



## East Central Regional Development Commission

100 Park Street South  
Mora, MN 55051  
Phone: 320-679-4065

### 2017 ANNUAL REPORT JULY 1, 2016—JUNE 30, 2017



**Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties**





Thank you for taking time to review the 2017 Annual Report of the East Central Regional Development Commission (ECRDC). In the following pages, you'll see the Commission continues to work tirelessly to advance the state of our region through the various programs and services we provide. The success of the ECRDC would not be possible without the hard

work and dedication of our local units of government and the valuable partnerships we have at the federal and state levels.

In December, the Commission completed and adopted the new 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). There are a number of ambitious economic development initiatives contained in the CEDS work plan. Among them are regional forums on childcare, tourism, financial resources for small business, succession planning, and housing. The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) requires an approved regional CEDS in order for the region to continue its designation as a federal Economic Development District.

This year the ECRDC also partnered with MnDOT and local stakeholders on a number of important planning initiatives. Among them were the development of the new regional Transit Coordination Plan which identifies strategies to im-

prove access to transit for older adults, disabled and low-income residents of the region; Safe Routes to School Planning; and the Mille Lacs Area Scenic Byway Designation Study.

The ECRDC's Community Development office continued its work assisting counties on updating All-Hazard Mitigation plans as required for FEMA disaster funding; working with underserved communities to improve access to broadband with financial assistance from the Blandin Foundation; and partnering with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety and local coalitions to coordinate traffic safety initiatives.

The Commission likes to take this opportunity each year to thank our outgoing board members and welcome newcomers to the Commission. Thank you to Steve Kimmel (Chisago County Public Interest) and Steve Hallan (Pine County Commissioner) for their years of service on the Commission. We also want to welcome John Mikrot (Pine County Commissioner) as our newest member as well. Committees

I hope you enjoy looking over the annual report. You can also learn more about our programs and services at our website [www.ecrdc.org](http://www.ecrdc.org). Thank you!

Robert L. Voss  
Executive Director

**ECRDC Board Members**

**Chisago County**

Diane Larkin, Township Rep.  
Ben Montzka, County Comm.  
Steven Kimmel, Public Interest  
Bill Schlumbohm, Sr. Municipal.  
Kevin Stenstrom, Municipal

**Isanti County**

Greg Anderson, County Comm.  
Loren Davis, Public Interest  
Richard Hansen, Township Rep.  
Marlys Palmer, Municipalities

**Kanabec County**

Karen Amundson, Public Interest  
Kathi Ellis, County Comm.  
Gordon Gullixson, Municipalities  
Dave Patenaude, Township Rep.

**Municipalities over 10,000**

Kirsten Haggen-Kennedy  
Jim Swenson

**Mille Lacs County**

Linda Evans, Public Interest  
Genny Reynolds, County Comm.  
Thom Walker, Municipalities  
Barbara Welty, Township Rep.

**Native American  
Tribal Representative**

Carla Dunkley

**Pine County**

Tim Franklin, Municipalities  
Steve Hallan, County Comm.  
Jeannette Kester, Public Interest  
John Mikrot, Jr., County Comm.  
Glen Williamson, Township Rep

**School Board Representatives**

Tom Lawlor, Southern  
Steve Odegard, Northern



*ECRDC Board Members at the Annual Meeting held at the Pine County Historical Museum in Askov Minnesota.*

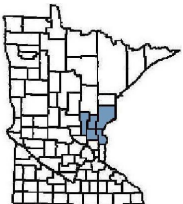
*Local governments have reached a milestone in their ability to work with state and federal agencies. The formation of regional development commissions provides the means for strengthening local government.*

*Former Governor  
Wendell R. Anderson*

# FINANCIAL

	FY 2017 ADOPTED BUDGET	FY2017 ACTUAL UNAUDITED	FY 2018 ADOPTED BUDGET
<b>AGENCYWIDE REVENUES (by source)</b>			
County Tax Levy	300,517	298,645	309,533
Grant Revenues	181,981	220,997	93,500
Local Contract Revenues	87,200	65,416	52,878
Various Other Sources	10,550	246,749	23,040
Revolving Loan Fund	61,668	63,489	56,000
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>641,916</b>	<b>895,296</b>	<b>534,951</b>
<b>AGENCYWIDE EXPENDITURES (by program)</b>			
General Fund	94,147	394,690	106,564
Economic Development	146,071	147,295	132,322
Transportation / Safety	286,563	256,198	220,416
Revolving Loan Fund:			
Administration	9,239	25,734	12,139
Loans Disbursed	60,000	32,500	35,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>596,020</b>	<b>856,416</b>	<b>506,441</b>
Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2017 (Unaudited)		General Fund Increase	33,625
Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2018 (Projected)		General Fund Increase	19,649

Fiscal Year 2016 Audit was conducted by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, Brainerd, Minnesota. The auditor's report expresses an unqualified opinion on the General Purpose Financial Statements of the East Central Regional Development Commission.



**Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties**

# EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

## WHO IS THE EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION?

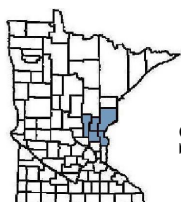
The East Central Regional Development Commission (ECRDC) is a public agency serving a variety of constituents within Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties. Other constituents include various state, federal and local governmental bodies.

The board members are represented by officials appointed by county boards, townships, municipalities, school boards and citizens at large.

The ECRDC is funded through a local tax levy and planning/program grants and contracts from state agencies, federal agencies and foundations.

## MISSION OF THE EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The mission is to provide leadership and direction through creative problem solving. We do this by initiating projects and programs that lead to creative solutions to regional problems, providing technical assistance and identifying and developing available resources. We serve in a leadership role as an advocate for East Central Minnesota to bring about positive change.



Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties

## ECRDC STAFF

JULY 1, 2016 - JUNE 30, 2017

**ROBERT L. VOSS**  
*EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

**MICHELE BOLLENBECK**  
*TOWARD ZERO DEATHS COORDINATOR*

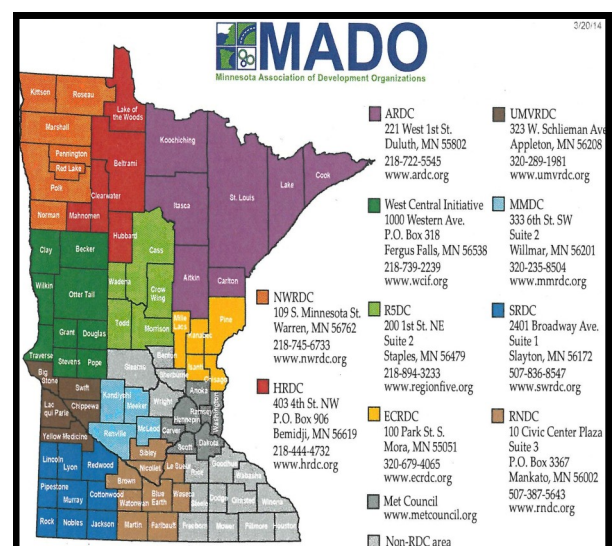
**ROBERT BOLLENBECK**  
*TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM DIRECTOR*  
*TOWARD ZERO DEATHS COORDINATOR*

**TAMMIE DENHOLM**  
*FINANCE OFFICER*

**TRISH RYDLUND**  
*OFFICE MANAGER*

**PENNY SIMONSEN**  
*COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*  
*TOWARD ZERO DEATHS COORDINATOR*

**JORDAN ZELLER**  
*ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR*



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## Minnesota Association of Development Organizations (MADO):

In conjunction with the Minnesota Association of Development Organizations (MADO) the ECRDC continues to implement DevelopMN, a statewide economic development plan that highlights common development opportunities and identifies strategies that will accelerate business growth and job creation in rural MN. The group arrived at consensus and built goals and strategies around four major cornerstones: human capital, economic competitiveness, community resources, and foundational assets. A link to the DevelopMN plan can be found on the ECRDC's website at [www.ecrdc.org](http://www.ecrdc.org).



**Economic Development Partnerships:** The ECRDC partners regularly with the following organizations: Central MN Workforce Investment Board, Central MN Housing Partnership, Minnesota Housing Partnership, Lakes and Pines, GPS 45:93, the Minnesota Association of Development Organizations (MADO). In addition, the ECRDC convenes regular meetings of City/County Administrators and Economic Development Professionals to share valuable information on economic development resources and techniques. Example of positive results gleaned from these meetings include: regional marketing initiatives, regional housing study and a regional housing website, business development in local communities.

