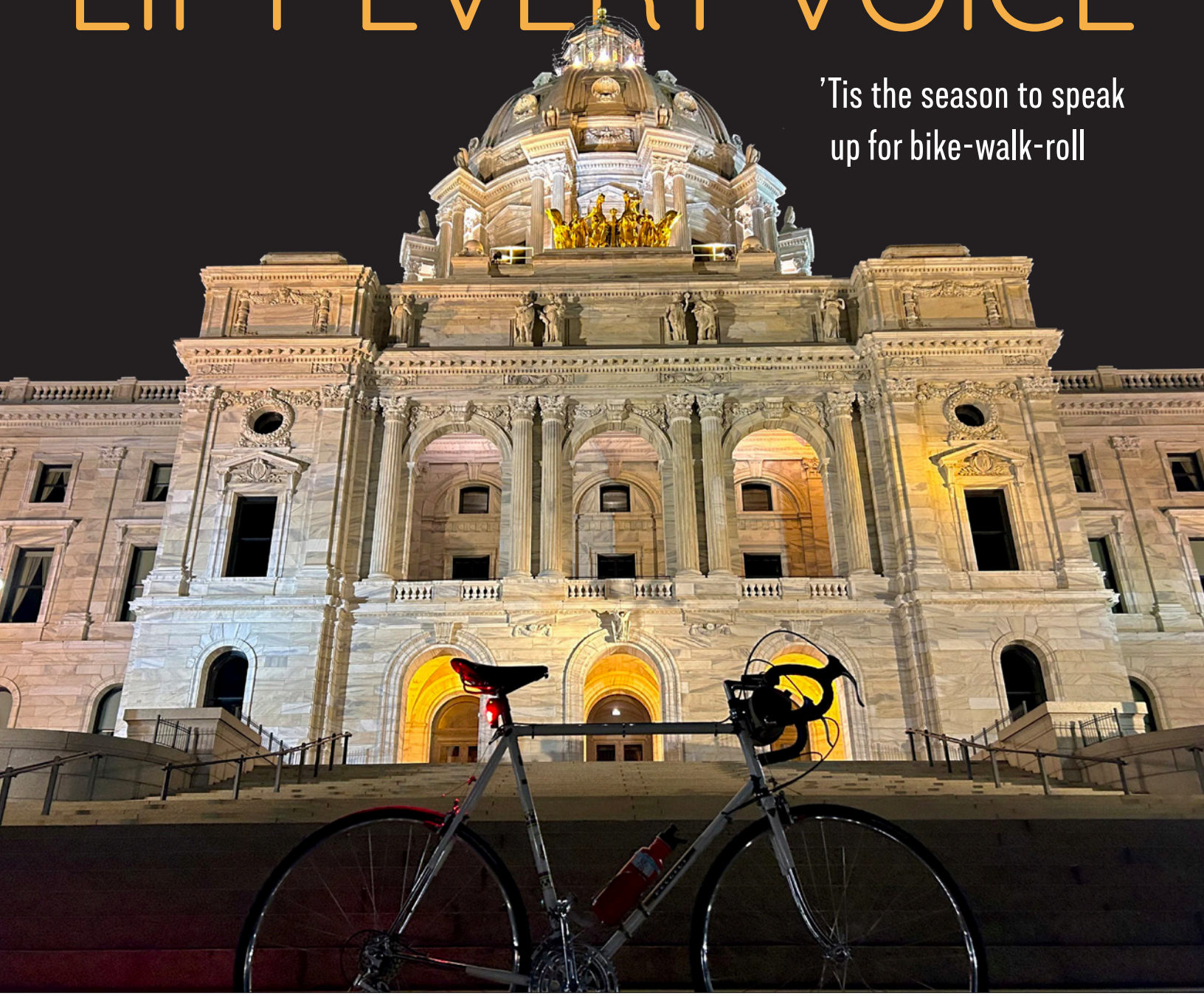
bikeMN
BICYCLE ALLIANCE OF MINNESOTA

WINTER 2025-26

SHIFT

LIFT EVERY VOICE

'Tis the season to speak up for bike-walk-roll



INSIDE

When Crossing the Street Is a Crime

BIKEMN WANTS THE LEGISLATURE TO DECRIMINALIZE JAYWALKING.

