

BEMIDJI PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, September 9, 2026

**City Hall Conference room
317 4th Street NW
5:00 PM**

- 1) CALL MEETING TO ORDER**
- 2) APPROVE AGENDA**
- 3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - a) July 14, Parks & Trails Commission Meeting Minutes
- 4) PUBLIC COMMENTS/AGENDA ITEMS**

(Comments limited to Agenda items only and a 3- minute maximum per speaker; 15-minute maximum per meeting regarding groups).
- 5) SECRETARY APPOINTMENT**
- 6) BUSINESS**
 - b) The Loren Dean and Betty Ann Reichert Charitable Fund
 - c) 2027 Parks & Trails Fee Schedule
 - d) 2026 Bemidji Bike Audit
- 7) PARKS AND TRAILS UPDATES**
 - e) Updates
- 8) COMMISSIONER UPDATES**
- 9) NEXT MEETING**

TBD
- 10) ADJOURN**

MINUTES
PARKS & TRAILS COMMISSION MEETING
July 15, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kristine Bommersbach, Mike Cronin, Debra Praff, Dustin Berg

MEMBERS ABSENT: Vicky Beckmann, Tim Faver, Tom Anderson

COUNCIL & BOARD REPRESENTATIVE: Emelie Rivera

CITY STAFF & OTHERS: Scott Schroeder

CALL TO ORDER:

Bommersbach called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

APPROVE AGENDA:

A motion was made by Cronin and seconded by Praff to approve the agenda. The motion passed

APPROVAL OF MAY 12, 2026 MEETING MINUTES:

A motion was made by Cronin and seconded by Berg to approve the May 12, 2026 meeting minutes. The motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No members of the public were present to address the Commission.

Commission Member Appointments and Resignations:

- Debra Faver resigned from the Commission.
- Dustin Berg and Deb Praff were appointed to the Commission.

Secretary Nomination:

- Schroeder mentioned this would be best done in September with hopes of more members being present.
- There was a motion brought forward by Cronin to table until September and seconded by Praff. The motion passed

First City of Lights Foundation Donation

- Donation involves the leveling of the ground for an even placement for the pixle tree in November.

- This project will help with water drainage issues that floods the nearby trail.
- There was a motion by Berg to accept the donation and seconded by Praff. The motion passed.

Commissioner Updates:

- Cronin gave an update on the success of the recent Loop the Lake event. 900 preregistration and 75 walk-ups. No major issues were reported.
- Cronin asked for an update on the Cameron Park trail grant and restroom roofing project
- Schroeder discussed that the final documents had been sent to the DNR for approval. Next steps are to receive a signed contract from the DNR.
- The replacement of the roof and soffits at Cameron Park restrooms is on the CIP for 2027.
- Bommersbach gave an update on the community bike ride that took place in late May. There were six participants with many bike “rules” learned.
- Bike MN was part of the bike ride and is due to give the City an audit regarding the ride.

First City of Lights Foundation Partnership:

- Council member Rivera brought up First City of Lights Foundation to see if the commission had an appetite to discuss the need for an agreement between the City and First City of Lights Foundation.
- Schroeder mentioned that in the past the Parks Department has contributed more than \$15,000 annually of in-kind labor for the install, removal and minor repairs of lights within Paul Bunyan Park. Since 2023, the City has funded over \$20,000 for tree and light pole outlet repairs.
- Commission members asked if the City is reimbursed with donations raised by First City of Lights Foundation, Schroeder said, no.
- Riveria asked if other special events, i.e. Dragon Boat, Water Carnival, Art in the park, get same or similar City Contributions. Schroeder said, no.
- Schroeder mentioned he will get with the City Manager to discuss the creation of an agreement between the two entities.
- The commission showed a desire to further discuss at the September meeting.

Meeting Schedule: September 8, 2026

- Updates to the First City of Lights Foundation partnership
- DNR Grants, ReLeaf and Cameron Trail

ADJOURNMENT:

- The next meeting is scheduled for February 10, 2026.

