

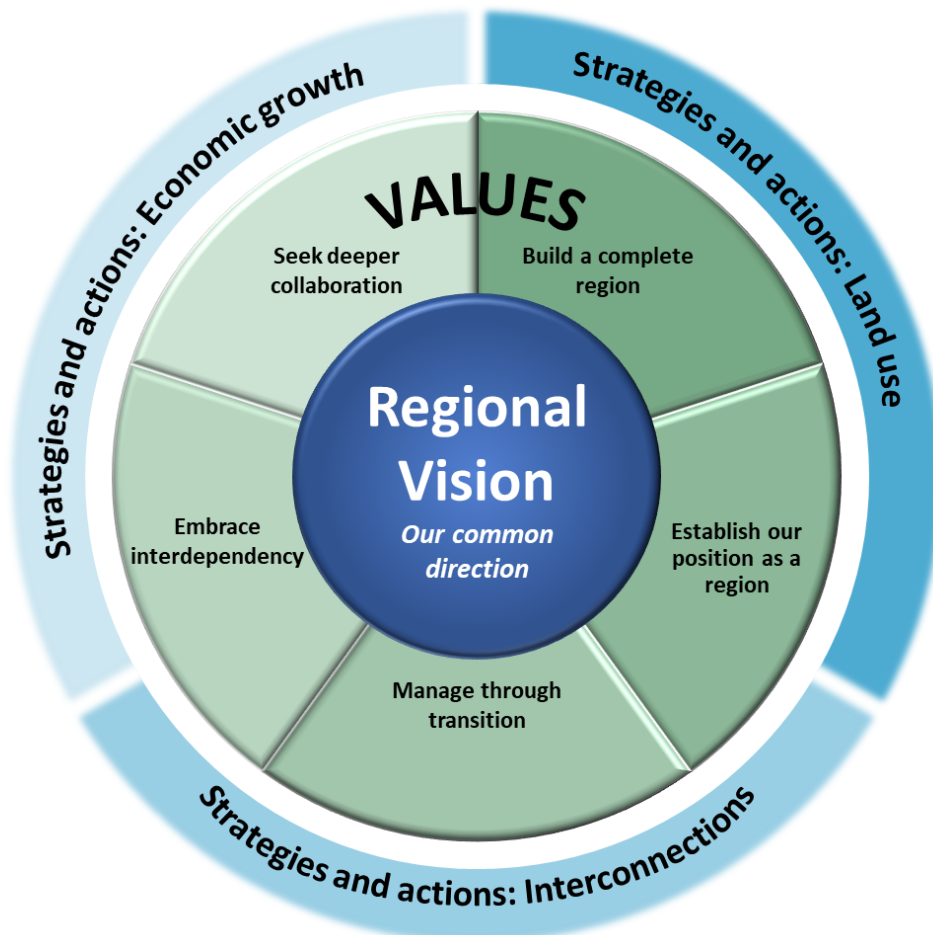
October 2021 Update: Vision, Strategies, Actions

The Framework 2030 regional planning framework includes a broad vision for the future of the region, 12 key strategies to move the region forward around land use, economic growth, and interconnections, and multiple actions to advance those strategies. The actions drive the Partnership's workplan, and are regularly monitored and updated. Check the [CMRP website](http://www.RegionalPlanningPartnership.org) for the most current information and progress.

Regional Vision

We – the communities of the Central Mississippi River Regional Planning Partnership – are a strong and dynamic region.

We are made prosperous through our network of assets and proactive leadership, made distinct through our vital and connected places, and made home by our welcoming people and communities.