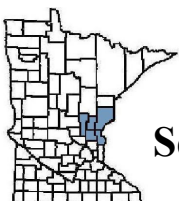


## Mille Lacs Lake Area Economic Relief Loan Program

In late 2016, the East Central Regional Development Commission agreed to assist Mille Lacs County, acting on behalf of themselves, along with Crow Wing and Aitkin Counties, with providing technical assistance with small business loan closings through the Mille Lacs Lake Area Economic Relief Loan Program, which funded by a grant from the State of Minnesota. Mille Lacs Lake, located adjacent to Mille Lacs, Aitkin and Crow Wing counties, and served by MN Economic Development Regions 3, 5 and 7E, has been experienced a steep decline in walleye fish in recent years, which has had a dramatic effect on the area's economy.



*As part of the Mille Lacs Lake Area Economic Relief Loan Program, the ECRDC is assisting with loan closings. L to R: ECRDC Executive Director Robert Voss, Mille Lacs County Administrator Pat Oman and Beachside Resort Owner Ben Lapinski*

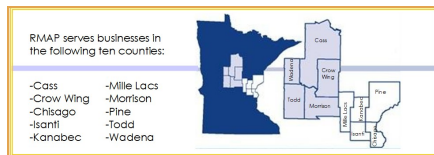


**Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties**

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Micro Loan Fund:

Robert Voss, Executive Director of the East Central Regional Development Commission participates on the loan board of North Central Economic Development Association's micro loan fund. This micro-loan fund was created by the USDA Rural Development's Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP). This micro-loan fund nicely complements our EDA Revolving Loan Fund



## GPS 45:93 Collaboration:

The ECRDC continues its economic development partnership with the GPS 45:93 in attracting high technology firms to Region 7E. GPS 45:93 is a regional economic development consortium strategically located along Interstate 35 between Minneapolis/St. Paul and Duluth. This makes it an ideal location for those companies serving the Twin Cities and Duluth area.

The mission of GPS 45:93 is to better position the region to attract high wage, technology based jobs, collaborate on business retention and expansion and encourage entrepreneurial activity. GPS 45:93 is working with Chamber of Commerce, banks and other local partners to support businesses in the region.



## Administrators City/County Clerks, & Economic Development Professionals Meetings:

The ECRDC organizes City / County Clerks / Administrator & Community / Economic Developers meetings quarterly to discuss mutual key issues occurring in the Region 7E communities. Past topics include financing opportunities for local units of government and businesses, customized training and workforce needs, business recruitment and expansion initiatives, entrepreneurship, and regional marketing initiatives. These meetings have evolved into a best practices approach to city economic development. Issues and speakers are selected that provide insight that will assist local governments and communities

**SCORE:** The ECRDC continues to market their satellite office of the St. Cloud chapter of SCORE. SCORE provides one-on-one counseling to entrepreneurs and those wanting to start a business on a variety of topics free-of-charge. SCORE also facilitates business related educational classes to assist entrepreneurs with sharpening their business skills.



*Steve Simon, MN Secretary of State, visits with regional City / County Administrators, Clerks and Community / Economic Development Professionals on April 14, 2017*



**Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties**

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



*Tina Chapman, Chair of the Mille Lacs Area Tourism Council, welcomes attendees to the Regional Tourism Business Resource Summit on April 17<sup>th</sup> at Wahkon City Hall.*

**Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):** The ECRDC recently completed their 2017-2022 CEDS, and begin its implementation. The CEDS tracks the region's demographic trends and economic conditions, identifies weaknesses and threats, and identifies strategies that have the potential to help mitigate roadblocks to the region's prosperity. A valuable planning process for regional economic development takes place in the development of a CEDS. An approved CEDS is required to maintain East Central Minnesota's designation as a federal Economic Development District. The current CEDS can be found on our website at [www.ecrdc.org](http://www.ecrdc.org).

Economic Development Districts (EDDs) are eligible to apply for various funding opportunities available through U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). For example, the ECRDC accesses the Partnership Planning grant to develop and implement the regional CEDS. More importantly, our local units of government may include regionally significant projects in the CEDS. Eligible projects may apply for federal funding through EDA's Public Works grant program on a competitive basis. The Public Works program

seeks to empower distressed communities to revitalize, expand, and upgrade their physical infrastructure to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, and generate or retain long-term, private sector jobs and investment.

Construction was completed this spring on a new Medical Campus and 181 acre Medical Business Park in Sandstone. The initial development includes a \$21 million Essentia Hospital and \$3.4 million Gateway Clinic located on 40 acres. The City of Sandstone applied to the US Department of Commerce / Economic Development Administration through the ECRDC and received a grant of \$2.3 million to assist with the cost of infrastructure for the nearly \$29 million public/private project.