A motion to adjourn was made by Berg and seconded by Praff at 5:45p.m. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Scott Schroeder
Parks & Trails Director

PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM



Meeting Date: September 9, 2026
Action Requested: Motion to recommend to city council
Prepared By: Scott Schroeder, Parks & Trails Director

Background:

The City of Bemidji has received confirmation that The Loren Dean and Betty Ann Reichert Charitable Fund will donate \$125,000 to the Northwest Minnesota Foundation to support the City's efforts to restore and strengthen its urban forest.

The donation will support the City's five-year urban forestry strategy, including protecting existing trees, responding to emerald ash borer, planting a diverse mix of new trees, and providing the ongoing care needed to successfully establish those trees.

The gift will be made in memory of Loren Reichert, his parents Dean and Arvilla Reichert, and his brother Donn Reichert. The Reichert family has strong ties to Bemidji. Dean and Arvilla raised their family near Diamond Point Park, and Loren graduated from Bemidji High School in 1957. Karl Reichert, trustee of the charitable fund, also attended Bemidji State University and graduated in 1987.

Loren Reichert was a strong supporter of environmental conservation and reforestation. His family hopes this contribution will help restore Bemidji's tree canopy and provide a lasting benefit for future generations.

Staff will continue working with the Northwest Minnesota Foundation and the Reichert family to finalize the donation and implement the five-year urban forest plan.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends making a motion to recommend city council approval of the donation.

Scott Schroeder, Parks & Trails Director
City of Bemidji
1351 5th St NW
Bemidji, MN 56601

August 16, 2026

Dear Scott:

This letter confirms that The Loren Dean and Betty Ann Reichert Charitable Fund will donate \$125,000 to the Northwest Minnesota Foundation to fund the City of Bemidji's efforts to renew its urban forest damaged by last year's devastating derecho storm. Following our meeting on July 17, 2026, I appreciated the thoughtful five-year strategy you created outlining how this gift will help "protect existing trees, respond to emerald ash borer, plant a diverse mix of new trees, and provide the ongoing care needed for successful establishment." **I would like this gift to be made in memory of Loren Reichert, his parents, Dean and Arvilla, and his older brother, Donn.**

My family has enjoyed a long history connected to Bemidji. My grandmother, Arvilla Anderson, was among the first students to attend the Bemidji State Normal School in 1919, the year it was founded. After marrying my grandfather, Dean Reichert, they bought a home on Birchmont Drive near Diamond Point Park, where they raised their sons, Donn (my father) and Loren (my uncle), just a block from the park. Years later, I attended Bemidji State University, where I spent many hours in the spring and fall studying in Diamond Point Park, graduating in 1987.

My Uncle Loren was proud to have graduated from Bemidji High School in 1957. While he spent most of his adult life in Las Vegas, where he was a professor of sociology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, he always enjoyed coming home to Bemidji to visit our family. Loren died last November at his home in Northfield, Minnesota, at age 86.

In retirement, Loren and Betty generously supported many causes, and more recently he focused his charitable giving on efforts to fight climate change, preserve wildlife habitats, and support arts and culture and emergency relief. He was particularly concerned about deforestation worldwide. "We need to plant trees!" was his mantra.

Earlier this year, as trustee of the charitable fund, I facilitated a \$125,000 gift to the City of Northfield to support reforestation efforts following the damage to the city's tree canopy caused by the emerald ash borer. Northfield is where Loren spent his final two years of life, and he cherished the community because it was where he met his late wife, Betty, while they were students at Carleton College. A second donation to support the planting of trees in Bemidji is fitting since it is where he spent his childhood.

My family's hope is that this gift will serve generations to come in Bemidji, so that they, too, can enjoy the city's natural beauty. The home of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox deserves a beautiful urban forest.

Best,



Karl Reichert
Trustee, The Loren Dean and Betty Ann Reichert Charitable Fund

Proposed Use of a \$125,000 Urban Forest Donation

Five-year concept for preserving, expanding, and caring for Bemidji's urban forest

250

estimated ash tree treatments

120

trees planted or transplanted

\$125,000

fully assigned over five years

Purpose of the Donation

The City of Bemidji could use the proposed donation over five years to **protect existing trees, respond to emerald ash borer, plant a diverse mix of new trees, and provide the ongoing care needed for successful establishment.** The plan also includes a meaningful spring 2027 project at Diamond Point Park, a location that is especially important to the donor and the donor's family.

