation remains a priority for the municipality, and that it is accountable to municipal strategic plans.

Establishing an Active Transportation Coordinator position has been recommended. The coordinator would serve as the central resource for all things related to active transportation. This role would include building partnerships, coordinating events, engaging with the public, supporting education and awareness campaigns, and seeking funding and grant opportunities. Further details will be provided when the Plan is brought forward to Council for endorsement. The recommendation to establish an Active Transportation Coordinator position will be evaluated based on corporate priorities from other departments when brought forward.

### ***Implementation***

#### *Phasing and Prioritization*

The Draft Active Transportation Master Plan represents a long-term investment of \$130 million in physical infrastructure. From this figure, \$23 million is identified as a short to mid-term priority. \$75 million is identified as longer-term investments. An additional \$32 million is yet to be allocated in the phasing interval. Detailed phasing and prioritization plans are still being worked on by staff and will be thoroughly discussed when the draft ATMP is brought for approval.

To provide flexibility, the phasing plan avoids rigid time intervals; however, there is still an overall phasing structure that is based on the positive impact that a project will have on the community, as well as how closely it meets the plan's objectives of connectivity, safety, and accessibility.

Other factors, such as alignment with existing policies and plans, public support, and the timing of other capital projects that present bundling opportunities, also influence prioritization.

### *Funding*

Although the ATMP is not a budget request, it will serve to justify future requests. Staff will submit a budget request to secure dedicated funding for active transportation infrastructure. Details on its structure are still in progress and will be discussed in detail when the plan is brought back to Council for final approval.

### **Monitoring**

A monitoring plan will accompany the ATMP to evaluate its success and to track progress. It would ensure accountability, measure impact, justify future funding, build public and political support, and support long-term planning. Moreover, the plan would assess how well the ATMP's implementation aligns with the Corporate Strategic Plan's performance metrics, particularly those aimed at expanding network coverage.

### **Next Steps**

A final round of public consultation will be held to present the latest updates to maps, policies, and the comprehensive ATMP document. Any necessary revisions based on public feedback will be incorporated. Following this, the ATMP will be presented by WSP to Council for formal adoption on June 23, 2025.

### **Financial Implications**

This is an informational report and therefore has no financial implications.

### **Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact**

The draft ATMP aligns with several focus areas of the City's Corporate Strategic Plan 2024 – 2027. Active transportation supports economic development, quality of life, tourism, and environmental sustainability. It contributes to the City's goal of attracting new businesses and increasing tourism spending (Focus Area 1: Community Development). By providing alternative modes of transportation that are both functional and recreational, the plan promotes sustainable forms of transportation while also investing in a type of recreation infrastructure (Focus Area 2: Quality of Life). By expanding the City's active transportation network, the ATMP helps to further the City's climate goals of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 (Focus Area 3: Infrastructure).

### **Recommendation**

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Intermediate Planner dated April 29, 2025 concerning the Draft Active Transportation Master Plan be received and that staff be directed to undertake a final round of consultation with the intent of bringing a final draft of the Plan to the June 23, 2025 Council meeting.

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Respectfully submitted,

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