

CITY OF CHATFIELD COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
AGENDA

City Council Chambers - 21 SE Second Street, Chatfield, MN 55923
June 23, 2025, 5:30 P.M.

A. Minutes

1. [May 5, 2025 Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes](#)
Review minutes from the previous meeting.

B. Discussion Items

1. [Transportation Management Organization Presentation](#)
2. [CCTV Operations](#)
Review the proposal as presented.
3. [Street Project](#)
Review proposed project, budget, and timeline.
4. [Public Works - Wastewater Facility Plan Quote](#)
Review quotes received.



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: June 23, 2025

Agenda Item: May 5, 2025 Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Subject | Summary:

Agenda Category:

Submitted By: Michele Peterson

Recommended Motion: Review minutes from the previous meeting.

Community Engagement and Outreach:

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount:

Ongoing Cost :

One-Time Cost :

Included in Current Budget?:

FISCAL DETAILS:

Fund Name(s) (Operations | Capital):

Account Code:

Background:

Attachments:

[2025.05.05 C.O.W. Notes.pdf](#)

Committee of the Whole Meeting Notes**May 5, 2025**

Council Members Present: Mayor John McBroom, Councilors Paul Novotny, Pam Bluhm, Mike Urban, and Dave Frank.

Members Absent: Josh Broadwater.

Others Present: Beth Carlson, Michele Peterson, Gretchen Lovejoy-Mensink, Craig Britton, Brian Burkholder, and Alison Bentley.

The Committee of the Whole met on Monday, May 5, 2025.

- a) **Notes from the February 24, 2025,** Committee of the Whole were reviewed.
- b) **Looking to the future:** Community Development Director Alison Bentley and City Administrator Michele Peterson shared a presentation about the growth of the community. Items discussed included the priorities for growth, it was noted that bringing a hotel to town was the priority. Consideration will be given to existing parks and future parks, as well as future residential developments. EDA is currently discussing the potential for a housing incentive, which would provide a cash payment from the City and the developer to buyers at closing, as well as provide additional benefits. Additionally, rate structures for water and sewer are being reviewed, a recommendation to change the current billing procedures will be presented to the Personnel | Budget Committee. The current procedure uses average water usage to bill for sewer charges nine months out of the year. The recommendation will be to bill for actual usage year-round for water and sewer. Additionally, a tiered rate system will be considered.

The meeting was closed at 6:20 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, June 23, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: June 23, 2025

Agenda Item: Transportation Management Organization Presentation

Subject | Summary:

Agenda Category:

Submitted By: Michele Peterson

Recommended Motion:

Community Engagement and Outreach:

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount:

Ongoing Cost :

One-Time Cost :

Included in Current Budget?:

FISCAL DETAILS:

Fund Name(s) (Operations | Capital):

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Background:

Attachments:

[Final Report SE MN TMO Study DRAFT_6-16-25.pdf](#)

[Appendix A-F 2025 Final Report.pdf](#)

[Appendix G SE MN TMO Implementation Plan DRAFT 6-16-25.pdf](#)

Southeast Minnesota TMO Feasibility Study

Final Report – DRAFT



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Charting a Course for Regional Mobility in Southeast Minnesota

In 2024, Southeast Minnesota Together (SE MN Together) launched a study to explore solutions to the transportation challenges impacting access to employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services across Southeast Minnesota. Recognizing the need for a more coordinated and sustainable approach, SE MN Together wanted to explore whether a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) would be a feasible and effective structure to facilitate improved mobility and connectivity throughout the region.

The study assessed how a TMO could improve transportation for workforce needs, quality of life, and access to services across the 11-county area. The evaluation included a review of existing plans and data, engagement with regional stakeholders, and an analysis of organizational models and funding options.

Study Goals

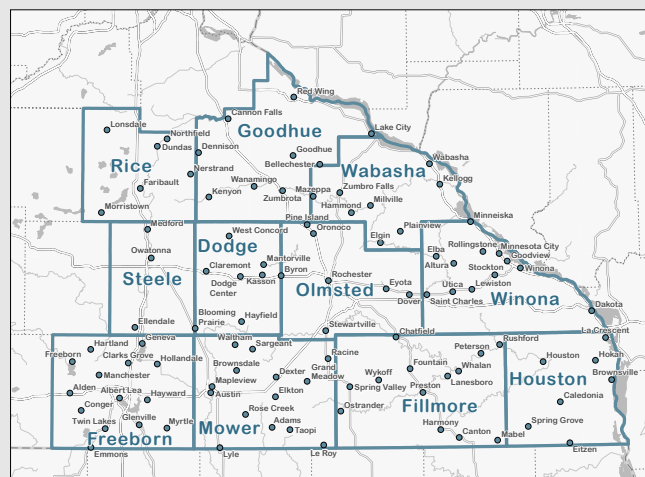
The study aimed to “*determine an organizational structure that can deliver resources to address the region’s transportation needs related to workforce transportation, access to healthcare and education, access to services, and quality of life*”.

To achieve that goal, the project team set the following study parameters:

- Build on and advance the region’s successful transit systems, services, and facilities.
- Engage with leaders throughout the 11-county area to affirm the TMO approach meets regional needs and priorities.
- Identify barriers, gaps, redundancies and efficiencies in the region’s transit, mobility, and ridesharing services.
- Coordinate with and complement the regional transportation coordinating council efforts in Region 10.