As part of our 2017-2022 CEDS workplan, the ECRDC is facilitating a variety of educational events across our region annually to assist in meeting the needs of individuals, workforce, businesses, local units of government and others. To date, these events have included a Childcare Capacity Building Summit and a Regional Tourism Business Resource Summit



*Ribbon cutting May 9<sup>th</sup> at the new Pine Medical Campus in Sandstone. Infrastructure to the facility was funded in part by a grant from the US Dept. of Commerce / Economic Development Administration (EDA).*



**Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties**



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## **Revolving Loan Fund (RLF):**

The ECRDC RLF provides gap financing for businesses looking to open, expand or relocate to Mille Lacs, Pine, Isanti, Chisago & Kanabec Counties. The ECRDC employs the RLF as a tool in recruiting new businesses, maintaining and expanding existing ones, creating and retaining good paying jobs and strengthening the economic base of East Central Minnesota.

Currently there are 11 active loans to small businesses in the region and approximately \$110,000 is still available to lend. Loan amounts typically range from \$10,000 to \$60,000 with terms up to 7 years. Informational brochures were recently updated and signs promoting the RLF program are often placed at benefiting businesses. Applications for the RLF are available on the ECRDC website at [www.ecrdc.org](http://www.ecrdc.org)



*Recent loan closing for KMS Properties. L to R: Owners Tim & Mindi Siercks & RLF Board Member Clyde Bloyer.*



*RLF Board Members L to R: Nancy Hoffman, Bruce Montgomery, Daniel Blake – RLF Attorney, Clyde Bloyer, Rachelle Nelson, Glen Williamson, Robert Musgrove, Bradley Larson, Frank Christopherson – Board Chair, Frank Westling and Wayne Bekius. Not pictured: Doyle Casavant.*



*CEDS Strategy Committee Members: Robert Voss – ECRDC Executive Director, Loren Davis, Carla Dunkley, Steven Kimmel, Rebecca Perrotti, Frank Christopherson, John Schlagel & Karen Amundson – Committee Chair. Not Pictured: Joe Mulford and Thom Walker.*



**Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties**

*A successful economic development strategy must focus on improving the skills of the area's workforce, reducing the cost of doing business and making available the resources business needs to compete and thrive in today's global economy.*

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## EDA Peer Review

The US Department of Commerce / Economic Development Administration (EDA) periodically conducts peer reviews at the local Economic Development Districts, such as the East Central Regional Development Commission. The ECRDC's peer review was conducted by Lee Shirey of the US Department of Commerce / Economic Development Administration and Donn Winkler – Executive Director of the Mid Minnesota Development Commission in Willmar, MN. This review provides an opportunity to review economic development efforts in our region as well as learn from other's experience.

*Participating in the ECRDC's peer review were Robert Musgrove – Pine County Economic Development Coordinator, Lee Shirey – Economic Development Representative with the US EDA, Karen Amundson – Chair of the ECRDC CEDS Strategy Committee and ECRDC Executive Director Robert Voss. Not pictured: Peer Review Donn Winkler – Executive Director at the Mid Minnesota Development Commission.*

## EDA Visits Sites in East Central MN

On June 22, the EDA's Darrin Fleener and Duggan Salley visited several sites in East Central MN that are looking to apply to the US Department of Commerce / EDA for infrastructure grants.



*L to R: Darrin Fleener – EDA, Duggan Salley – EDA and Joe Mulford – President of Pine Technical & Community College.*

## City of Quamba Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Zoning

The City of Quamba, located in Kanabec County, recently enlisted the East Central Regional Development Commission to assist them with creating a Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance. This project is expected to take approximately 6 months to complete, and will result in the first zoning for the City.



*The Quamba Planning Commission meets with Heidi Steinmetz – Kanabec County EDA Director, and ECRDC Executive Director Robert Voss.*



**Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties**

# TRANSPORTATION

## Planning and Programming Activities

The ECRDC works in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to implement transportation planning and programming activities in Region 7E. This fiscal year, the ECRDC was involved in the implementation of the Transportation Alternatives program in Region 7E. In addition, the funding recommendations for local road projects were developed and brought forth for the FY 2022 STIP year. This year meetings with potential applicants from Chisago, Mille Lacs, and Kanabec Counties occurred. The ECRDC Transportation Advisory Committee reviewed and discussed each application; then developed a list of priorities which were approved by the Commission and forwarded to the MnDOT ATPs for funding consideration. Two projects were selected for funding.



