



EDUCATE,

ADVOCATE,

EMPOWER!

OUR WORK, TOGETHER, IN 2024.



INSIDE

- > Find the right e-bike
- > Mankato cyclists' spirit
- > Celebrating the Twin Cities Bike Tour

SAVE THE DATE



Celebrate 16 years with the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota — and our impact on bicycling, walking and rolling throughout the state.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24
4-7:30 P.M.

REGISTRATION & HAPPY HOUR, 4-5:45 P.M.
DINNER AT 6 P.M.

LAKE MONSTER BREWING, ST. PAUL

Funds raised from ticket sales will help us pedal toward our \$7,500 goal.



Questions?

bikemn.org/events or
info@bikemn.org



Welcome to BikeMN!

The Bicycle Alliance extended its reach in 2024 with the addition of Vibrant Streets Duluth and the Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition as chapters, bringing the total number to 13 (see page 11 for the full list).



The two newest chapters have two different origin stories, but leaders of both say that the alliance with BikeMN will help them recruit members, raise money, share best practices with other chapters statewide and be proactive on issues of common interest.

“People come to meetings and events, but I’d like to see a core group of people to help keep the Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition sustainable,” says Zack Mensinger, chair of the organization, which volunteers founded in 2010 when the St. Paul City Council disbanded its Bicycle Advisory Board.

Likewise, Vibrant Streets Duluth — a newly formed organization that builds on the past work of We Walk in Duluth and Duluth Bikes — appreciates the structure that being a BikeMN chapter can provide.

“We’re more a collection of people getting it all figured out,” says John Jaramillo-Kraemer, a member of the Vibrant Streets executive committee. Updating social media profiles, improving the website and planning events are all in process. Next up is a strategic plan.



Zack Mensinger, Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition

Libby Bent, another executive committee member, says the new Vibrant Streets logo reflects the group’s concern for the changing climate by incorporating elements of nature. “It’s more than just biking, more than just streets,” she explains. “You get a sense of vibrancy.”

OUR BIKE-FRIENDLY STATE

The League of American Bicyclists ranks Minnesota fifth among bike-friendly states in the nation. We have 33 bicycle-friendly communities — including towns and cities with BikeMN chapters such as Albert Lea, Duluth, Fargo-Moorhead, Fergus Falls, Grand Marais, Hopkins, Mankato, Rochester, St. Paul, Thief River Falls and Willmar.

EDUCATE AND ADVOCATE

When you think of the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, organized bike rides in beautiful settings during (usually) warm weather may come to mind.

But that's only part of what BikeMN does. "Educational programming is a big piece of what the staff focuses on," says Education Manager CJ Lindor, "but it's not as well known."

For example: The Walk! Bike! Fun! program, which promotes youth walking and biking safety, has components for parents, volunteers and students as well as teachers, educators and school administrators. Another popular core program is Learn to Ride, for adults who have never had the opportunity to ride a bike.

Among the education highlights of 2024:

- BikeMN hosted its first "train the trainer" workshop for the Learn to Ride program outside the Twin Cities. Employees of Zeitgeist and Continental Ski & Bike in Duluth took part in the multi-day program.
- Funding from the Minnesota Department of Health supported Bikeable Community Workshops in Warroad, a community of 2,000 people that already has downsized a highway and established free bike libraries, and in Warren, population 1,560, the county seat of Marshall County.
- Eighty-two people participated in Learn to Ride at locations including Sarah's Oasis, a safe-housing program for women, St. Paul Public Housing, the International Institute and Literacy Minnesota.
- All told, Bicycle Alliance educators instructed and motivated 319 participants in various programs to bicycle more safely and knowledgeably in 2024.
- A total of 51 classes included 14 pop-up bike repair shops at various locations and e-bike commuter assistance programs (ECAP) for Move Minneapolis, the Lyndale Neighborhood Association and others.
- And some 50 folks learned the fine points of navigating multimodal roads through the People-Friendly Driver classes, aimed at driver's education instructors ("train the trainer") and workplace safe-driving initiatives.

Not all Bicycle Alliance programs can be quantified in neat numbers.