SE MN Together is a regional network of community leaders, organizations, and institutions committed to building regional collaboration and community capacity throughout Southeast Minnesota. The coalition brings together stakeholders from across the 11-county region—including local governments, nonprofits, businesses, and educational institutions—to address shared challenges and pursue collaborative solutions in workforce development, economic opportunity, and regional planning.

Geographic Focus



The study area included the 11 counties of Southeast Minnesota: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Winona

What is a TMO?

A TMO is an entity formed to coordinate and manage transportation services and initiatives within a defined geographic area. TMOs typically provide services such as:

- Educate and promote sustainable transportation options and services
- Convene stakeholders to find collaborative solutions
- Facilitate and advocate for improved services, such as transit, shuttle operations, and bike-share/bike library programs

Successful TMOs operate with a collaborative, member-based governance structure, involving both public and private partners. Their missions reflects the unique needs of their members and service areas.

Assessing the TMO Feasibility Framework

The Southeast Minnesota Transportation Management Organization (TMO) Feasibility Study used a structured framework to assess its viability. The study aimed to determine if a TMO was feasible, what its functions should be, whom it should serve, and how it should operate.

The feasibility framework drew from national best practices and insights from over 100 existing TMOs, and focused on evaluating the following core elements:

1. **Area Characteristics:** Reviewing demographic, economic, and land use factors that influence travel behavior and transportation needs.
2. **Transportation Challenges:** Identifying current barriers to access and service gaps for workers, residents, employers, and institutions.
3. **Stakeholder Commitment:** Assessing interest, capacity, and leadership from regional partners to champion and sustain a TMO.
4. **Financial Sustainability:** Evaluating funding mechanisms and the feasibility of a multi-year, regionally supported TMO.

To apply this framework, the project team used a comprehensive planning process that combined technical analysis with extensive stakeholder engagement. Activities included:

- Reviewing more than a dozen regional, state, and local transportation and workforce development plans to understand and build on past work and related efforts.
- Analyzing regional travel behavior using data from Replica (Fall 2019 and Fall 2023), Census information, and transit ridership data. This analysis provided valuable insight into where people are traveling and how travel patterns are shifting.
- Engaging stakeholders through interviews with employers; focus groups including transit providers, human services organizations, cities, towns, and higher education providers; a regional survey; virtual engagement; and one-on-one conversations.
- Facilitating a Steering Committee, which served as the primary strategic advisory group and a driving force behind the study's development. Members represented a wide range of sectors, geographic areas, and community perspectives across the 11-county region. The Committee was structured to include both conventional decision-makers and underrepresented voices, ensuring that recommendations reflected the full diversity of regional needs.
- Calculating the economic benefits of public transit in the region.

The findings from this process are presented in the following sections, organized by the four elements of the feasibility framework.

1. Area Characteristics

A TMO is designed to be flexible and responsive to the unique needs of its service area, so its geographic scope and structure can vary significantly. To assess the feasibility of a regional TMO in Southeast Minnesota, the study reviewed key area characteristics—specifically land use, demographic, and economic factors—that influence travel behavior and transportation needs. These characteristics provide important insight into where and how a TMO could deliver the most value across the region.

Land Use

Many TMOs form in major activity centers that combine commercial, retail, entertainment, and residential uses, such as central business districts, urban redevelopment sites, or suburban activity centers. These areas are ideal for TMO formation, especially when there is existing density and diverse land uses or plans to increase them. Some TMOs serve major highway or transit corridors with a common set of issues or a cohesive sense of community along the length of the corridor. Often, land uses are spread out along the corridor, with concentration at major interchanges, intersections, or transit stations.

Southeast Minnesota is a geographically diverse region encompassing 11 counties characterized by a mix of rural communities, small towns, and several mid-sized cities. While the region is predominantly rural—with agriculture and natural landscapes shaping much of the land use—it also includes urban centers such as Albert Lea, Austin, Faribault, Northfield, Owatonna, Red Wing, Rochester, and Winona, which serve as regional hubs for employment, healthcare, education, and commerce. A TMO spanning 11 counties will need to balance the need for regional coordination and service with the needs of subregional activity centers.

Demographic

Understanding Southeast Minnesota's demographics is essential for identifying transportation needs and designing effective solutions. Demographic trends help pinpoint which populations are most likely to face mobility barriers and where targeted interventions could have the greatest impact.

Southeast Minnesota is experiencing modest population growth and increasing diversity, with a rising share of older adults and foreign-born residents. These demographic shifts, combined with the region's dispersed geography and changing travel patterns, create distinct challenges in providing and communicating transportation options in the region.

Data show that older adults average just 2.76 trips per day—far below the regional average of 4.17, potentially indicating unmet transportation needs. Other transit-reliant groups, including individuals without a driver's license or access to a vehicle, or those with disabilities, also face constrained mobility.

These findings emphasize the need for equitable, coordinated transportation strategies.

Population Density

Southeast Minnesota's population is unevenly distributed across a large geographic area. While the region includes a few mid-sized cities with moderate to high population densities—such as Albert Lea, Austin, Faribault, Northfield, Owatonna, Red Wing, Rochester, and Winona—the majority of the 11-county area is made up of low-density rural communities and small towns.