Five-Year Funding Plan

2027 | 40 trees | \$35,000

- Establish an in-house emerald ash borer injection program and treat approximately 50 ash trees - \$10,000.
- Spade and transplant 15 pine trees into Diamond Point Park in spring 2027 - \$10,500.
- Purchase and plant 25 additional 10-gallon trees throughout parks, green spaces, and boulevards - \$8,750.
- Purchase 40 staking kits and 40 tree guards - \$950.
- Provide watering, mulch, soil improvements, replacement materials, and initial establishment care - \$4,800.

2028 | 40 trees | \$25,000

- Continue emerald ash borer treatments for approximately 50 ash trees - \$4,000.
- Purchase and plant 40 10-gallon trees, including staking kits and tree guards - \$14,950.
- Provide watering, mulch, establishment care, and continued care for the Diamond Point pine trees - \$6,050.

2029 | 40 trees | \$25,000

- Continue emerald ash borer treatments for approximately 50 ash trees - \$4,000.
- Purchase and plant 40 10-gallon trees, including staking kits and tree guards - \$14,950.
- Provide watering, mulch, establishment care, and replacement of unsuccessful trees when needed - \$6,050.

2030 | planting as needed* | \$20,000

- Continue emerald ash borer treatments for approximately 50 ash trees - \$4,000.
- Use the remaining \$16,000 for structural pruning, watering, mulch, soil improvements, tree protection, Diamond Point pine maintenance, and replacement needs.

2031 | planting as needed* | \$20,000

- Continue emerald ash borer treatments for approximately 50 ash trees - \$4,000.
- Use the remaining \$16,000 for long-term pruning, watering, tree protection, Diamond Point pine aftercare, replacement needs, and other urban forestry priorities.

**Any replacement planting in 2030 or 2031 would remain within the City's limit of no more than 40 planted or transplanted trees in a year.*

Five-Year Investment Summary

Investment Area	Estimated Five-Year Amount
EAB injection equipment, materials, and five years of treatments	\$26,000
Diamond Point Park pine tree-spading project	\$10,500
Purchase and planting of 105 additional 10-gallon trees	\$36,750
Staking kits and tree guards for three planting years	\$2,850
Watering, mulch, soil improvements, pruning, replacement needs, and long-term tree care	\$48,900
TOTAL PROPOSED DONATION	\$125,000

What the Donation Could Accomplish

- Establish an in-house emerald ash borer treatment program and provide approximately 250 ash tree treatments over five years.
- Transplant 15 pine trees into Diamond Point Park in spring 2027.
- Purchase and plant 105 additional trees in parks, green spaces, and boulevards.
- Plant or transplant approximately 120 trees during the first three years without exceeding 40 trees in any year.
- Provide staking, protection, watering, mulch, pruning, and establishment care to protect the investment.
- Improve species diversity and strengthen the long-term health and resilience of Bemidji's urban forest.

Planning note: This is a practical example of how the donation could be used. Actual annual expenses may vary based on tree availability, treatment prices, weather, and field conditions. Funding would remain dedicated to eligible urban forestry purposes and could be adjusted among the listed activities while preserving the overall intent of the donation.

PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM



Meeting Date: September 9, 2026
Action Requested: Motion to recommend to council
Prepared By: Scott Schroeder, Parks & Trails Director

Background:

Staff recommends the following updates to the Parks & Trails Department's 2027 fee schedule:

- Remove Jiigibiig facility rentals because Bemidji State University will operate outdoor recreation programming from the facility beginning in 2027.
- Remove the Beatrice Mills Suite at the Carnegie Library because it is no longer available as a rentable space.
- Increase the South Shore Marina seasonal slip rental fee by \$100 for the 2027 boating season.
- Discontinue weekend slip rentals at South Shore Marina.