The ECRDC was also involved in the Safe Routes to Schools program. The RDC implemented a planning project in Taylors Falls which involved the city, school district, and others. Isanti County was selected for a SRTS planning project for next fiscal year.

Region 7E is challenged somewhat in that our boundaries take in three different MnDOT Districts & ATPs. Projects are brought forth for District 3 and Metro Division and programmed with funding available to this region. Projects programmed for FY 2022 federal funding include road projects in Kanabec and Isanti Counties. Transit projects were funded separately through the Mn/DOT's Office of Transit.

## NLX Passenger Rail

The ECRDC continued to support efforts to establish passenger rail service through Region 7E. Staff participated in several meetings/activities for development of the corridor between the Twin Cities and Duluth; with stations in Cambridge, Hinckley, and Sandstone.



**40% of all UMD students come from the Twin Cities**

**Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties**

## Planning Projects

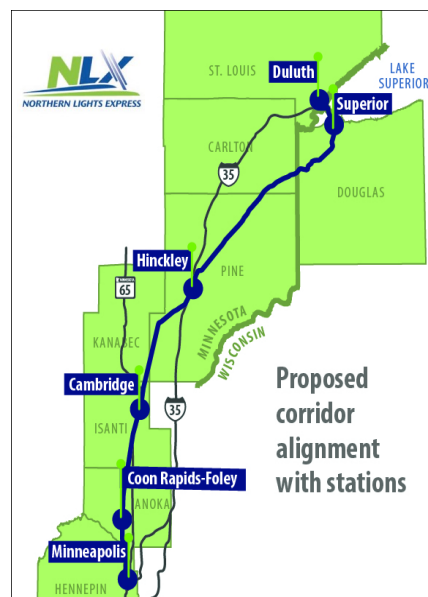
The ECRDC was involved in two specific planning projects for transportation. First, the ECRDC, under a Mn/DOT contract, conducted a Transit Coordination Study in the region. This involved various local transit agencies in identifying unmet transit needs and possible solutions to address identified needs.

The ECRDC also began a Scenic Byways Designation Study for the Mille Lacs Lake area. This involved coordination of three RDCs...East Central RDC, Arrowhead RDC, and Region 5 RDC. A number of meetings involving local stakeholders were held to determine if a Scenic Byway Designation should be pursued. This planning project is being conducted with additional funds from MnDOT.

As always, staff continues to participate in local highway task forces in the region. Bob Voss, ECRDC Director, participates in the planning process for Highway 95 through Cambridge. Transportation Planner Bob Bollenbeck participates in the Highway 8 and Highway 65 Task Forces regarding improvements to those roadways.

ECRDC transportation planners continued discussions regarding development of bike routes in the region.

The US Bike Route 41 (map can be located on the bottom of page 19) through Region 7E was designated for a national route. The ECRDC also participated in several regional trails meetings during the fiscal year.



# SAFE ROADS/TOWARD ZERO DEATHS



*KBEK radio interview held quarterly to discuss the four E's (education, enforcement, engineering and emergency services along with traffic safety issues.*



## Traffic Safety

The ECRDC implemented Toward Zero Deaths/Safe Roads programs this past fiscal year in three counties of Region 7E. Traffic Safety Coalitions successfully operated in Isanti, Kanabec, and Mille Lacs Counties with different coordinators from the agency's staff. The Coalitions, made up of community members, utilize the four E's in addressing safety issues. The E's represent Education, Enforcement, Engineering, and Emergency Services. Examples of projects implemented this past year include awareness campaigns for law enforcement mobilizations, a mock crash, and the Safe Cab program. Some of these activities were funded through grants from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety, and others. They operate under the Transportation Program of the ECRDC. The traffic safety issues facing counties include distracted driving, speed, seat belts usage, and impaired driving.

## Extra speed enforcement results in 16,580 citations

*More than 300 law enforcement agencies participated in July's two-week extra speed enforcement around Minnesota from July 7-23.*

### **Results**

- Officers, deputies and troopers issued 16,580 citations for unsafe speed and 1,781 seat belt citations. Results from previous speed campaigns include:

### **Fast and Dangerous**

- During the campaign, 20 agencies reported speeds of 100 mph or more. Those speeds included:

### **No Good Excuse**

Some of the excuses law enforcement heard during the two-week period:

- Running late to have dinner with our grandma (109 mph in a 65 mph zone).
- Going to a funeral. The driver was wearing gym clothes (74 mph in a 55 mph zone).