This dispersed settlement pattern, meaning people and businesses are spread out over a large area rather than concentrated in dense cities, challenges efficient public transportation (transit) service delivery and regional coordination. In these low-density areas, there often aren't enough riders living close together to make traditional fixed-route service financially viable. Fixed-route service refers to buses or trains that run on set schedules and routes, like a typical city bus line. Because of this, these areas are more reliant on flexible transportation options, such as demand-response services, which operate more like a taxi or ride-share, where vehicles pick up and drop off riders when and where they're requested, rather than following a fixed schedule or route. Coordinated transportation solutions involving different providers working together to share resources and offer more seamless rides across a region, also provide opportunities in rural areas (as discussed below).

A future TMO would need to balance urban and rural needs by promoting scalable transportation options that operate efficiently across varying population densities.

Economic Development

For a TMO to thrive, it needs to operate in an area with a strong economic pulse. This section examines Southeast Minnesota's economic landscape, focusing on job density and growth, to understand where a TMO can deliver the most value. Understanding these economic factors is crucial because TMOs tend to be most effective in regions experiencing significant development or strong business activity. They are typically less suitable for areas with stagnant growth or economic decline—unless the primary challenge is access. Analyzing these characteristics helps determine how a TMO can best support workforce access, economic mobility, and regional prosperity by connecting residents to job opportunities.

A primary indicator of economic development is an area's job density relative to the region and the change in the total number of primary jobs over time. In Southeast Minnesota, job density is highest in the region's urban centers, which serve as economic hubs for surrounding rural areas.

- **Rochester** is the clear **anchor of regional employment**, with the highest job density in Southeast Minnesota. Driven largely by Mayo Clinic and related healthcare and research industries, Rochester has both a high concentration of primary jobs and steady job growth over time.
- **Winona, Austin, Albert Lea, and Red Wing** also exhibit **moderate job densities**, supported by sectors such as education, manufacturing, healthcare, and local government. These cities function as subregional employment centers, drawing workers from nearby rural communities.
- The **surrounding rural areas**, while geographically expansive, have **low job densities** and are more likely to be home to agricultural, small business, or home-based employment. Workers in these areas often commute to job centers, underscoring the need for reliable regional transportation connections.

The distribution of job density highlights the importance of connecting rural residents to employment opportunities in regional hubs. A TMO can facilitate coordinated transportation services to enhance job access, workforce retention, and economic mobility across the region.

2. Transportation Challenges

A key factor in TMO success is the presence of **clearly defined and widely recognized transportation challenges**—issues that neither the public nor private sector can fully address alone but could be meaningfully solved through collaboration. A lack of consensus around the transportation problem or the absence of an actionable role for the TMO is often a key reason why emerging TMOs struggle. To inform the understanding of transportation challenges, the project team built on findings from previous studies and conducted stakeholder engagement throughout the feasibility study. More than 150 stakeholders participated through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and virtual input. Insights into transportation challenges identified by stakeholders are documented below.

Fragmented and Undercoordinated Transportation Services

More than 40 transportation providers operate in Southeast Minnesota, including transit agencies, human service providers, intercity carriers, and private shuttles. However, these services often operate in silos, leading to inefficient coverage, service duplication, and rider confusion. Providers also cited difficulty coordinating schedules and service boundaries due to incompatible booking systems and limited collaboration between agencies.