Recommendation:

Approve the changes to the 2027 Fee Schedule

DESCRIPTION	CURRENT FEE	2027 FEE Note: change in BOLD for new or strike through for eliminate
PARKS DEPARTMENT		
City Park:		
City Park Building Rental	\$300.00	\$300.00
- Deposit (refundable)	\$300.00	\$300.00
Softball Field Rental	\$30/field/game	\$30/field/game
- Holiday Field Use Fee	\$50.00/day	\$50.00/day
Tournament Fees:		
*Includes use of Main Building & Complex		
- Tournament Field Rate	\$75.00/Field/Day	\$75.00/Field/Day
- Dragging Fee	\$6.00/time	\$10.00/time
- Chalking Fee	\$6.00/time	\$10.00/time
- Concession Fee (Daily Gross Sales)	5%-10%	10%
- Fence Installation/per field	\$100.00	\$100.00
- Deposit (refundable)	\$200.00	\$200.00
North Country Park:		
Baseball Field Rental	\$40.00 per field/practice/per day	\$40.00 per field/practice/per day
Diamond Point Park:		
Main Building Rental	\$300.00	\$300.00
- Deposit (refundable)	\$300.00	\$300.00
Pavilion Rental	\$150.00	\$150.00
Jiigibiig Facility Rental	\$250.00	\$250.00
- Deposit (refundable)	\$300.00	\$300.00
South Shore Park:		
Building Rental	\$275.00	\$275.00
- Deposit (refundable)	\$300.00	\$300.00
Nymore Park:		
Warming House Rental	\$100.00	\$100.00
- Deposit (refundable)	\$100.00	\$100.00
Carnegie Beatrice Mills Suite:		
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	\$25.00/hour	\$25.00/hour
After 4:00 p.m.	\$35.00/hour	\$35.00/hour
Community Garden Plot:		
15 x 15 garden plot	\$25.00/each	\$25.00/each
10 x 15 garden plot	\$20.00/each	\$20.00/each
South Shore Marina:		
Seasonal Slip Rental	\$1,650.00	\$1,750.00
Weekend (3 day) Slip Rental (Friday-Sunday)	\$75.00	\$ 75.00
Miscellaneous Rental Fees:		
Court Reservation/Rental Fees (Pickleball/Tennis)	\$7.00/court (up to 4 courts)	\$7.00/court (up to 4 courts)
Disc Golf Course League/Tournament	\$75.00	\$75.00
Commercial Permit Fee:		
Annual	\$250.00	\$250.00
Month	\$100.00	\$100.00
Day	\$25.00	\$ 25.00

PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM



Meeting Date: September 9, 2026
Action Requested: Discussion
Prepared By: Scott Schroeder, Parks & Trails Director

Background:

On May 29, 2026, BikeMN and local participants completed an on-bike audit of a designated route through downtown Bemidji and adjacent neighborhoods. The assessment identified the following highlights:

- **Community strengths:** Engaged local partners, compact destinations, the existing trail connection, and the Lake Boulevard contra-flow bike lane.
- **Primary concerns:** Heavy traffic, limited shoulders and bike lanes, parking conflicts, and driver awareness. The intersections of 5th Street NW/Irvine Avenue NW and Irvine Avenue NW/15th Street NW were identified as high-risk locations.
- **Infrastructure priorities:** Create connected east-west and north-south routes; improve signage and pavement markings; and evaluate bike boxes, bike signals, parking changes, and signal or crosswalk timing.
- **Education and coordination:** Certify local League Cycling Instructors, expand rider and driver education, promote Bicycle Friendly Businesses, and consider forming an Active Transportation Committee.

Next Steps

The report recommends identifying community partners to advance feasible short-term items, reviewing progress in January 2027, and preparing for the June 16, 2027 Bicycle Friendly Community application deadline.

Recommendation:

City of Bemidji

Bike Audit Assessment Report



Prepared for: City of Bemidji and Beltrami County
Assessment report respectfully submitted on: August 22, 2026

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to community members of Bemidji who participated in assessing local infrastructure on a designated route within city limits, including the following: Kristine Bommersbach, Mike Cronin, Charles Biberg, Tony Klaers and a high school student who lives in the community. Natalie Gille led the on-bike portion of this transportation infrastructure audit and prepared a summary of our findings in this report, in addition to providing recommendations for consideration.

This assessment was made possible through funding from the City of Bemidji, in collaboration with Beltrami County and Bemidji Parks Commission.