BikeMN staff worked with 100-plus educators in Walk! Bike! Fun! programs this past year; those teachers, in turn, passed on their learnings to thousands of schoolchildren throughout Minnesota. "Indirectly via our 'train the trainer' model — which is our primary strategy for providing education statewide — we can confidently claim tens of thousands of schoolchildren affected via Walk! Bike! Fun! lessons in classrooms," Lindor says.

That means many more cyclists, and many more confident, safety-conscious cyclists, reshaping our climate and our communities.



THE LEAGUE
OF AMERICAN BICYCLISTS
since 1880



Christy Olafson works with the hospitality group at Marvin Windows, a windows and doors manufacturer — and a major employer — in Warroad. The company established a bike library for staff and visitors.



Education Manager CJ Lindor (left) and Deputy Director Angela Olson represented BikeMN at the Safe Routes to School National Conference in Fort Collins, Colorado, in October 2024. Olson presented on two topics: "Pedaling the Policy: State and Local Engagement" and "Let's Roll With It! A Gathering of and for Bike Educators." Safe Routes is a national movement to make walking and biking to school easier for children and teens. Learn more: saferoutespartnership.org

Flood Can't Drown the Spirit of Mankato Bicyclists

BEST DAM PIE RIDE HONORS THE HRUSKA FAMILY FOR YEARS OF SUPPORT

By Becky Davis

On Sunday, October 6, 2024, the Greater Mankato Bike and Walk Advocates — also known as Kato Bike-Walk — honored the Dam Store with an official ride, titled the Best Dam Pie Thank You Ride.

From 2011 through 2023, Kato Bike-Walk along with other bicycling enthusiasts and numerous businesses hosted the Mankato River Ramble, which attracted close to 2,000 riders each year from throughout Minnesota and across state lines. Townspeople prepared and organized snacks, and music from local talent rang out as we pulled up to each rest area. We guzzled coffee or Gatorade, refilled water bottles and gobbled snacks.

But the highlight of everyone's day was the Best Dam Pie ever, created by Jenny (Hruska) Barnes at the Dam Store next to Rapidan Dam, 16 miles southwest of Mankato.

Almost every cyclist in the region made the Rapidan Dam store a destination for a tasty burger cooked by Jenny's brother, David Hruska, or a milkshake, or a piece of Jenny's famous pie. Any stop on a regular weekday undoubtedly meant a chat with their dad, Jim Hruska, originator of the Dam Store.

Last June, when the Blue Earth River swelled out of its banks and carved a new path around the old dam, the Hruska family home was washed down the

The 112-year-old Dam Store was demolished June 28 after major flooding of the Blue Earth River carved a new path around the west side of the Rapidan Dam.

— *Mankato Free Press*, coverage by Tim Krohn, editor

river, and authorities dismantled the Dam Store before it met the same fate. The event made international

news. Monetary support poured in through Go-Fund-Me sites and a highly successful fundraiser at the Mankato Brewery.

But nothing can replace a way of life that was swept away.

David, Jenny and Jim want to rebuild, but that won't be possible for a good long while. So, they opened a temporary Dam Store



From left: Jenny (Hruska) Barnes receives a \$3,000 donation from BikeMN Executive Director Michael Wojcik and Kato Bike-Walk President Chris Corley.



Café on Front Street in Mankato, in the iconic Wagon Wheel location. Locals prowled past the door for two weeks prior to its October opening, peering in to see if the Dam Store Café had opened yet.

We cyclists wanted to show the Hruska family how much we appreciate their work and service — and their willingness, for years, to work extra-long hours to serve pie to 1,800 riders in one day. So Greater Mankato Bike and Walk Advocates organized the Best Dam Pie Thank You Ride on the day before the new Dam Store opened. We gathered at Mount Kato, a winter recreation area south of town. Chris Corley, our GMBWA president, addressed the crowd from the Ski Chalet balcony, explaining our reasons for the ride and our intentions for the future (which we hope will include a two-day Kato Bike Fall Fest).

Capped at 200 people, the Best Dam Pie Thank You Ride included 20- and 6-mile routes and a 4.5-mile walk. At the new Dam Store Café location, Kato Bike-Walk and

BikeMN presented the Hruska family with a \$3,000 check of appreciation for their past 12 years of support.