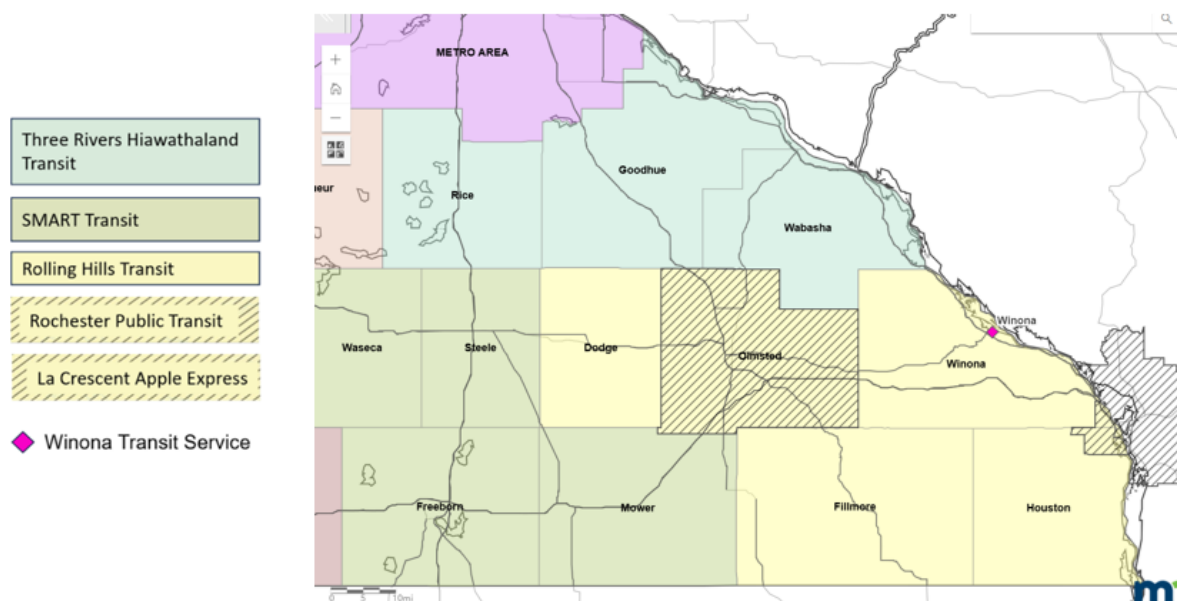


Figure 1 Transit Service Providers across Southeast Minnesota. Source: Minnesota Department of Transportation (June 2025). Find your transit provider. <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/find-your-transit-provider.html>

Limited Regional Coverage and Service Gaps

Many rural and small-town areas lack adequate transit coverage, as providers report insufficient funding and staffing to expand services into low-density regions. This leaves significant geographic gaps, especially for trips between counties or across transit agency service boundaries. The barriers are compounded by inadequate evening and weekend service, a lack of first/last-mile connections (connections between where people live or work and main transit stops), and unclear information on how to access services across jurisdictions.

Current Riders are Reliant on Transit

A survey of transit riders showed that:

- 60% of riders lack a driver's license
- 60% do not have access to a personal vehicle
- 64% have a disability

Riders expressed that more reliable schedules, expanded hours, and better geographic coverage would improve their ability to get around.

Lack of Centralized Information and Trip Planning Support

Transit riders and regional stakeholders frequently cited the lack of centralized, user-friendly information about available services as a major challenge. Transit operators confirmed that many Southeast Minnesota residents are unaware of the full range of services available. Without a regional resource or travel navigator, many potential riders will remain unaware of their options. Stakeholder engagement made it apparent that some available transportation services are promoted by “word of mouth” due to undercoordination or lack of resources. This included school transportation for children and commuter vans/shuttles for apartments.

Technology and Booking Integration Gaps

Separate scheduling systems across providers prevent seamless trip planning and transfers. Riders must often call or navigate multiple websites to arrange complex trips, which discourages use and limits access, especially for cross-county travel or multi-leg journeys.

Underutilized Transit Services and Financial Inefficiencies

Though public transit service levels have largely rebounded post-COVID, ridership has not. In 2023, Southeast Minnesota providers delivered 1.1 million passenger trips—well below 2019 levels—resulting in an estimated \$35 million in lost benefits and higher per-trip costs. Without coordination or promotion, transit services risk becoming increasingly unsustainable. Privately supported commuter bus service, such as the routes sponsored by Mayo Clinic serving many of the communities in the region, were paused when the pandemic began. This service is just being revived in early 2025 in limited pilot form for Mayo Clinic employees.

Mismatch Between Travel Patterns and Service Models

Trip data analysis shows travel is increasingly localized, especially in smaller communities. However, most services remain fixed-route or reservation-only dial-a-ride, limiting flexibility for workers with irregular schedules or those making short, spontaneous trips.

Employer Needs and Opportunities

Several employers, especially those requiring in-person work, reported recruitment and retention challenges in part due to limited transportation options for their workers. Most employers are interested in facilitating and promoting carpooling and vanpooling but lack the internal resources. This highlights the need for regional coordination and technical assistance that a TMO could provide.

These challenges reinforce the need for a dedicated entity to coordinate services, advocate for improvements, and raise awareness about available transportation options.

3. Stakeholder Commitment

Successful TMO formation depends on a shared recognition of regional transportation challenges, a willingness to contribute to collective solutions, and a clear understanding of the TMO's potential role.

The process is significantly smoother when stakeholders have a history of working together on local or regional issues—whether transportation-related or not – and when specific coordination gaps and needs have been identified that existing organizations are not addressing.

Regional Collaboration in Southeast Minnesota

While Southeast Minnesota has a track record of successful public and private sector collaboration, the region currently lacks a regional transportation coordinating council (RTCC) or similar organization to bring together transportation providers, businesses, workforce development, human services agencies, and local and regional governments. Stakeholders consistently pointed to the lack of formal coordination among providers as a barrier to efficient service delivery. This study echoed previous findings which also identified a clear need for structure to facilitate and sustain transportation collaboration and coordination in the region.

Importance of Regional Champions

A frequently cited factor in early TMO success is the presence of a committed local champion—such as a community leader, influential employer, or developer—who advocates for the initiative and helps catalyze action. Even more effective is the involvement of multiple champions: a small group of respected and invested advocates who are willing to lead the initial steps, promote the concept broadly, and guide early implementation.

In Southeast Minnesota, SE MN Together has been a vocal champion for transit. Through this study, a larger group of champions is emerging including transit providers, human services organizations, local municipalities, and large employers, who have expressed strong support for a regional TMO and a willingness to stay engaged.

Several organizations also indicated willingness to host or support the TMO, laying the groundwork for implementation, and a host organization has been identified.

4. Organizational and Financial Viability

A regional TMO's long-term viability depends not only on stakeholder support but also on securing sustainable and diversified funding. Successful TMOs typically maintain a balanced mix of funding sources—supplementing government grants and local contributions with membership dues or service fees—to reduce overreliance on any single stream and enhance resilience over time.