Do you ever cross a street midway down the block because you're in a hurry and no cars are coming? Or walk diagonally through a four-way intersection because it's more convenient?

If so, you are guilty of jaywalking — a term not found in Minnesota statute but a common practice that is illegal, nonetheless. Violation can result in a fine of $25 to $100, and the law lands most harshly on poor people and minorities, according to data that the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota has helped amass.

Under the direction of BikeMN in fall 2024, four Minnetonka High School students studied jaywalking as part of the award-winning school's VANTAGE program for experiential learning and professional development. The students' primary and secondary research revealed these facts and viewpoints:

- Seventy-five percent of all jaywalking tickets in New York City were issued to people of color prior to 2024, when the state's Department of Transportation decriminalized the practice, effective April 2025.
- Decriminalizing jaywalking "would have little impact on pedestrian safety," according to a student interview with Suzanne Scotty, pedestrian and bicycle planner for the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (MnDOT) metro district.
- "Design is the most important factor in pedestrian safety," Scotty said, and current design standards for streets favor vehicles over both bicyclists and pedestrians.

A slide from a presentation by Minnetonka High School VANTAGE program students that encouraged the decriminalization of jaywalking.

Rian Mathew, now a senior at Minnetonka High, helped present the group's findings at BikeMN's Day on the Hill in February 2025. "Part of our solution was to mark more crosswalks, increase the frequency of marked crosswalks, reduce speeds — whatever you can do to make drivers likely to yield," he says.

Generations of parents have instructed their kids not to dart out in traffic: Wouldn't decriminalizing jaywalking make roads more dangerous for children? Not if "we make legal crossing more convenient," says student researcher Alex Mattson, explaining that any intersection with a stop sign has pedestrian markings in Excelsior, where he works.

Safety, infrastructure and equity were the three themes in the students' presentation, the first by

high schoolers at BikeMN's Day on the Hill. Mathew found a study from Washington state showing that police conducted warrant checks on 77% of the people stopped for jaywalking. Such "selective enforcement," he says, is "not a way of improving traffic safety."

NEXT STEPS

As part of its Freedom to Move Act, the Bicycle Alliance promoted a bill in the 2025 Minnesota legislative session that would have allowed "pedestrians to cross a street when and where it is safe to do so," says Executive Director Michael Wojcik. "It was not an invitation to run into traffic — that will remain enforceable when our bill is passed." Though the proposed law got stuck in committee, the jaywalking initiative will again be on BikeMN's legislative agenda in 2026 (see the back cover).

Deputy and Education Director angela olson, who supervised the students, is working with a second group from Minnetonka High on jaywalking again this fall and winter. "I'm hoping they'll look into why the last bill did not succeed, along with other supporting research for the legislative session," she says.

◀ Minnetonka High School VANTAGE students appeared at BikeMN's Day on the Hill in February 2025. From left: Alex Mattson and Rian Mathew, now high school seniors; and Nico Martinez and Finn Pelto, who have graduated.

Cover photo by Dan Marshall; student photo by Amy Sundby Jeanchaiyaphum

Dream Alongside Me Into 2026

By Michael Wojcik, executive director

I invite you to take a moment during these short, hectic winter days to step back and imagine the community we all want to live in.

- Are the people who live there healthy and happy?
- Is it safe for kids to explore neighborhoods on their own power?
- Are the streets open for community festivals that draw people together from every generation and background?
- Do small, locally owned businesses thrive?
- And, perhaps most critically, is it a community that inclines us toward knowing neighbors and making new friends?

As I've traveled around our state visiting with community leaders and BikeMN members and chapters, these are the common themes that have emerged.

The mission of BikeMN is to realize these possibilities in towns and cities across our great state. As we continue to move together through an era of fear, uncertainty and national disunity, it remains our North Star.

At BikeMNour mission starts with advocating for the literal pathways that bring us together — and empowering individuals and families along the way. Anything less harms public well-being.