Summary: Strategies

Land Use

- L1. Leverage the region's unique parks and natural resources
- L2. Promote life-cycle housing
- L3. Invest in placemaking
- L4. Improve regional communication to support local land planning and management

Economic Growth

- E1. Expand on the quality and diversity of employment opportunities
- E2. Increase the pool of skilled labor in the region
- E3. Network the response to economic disruptions
- E4. Measure impacts of action locally and regionally

Interconnections

- I1. Use clear regional identity to advance collaborative work
- I2. Enhance regional connections
- I3. Share talent, time, and information
- I4. Continually address regional vulnerabilities

Land Use: Strategies and Actions

Land Use Strategy L1. Leverage the region's unique parks and natural resources

In addition to serving as a major gateway to recreation opportunities "Up North," the region and Partner communities enjoy a wealth of their own natural assets. These include the Mississippi River, multiple lakes, the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, and numerous community parks and trails.

Action L1-A: Promote the expansion of bicycling and walking infrastructure throughout the region

Expanding active transportation facilities and infrastructure would enhance connections between key destinations and improve mobility and recreation options. The region is rich in natural beauty and outdoor amenities that are increasingly connected through multi-use trails and paths. There are over 50 miles of these biking and walking trails within the region, and 60 miles of the 4,600-mile North Country Scenic Hiking Trail. These connections also have an economic impact as they attract visitors, encourage small business, and help attract talent across the region. The Partnership can celebrate, advocate for, and champion projects that enhance the connections between these invaluable assets. While trails exist throughout each of the communities, they are not all connected to one another in a larger, regional network. There is an opportunity to fully network the system and provide connections within and around communities. The identity of the region may be strengthened as these connections increase and natural corridors are enhanced.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action L1-B: Develop a regional parks website

Sharing information about natural amenities would create a greater sense of collaboration and identity. While each local government operates its own parks system, residents and visitors often benefit from assets outside their own communities. There are currently 61 parks in the three cities alone. By creating a centralized website to share information about programming, places, and events, the Partnership could magnify the efforts of each community and establish a stronger regional identity based on its outdoor

recreation amenities. The platform can also highlight the Mississippi River’s ecological and recreational amenities and support future investments.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action L1-C: Commission a regional trails and greenways map and plan

A digital map of city, county, regional, and state parks, trails, and greenways for use by residents, visitors, and to inform future planning. The region is bisected by more than 60 miles of mixed-use trails that are major regional assets and can be better organized and shared. Consolidating existing local maps into a comprehensive and dynamic regional greenways map hosted on the CMRP and individual community websites would provide a clearer picture of these regional assets. Over time, the Partnership could use this map to convene discussions about future trail connections and developments of particular importance such as between communities, along key natural features, or others.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Land Use Strategy L2. Promote life-cycle housing

A majority of regional employees commute into the region from outside the region and the majority of residents in the regions commute outside of the Partnership communities for work. This suggests opportunities to expand housing options and availability for incoming commuters. Unaddressed, this trend could limit the region’s competitiveness related to the workforce and increase residential tax burdens.

Action L2-A: Present an annual report and presentation on housing trends and development (also see L2-B)

Communities may benefit from sharing information about the housing conditions and trends in the region.

Up to and accelerated through 2020, communities of the region have experienced significant increases in housing costs and average sales price, in part due to strong development pressure from the Twin Cities Metro. Because communities in the region share many of the same great conditions and qualities, the housing market is expressed on a regional scale rather than bound by jurisdictional lines. The Partnership has an opportunity to collect, study, and regularly share key lessons learned around housing development and growth pressure, and lead important conversations about regional housing issues and options.

Action L2-B: Create a regional housing market dashboard

Access to current information about the housing market in the region would be valuable for Partner communities. In a dynamic housing and regional housing market, current data and information is critical for policy development and decision making. Employment, education, land use, transportation, infrastructure, and others are all influenced and affected by housing. Gathering and maintaining housing data such as rent prices, home sale prices, cost burdening for renters and homeowners, affordable housing unit availability, and similar, helps people understand regional opportunities and challenges and informs future planning. Furthermore, effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the real estate market have been identified but not yet fully realized. With buyers looking for lower density, quieter neighborhoods, and more access to nature, it is likely that the region will continue to see an increase in demand comparable to nationwide trends.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Developing the metric/dashboard that will be used for the report; both will support the Annual State of the Region forum in early 2022. Working with planners and admins on how to gather,

organize, and present this info in meaningful ways.