Having Dam Store pie again with friends in the new café brought a lot of smiles. Café workers gathered with riders and talked as Jenny, David, Mark Barnes (Jenny's husband, who works endlessly behind the scenes) and Jim were preparing for the big opening on Monday, October 7. Several times that opening week, the line to get a table was out the door.

We wish continued success for this family that has given so much to the Mankato community; we also thank BikeMN Executive Director Michael Wojcik for joining the ride and proudly supporting our work.

Avid cyclist, novelist and children's book author Rebecca Fjelland Davis recently re-released "Chasing AllieCat," an award-winning novel about mountain bikers, set in the Mankato area. This article is adapted from her blog post at rebeccafjellanddavis.com.



Jenny Barnes serves her homemade pie in 2023 at the Mankato River Ramble's most popular rest stop.

Kato Bike-Walk: A Brief History

- 2010:** Group forms and becomes an affiliated committee of BikeMN.
- 2011:** Hosts the first Mankato River Ramble.
- 2013:** Holds first River Valley 100.
- 2014:** City of Mankato paints the first on-street bike lanes.
- 2016:** Leads bicycle education training for PE teachers.
- 2017:** Installs bike-repair stations around town.
- 2023:** Adopts Kato Bike-Walk as a nickname.
- 2023:** Greater Mankato Bike and Walk Advocates becomes a formal BikeMN chapter.

Learn more at katobikewalk.com



Above and left: Chris Corley speaks to the crowd at Mount Kato before the Best Dam Pie Thank You Ride on October 6.



Board Leaders

Outgoing Chair Andy Lambert has served on the BikeMN board since 2020.

As Andy Lambert prepares to cycle off his position as board chair for the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, he reflects on the group's "significant policy wins" at the Minnesota Legislature in 2024.

Those include:

- Updating the e-bike classification system, along with language on what constitutes an e-bike.
- Ensuring that driver's education in Minnesota helps motorists understand how to safely share our streets with cyclists, walkers and other "vulnerable road users."
- Advocating that transportation entities — city, state and federal — plan, design and implement roadwork through a "complete streets" vision that sees and serves all types of road users.

Last year, Lambert chaired the hiring committee to replace founding Executive Director Dorian Grilley with Rochester resident and former City Council member Michael Wojcik, who has served as executive director at BikeMN since August 2023. "I am still so proud of how the staff and board came together to get to where we are today," Lambert says.

He looks forward to the leadership of his successor, current Vice Chair Reyna Lopez, who will ascend to board chair in January 2025. "Her leadership and commitment to equitable mobility will guide us as we continue our work," Lambert says.

"Reyna brings a welcome perspective and a deep dedication to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background or ZIP Code, has access to safe

and sustainable transportation options."

As she steps into the role, Lopez says she is eager to bring diverse participation and perspectives to BikeMN as it strives to serve all corners of the state. "When people see someone who looks like

them, they want to be part of that organization or event," explains Lopez, a native of Monterrey, Mexico. "As a member of the

"In 2024 we passed what is broadly considered the best e-bike legislation in the nation, and we hope to capitalize on that even more in 2025."

— Erik Noonan, BikeMN communications manager

WE HOST GREAT RIDES. • WE EMPOWER AND EDUCATE PEOPLE.

Latin community, I want to make us one community and bring people together.”

She aims to recruit more partnerships and sponsors — along with “more people, more ideas” — to the Bicycle Alliance’s work: in lobbying, education of children and adults, events management and more.

Lopez also wants to grow the number of BikeMN chapters in Minnesota, which now sits at 13 with the recent addition of chapters in Duluth and St. Paul. Local involvement and role modeling inspire more people to take up bicycling. “You feel more safety if you can see other people riding in your neighborhood,” says Lopez, who has developed relationships with new bicyclists in the Twin Cities’ Hmong, Latin and Somali communities.

“I want to encourage more people to try bicycling,” she explains, “and to use it more for transportation.”

Safe bicycling remains another top priority, through BikeMN’s education initiatives for cyclists of all ages. But safety includes drivers as well. “I want us to do more education,” says Lopez, “and not just for cyclists and pedestrians but people in a car. At the end of the day, we share the same streets.”

WHY I SERVE...

“I’ve always been an advocate for walking, bicycling and trail development to make communities safer for all road users. Being able to represent Greater Southwest Minnesota on the BikeMN board is a perk.”