## **Consequences of Speeding**

- Greater potential for loss of vehicles control.
- Increased stopping distance
- Less time for driver response for crash avoidance.
- Increased crash severity leading to more severe injuries and death.

## **Save your Money. Save your License. Save your Life**

- Cost of a speeding violations will vary by county, but it will typically cost a driver more than \$110 with court fees for traveling 10 mph over the limit.
- Fines double for those traveling 20 mph over the limit.
- Fines for speeding in a work zone are more than \$300
- A driver can lose their license for six months for going 100 mph or more.



*(Note: Staff persons Bob Bollenbeck and Michele Bollenbeck will retire as Coordinators of traffic safety coalitions in the fall of 2017.)*



**Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties**

# SAFE ROADS/TOWARD ZERO DEATHS



## Isanti County TZD

The ECRDC has coordinated the Isanti County TZD program since 2003. One of the significant programs developed during this time was the establishment of a viable Safe Cab service for the community. Safe Cab began in 2005 with few rides given. The program now has grown to the point where it is now a significant part of the reduction of DUI arrests in Isanti County. According to Judge Dehn there has been a reduction of about 70% in impaired driving in Isanti County. In fact, the Isanti County Safe Cab program has become a model for other rural counties. Isanti TZD has now helped to develop similar programs in neighboring counties such as Wright, Pine, Kanabec, and Sherburne. Minnesota Safe Ride, Inc. now administers Safe Cab. To date, Isanti County Safe Cabs have provided more than 20,000 persons safe rides home.

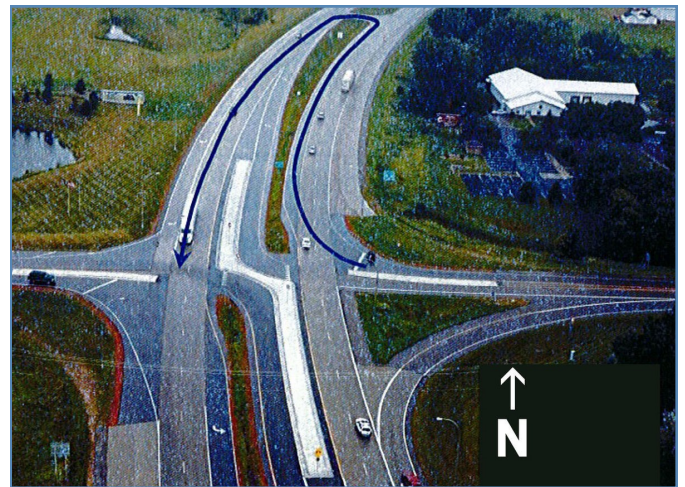


The Kanabec County Safe Roads coalition continued to address traffic safety in the county during the past year. The Coalition has met on a regular basis. The traffic safety issues have been reduced significantly.

Both the Isanti and Kanabec TZD/Safe Roads coalitions will be moved to local organizations this fall. There is much local interest in building on the successes of the traffic safety programs under the ECRDC Staff Michele and Bob Bollenbeck.

## Road Project Advocacy by Isanti & Kanabec TZD/Safe Roads Programs

Based on discussions at local traffic safety coalition, safety projects have been proposed to proactively address safety issues. Due to local discussions and advocacy the MN/DOT Traffic Safety Engineer is considering improvements at the TH 65/107 intersection by Braham and on TH 65 just north of TH 23 in Mora.



*This intersection near Cologne, Minn., has a similar layout to the Highway 65/107 interchange. In the proposed "restricted crossing U-turn" intersection, drivers leaving Braham intending to go south would turn north and navigate a U-turn to reduce conflict points at the dangerous intersection.*



*Mock Crash held May 2017 -Onamia High School and the Mille Lacs County Sheriff's Office were taking matters into their own hands by showing students what happens after a crash occurs.*



**Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties**

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byways meetings held in Wahkon on January 23 & March 17, 2017.