Prepared by:



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit Overview

Name of project: City of Bemidji Bike Audit

Date of audit: May 29, 2026

Lead auditors: Natalie Gille, Kristine Bommersbach, Mike Cronin, Charles Biberg, Tony Klaers

Audit goal: Assess local infrastructure in Bemidji along a designed route

Key Findings

Safety Hazards: heavy traffic flow, parked cars blocking cycling routes, drivers of motor vehicles lack education about how to share the road with people travelling by bike, drivers of motor vehicles unsafely passed stopped cars on the right

Infrastructure gaps: no shoulder roads, absence of bike lanes

High-Risk Zones: intersection of 5th Street NW and Irvine Avenue NW; intersection of Irvine Avenue NW and 15th Street NW

Top recommendations

Immediate Fixes: Certify local League Cycling Instructors (LCIs), Promote the Bicycle Friendly Business (BFB) program to local businesses in Bemidji, Formalize an Active Transportation (AT) Committee, Apply for Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) award status,

Long-Term Goals: Increase signage to designate local bike routes, Create bike boxes and install bike signals at the identified High-Risk Zones (i.e. 5th & Irvine and Irvine and 15th), Eliminate parking along 15th Street, Implement on-street colorful street murals, replace trees destroyed by the 2025 storm to provide shade along bike routes, Launch a local bike education program taught by the LCIs, Establish an east-west designated connecting route for people traveling by bike, Establish a north-south designated connecting route for people traveling by bike

Next steps (review progress in January 2027): City of Bemidji to identify who can work with local community members to: 1. Certify LCIs, Promote BFBs, Formalize an AT Committee and Apply for BFC.

BACKGROUND

The City of Bemidji is a small, rural community in northern Minnesota and serves as a regional hub, as the county seat for Beltrami County. It is a community estimated to have a population of 15,770 by the U.S. Census Bureau as-of July 1, 2025. Bemidji is located along the shores of Lake Bemidji and is known as the “First City on the Mississippi”.

Beltrami County and the City of Bemidji is seeking input along a defined route within city limits.

Route for the bike audit: Start at Paul Bunyan Park, then travel along the trail to the intersection of Bemidji Avenue N and 5th Street NW. At the intersection of Bemidji Avenue N and 5th Street NW, travel west on 5th Street NW 4 blocks to make our first stop in the parking lot of the Bemidji Public Library. Returning to 5th Street NW, make a right turn at Irvine Avenue NW. Travel north 10 blocks along Irvine Avenue NW to the intersection of Irvine Avenue NW and 15th Street NW, where Dave’s Pizza is located, and make a right turn. Here we make our second stop in the parking lot behind Dave’s Pizza. Returning to 15th Street continue east 13 blocks to Birchmont Drive NE and make our 3rd and final stop in a parking space, immediately following a right turn on Birchmont Drive NE. The route back to Paul Bunyan Park takes you along 2 blocks of Birchmont Drive NE, make a left turn on 12th Street NE, a right turn on Lake Blvd NE to travel along the contra-flow bike lane and then at 6th Street NW, rejoin the trail connection behind the Carnegie Library to Paul Bunyan Park, as the end of the route.

BikeMN believes that assessment of local infrastructure is core to transportation planning and implementation. It’s an excellent first step in creating a community-wide coordinated effort for the City of Bemidji to pursue ranking as a Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) from the League of American Bicyclists (The League). The goal of this assessment is to guide efforts to make biking, walking and rolling easy and fun, across Minnesota. The BFC application also serves as a good benchmarking tool to create a built environment that increases safety for kids who would like to ride bikes to school, the parks, the library and other places of interest within the community, including the connection of safe routes between residential neighborhoods and the Bemidji Public Library and Library Park.

There is an opportunity for the community to place a priority on Safe Routes to Schools (“SRTS”) and implementation of local Safe Routes to School plans. ISD 31 serves the communities of Bemidji, Turtle River, Solway, Tenstrike, Becida, Wilton and Puposky. The Bemidji schools in ISD 31 include: Early Childhood programming (Paul Bunyan Center), Elementary (Gene Dillon, Horace May, J.W. Smith, Lincoln, Northern and Solway), Bemidji Middle School, Bemidji High School and Alternative Schools (Lumberjack High School, First City School and Oshki Manidoo).