— LUKE EWALD, JACKSON

“I serve on the board to advocate for a healthy lifestyle for all people and to help navigate corporate relationships to best gain access to philanthropic funds.”

— THOMAS LAVIN, ST. ANTHONY

“I believe biking and walking are essential to our physical and mental health. My BikeMN board service is to help others walk and bike in a fun, accessible and safe way.”

— BOB BIERSCHEID, ROSEVILLE

Meet the BikeMN Board



Incoming Chair Reyna Lopez has served on the BikeMN board since 2022.

BOARD OFFICERS

Reyna Lopez (she/her), chair, St. Paul

Kim Struk (she/her), secretary, Roseville

Marcie Lowry, treasurer, St. Louis Park

BOARD MEMBERS

Bob Bierschied (he/him), Roseville

Luke Ewald (he/him), Jackson

Wayne Hurley (he/him), Fergus Falls

Dina Khaled (she/her), Minneapolis

Andy Lambert (he/him), Minneapolis

Thomas Lavin (he/him), St. Anthony

Khaleel Qandeel, Minneapolis and Chicago

Tom Steen, Rochester

Anne Walli (she/her), St. Paul

Martha Wavrin (she/her), Belle Plaine

Cindy Winters (she/her), Mankato

● WE CONNECT CYCLISTS AND PEDESTRIANS ACROSS THE STATE.

Ride On!

INAUGURAL TWIN CITIES BIKE TOUR INSPIRES ENERGY AND CYCLISTS GALORE.

After months of planning, negotiating city and county permits, watching the weather reports, sweating the frantic last-minute details — you'd think the Bicycle Alliance team would be exhausted. *Not!*

Instead, the planners of the inaugural Twin Cities Bike Tour (TCBT), which drew 2,000 riders on September 15, say they're excited to begin planning the second year.

"The route included areas of the Cities I have not seen before."

First, however, Executive Director Michael Wojcik is savoring the success of the Bicycle Alliance's first two-city metro ride, one that his team had only about six months to plan. That the bike tour is the organization's primary fundraiser only added to the pressure.

"Our fundraising goal was \$15,000, and we netted more than \$40,000,"



Wojcik exclaims. "For half of the riders, it was their first time riding in a bike event."

Wojcik also is pleased with the diversity of age, ethnicity and gender identity among riders. "I want our audience to be representative of the community," he says. A partnership with Minneapolis Public Schools on the inaugural TCBT helped make that possible.

Bicyclists came from Greater Minnesota; Grand Forks, North Dakota; Eau Claire, Wisconsin; and Milwaukee and Detroit, though most were from the 11-county metro area.

HEADING WEST

This year's catchy tagline, "Two Great Cities, One Great Ride," won't describe the route in 2025. Instead of focusing on the Saint Paul Grand Round, the Twin Cities Bike Tour will head west on Sunday, September 14, to celebrate the growing cycling infrastructure in Hopkins, St. Louis Park and Minneapolis — the top-ranked cycling city in the nation, according to People for Bikes.

From the same starting point at Wabun Park in Minneapolis, riders will experience:

- The Bryant Avenue bikeway, which the City of Minneapolis "reimagined" in 2022 to include safe and dedicated infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians.

- Portions of the popular Midtown Greenway, a 5.5-mile former railroad trench widely considered a highpoint of bicycling infrastructure in Minneapolis.
- The bike- and pedestrian-friendly Artery, a connection point between historic downtown Hopkins and a still-to-come light-rail transit station once the Green Line Extension goes through.
- The reopened North Cedar Lake Regional Trail, which includes a bridge and two tunnels, allowing trail users to get between the Midtown Greenway and Hopkins with few at-grade crossings.
- The multimodal Franklin Avenue Bridge near the University of Minnesota, which proves that reducing driving lanes can accommodate other modes of travel equitably and effectively.

"The ride made me appreciate just how much bike infrastructure we have."

"For people who live outside the metro, the Twin Cities is more of an ambiguous border than people who live in Minneapolis and St. Paul," says Ted Duepner, supporter relations and engagement manager at BikeMN — who aims to utilize both the suburbs and the urban core on the annual ride.