Securing Financial Sustainability

While some financial questions remain, preliminary analysis found that a regional TMO is organizationally and fiscally feasible. Launching a TMO as a program under an existing regionally operating organization will reduce administrative expenses, start-up time, and costs. Potential funding sources are being explored in collaboration with MnDOT and local and regional partners. Continued exploration of these models will be a critical next step for implementation.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that a well-structured, locally supported TMO could enhance transportation access, foster economic growth, and build on the region's existing assets to deliver lasting impact.

Key Insights into Economic Benefits

The feasibility study included a detailed economic benefits analysis that quantifies the social and economic value generated by public transit services in Southeast Minnesota. This analysis highlights transit's critical role in supporting individual opportunity, community stability, and regional economic vitality.

Transit as a Lifeline

Transit services in Southeast Minnesota provide essential access to employment, healthcare, education, shopping, and social connections, especially for those without access to a personal vehicle. For many, transit is not just a convenience, but a lifeline that enables independence and reduces reliance on public assistance. Many riders expressed that if transit services were no longer available, they would have to leave their community.

Substantial Economic and Social Return

In 2023, the five primary public transit systems in the region generated approximately **\$29 million** in societal benefits—including healthcare savings, reduced vehicle operating costs, and public assistance cost savings. Additionally, transit riders spent an estimated **\$3 million** locally, supporting small businesses and community vitality.

Transit agencies included in the transit benefit analysis:

- **Hiawatha Transit / Three Rivers Community Action**
- **Rolling Hills Transit / SEMCAC**
- **SMART Transit (Southern Minnesota Area Rural Transit)**
- **Rochester Public Transit (RPT)**
- **Winona Transit Service**

Positive Return on Investment

Nearly all agencies demonstrated a positive cost-benefit ratio, averaging **1.4** across the five systems, indicating that every \$1 invested in transit services yields \$1.40 in economic and social returns.

COVID-19 Impact and Opportunity for Recovery

Public transit ridership in Southeast Minnesota declined **56%** from 2019 to 2023, resulting in a \$35 million loss in benefits. As shown in Figure 2, while service levels have largely rebounded, ridership has not kept pace. This suggests an opportunity for a future TMO to restore ridership through better coordination, promotion, and service integration. Additionally, private transit services, such as commuter service sponsored by Mayo Clinic that was halted during the pandemic, had not restarted in 2023 and presents an economic loss and opportunity not reflected in the economic benefits analysis.

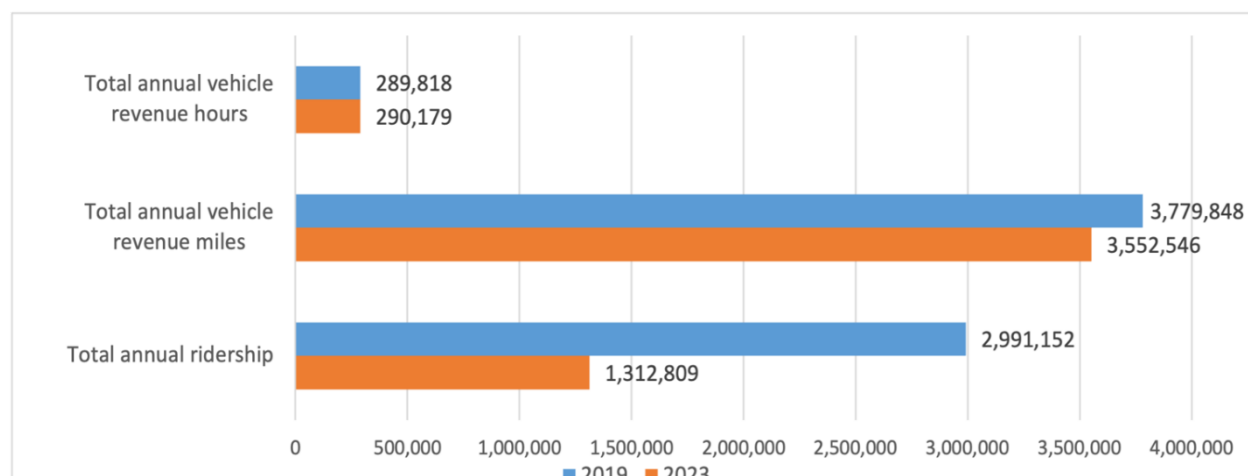


Figure 2 Regional Transit Ridership vs. Service Hours, 2019–2023

Potential for Growth

Modeling of ridership growth scenarios shows that benefits increase at a compounding rate. For example, a **25% increase in ridership** would result in a **27% increase** in benefits. If the region restores pre-pandemic ridership levels, annual benefits could more than double to **\$64 million** (see Figure 3Error! Reference source not found.).