The City of Bemidji and Beltrami County are both served by the Headwaters Regional Development Commission (“HRDC”). HRDC is a focal point and leader in seeking out funding opportunities to assist the city in implementing comprehensive and safe routes to school plans and guided by the following, “We exist to help our communities and our region as a whole be

successful. This is our core mission and core value. Everything we do is focused on creating that success. Our services and activities are a function of our skills, competencies and the needs communities have as they strive to be successful.” Bemidji has several SRTS Plans for schools in the community. HRDC has written plans for Voyageurs, Aurora, JW Smith and Lincoln. They have also been involved in the Engineer Study for Bemidji High School and Gene Dillion and assisted with the Voyageur and Aurora Safe Routes Design Assistance Plan.

Mike Cronin and Natalie Gille conducted a pre-ride of the route on Wednesday, May 27th, 2026. The on-bike audit was conducted on Friday, May 29th, 2026 and is the first step in identifying where there are opportunities to take steps to become more bicycle-friendly.

Community strengths include: Bemidji community members participating in an on-bike audit, active engagement and interest from the group of folks conducting the bike audit who contributed helpful comments for consideration, contra flow bike lane along Lake Blvd NE, close proximity between local places of interest (i.e. compact downtown area), including Bemidji Public Library, Dave’s Pizza, Erbert & Gerberts, Bemidji State University and Paul Bunyan Park, local partnerships with Beltrami County and HRDC staff who provided assistance in contributing comments incorporated into this report

Bike Bemidji is a local bicycling non-profit located in Bemidji, with the following mission “Our goal is to promote bicycling in the Bemidji area” and vision “...that Bemidji becomes a safe and easy place for everyone to ride bikes, and to grow the idea that Bemidji is a bicycle-friendly town.” This group is recognized with gratitude for the contributions and legacy created by local leaders in the Bemidji bicycling community.

Areas of opportunity include: The City has some challenges to overcome. Creating change to the components of the community’s transportation network would improve safety and accessibility for folks traveling by bike as their mode of transportation. Bike network challenges include: absence of bike infrastructure on an east-west route through the Bemidji city center, absence of bike infrastructure along Irvine Avenue NW going north-south through Bemidji city center and the need for paint and signage of the contra-flow bike lane along Lake Blvd NE. There is a need for local bicycle programming, which includes teaching bike education classes, leading group bike rides and advocacy for improved policy and infrastructure that supports traveling by bike in Bemidji.

Still, BikeMN thinks Bemidji has great potential to be a bicycle friendly community. This on-bike audit and corresponding report is based on a limited amount of infrastructure and assessment; however, many of the recommendations within this report are easy and will have a low cost to implement yet will have a high impact. This assessment report and its recommendations will provide a user-friendly analysis and feedback to guide short-term changes and evaluate long-term strategies. BikeMN hopes that it will guide the community toward intentionally becoming more bicycle-friendly resulting in a more vibrant, livable community for residents, workers and visitors and, of course, a successful BFC application to The League.

BikeMN and our partners all agree that making biking, walking and rolling easy and fun, across

Minnesota, requires more than just building infrastructure and that the Bicycle Friendly Community program of The League provides an excellent roadmap to improving conditions for bicycling. The BFC application is based on five areas: 1. Equity and Accessibility, 2. Engineering, 3. Education, 4. Encouragement and 5. Evaluation and Planning, the “5 E’s”.
<https://bikeleague.org/bfa/community/faq/>

APPROACH

The City of Bemidji and Beltrami County has implemented a coordinated approach to evaluating a designated route within city limits.