The Loons Loop the day before our Twin Cities Bike Tour in September. *Photo: Marco Meija*

So, as we gear up for 2026, I ask you to join me in making this dream one of your New Year's resolutions. If you have financial means, support BikeMN and other organizations that work to connect communities. Tell your local leaders why these values matter. Shovel your neighbors' sidewalks, invite them to share a meal, schedule a playdate for your kids and talk with them about these hopes.

You can be the change this year. And BikeMN will be right alongside you, pushing toward a Minnesota where we all do better.

From my family to yours, and on behalf of the entire BikeMN team, thank you for dreaming and working with me.

We welcome your donation
at bikemn.org/donate
or use the QR code.

Healthy Aging on an E-Bike

EDUCATION ENSURES SAFETY AND JOY FOR RIDERS OF ALL AGES.

By Amy Gage

Kathy Kelso (left) and her husband, David Radosevich, pose with their new Gazelle e-bikes (Easyflow C7, hers; Arroyo C5, his), which they bought after extensive research.

"The term 'healthy aging' is taking hold," says St. Paul resident Kathy Kelso, 77, a longtime advocate for issues on aging and a board member of Elder Voice Advocates.

For her, that has meant trading her 21-gear Trek hybrid bicycle for a seven-gear Class 1 e-bike, a pine green Gazelle Easyflow Low-Step that accommodates her 5-foot-1-inch frame and the physical limitations of an arthritic spine and joints.

The last time she rode her Trek, Kelso says she felt unsafe. "I had to accept that my hybrid biking days were over, but I still enjoy biking and want the physical exercise."

After attending a workshop for seniors on how to buy an e-bike — which BikeMN and AARP organized this past October — Kelso promptly visited Tonka Cycle and Ski, one of the event sponsors. She had researched enough on her own to know what she wanted (a frame she could step through) and didn't want (a throttle found on Class 2 e-bikes that gives riders a sudden, momentary boost).

"A throttle seemed unnerving," says Kelso. "I wanted only motor assist," which enhances but does not replace the bicyclist's own pedaling power.

Thirty-three people attended the AARP class, held at the Depot Coffee House in Hopkins. Questions centered on the differences among e-bikes, what you should plan to spend, where it's legal to ride an e-bike, and how to store a bike and battery safely, according to Meghan Redmond, associate state director of community engagement for AARP Minnesota.

E-bikes are an effective way to promote active mobility and independence among people whose bodies may be wearing out and slowing down, Redmond says. "E-bikes help older adults maintain mobility, extend their range of travel and continue participating in community life — even as physical abilities change."

E-BIKE BACKLASH?

In a presentation at the Iowa Bikes and Trails Summit in October 2025, BikeMN Communications Manager Erik Noonan described an "e-bikelash" that is gaining traction nationwide, largely driven by a lack of public understanding of this newer technology.

> "Better brain health; stronger hips, knees and ankles; and improved muscle mass are among the benefits of e-biking for seniors."
>
> — Bicycling Magazine, bicycling.com

One recent television news report emphasized — erroneously — that "it is against the law to ride e-bikes on public roads" and described the danger of e-bikers younger than 15 (the legal riding age for an e-bike) going too fast.

Media attention often fails to distinguish among the three classes of legal e-bikes (see box) and the scooter-like two-wheelers that Noonan and other bicycling enthusiasts disparage as "e-motos." These go faster than the legal e-bike limit of 28 miles per hour, use overpowered motors and often have non-functional pedals.

When a pedestrian in Hastings, Minnesota, suffered permanent brain damage in 2024 after being struck from behind by a teenager riding an e-moto, both media and police reports initially described the vehicle as an e-bike. The Bicycle Alliance learned that the machine was a Movcan V60, which "would be illegal to operate on any public right of way in Minnesota," according to BikeMN Executive Director Michael Wojcik.

BikeMN urges consumers to be cautious when purchasing an electric bike online and be sure it's not an e-moto. Consider:

- E-bikes' motors are no larger than 750 watts and have a maximum speed of 28 mph, with a throttle speed no higher than 20 mph.

