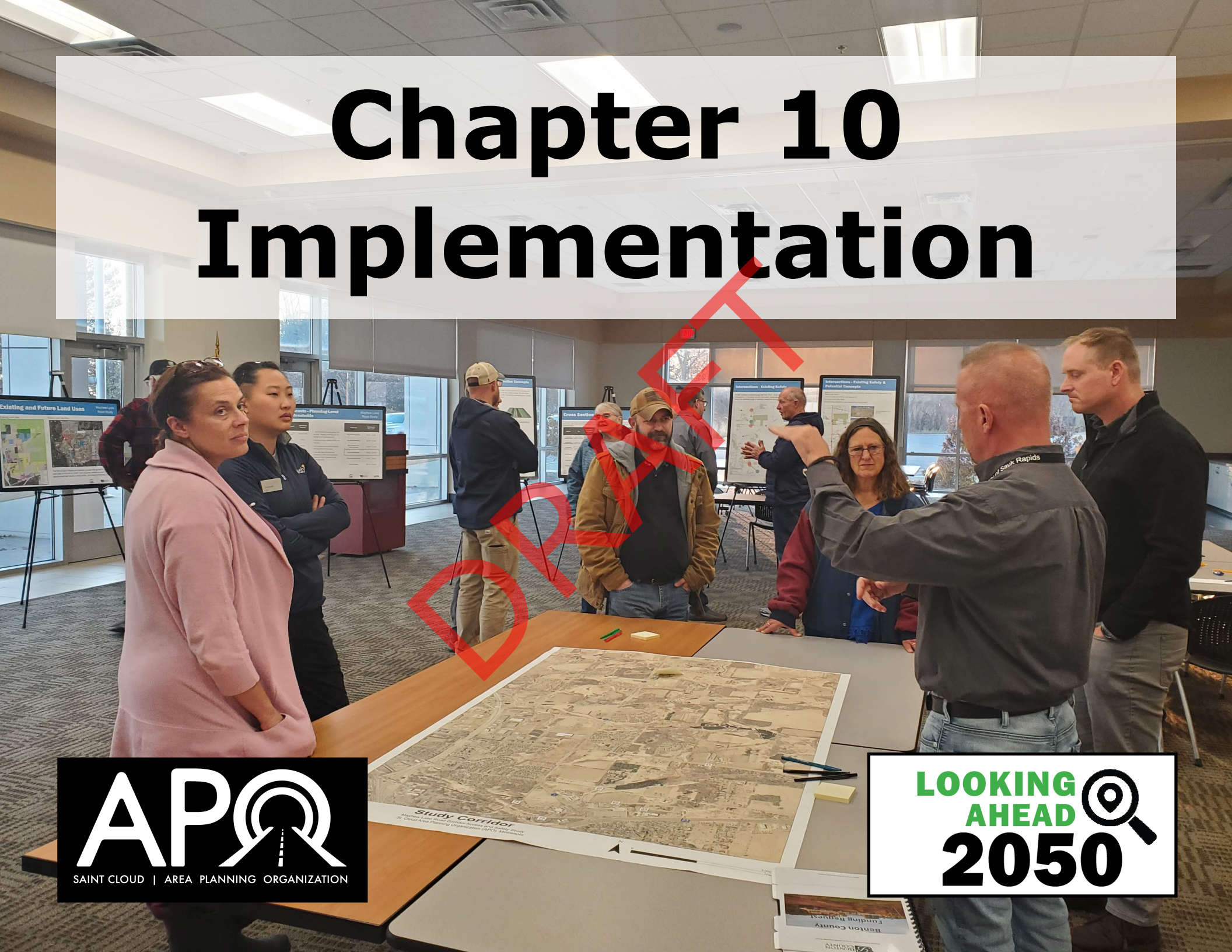
Chapter 10
Implementation



From Planning Efforts to Actionable Steps

Fully implementing the vision set forth in this plan will take time and effort.

We have already discussed the fiscally constrained list of capacity expansion and reconstruction projects for each city and county in the MPA along with projects identified by MnDOT. Every *new* roadway project follows roughly the same development process:

1. **Visioning and Planning:** What problem are we trying to fix? What are our options for fixing it?
2. **Environmental Review:** What are the potential environmental impacts of each option?
3. **Final Design:** Which option is the best option to fix the problem?
4. **Right-of-Way Acquisition:** Purchasing land needed to construct our final vision for the roadway corridor.
5. **Construction:** Building the solution.

For reconstruction projects, this development process is somewhat shortened. Afterall, the roadway already exists, and the intent is simply to rebuild it. Still, some minor improvements can be made in a reconstruction project such as adding curb ramps at corners, adding turning lanes at specific intersections, installing traffic signals or roundabouts, etc.

As a transportation planning entity, the APO is normally involved in the first step of the project development process.

The Planning Process

Most planning processes also follow roughly the same steps:

1. **Understand Existing Conditions:** How is the roadway corridor functioning right now?
2. **Identify Issues:** What are the current problems and what are the likely future problems if we do not act?
3. **Develop Alternatives:** What are all the possible solutions to fix the problems?
4. **Analyze Alternatives:** Which is the best solution to fix the problems?

Figure 10.1: *Public engagement event regarding the Stearns CSAH 1 roadway corridor planning effort.*
Photo courtesy of Saint Cloud APO.