Among the taglines being considered for the 2025 tour is "The Ride That

Supports the Work,” a nod to the TCBT’s fundraising capacity for bicycle-related initiatives across the state — as well as the support that the inaugural ride engendered.

“The list of sponsor organizations is a ‘who’s who’ of people and groups who are working locally to create community around biking,” says BikeMN Communications Manager Erik Noonan (see the full list at right). “No group said ‘no.’ Given that it’s our primary fundraising ride, the Twin Cities Bike Tour is the ride that actually works to improve things for bicyclists and pedestrians across Minnesota.”

“It was nice to have mechanics available at every rest stop.”



Look Who’s Riding!



Here’s who rode the inaugural Twin Cities Bike Tour on September 15, 2024:

- **Age:** 27%, ages 35-49; 26%, 50-64; 24%, 65-plus; 14%, 23-34; 9%, under 23.
- **Gender identity:** 55% male, 36% female, 1% nonbinary, 8% no answer.
- **Ethnicity:** White (non-Hispanic), 79%; Asian, 4%; Hispanic, 3%; Black, 2%; biracial, 2%; no answer, 10%.

Our Sponsors Rock!

Thanks to the many businesses and organizations that provided dollars, food, time and effort to the inaugural Twin Cities Bike Tour in September 2024.

Presenting Sponsors

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St. Paul Pioneer Press

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30 Days of Biking
Wahoo! Adventures
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Sustain Saint Paul
Twin Cities Bicycling Club
Twin Cities in Motion
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The Hub Bicycle Co-op
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Loons Loop Friends

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Skratch Labs

BECOME A SPONSOR
OR PARTNER IN 2025





Find the Right E-Bike for You!

By Angela Olson

Whether you're a year-round cyclist or a seasonal rider, winter can be a great time to shop for a bike. Stores are less crowded; retailers may be discounting last year's models — and if you're considering an e-bike, you can take time to learn about the many varieties and brands.

Here are five recommendations to help in your research:

1. Consider your needs.

What kind of riding do you do? Do you need a rack to carry saddlebags or a child seat? Do you plan to ride through the winter? How you want to use your bike will influence the accessories and equipment you'll need — like tire size or number of gears. Consider also the torque of the motor, battery life and weight.

2. Find your class.

Three different classes of e-bikes are legal in Minnesota (see sidebar). Class 2 is currently the most common type of e-bike sold.

3. Fit matters.

The right frame size will help you feel comfortable and avoid stress to your body. When standing over the frame, you want at least an inch of space between your body and the bike. A bigger, wider seat may seem like the most comfortable choice, but too big a seat can create friction. You can adjust saddle angle and position, too, for a more comfortable ride.

4. Try before you buy.

Any shop should let you take your potential bike for a spin. Is it comfortable and rideable? Test out the gears, the various speeds and the throttle (if the e-bike has one). Try starting and stopping; see how the bike feels going up and down hills or around corners. In-store, ask a sales associate to hold the front of the bike while you sit on the seat to test out angle and fit. Lift the e-bike: Is the weight manageable? Learn about every feature before you commit to the purchase, and if you're nervous, bring a friend!

5. Be patient!

An e-bike is a big investment. Give yourself plenty of time to conduct research and visit bike retailers. Ask your friends who have e-bikes what they like and dislike about their model.

And a bonus tip: Whether it's a properly fitted helmet, front and rear lights (required by law for night riding) or a good pair of gloves, invest in your safety and comfort by buying the right gear.

Angela Olson is deputy and education director at BikeMN. She rides an e-bike year-round.



What Is an E-bike?

An e-bike is any bicycle with either a built-in or post-production electronic motor that assists with your pedaling. The assist is meant to enhance your pedaling power, not replace it. In short, you'll still get exercise.

E-bikes come in three classes:

- **Class 1:** electric assist up to 20 miles per hour with no throttle (the extra boost that helps when climbing a hill or hitting a headwind).
- **Class 2:** electric assist up to 20 mph with a throttle (the type most often sold).
- **Class 3:** electric assist up to 28 mph without a throttle (restrictions on where you can ride).

Class 3 e-bikes with a throttle are illegal in Minnesota. E-bike riders must be at least 15 years old.