1. Natalie Gille, Active Living Consultant of Light My Lotus LLC, secured a funding stream through the City of Bemidji for the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (BikeMN) to conduct a one-day on-bike audit of the designated bike route with local stakeholders on Friday, May 29th, 2026.
2. Kristine Bommersbach and Mike Cronin are the chair and vice chair of the city of Bemidji Parks Commission. They were instrumental in spearheading logistics to identify the bike route, identify key stakeholders, promote this local bike audit in the community and secure funding through the City of Bemidji that made this project successful.
3. Tony Klaers, Community Development Planner at Headwaters Regional Development Commission (HRDC), is a key planning partner and contributed comments to this report.
4. BikeMN, who has helped communities throughout the state with BFC applications, is available to answer questions about the BFC application, will guide the process and recommend the most effective ways for collecting and reporting data, and will ensure that the community showcases a comprehensive list of bicycling assets on the BFC application.
5. The on-bike audit was conducted on Friday, May 29th, 2026 by active living consultant, Natalie Gille, in collaboration with BikeMN, Beltrami County and through funding provided by the City of Bemidji. This on-bike audit helped contribute toward establishing a baseline for transportation infrastructure in the City of Bemidji.
6. Draft report provided via email to bike audit participants for review and comments.
7. Final report and next steps provided to local stakeholders, including city staff and elected officials.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

The following details will be organized into 5 categories, called the “5 E’s”. 1. Equity and Accessibility, 2. Engineering, 3. Education, 4. Encouragement and 5. Evaluation and Planning, the “5 E’s”.

*(Please note: **Equity and Accessibility**: Concerns within this category of the 5 E’s were not raised as part of this limited scope bike audit of a designated route selected by Beltrami County and the City of Bemidji.)*

Engineering

Finding: Cyclists are traveling on heavy flow roads.

Recommendation: *Improve local bike infrastructure and signage to designate local bike routes within a connected bicycling network in the community.*

Finding: The intersection at 5th Street NW and Irvine Avenue NW and the route north on Irvine Avenue NW for 8 blocks was uncomfortable where there is no shoulder.

Recommendation: Create bike boxes on 5th Street NW along east-west travel at the intersection of 5th Street NW and Irvine Avenue NW by using colorful paint that designates an area at the front of a signalized intersection to provide cyclists with a safe space to wait for the light. Redesign the right of way on Irvine Avenue NW to include a bike lane.

Finding: Parked cars along both sides of the road on 15th Street NW. Off street infrastructure would be preferred.

Recommendation: *Eliminate parking on 15th Street from Irvine Avenue NW to Birchmont Drive NE and repurpose this right of way with bike lanes, as a connecting route for students who make up over 30% of the Bemidji population (BSU Facts & Figures document, “approximately 5,100 undergraduate and over 300 graduate students”*

<https://www.bemidjistate.edu/about/facts-figures/>

Finding: Birchmont Avenue NW is uncomfortable with student pedestrian traffic and parked car congestion.

Recommendation: Implement on-street colorful street murals at key intersections that have heavy pedestrian student traffic, including two that were on our bike audit route: 1. Birchmont Drive NE and 15th Street NE and 2. Birchmont Drive NE and 14th Street NE. This creates a visible and clearly defined pedestrian crosswalk, signalling to people driving cars that pedestrians belong here.

Finding: Drivers race through yellow lights at the intersections of: 1. 5th Street NW and Irvine Avenue NW and 2. Irvine Avenue NW and 15th Street NW.

Recommendation: Install bike signals to improve safety of travel by bike through the intersections of: 1. 5th Street NW and Irvine Avenue NW and 2. Irvine Avenue NW and 15th Street NW. This treatment would complement the installation of bike boxes at these intersections. More detail on bike signal design can be found by referencing the NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide, <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/>.

Finding: Trees along 5th Street NW were destroyed during the 2025 storm and this has reduced shade along this route.

Recommendation: *Replace trees along this transportation corridor to provide shade for non-motorized travel along this route.*

Finding: Currently a cyclist has to get on the sidewalk to push the button to call for the light to change.

Recommendation: *Switch the stoplight to a timed stoplight, instead of weight-driven, so people traveling by bike have an opportunity to cross.*

Education

Finding: Absence of regularly scheduled bike education.

Recommendation: *Develop a sustainable, growing bike education plan that includes identifying and certifying 1-2 community members to become League Cycling Instructors (LCIs) to work with educators to teach the Walk! Bike! Fun! School safety curriculum, including a required on-bike component.*

Finding: Riding with new people was uncomfortable,, because of not knowing how they will respond to traffic, intersections and right of way with drivers.