Last October, AARP and BikeMN sponsored a class for seniors interested in e-biking.

- E-motos have larger, motorcycle-style throttles and can go faster than 28 mph.
- E-bikes have fully functional pedals, while e-moto pedals are decorative or nonfunctional.

As an e-bike rider himself, BikeMN's Wojcik told the AARP workshop that e-bikes are appropriate for adults of all ages. "What I liked best was the complete endorsement and enthusiasm of older adults hitting the trails with e-bikes and the education that will keep us safe," Kelso explains. "He took the ageism out of it."

E-BIKES DEFINED

Bob Timmons, outdoors reporter for the Minnesota Star Tribune, described the three classes of e-bikes that are legal in Minnesota in a story published on May 28, 2025:

- **Class 1:** A bike with pedal assist and no throttle. The assist cuts off at 20 mph.
- **Class 2:** A bike with pedal assist and a throttle. The bike's maximum speed is 20 mph regardless of how you use the assist or throttle.
- **Class 3:** A bike with a pedal assist and no throttle that can hit a maximum speed of 28 mph.

Source: startribune.com/so-you-want-to-get-an-e-bike-heres-what-you-should-know-in-minnesota/601346535

BikeMN and Our Streets'

DAY ON THE HILL

THURSDAY, FEB. 26, 2026

Good Neighbor Center
441 Rice St., Saint Paul

Learn more: bikemn.org

Interviews by Amy Gage

It's no accident that the word "Minnesota" is prominent in the Bicycle Alliance's name, as well as its nickname, BikeMN.

With 10 chapters throughout the state, the Bicycle Alliance has roots and resources in many places beyond its Minneapolis headquarters, including Rochester, where Executive Director Michael Wojcik lives.

These connections help us collaborate and work toward our mutual goal of making Minnesota a place where every person, everywhere, can easily walk, bike and roll — whatever their age and abilities.

We caught up with several chapters to see what they accomplished in 2025 and what's on the horizon for next year. In a word (or two), these folks are busy. And engaged.

Welcoming Willmar

Having grown up in Willmar, a town of some 21,000 people in west-central Minnesota, Pam Vruwink knows firsthand what active transportation looks like in a rural community.

Although bicycling would seem more doable in a small town, "you have to encourage people" to take advantage of the sharrows and designated bike routes on city streets that Willmar Bikes — the local BikeMN chapter — has worked hard to put in place.

"Being in a rural community, even if it's convenient to walk or bike somewhere, you may then have to drive 5 miles to work or 10 miles to visit Grandma," says Vruwink, the community education enrichment coordinator for Willmar Public Schools and an active member of Willmar Bikes.

With agriculture and manufacturing, including Jennie-O Turkey, as the area's economic engines, Willmar has evolved into a "wonderfully diverse" community, she says, of migrant workers who have become permanent residents. Somali immigrants and Karen-speaking refugees from Myanmar have augmented the established Latino population in recent years.

Adults from those communities often bike to work if they lack access to a vehicle, Vruwink says. And "getting their kids on bicycles" is a priority for Willmar Bikes, whose numerous collaborators include:

Willmar Bikes has taken advantage of BikeMN's Walk! Bike! Fun! training, helping school-age children gain confidence as bicyclists and pedestrians.

SAVE THE DATES!

Join a spring ride in MAY and a four-day jaunt in AUGUST — both in Greater Minnesota.

3RD ANNUAL MED CITY MEANDER

May 23
(Saturday)
Rochester

BICYCLING AROUND MINNESOTA

Bicycling Around Minnesota

August 13–16
(Thursday–Sunday)
Location TBA

Learn more at bikemn.org/events

Willmar Bikes' monthly meetings attract a variety of organizational partners and volunteers. Front, from left: Chris Radel, Pam Vruwink (Willmar Public Schools Community Education) and Beth Fischer (executive director, Convention & Visitors' Bureau). Back, from left: Blake Barnard (Mid-Minnesota Development Commission), retirees Ritch Mjelde, David Moody, Donn Winckler and Jeff Filipek, and Willmar Mayor Doug Reese.