Adapted from the Bicycle Alliance website: bikemn.org/lets-talk-e-bikes

PRO TIP

SHOP LOCAL

"Can the bike shop where you purchase the e-bike perform all the customer support, services and warranty issues that may occur? Internet orders do not support the local ecosystem for bicycle repair and servicing."

— Butch Johnson,
Continental Ski & Bike, Duluth

PRO TIP

CARGO REPLACES CAR

"Have enough cargo capacity on your e-bike. It's a plus to replace some car rides for running grocery errands, taking kids to school and lessons, and going to pickleball or any sports you do."

— Alex Wong, Capital Deals, St. Paul



Charitable Giving

The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, the highest rating given by this trusted nonprofit evaluator. When you donate to BikeMN, you can be confident that your contribution supports a stable, efficient and sustainable organization.

Many supporters have shown interest in Donor Advised Funds (DAF) and Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD).

- **Donor Advised Funds:** Anyone can open a DAF with a minimum of \$5,000. These accounts are offered by most brokerages and numerous community foundations. Consult a financial professional to determine if a DAF aligns with your charitable and financial goals. If you already have a Donor Advised Fund, we'd appreciate your consideration of BikeMN as a grant recipient.
- **Qualified Charitable Distributions:** Individuals over age 70½ can make Qualified Charitable Distributions from most types of IRA accounts. Consult a financial professional to decide whether this fits your objectives. Most brokerages can send your QCD directly to BikeMN or provide you with checks. BikeMN also accepts electronic funds transfers. For our brokerage account information, contact dan@bikemn.org.

BikeMN manages your financial support with a commitment to remain dynamic and responsive. Our board and staff are grateful for your dedication, insights and trust. Thank you for your investment in Minnesota's culture of walking and biking. It makes an impact now and for the future.

Powering the Work

Every donation, of any size, makes a difference:

We embrace that philosophy at BikeMN. And we appreciate every dollar and hour of volunteer service that supports our vision and values.

As our fiscal year draws to a close, we thank the individuals, families, organizations and businesses who gave sizable donations of \$500 or more during 2024. We equally acknowledge our friends and members who gave what they can afford.

Together, we celebrate pedestrian- and bike-friendly legislation and seek creative ways to help our families and friends, colleagues and neighbors enjoy our streets and trails on foot or by wheel.

Our Statewide Reach

The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota now has 13 chapters across the state. Our members can opt to share their annual dues with the chapter(s) of their choice.

Our 12 geographically based chapters are in: Albert Lea, Cannon Falls, Duluth, Fargo-Moorhead, Fergus Falls, Grand Marais, Hopkins, Mankato, Rochester, St. Paul, Thief River Falls and Willmar. Bicycling Around Minnesota (BAM), another chapter, sponsors an annual bike ride and supports bicycle safety initiatives.



SAINT PAUL
BICYCLE COALITION



WHY I GIVE

"I think the mission of making Minnesota more bike-friendly is important to our riders of today and tomorrow!"

— Michelle Holden, Backus

"BikeMN advocates for safe bicycle routes and infrastructure so that bicycling is open to more people and safer yet for the frequent bicyclists."

— Marty Cormack, Rochester

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





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Thank You, Donors!

What an honor it has been to help guide BikeMN in 2024. My first full year as executive director only furthered my appreciation for our incredible network of supporters in every corner of Minnesota.

This year we helped enable the passage of three key pieces of state legislation (see page 6). We also helped pass our constitutional amendment to continue dedicated funding for the outdoors; expanded our roster of chapter partners in Minnesota; and introduced new events contributing to the vibrancy of our communities.

To every person who contributes — financially or otherwise — we appreciate you!

- We hold steadfast to the belief that every person in Minnesota should be able to bike, walk or roll as a means of safe transportation.
- We treasure the recreational opportunities our state offers.
- Whether we are working to close gaps in multi-community trail connections or get an ADA ramp added so you can roll from your home to the grocery store, we are committed to strong, equitable communities.

None of this is possible without your support.

If you are financially able, please consider becoming a sustaining member of our organization and



Rochester resident Michael Wojcik at the inaugural Med City Meander in May 2024.

contribute what fits your budget once a month. Together, we do great work.

— Michael Wojcik, executive director