Recommendation: *Work with LCIs to offer group riding classes in Bemidji.*

Finding: Drivers are unsure of how to engage with cyclists as “vehicles”.

Recommendation: *Work with LCIs and BikeMN to offer the People Friendly Driver course, a program of BikeMN that educates motorists on safe driving behaviors around people who are walking, biking or rolling.*

Finding: During the on-bike audit, one of the participants observed a car waiting to make a left turn off Irvine onto 11th Street and another car passed them on the right and did not slow down much to do it.

Recommendation: *It is prohibited for cars to cross the solid white line to pass another vehicle on the right. Increase bike education as part of Drivers Education to continue to educate drivers of motor vehicles to share the road with all road users, including people traveling by bicycle.*

Encouragement

Finding: Bemidji is no longer recognized as a Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) by the League of American Bicyclists (The League).

Recommendation: *The next BFC deadline is June 16, 2027. BikeMN recommends that the City of Bemidji prepare to submit a BFC application by this deadline, implementing at least some of the recommendations provided in this report between the fall of 2026 and spring of 2027 to prepare the community for a stronger BFC application.*

Finding: Very few local businesses are recognized as Bicycle Friendly Businesses by the League of American Bicyclists (The League).

Recommendation: *Identify and explore opportunities for local businesses in Bemidji to become recognized as Bicycle Friendly Businesses (BFBs) through the League of American Bicyclists, including Sanford Health, Bemidji Public Schools and Paul Bunyan Communications.*

Evaluation and Planning

Finding: At the intersection of 1st Street W and Bemidji Avenue N, pedestrians were observed using the north-south crosswalk. Cars were lined up waiting for the pedestrians to clear the intersection. Some cars were pulled halfway through the intersection waiting.

Recommendation: *Conduct further assessment of the crosswalk timing and if the walk lights are timed to provide a sufficient amount of time for people of all ages and abilities to cross Bemidji*

Avenue N.

Finding: 5th Street NW from Carnegie Library to Bemidji Public Library felt tight with parked cars not inviting. There is a need to define an east-west connecting bike route in Bemidji for people who travel by bicycle as their mode of transportation.

Recommendation: *Safe routes along 5th Street NW and 15th Street NW would create east-west connecting routes.*

Finding: There is a need to define a north-south connecting bike route in Bemidji for people who travel by bicycle as their mode of transportation.

Recommendation: *Safe routes along Irvine Avenue NW, Birchmont Dr NE and Lake Blvd NE would create north-south connecting routes.*

Finding: Absence of an Active Transportation Advisory Committee.

Recommendation: *Formalize an Active Transportation Advisory Committee and charge it with ensuring that the 5 E's of being bicycle friendly are part of the City's ongoing work.*

PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM



Meeting Date: September 9, 2026
Action Requested:
Prepared By: Presented by & Title

Background:

Recommendation:

Parks and Trails updates

DNR ReLeaf grant-

The City was awarded \$308,070.10 to be geared towards stump removals (181), Planting/1 year watering maintenance for 186 trees and a 500 gallon water tank for water maintenance. The grant will also fund a City Wide tree inventory and 5 yr tree management plan.

- The stump project was completed in late June
- Water tank has been ordered
- Tree planting to take place in early September
- Inventory to start in September

Great River Greening-

This group is out of St. Paul, MN and they use funding from state and federal grants to assist communities with tree planting and maintenance of those said trees in following years.

- 50 trees planted this past spring by City staff
- 150 trees planted by September of 2026
- An additional 200 trees planted by fall 2027
- GRG will contract watering to take place for a year from plant date

2026 DNR EAB grant-

The City is seeking \$140,070.08 of DNR funding to proactively address emerald ash borer by removing and replacing 62 declining ash trees in two priority areas. The grant application is due September 14, 2026.

Cameron Park Trail Grant-

I spoke with the DNR on 8/11 regarding the signed contract and they are a bit behind schedule. The hope would be to get the City something by the end of September.

HRDC “Growing Together Bemidji” grant funding-

HRDC has recently received grant funding to strengthen community gardens. The City has been approached with a funding opportunity to update our current gardens. Fencing, water hydrant and black dirt have made the list of improvements. \$24,452.00