- Kandiyohi and Renville County SHIP (Statewide Health Improvement Partnership), which has funded bike helmet giveaways for kids, provides bike tuneups at events and successfully applied for Willmar Bikes to be named BikeMN's Advocate of the Year in 2024.
- Willmar Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, whose website highlights Glacial Lakes State Trail, Green Lake Trail, Eagle Lake Trail and various fat-tire or mountain bike trails.
- The city's Parks & Recreation Department, where Director Rob Baumgarn has "made bike safety a priority," says Vruwink.
- Kandiyohi County Public Works Director Mel Oden, previously the city engineer, "who is always considering how biking fits into county infrastructure planning."
- Rick's Cycling and Sports Center, which owner Rick Norsten has been running since 1983. "It's locally owned, which is wonderful," Vruwink says, "in that [small-town] bike shops tend to be disappearing."

Coming up: The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission helped secure a $2,500 grant — "a huge number for us" — for bike safety efforts in the coming year. Unless a thunderstorm forces its cancellation again, the 13th annual Mayors' Bike Ride, led by elected officials from New London, Spicer and Willmar, will happen in September. The Glacial Lakes trailhead in Willmar is getting a new shelter with restroom facilities. And the Tuesday night Rockin' Robbins concert series near Foot Lake in July and August will be home to a Willmar Bikes–sponsored bike corral that encourages folks to skip the free shuttle and ride their bikes to the event.

"It's fun to see the trends," says Vruwink, who checks in the bikes on Robbins Island. "This past summer we saw a higher number of e-bikes with mature adults. Also, there are more young families with bike trailers and bike seats. I think people are feeling more confident about biking," she concludes.

Credit Willmar Bikes' consistent and collaborative advocacy for that.

A spring bike check kicked off Bike Month in Willmar, with volunteers Carl Holm and Mike Calvin providing minor repairs to residents' bicycles and adult trikes.

Interviews by Amy Gage

Small town thinks big

At 8,800 people, Thief River Falls in northwestern Minnesota is undeniably a small town. But the cycling enthusiasts at Bike Thief River Falls — a BikeMN chapter founded in 2019 — know how to celebrate big.

Glen Kajewski, who's been biking since he was a farm boy outside Waseca, spent three hours training Girl Scouts this past fall on bike safety and skills review. "The smiles on their faces: I don't need to get paid when I see that kind of energy," he says.

When a new trail along First Street opened this past summer, connecting to the River Walk and downtown, the chapter helped organize a bike-walk-roll event "without motor vehicles," says Glen Kajewski, a former City Council member and retired USDA employee. Close to 100 people participated in the event, which included pedestrians on the trail, bicyclists on the street and Mayor Mike Lorenson and his family serving ice cream at Hugo's Family Marketplace.

Active railroads make rails-to-trails initiatives impossible in the area.

A couple enjoys the 29-mile gravel route during the 2025 Rosewood Gramble.

"But we're flat and open country," Kajewski notes, making rural riding accessible. Bike Thief River Falls organizes the annual Rosewood Gramble every September, with two paved and two gravel routes spanning 16 to 64 miles. The 2025 ride drew 44 riders, up from nine when the Gramble launched in 2022.

About half of attendees at the chapter's monthly meetings "don't even ride bikes," he says, "but they see the value in making the community more walkable and bikeable."

That broad view of its mission and projects helps the organization work with an eye to the next generation. "I'm heavily into investing in education for our kids, and part of that is biking," says Cheryl Lee, a retired accountant, former business owner and past member of the Thief River Falls School Board.

When reduced funding and a shortage of drivers forced the school district to cut bus routes within 2 miles of schools, "it pushed some kids to ride bikes," Lee says. That, in turn, spurred participation in spring 2024 in BikeMN's Walk! Bike! Fun! curriculum.