Issues: Note that L2A and B are being merged for clarity and communications.

Action L2-C: Facilitate community conversations around strategic growth areas

Involve the community and leadership in identifying and influencing key growth corridors or nodes.

Facilitate an ongoing discussion around areas of particular opportunity. The two-county region can expect increased development pressure over the next decade. This pressure has already transformed communities to the south of the region, with housing development, commercial growth, and major investments in transportation infrastructure drastically changing the character and scale of these places. With increased work-from-home options and fewer large-tract development opportunities along I-94, development pressure in this region will only intensify. Proactively engaging communities in an ongoing discussion around key development corridors and nodes will deepen understandings of development opportunities or threats, lead to a more coordinated approach to land management (especially along corridors), and help ensure growth enhances the quality of place, quality of life, and the quality of opportunity.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action L2-D: Develop a regional housing strategy

Based on data, trends, and input from local partners, a regional strategy provides high-level guidance for accommodating housing growth while respecting the character and priorities of the region. This is a logical outgrowth of the meetings, collaboration, and data collection facilitated by the Partnership. It will reflect on changing demand, share ideas about how to respond to growth, and define the market area and various housing products. A regional housing strategy may also address topics such as workforce housing, post-pandemic housing needs and opportunities, and housing incentive tools. Developing socially sustainable housing allows residents to thrive through their life stages and may attract newcomers to the region. The communities will collaborate on the level of specificity within recommendations, and each be responsible for mapping, location-specific recommendations, and implementation.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Land Use Strategy L3. Invest in placemaking

Residents of the region love their communities and see even greater potential for the future. Investments in downtowns, neighborhoods, parks and trails, and elsewhere should focus on authentic expressions of the community and cultivate a better sense of place. These initiatives will work best when the ideas and creativity are locally sourced.

Action L3-A: Host a regional placemaking committee (also see L3-B)

A dedicated group of people is needed to plan, champion, and guide regional placemaking initiatives.

Placemaking is a creative and proactive approach to connecting people with the public places they share. This was a major priority for respondents to the Framework 2030 community survey. Participants described numerous examples of local placemaking initiatives that had greatly enhanced their pride of place. They also provided examples of where these types of projects could be beneficial, such as public art and wayfinding signs, repurposing alleys into gathering spaces, and hosting community events. This committee will be essential in guiding placemaking across the region and administering Partnership-sponsored programs or initiatives. Responsibilities might include: Inventory and seek funding for placemaking projects; support or sponsor community events; develop a regional public art plan; create a regional public art map; administer

the micro-grant program; and more as the group matures.

Action L3-B: Launch a placemaking microgrant program

By providing small-scale grants, the Partnership can encourage creative placemaking efforts across the region. With oversight from the Placemaking Committee, the microgrant program would invite non-government groups to apply for small grants (e.g., \$500-\$1000) to support neighborhood-scale placemaking projects, with an emphasis on visibility. The Placemaking Committee would define the process and reporting commitments along with award criteria, and publish a grant application. Individuals and groups from across the region would submit their proposals to the Committee for approval, with grants awarded based on available funding. The Partnership could celebrate these completed placemaking projects through features on the website and community events.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Researched placemaking initiatives and microgrants and drafted process and content framework. Actively recruiting Committee members. Initial Committee members met to start on initial process and content and finalize request for CMRP approval for 2022 multiple cycles and budget.

Issues: Note that L3-A and B are being merged for clarity and communications. Send Committee member ideas to Bill Kemp.