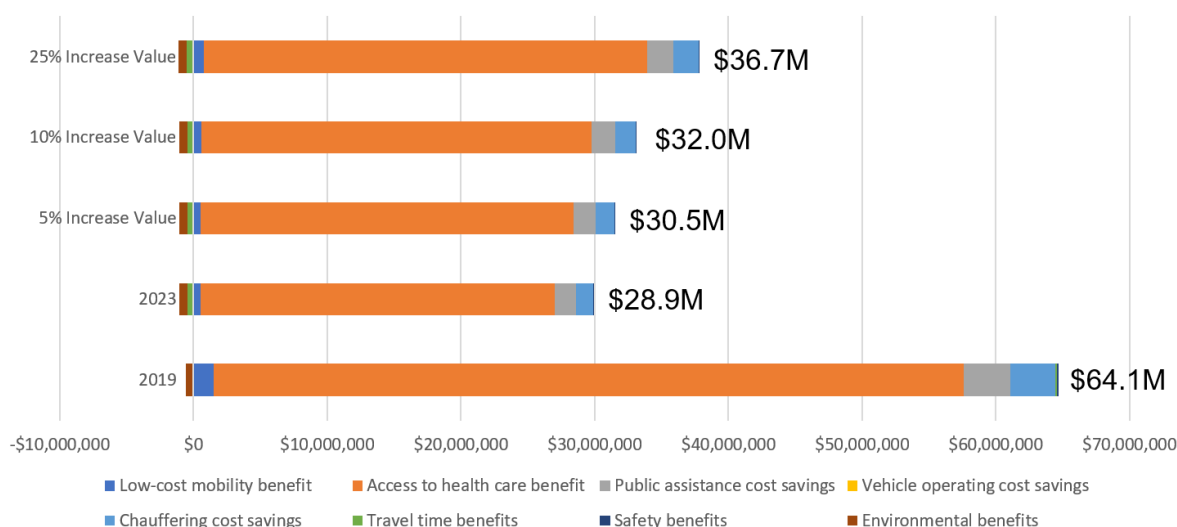


Figure 3 3Projected Transit Benefits in Southeast Minnesota Under Ridership Growth Scenarios

The review demonstrated that the concept of a regional TMO is feasible and well-aligned with ongoing planning efforts and policy goals. It confirmed that the TMO could play a critical role in closing gaps between transit, workforce needs, and service delivery across Southeast Minnesota. Building on these findings, the following section outlines the TMO's proposed roles and responsibilities, detailing how it can deliver value to the region through coordinated action, improved access, and strategic growth.

What Will a TMO Look Like?

Establishing the right organizational model is critical to ensuring the TMO can deliver services effectively, collaborate across jurisdictions, and remain financially sustainable. The proposed organizational structure for the Southeast Minnesota TMO is designed to be cost-effective, collaborative, and scalable. Based on feasibility analysis and stakeholder input, a hosted model was identified as the most appropriate path forward, allowing the TMO to launch within an established organization while minimizing startup costs and administrative burden.

Host Organization

The Southeast Service Cooperative (SSC) has agreed to serve as the host agency for the TMO. SSC is a non-profit agency that works across all 11 counties in the Southeast Minnesota region, providing services to public and private schools, local governments, and other community-based organizations. As host, SSC will provide key administrative services such as human resources, IT, and financial management, in exchange for an administrative fee. The TMO will operate as a financially self-sufficient program within SSC (see Figure 4).

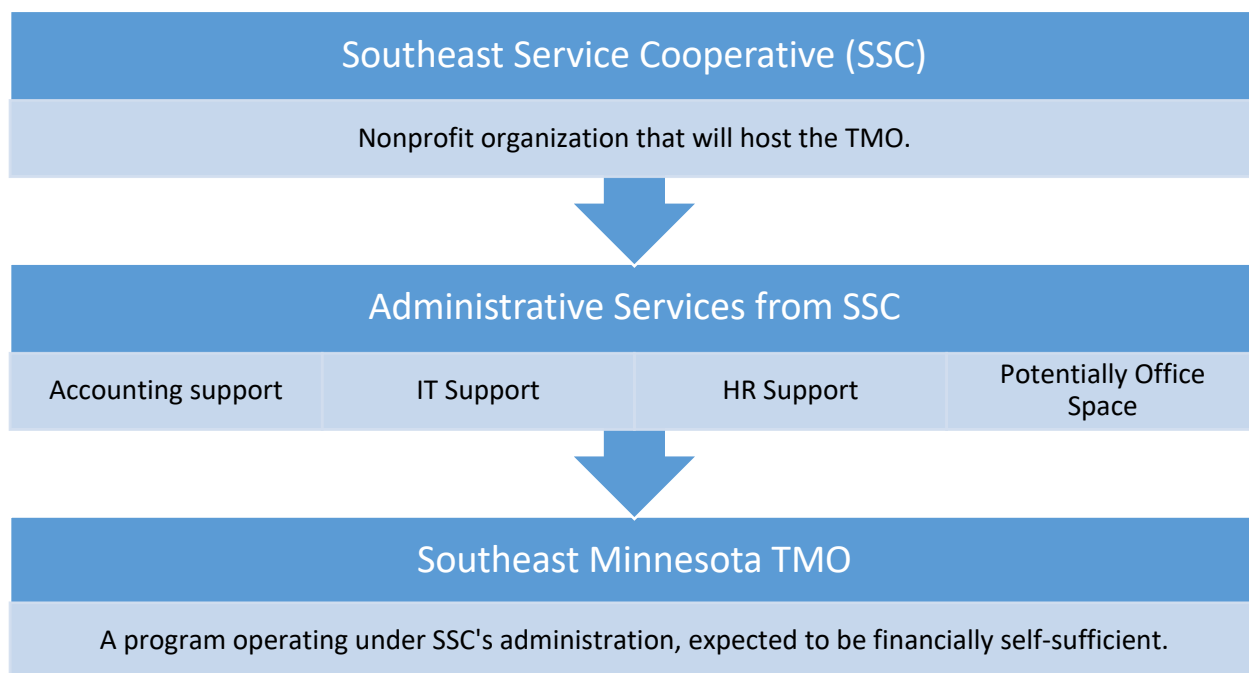


Figure 4 Southeast Service Cooperative (SSC) Hosting Southeast Minnesota TMO: Administrative Support Structure