Other kid-friendly initiatives include:

- A mile-long trail link from Main Street to the Northland Community & Technical College athletic field complex "makes it easier for young folks to get around to their activities," Lee says.
- A Safe Routes to School grant is helping the group plan for more active transportation within town and to and from schools.
- Bike Thief River Falls now owns a bike fleet and manages the BikeMN trailer for transporting it.
- The group donated 100 bikes at the annual giveaway earlier this year, which allows people to turn in, take or exchange a bike fixed up by chapter members.
- Next: "We want to up our game on helmets," says Kajewski. The group also aims to give away more bike lights and locks.

The annual fat-tire rides this winter help folks see the potential for year-round cycling. That preparation is important when you're only 70 miles south of the Canadian border. "Our weather up here is a little different than the Twin Cities," says Lee with a laugh. "We're colder, faster."

Beyond the Twin Cities

BIKEMN AIMS TO INCREASE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS THROUGHOUT MINNESOTA.

His job is to increase biking opportunities in Duluth and other communities in northeast Minnesota. But Val Langer didn't learn to ride a bike himself until he was 12 years old.

"It's ironic given the name of my employer," says Langer, the new northeast regional coordinator for BikeMN, who has lived in Duluth since 2020. "But as an adult rider, I don't have a lot of confidence."

That is one reason why Langer, who doesn't own a car, is an avid pedestrian and transit user. The other reason relates to an issue on which he hopes to collaborate with Vibrant Streets Duluth, a Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota chapter — lack of safe and accessible infrastructure.

From his home in West Duluth, Langer says he has "sidewalks and maybe a shoulder or two" on the 2-mile trek to downtown, "so biking takes a back seat." It's a situation he hopes to change.

Among Langer's top priorities for the newly created BikeMN position:

1. Serve as a liaison for Vibrant Streets Duluth and help support that group's events.
2. Take over the E-bike Commuter Assistance Program (ECAP) for northeast Minnesota.
3. Expand the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota "name and brand" beyond the Twin Cities metro area, by building a broad network and local connections.

A lifelong resident of Northern Minnesota, Val Langer enjoys taking the "Troll Train" for the annual Knife River Julebyen celebration on the North Shore.

Langer is working toward a bachelor's degree in environmental sustainability at the University of Minnesota–Duluth. He focused last year on multimodal transportation in Duluth as a member of Minnesota GreenCorps assigned to Zeitgeist, a nonprofit arts and community development organization.

Once he hits his one-year mark with BikeMN next August, Langer hopes to have established the organization as a resource for people who want to launch a multimodal commute or learn how to buy the right bike. Alongside Vibrant Streets Duluth, he aims to create group rides and mechanic nights, "programs that have no cost barrier and accommodate people's income levels."

Reach out: Connect with Val Langer and welcome him to the BikeMN community by emailing val@bikemn.org.

Our Statewide Reach

The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota has 10 geographically based chapters across the state in Albert Lea, Cannon Falls, Duluth, Fergus Falls, Hopkins, Mankato, Rochester, St. Paul, Thief River Falls and Willmar. Our members can opt to share their contributions with the chapter(s) of their choice.

BikeMN also is affiliated with Bicycling Around Minnesota (BAM), which hosts an annual bike ride promoting bicycle tourism around the state. We are working to restore chapter presences in the Arrrowhead and Red River Valley regions of the state.

What's next for Summit Avenue?

BIKEMN CONTINUES TO ADVOCATE FOR THE REGIONAL BIKE TRAIL ALONG ST. PAUL'S SHOWCASE STREET.

By Erik Noonan

BikeMN helped organize a Safer Summit bike ride on Sunday, October 12, from the monument at Summit Avenue and Mississippi River Boulevard east to the Cathedral of Saint Paul. *Photo: CJ Lindor*

Following a short but impressive campaign season in our capital city, St. Paul is set to welcome a new mayor: DFLer Kaohly Vang Her, who has served in the Minnesota House since 2019. She often speaks fondly of biking with her siblings while growing up in Appleton, Wisconsin, and has voiced support for accelerating high-quality bike infrastructure in underinvested neighborhoods.

Yet Her's lack of clear support for the already-approved Summit Avenue Regional Trail plan has left many metro-area bike advocates concerned that this vital project could lose momentum.