Action L3-C: Commission local public art in regional gateway and wayfinding signage

Local art in regional gateways can beautify, unify, and connect our communities through a common aesthetic. Arts-based placemaking is an effective way to promote a sense of place in the communities as well as increase cultural diversity and civic engagement. Physical art projects have a tangible impact on all communities and signal to residents and visitors that they are in a place with a unique identity. It will be important that funded projects maintain a consistent visual relationship and display the regional brand. The works and the artists should be local, and decisions around placement and content left up to the individual communities. Involving local artists also gives each community the opportunity to contribute its talent to the region at large. There should be some marker that connects each unique project to the overall set, such as the regional brand or similar.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Land Use Strategy L4. Improve regional communication to support local land planning and management

The “small town feel” is a shared and treasured value across the region’s diverse communities, and can be attributed to the scale and character of development (or the lack of it) in each place. The multi-year trend of strong growth in jobs and people will continue over the coming decades. To maintain the region’s character while enabling the benefits of good growth, communities in the region will need to fashion plans and policies that work in concert.

Action L4-A: Identify key regional corridors for coordinated planning

As a network of connected places, partner communities would benefit from coordinated planning of the regional corridors. Corridors in the region present an opportunity to collaborate on land use decisions, transportation considerations, and placemaking strategies. Although multi-jurisdictional planning is complex, it is also an effective way to build a collaborative spirit, facilitate smart growth, and promote positive economic outcomes. The region is bisected by several key transportation corridors that have multi-jurisdictional impacts around transportation efficiency and land use decision-making. Additionally, the

region's single river crossing has been a challenge and is an ongoing point of discussion. Corridor planning can help lay the groundwork for significant future infrastructure and economic investments.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action L4-B: Develop a regional conceptual development strategy

Integrating the comprehensive plans and land use policies of the individual communities into a cohesive regional map would provide significant insights for future development. This is a dynamic and growing region that has experienced significant land use, demographic, and economic change just in the last decade. Aggregating relevant existing plans in the region would help to identify points of friction and areas of redundancy, unnecessary competition, or gaps in planning. The Partnership communities could then discuss how to address some of these findings in a regional strategy. As communities continue to update their own plans, the composite map would also be updated. This effort should include local and regional plans such as corridor studies, comprehensive plans, area analyses, and economic work.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Economic Growth: Strategies and Actions

Economic Growth Strategy E1. Expand on the quality and diversity of employment opportunities

The region has the opportunity to expand employment opportunities in emerging industries while strengthening the quality of jobs in the local economy. By investing in small business and private sector job growth, the region builds resiliency through a broader array of employment industries.

Action E1-A: Facilitate expansion of high-speed internet access across the region

Broadband internet is necessary to support business growth and will be essential to improving and increasing employment opportunities in the region. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the necessity of internet access for attending online school, working remotely, and obtaining important health and community information. In response to these needs, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 released more than \$7 billion for the Emergency Connectivity Fund to support schools and libraries that provide free broadband service and devices. The American Jobs Plan also proposes to invest \$100 billion in broadband infrastructure to provide affordable high-speed internet to all Americans. The Partnership can help the region capitalize on this opportunity to expand the reach of broadband across the planning area by collecting and sharing key information on the expected roll-out of state and federal programs and by mapping focus areas or areas with limited or no high-speed coverage. Broadband availability across the counties can be mapped using FCC Form 477 as a starting point. It is updated twice a year but lags by approximately one year.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Met with County coordinators and one provider; working on the best approach moving forward and what role the Partnership might play in regional coordination. [Presentation](#) by Diane Wells of DEED's Broadband Office lists current maps and funding sources.

Issues: Wright County Study is expected to be completed soon

Action E1-B: Maintain a regional industrial land inventory

A collaborative approach to industrial land marketing and management could mitigate vacancies and promote economic synergy among the Partnership communities. Industrial-zoned land currently makes up 4% of the Focused Planning Area. About 32% of industrial-zoned parcels are currently vacant or used for agriculture, and combined community plans show a planned increase of 92% in industrial land by 2040. Furthermore, decommissioning of significant energy plants will likely be completed by 2030, leaving legacy infrastructure that would enable future investments in renewable energy production and/or energy-intensive industrial uses. A regional industrial land inventory would build on this existing knowledge and provide relevant data to the Partner communities. Combined with an understanding of the different employment sectors in terms of their land, transportation, and service needs, the Partnership could identify the most strategic locations for new industrial clusters based on types of activity. Creating and sharing a regional map of those clusters would facilitate a cooperative approach to marketing and sharing leads, protecting industrial lands, and supporting intensification efforts.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Economic Growth Strategy E2. Increase the pool of skilled labor in the region

As the region transitions from one economic era to the next, there will be an increased need for skilled and adaptable labor. Most regional employees commute in from outside the region, while most regional residents commute out of the region for work – and this gap will continue if unchecked.