Governance Model

To ensure inclusive representation and effective decision-making, the TMO will operate under a three-tiered governance model as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1 TMO Governance Model

Governance Body	Role & Responsibilities	Membership & Meeting Frequency
Executive Committee	Acts as the TMO's Board of Directors, providing strategic oversight, fiscal guidance, and leadership. Approves work plans, budgets, and staffing decisions.	7–9 members representing diverse sectors and geographies; monthly
Advisory Board	Offers regional insight and strategic advice. Supports program alignment with community needs and serves as a sounding board for initiatives.	Open membership, building on Steering Committee participants; bimonthly
Working Groups	Issue- or geography-specific groups that advance key initiatives such as transit coordination and rural mobility.	Approx. 15 members per group, drawn from relevant sectors; quarterly

Staffing

A full-time Program Manager will lead the TMO, responsible for day-to-day operations and executing the TMO work plan. The Manager will coordinate with governance bodies, lead employer and partner engagement, oversee outreach and data collection, and develop sustainable funding sources. Figure 5 shows the proposed organizational structure featuring the host organization at the top providing administrative support and oversight for the TMO. The four blue components sit below the host organization with clear lines of communication stemming from the host organization. The TMO Program Manager will serve as the operational lead of the TMO, reporting to the Executive Committee and coordinating with the Advisory Committee. Additional key functions of the TMO Program Manager are listed below.

Key Functions of the TMO Program Manager:

- Deliver priority services, including a regional transportation coordination working group and trip-planning tools.
- Build relationships with employers and community partners to promote sustainable commute options.
- Oversee program performance using data-driven strategies.
- Secure and manage diverse funding streams, including grants, memberships, and sponsorships.



Figure 5 Proposed Organizational Structure for the Southeast Minnesota TMO

Working Group Focus Areas

Working groups serve as collaborative forums within the TMO structure, bringing together stakeholders and partners to focus on specific topic areas that support the TMO’s overall goals. Each group will address a key area of need or opportunity, providing recommendations, supporting project implementation, and helping to align regional efforts.

For instance, the first working group will focus on Transit Coordination, bringing together stakeholders from transit agencies, municipalities, employers, and human services to improve regional service alignment and efficiency. Additional working groups may be established over time based on emerging priorities and stakeholder interest.

Advancing the TMO

The Southeast Minnesota TMO has the opportunity to serve as a coordinating and capacity-building entity that improves access to transportation, increases awareness of transportation options, and strengthens regional collaboration.

TMO Activities

The TMO's work plan will be guided by the ideal outcomes stakeholders identified for a TMO during this study:

- Transportation services and multimodal options that better serve the community
- TMO provides a productive and safe space for regional coordination
- Better utilization and coordination of existing transportation services
- Widely available information on how to use transit and other options in the region
- Platform of support that will lead to sustainable long-term funding for the TMO

Initial priorities focus on four major functions: coordinating transportation providers and services, promoting transit and travel options, serving as a regional information hub, and creating a unified voice for transit advocacy in the region.

Figure 6 summarizes these core roles and the key activities.