> "The best time to build protected bike infrastructure was a generation ago. The next best time is now."

WHAT IS THE SUMMIT AVENUE REGIONAL TRAIL?

After nearly a decade of visioning and extensive public engagement, the Summit Avenue Regional Trail plan — approved in 2023 by both the Saint Paul City Council and the Metropolitan Council — would upgrade the corridor's narrow, unprotected painted lanes into elevated, protected and significantly safer bikeways. The redesign moves bike traffic to the right of parked cars, widens the lanes for comfortable two-way travel on each side, and prevents vehicles, debris and ice from encroaching.

If you joined the second annual Twin Cities Bike Tour this past September, think of the off-road infrastructure on Bryant Avenue — except running alongside the longest stretch of Victorian-era homes in the United States.

Every major study of this type of protected infrastructure shows the same thing: These designs get more people riding more often, more safely and for more months of the year, which is important in four-season Minnesota.

Here's why Summit Avenue matters: St. Paul is behind. While Minneapolis is nationally recognized for building protected bike infrastructure that keeps all road users safer, reduces maintenance costs and supports health and sustainability, St. Paul — despite its impressive 27-mile Grand

▶ East of Lexington Avenue, the current painted bike lanes on Summit place riders dangerously close to parked cars, increasing the risk of getting "doored." *Photo: CJ Lindor*

▼ The driver of this white van turned illegally in front of three kids on bikes moments after this photo was taken. *Photo: Erik Noonan*

Round encircling the city — still treats biking largely as recreation. The Summit Avenue Regional Trail would change that. It would become a critical east-west spine, a foundation for a true citywide network. A 95% safe trip is still unsafe; complete streets that work for everyone are the solution.

Opposition groups are spreading misinformation: about tree loss, safety, corruption and lack of public support. These same claims appear every time and everywhere protected bike infrastructure is proposed. And every time, the data and facts point to a different reality.

We cannot grow ridership by only building infrastructure for the most fearless riders. Since the 1970s the evidence has been clear: Safe, dedicated, protected routes on high-traffic corridors are what get people riding.

A ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION OPPORTUNITY

Summit Avenue's utilities are over 100 years old, and the road is at the end of its life. Cities and counties almost never add bike infrastructure outside of major reconstruction. If we miss this moment, Summit Avenue will remain unsafe and inaccessible for another half-century or more — its beauty reserved exclusively for car-users, pedestrians and the bravest, most confident cyclists.

Outgoing Mayor Melvin Carter has been a strong proponent of the Summit Avenue plan and of infrastructure investments that work for everyone. BikeMN staff and members of our Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition chapter have already reached out to Mayor-Elect Her to share how robust the public process was and how closely the plan aligns with the equity priorities she has championed.