Action E2-A: Initiate discussions with higher-education institutions to better integrate economic development with workforce development

Increasing and strengthening the workforce requires strong relationships between communities and a wide variety of educational institutions. With high school graduation rates above 90%, the region has a higher percentage of high school graduates than the state average. After high school, however, residents of the planning area are less likely to obtain bachelor's, graduate, or professional degrees than their peers. The Partnership may play a significant role in aggregating information about and facilitating discussions with the various institutions that already provide post-secondary education, adult learning, and technical, vocational, and high-skill training. Building stronger connections between the secondary and post-secondary opportunities in the region can enhance opportunities for students and produce a stronger, more competitive workforce. In turn, this strategy could support and attract new employers and generally provide better opportunities for residents overall.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action E2-B: Facilitate partnerships between businesses and schools

Experience is often the best teacher. Promoting and facilitating opportunities for students to gain “real life” work experience would bolster the workforce in the region. The region is home to just over 14,000 primary jobs, but less than half are held by residents. Skills are a primary driver for hiring in the region and local employers are casting a wider net each year to fill job vacancies. The Partnership can leverage the connections of its members to convene conversations among major employers and secondary education. The group owns a unique position and perspective on regional issues related to workforce and employment and can bring a broad group of stakeholders together to discuss current issues and opportunities. Further, the group can work with these stakeholders to build mutually beneficial relationships. Through stronger connections between businesses and students, there is an opportunity to forge lasting partnerships that encourage students to continue working in the region beyond graduation.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Economic Growth Strategy E3. Network the response to economic disruptions

Economic disruptions are being felt throughout the region; some are unique to this area and others are national. Some of these were spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic and related to the economic shutdown; others were well underway, such as decommissioning the two power plants. One of the most effective responses to economic disruptions is regional collaboration and coordination on the region's growing and emerging industries.

Action E3-A: Commission a regional fiscal analysis of land use

Understanding the fiscal impacts of different types of land use clusters is essential for good decision-making and future planning. The fiscal productivity -- or the net community benefit -- varies across the region based on the land use. At present, 84% of land within the region is zoned agricultural / rural, 6% is zoned residential, 4% industrial, 2% riverfront, and <1% commercial. Each of these uses generates different levels of revenue based on various forms of local and property taxes. Each is also associated with different costs due to infrastructure needs and school service requirements. Understanding the net impact of these costs and revenues on government finances can help decision-makers identify which types of land use to encourage and those to approach with caution. Beyond a point-in-time study, regularly tracking the net fiscal effects of land use could become a valuable tool for evaluating decisions made at a regional scale.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action E3-B: Create and manage a regional commercial property vacancy database

Providing accessible and centralized commercial vacancy information may reduce barriers to filling these holes and avoiding long-term blight and disinvestment. The pandemic and related economic shutdowns accelerated the use of e-commerce platforms for basic goods fulfillment, and communities (including those in the region) are struggling to address the resulting commercial vacancy and redundancy. The move to remote work has also had an impact on office spaces around the country. An aggregate of community future land use plans reveals a 163% planned increase in commercial land across the Focused Planning Area. A centralized database of commercial vacancies would provide easy access to information for potential new tenants, and it may influence the communities' understanding of the need for additional commercial land. Furthermore, creative and adaptive reuse of vacant commercial spaces may help address other challenges in the region, such as housing.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Economic Growth Strategy E4. Measure impacts of action locally and regionally

Measuring the success of any initiative requires logical measures of progress such as dashboards that provide leaders with necessary information. This region – through this collaborative Framework 2030 effort – is committed to making progress across a wide range of topics and identifying a set of key metrics to measure community progress critical to long-term success.