Input and feedback from the public is an important part of all planning processes and occurs at all stages of plan development. The people who live near a roadway or who drive it regularly often know more about how a corridor is functioning and where the problem spots are than the data considered by planners. Combining data with first-hand

experiences allows us to gain a better, more complete understanding of how the roadway is functioning and how well the potential solutions might work.

The outcome of this planning process is usually a written plan that identifies a preferred roadway alignment, cross-section, and design features. A final alignment and design cannot be selected until the Environmental Review has been completed.

The capacity expansion projects shown in this document will need to go through the planning process. Community members will be invited to participate throughout as well as help shape the alternatives and narrow down the selections to a preferred alternative.

But beyond the projects already shown in the plan, additional planning may be needed to fully realize the vision within this document. For example, as noted in Chapter 2, there are many people who work in the Saint Cloud metropolitan area who do not live here. They commute into the area. Since our goals include minimizing congestion, protecting network condition and operations, and minimizing the environmental impacts of transportation, it may be valuable to explore why so many people choose to commute into the area rather than live here. The APO could allocate funds to study this phenomenon.

Here are some of the potential planning studies that the APO may consider over the next five years to more fully implement the vision of this plan:

1. **ESTIMATE THE TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF LONG-DISTANCE COMMUTERS & UNDERSTAND THEIR CHOICE.** There are more jobs in the Saint Cloud metropolitan area than there are workers to fill those jobs. Many local businesses actively recruit workers from nearby communities, which puts more cars onto area roads, but the workers pay property taxes in other communities. Why don't they choose to live here? Is it better to provide transportation capacity for those workers, or would it be more cost effective to entice them to move into the Saint Cloud metropolitan area? At the same time, there are many people who choose to live in the Saint Cloud area but work in the Twin Cities. Many businesses rely on access to the Twin Cities labor market and ship significant amounts of freight to and from the Twin Cities. For all of these people, reliable and efficient connections between the Saint Cloud MPA and the Twin Cities are vital. While the Northstar Commuter Rail connection is still a possibility, other connections should also be explored, such as roadway connections, internet and broadband connections, bus and transit connections, etc. What are the challenges, opportunities, and trade-offs?
2. **IMPROVE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT.** Existing roadways are not always used at the peak of their efficiency. Actually, it takes very little additional traffic to tip a roadway from operating at level-of-service (LOS) C to operating at LOS E or F. Better utilizing the transportation assets we already have can help alleviate congestion, delay, and air pollution from idling vehicles. Advances in the area of signal controllers, sensors to monitor traffic flow, real-time adjustment of signal timing, and other technology could pay for itself by reducing the need to build new roadways or expand existing roadways.
3. **UPDATE PAVEMENT CONDITION DATA.** To efficiently program funds for reconstruction projects, we need to know which roadways would most benefit from short-term pavement preservation projects and

which need complete reconstruction. By regularly updating our pavement condition data, we can better "fill those potholes" and provide a better experience for drivers. The pavement condition database should be updated no later than 2025 and then again no later than 2030.

Figure 10.2: *Photo of 322nd Street in Saint Cloud/LeSauk Township.*
Photo courtesy of Saint Cloud APO.

4. **ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION.** By ensuring that the active transportation network continues to develop and remains in good condition we help encourage more walking and bicycling and other forms of active transportation. In turn, this helps to remove vehicle traffic from area roadways; promote public health; protect the natural environment; and provide a safe and efficient low-cost transportation alternative for area residents. The Regional Active Transportation Plan should be updated no later than 2027. Additionally, the APO should continue developing and updating Safe Routes to School plans for area elementary and middle schools.

5. **CONTINUE MONITORING AND ADJUSTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF EVs and CAVS.** The development of electric vehicles (EVs) and connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs) will be a game-changer for transportation. From typical trip-generation rates to average trip lengths, to roadway design and land-use choices, EVs and CAVs will change many of the long-standing assumptions and the environment in which planners have worked for decades. It will also be important to adjust to the needs of EVs and CAVs to keep the region economically competitive. Over the next five years, APO staff will continue monitoring the development and deployment of EVs and CAVs and adjusting their planning practices accordingly.

6. **COORDINATE DEVELOPMENT OF THE URBAN BELTLINE CORRIDOR.** The jurisdictions within the urban area have agreed on the development of an arterial roadway encircling the urban core. However, the technical and monetary challenges of developing a complete beltline corridor will be considerable. APO staff will continue working with the member jurisdictions to develop planning documents for each segment of the beltline corridor and will support (to the extent possible) the identification of funding for the construction of each segment.

7. **BETTER UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION IN THE REGION.** Vehicles emit air pollution. Storm water runs off roadways, carrying road salts, oil, gasoline and other pollutants

into local waterways. Roadway construction can impact habitats critical to endangered and threatened species. Increasing land-use densities and mixing compatible uses may shorten trip lengths and fuel use but may also increase congestion and travel times which increases fuel use. Conversely, transportation systems are susceptible to damage and destruction from the natural environment in the form of storms, floods, UV radiation (which ages bitumen), high temperatures (which soften pavement leading to rutting and cracking), and other impacts. Conserving the natural environment entails understanding how incremental changes to the transportation system can impact that environment, and maintaining a reliable, cost-effective transportation system entails understanding how the natural environment is impacting the transportation system. This effort would seek to better understand such trade-offs and seek insight on the options or combination of options that minimizes the overall net environmental impact of transportation assets while still providing for safe and efficient transportation networks.

Figure 10.3: *Creek running through Island View Park in the City of Sauk Rapids. Photo courtesy of Saint Cloud APO.*