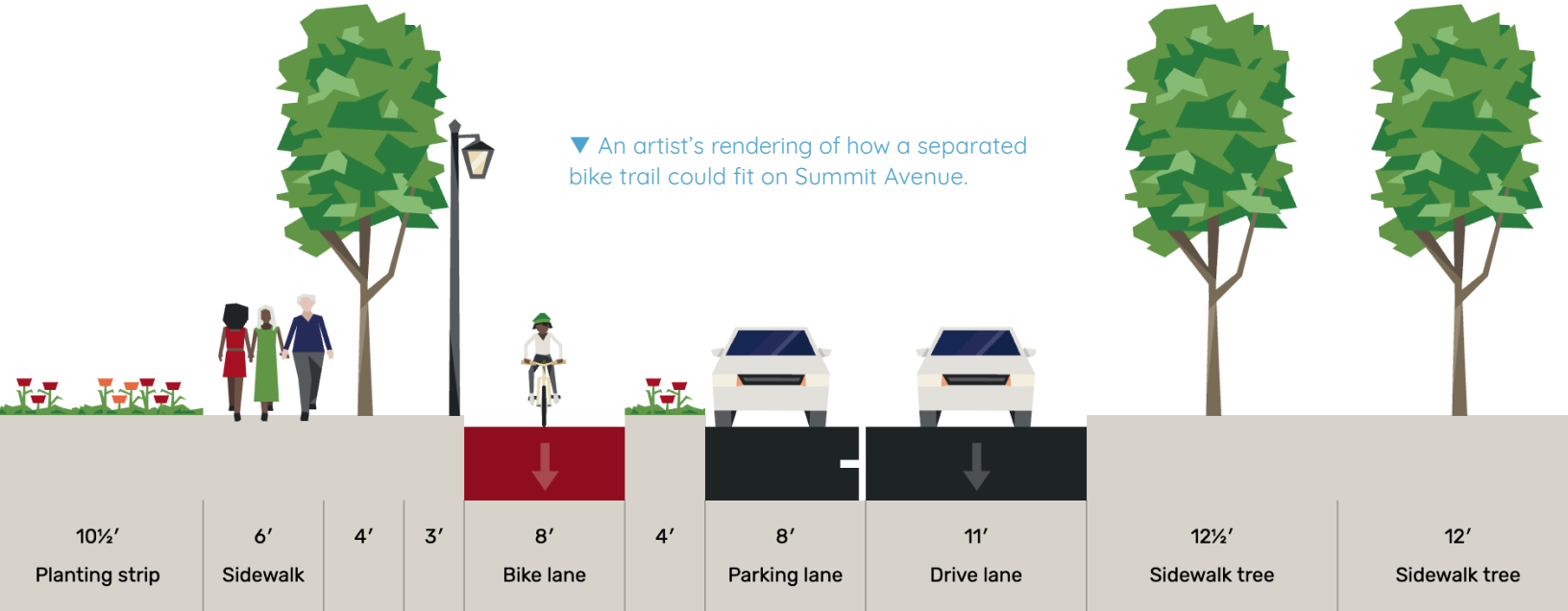
We believe once she fully engages with the details, she will see how deeply this project supports her vision for a more connected, healthy and inclusive St. Paul. We eagerly await the mayor-elect making time for these conversations.

A completed Summit Avenue Regional Trail will be a gift to future generations — much like the Grand Round, which faced similar skepticism in its time. From the Mississippi River to the Cathedral of Saint Paul and back again, the trail promises clean, safe, joyful travel for people of all ages and abilities. And it will show what's possible for streets across our capital city and beyond.

GET INVOLVED!

If you live in St. Paul or near Summit Avenue or simply want to help increase safe and accessible bicycling infrastructure throughout the Twin Cities, visit **safersummit.org**.

Erik Noonan is communications manager at BikeMN and a year-round bicyclist and pedestrian.



▼ An artist's rendering of how a separated bike trail could fit on Summit Avenue.

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BikeMN's Legislative Priorities

The Minnesota Legislature will begin its 2026 session on Tuesday, February 17 (the day after Presidents' Day), and adjourn on Monday, May 18.

Here are the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota's advocacy goals for 2026:

- Expand the definition of a highway's purpose to include transit, bikers and pedestrians.
- Strengthen the definition of safe passing distances beyond 3 feet.
- Establish and enforce 15 mph speeds in school zones.
- Legalize jaywalking when a pedestrian determines it is safe to cross.
- Bicyclists may treat a red light as a stop sign when it is clearly safe.
- Increase penalties for repeat and extreme speeding offenders.
- Before highway infrastructure is expanded, prioritize funding to repair and maintain what exists.
- Define "e-motos" to distinguish them from legal e-bikes.
- Change Minnesota State Aid roadway standards to make safety-oriented infrastructure changes easier on these corridors.
- Create an inspector general position within the Minnesota Department of Transportation to ensure MnDOT abides by its own rules and regulations.

Visit **bikemn.org/2026-legislative-priorities** for details and updates.

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BOARD TALK...

WHY I VOLUNTEER

"BikeMN has set the bar for statewide organizations supporting biking, walking and rolling. I am proud to have been a supporter since 2012."

— JAN MATHEUS, BOARD MEMBER

SHIFT was produced by editor/writer Amy Gage and designer Michelle Wright.