Action E4-A: Establish and update regional indicators dashboard

Measuring, tracking, and publishing economic data over time supports progress tracking and informs future strategies. An indicator dashboard or regional scorecard tracks progress on actions and strategies that advance the regional vision. Successful dashboards collect and monitor the pertinent data points over time and present the information in a clear and compelling way. Information such as job growth, population change, graduation rates, and housing starts provides important insights into the trajectory of the region and will be regularly made available to the public. Though each partner community may track these statistics individually, an aggregate and collective understanding of these topics within the region would help the communities identify broader trends. The selected indicators for the dashboard then become the benchmarks to evaluate the Partnership's success in achieving its vision, and progress in key areas may increase the region's competitiveness.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Met with Partners, staff, Greater MSP, and GSDC, to explore indicators and metrics.

Developing a survey for Partners to prioritize indicators. Greater MSP's dashboard has some useful info and can break out data by county.

Issues: Local community data and Focused Planning Area (FPA) data will be harder to update because of availability of data.

Action E4-B: Establish and monitor progress criteria for all Framework actions

Effective implementation of this plan will depend on benchmarking and monitoring the advancement of each of the actions. For internal accountability, the Partnership will need to develop a set of criteria to gauge the progress toward its commitments. For each action item within this agenda, the Partnership will set

specific, measurable, and attainable goals to guide implementation. Individuals and groups may be assigned to complete particular tasks within an action or to take responsibility for the action itself. While implementation is a collective effort with many involved parties among the communities, the Partnership will be responsible for ensuring that the actions advance as intended. Regular and ongoing check-ins will promote follow-through and ensure that the action ideas become realities across the region. The group may use this reporting as a prompt for ongoing action evaluation and prioritization of action items. Benchmarking progress will be key to the Partnership’s value proposition.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Ongoing discussions with Partnership members and staff to determine best format

Issues: This will continue to evolve based on Partnership guidance and feedback

Interconnections: Strategies and Actions

Interconnections Strategy I1. Use clear regional identity to advance collaborative work

Each community is unique, and at the same time they rely on one another for jobs, housing, retail, and amenities. A recognized regional brand connects or associates places with one another, provides leaders with an object to reference and celebrate, and can leave a memorable impression on visitors. The Partnership's work on Framework 2030 is a crucial first step in establishing a regional identity, and richer regional collaboration further builds that identity and unlocks new opportunities for resources, action development, and successful implementation.

Action I1-A: Integrate branding with placemaking initiatives

Applying the regional brand to local placemaking initiatives will provide a common thread that links the efforts of each community. While every placemaking project or event should be unique, attaching the regional brand to each of them displays how the communities are part of something larger than themselves. By working with local artists, the communities may also create physical markers that both identify their particular location and their place within the larger region. As the role and influence of the Partnership expands, it will be important to credit the group when projects are completed because of its involvement; applying the branding is one way to ensure this happens.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: The new branding is being used on the website; new documents, emails, memos, etc.; and for ongoing docs such as policies, bylaws, and the JPA.

Issues: None

Interconnections Strategy I2. Enhance regional connections

The physical and non-physical connections across the region play a key enabling role for local and regional economic activity. These corridors are the unifying factor for the region and help define its character.

Action I2-A: Continue conversations with MnDOT and the counties regarding special projects

Regular and ongoing communication across various agencies will be essential for understanding projects of special interest to the region. Major transportation and infrastructure investment into the region has, in most cases, been the result of a collaborative process between communities, counties, and the state. The complexity, cost, and multi-jurisdictional coordination of these projects exceeds the capacity for any individual community to complete. As the region continues to grapple with challenges related to growth and associated congestion, it will be essential to be "at the table" as major investments are considered and prioritized. The Partnership can play an increasingly effective role as an intermediary for the region's communities as these projects are debated. Further, the delineation of the region will help partners speak with a more collective and unified voice during these negotiations. MnDOT is currently projecting an \$18 billion gap in its revenue versus needs projections through 2037. Major roads and infrastructure funding will be ever more competitive in the decades to come. The Partnership can help increase the volume of regional needs in the discussion and elevate major projects in the process.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Transportation Task Force was established at 9/28 CMRP meeting and held an organizational meeting to frame direction and scope. Will bring county and community engineers (and likely planners) on board in near future.