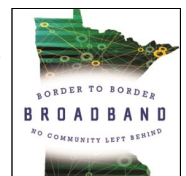


## Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Study

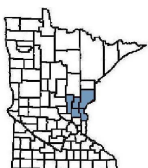
Local units of government, business owners, and stakeholders in the Lake Mille Lacs area are exploring strategies to improve the economy in light of the recent downturn resulting from the low Walleye population. While the Minnesota DNR and others work toward restoring the Walleye population of Lake Mille Lacs, there is also a need to diversify the region's economy by promoting other cultural, historic, recreational, and scenic qualities of the area. To assist with this, ECRDC along with the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) and the Region 5 Development Commission (R5DC) have initiated a process with the State of Minnesota to conduct a feasibility study for establishing a Scenic Byway route around the lake. The hope is that a Scenic Byway designation might tie many of these components together into a tourism destination with broader appeal. MnDOT has approved funding for an initial designation study that is set to be completed over the next year.

## Broadband Development

The Blandin Foundation's Broadband Community Initiative offered funding to support expansion of broadband services to Wilma Township in Pine County, resulting in several dozen households now being able to access the internet through the town hall in this small community. The ECRDC presently works with several other Pine County townships to pursue Blandin Foundation funding for small broadband projects.



Wilma Townhall in Pine County received broadband equipment to develop a hot spot at their town hall.



Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## Safe Routes to Schools

Safe Routes Minnesota provides funding to community and school groups to make improvements to the routes your children use to walk and bike to school and get the exercise they need.

In order to increase opportunities for children to walk and bicycle to school safely, the 2005 federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, provided funding for Safe Routes to School in all 50 states. The federal Legislature created SRTS, in part, to help reverse the alarming nationwide increase in childhood obesity and inactivity. The program has numerous benefits to local communities including reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality and helping kids arrive to school focused and ready to learn.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Planning concluded in Taylors Falls (Chisago Lakes School District) for the Taylors Falls Elementary School, and included parent surveys, community walk and bike audits and subsequent data collection into the national database. The planning processes ask for several meetings, with specific agendas and deliverables which support communities and school districts embracing safety and



***Walk to School Day** brings together students, school administration and staff, parents, and valued community members to celebrate the value of walking to school. The event provides a fun way to increase physical activity, improve health, and highlight the need for improvements to create safer spaces for students that walk and bike.*

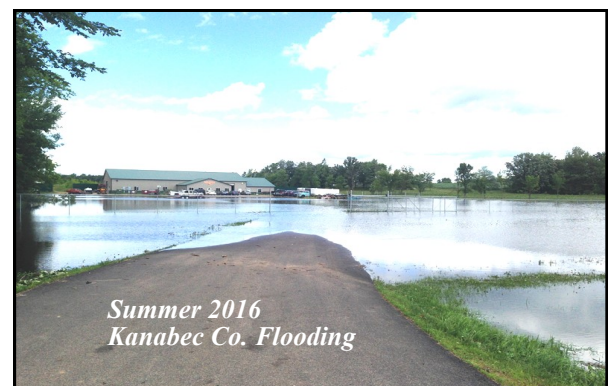
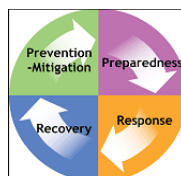
health benefits for those who walk or bike. As a result of the Taylors Falls Safe Routes to School planning, the City of Taylors Falls applied for MnDOT funding to develop sidewalks and walking paths near and around the school. The ECRDC offered technical assistance toward that application.

## Hazard Mitigation

Mitigation significantly reduces or permanently eliminates future risk to lives and property from natural hazards, by community planning and implementing projects. The purpose of hazard mitigation assistance is to reduce the impact of life and property due to natural disasters and develop resilient communities by planning and projects. Per the Stafford Act, states must have an approved plan to be eligible for public assistance and hazard mitigation assistance. The Minnesota All-Hazard Mitigation Plan requires local mitigation plans, approved by FEMA, from counties, cities, other government units and private non-profits to be eligible for hazard mitigation assistance funding.

Hazard mitigation planning processes includes: 1) organizing resources; 2) hazard identification; 3) risk assessment; 4) structural vulnerability; 5) capability assessment; 6) mitigation actions; and 7) plan maintenance.

Kanabec and Mille Lacs County contracted with the ECRDC to provide the planning function for the development of their plans in 2016 and 2017.



**Serving Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine Counties**



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**100 PARK STREET SOUTH**  
**MORA, MN 55051**  
**[WWW.ECRDC.ORG](http://WWW.ECRDC.ORG)**  
**JULY 1, 2016 - JUNE 30, 2017**