Issues: None

Interconnections Strategy I3. Share talent, time, and information

The region today is a collection of small cities and smaller townships (based on population). One advantage of this scale is the ability to foster community connections and reinforce the "small town feel" – but this scale also

limits capacity. Working collaboratively, communities can enhance their capabilities by sharing time, talent, and information to take advantage of larger-scale opportunities and solve complex challenges.

Action I3-A: Establish an annual "State of the Region" forum

An annual meeting to present findings and facilitate conversation is a logical outcome of the Partnership's growing role in data collection and analysis, reporting, and convening. As the Partnership studies housing, growth and development trends, employer incentive packaging, and other topics of particular interest to the region, communities and non-government entities in the region will benefit from coming together to discuss the findings. The role of the Partnership is not to determine the future actions based on their research, but instead to present the information and invite the relevant parties to sit at a common table. With time and maturity, the group will continue to grow its perspective and understanding of regional issues. The group should prioritize engagement during the event and allow participants to share their perspective and ideas.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action I3-B: Hire staff or consultants to support actions

For the plans of the Partnership and Framework 2030 to materialize, dedicated people are needed to orchestrate actions, manage priorities, and guide the ongoing work. The Framework 2030 plan is ambitious, and the group is limited by time and availability. In addition to leveraging the contributions of Partner staff, contractors and consultants working for the Partnership will help it prioritize and pursue agreed-upon action steps, strengthen relationships, and monitor and regularly report out issues, needs, and progress. These people can also ensure the Partners have the information for robust deliberations and decision making.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: *Hired a contract project manager in August 2021 to move action Items forward; others will be brought on as needed in the future*

Issues: None

Action I3-C: Pursue a regional lobbying effort, "Our fair share"

A primary role of the Partnership is to advocate for the communities and the region at the state and federal levels. Sitting at the center of discussions occurring around the region, the Partnership can elevate the region's needs and highlight its potential to ensure that priority projects are considered and/or funded. This helps build perspective around needs and opportunities for collaboration. State and Federal funding for transportation, infrastructure, housing, and other major investments is increasingly tied to regional collaboration and data-driven analysis. The Partnership can work on both sides of the challenge. Through its ongoing regional convening it can develop strong priority investment targets, and as a principal advocate, it can communicate to state and federal agencies on behalf of its communities. With major funding being released through the American Rescue Plan and the potential for increased federal infrastructure spending the next decade, the region must ensure it receives its "fair share" of this investment. As a unified region, the Partnership can leverage its size and perspective in a way that the individual communities cannot.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: *Group of Partner staff spoke with US EDA about funding under the America Rescue Plan Act and other sources; there are some potential funds for regionally significant and supportive projects.*

Issues: None

Interconnections Strategy I4. Continually address regional vulnerabilities

Framework 2030 should result in an ongoing process by the communities in the region to identify areas of weakness or vulnerability. The project was initiated in 2020, a year of profound disruption, and this churning is expected to continue for some time. The region must commit to an ongoing evaluative process.

Action I4-A: Study social service opportunities that may benefit from regional coordination

Services like food banks and ridesharing may better serve our communities if they operate at a regional level. A full inventory of existing social services in the region would provide a clearer understanding of the coverages, gaps, and redundancies in the network. The region has hundreds of mission-minded organizations. Some of these could benefit from an “economies of scale” approach. Then the Partnership and communities can work together to identify if certain services would be more effective if coordinated regionally rather than in each of the individual jurisdictions, and convene discussions to initiate this collaboration. Furthermore, this study may expose gaps in regional services that the Partnership could then consider how to address in future work.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None