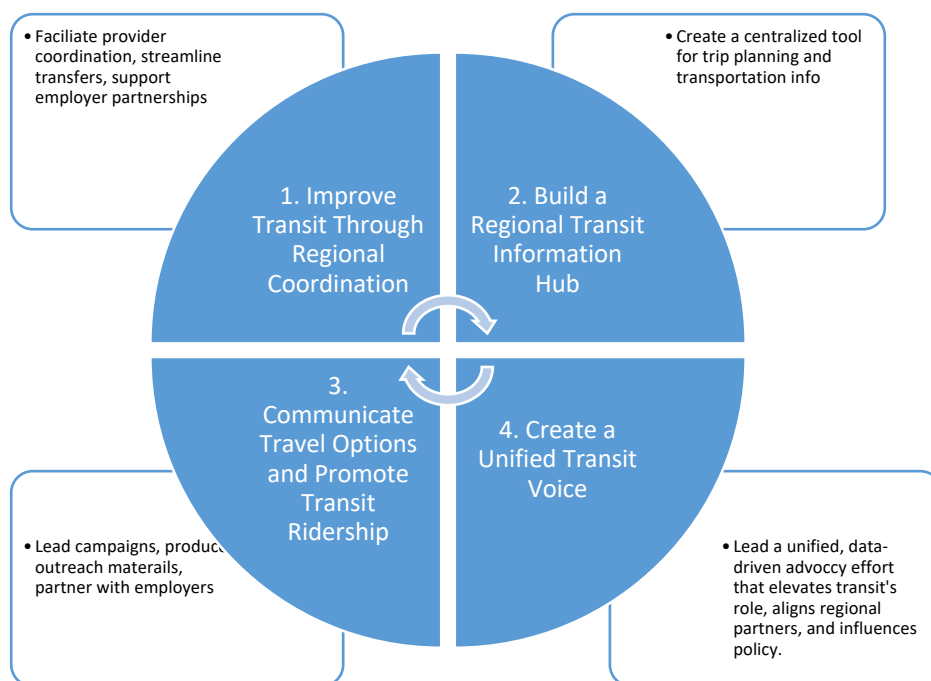


Figure 6 Summary of Key Roles and Functions of the Southeast Minnesota TMO1. Improve Transit Through Regional Coordination

1. Improve Transit Through Regional Coordination

The TMO will play a central role in coordinating transit agencies, local governments, employers, and other partners to streamline services and expand access across Southeast Minnesota. This includes:

- **Form a Transit Coordinating Committee** to address schedule alignment, streamline transfers, and explore operational efficiencies like vehicle sharing.
- **Facilitate partnerships between transit agencies and employers** to address workforce transportation needs.
- **Identify opportunities to coordinate specialized transportation services** (e.g., non-emergency medical transportation) to reduce duplication and improve coverage.
- **Establish a coordinated advocacy strategy to promote transit's regional value**, including shared messaging and resources. Engage in legislative sessions to advocate for investment in a connected, regional transit network.
- **Support intercity, rural, and first/last-mile connections.** First/last-mile connections refer to how people get from their home to a main public transportation stop, and from that stop to their final destination. This includes **microtransit** (on-demand shared rides, often booked through an app, that serve a specific small area) and **Park & Ride connections** (places where people can park their cars and transfer to public transportation).

2. Build a Regional Transportation Information Hub

The TMO will develop and maintain a **Regional Transportation Tool/Website** to provide residents and workers with a single, trusted source for transportation information. The tool and its resources should be ADA accessible and multilingual. Features may include:

- An interactive trip planner with information about fixed-route, on-demand, and vanpool services.
- Maps of Park & Ride locations and connections to local employers.
- Integration with platforms like Transit App and MnDOT's statewide transit planner for real-time route and fare information.
- Investigate opportunities to integrate transit provider information into other digital platforms to improve user access to route information and payment.
- Single platform to purchase fares online for transit services within the region.

3. Communicate Travel Options and Promote Transit Ridership

The TMO will lead inclusive and strategic outreach to raise awareness, promote existing services, and shift how people get around the region. Initial strategies include:

- **Create Travel Options Resources** that are multilingual, accessible, and printable for distribution at community events or work sites.
- **Lead a "Try Transit" Campaign** offering free transit rides in partnership with transit operators.
 - Work with transit operators to secure free transit passes or a week of free transit for a regional "Try Transit" campaign.

- Create and widely distribute promotional materials through employers and community groups, local governments, chambers, and other TMO partners.
- Maximize awareness using social media, public events, and targeted outreach to underserved communities.
- **Launch a regional outreach and education strategy** to build broad awareness, trust, and understanding of regional transit services and other travel options among residents and workers of all abilities.
 - Build a regional membership of employer partners, starting with large worksites requiring in-person staff. Leverage TMO services and resources to address workforce transportation challenges.
 - Deliver tailored on-site engagement to host commute information sessions, share educational materials, and deliver “Try Transit” or similar campaigns.
 - Engage in community-based education, including presentations, tabling at local events, and travel training workshops for seniors, youth, and individuals with disabilities.

4. Create a Unified Transit Voice

The TMO will take the lead in amplifying Southeast Minnesota’s transit story with a cohesive advocacy strategy that elevates the visibility, value, and impact of transit. The TMO will serve as a convener, messenger, and policy influencer to drive investment and support for a more connected regional system. Through this initiative, the TMO will:

- Develop compelling, data-backed messaging that positions transit as essential to economic competitiveness, health equity, and regional resilience.
- Coordinate legislative engagement and advocacy efforts to ensure the region’s voice is heard at the Capitol and beyond.
- Deploy regional campaigns and roadshows that align stakeholders on shared priorities and increase public understanding.
- Equip providers with branded toolkits and unified messaging, enabling them to speak with one voice.
- Influence funding decisions and policy conversations by ensuring transit is always part of the regional planning agenda.

Explore Future Services and Build Capacity

Building on the initial four recommended roles for the TMO, the next phase of growth positions the TMO to expand its impact and support long-term regional mobility goals. As the TMO establishes itself as a trusted convener and service provider, it can begin to offer additional services that address persistent operational and funding challenges. These may include support for driver recruitment and retention through partnerships with workforce agencies, grant-writing assistance to help providers secure new funding streams, and the development of shared data systems to enable regionwide performance tracking. Over time, the TMO can also explore fare integration and unified payment systems to enhance the rider experience, while continuing to lead policy advocacy to remove barriers and support service innovation. These future services will allow

the TMO to evolve in step with regional needs, reinforcing its role as a catalyst for coordinated, equitable, and effective transportation solutions in Southeast Minnesota.

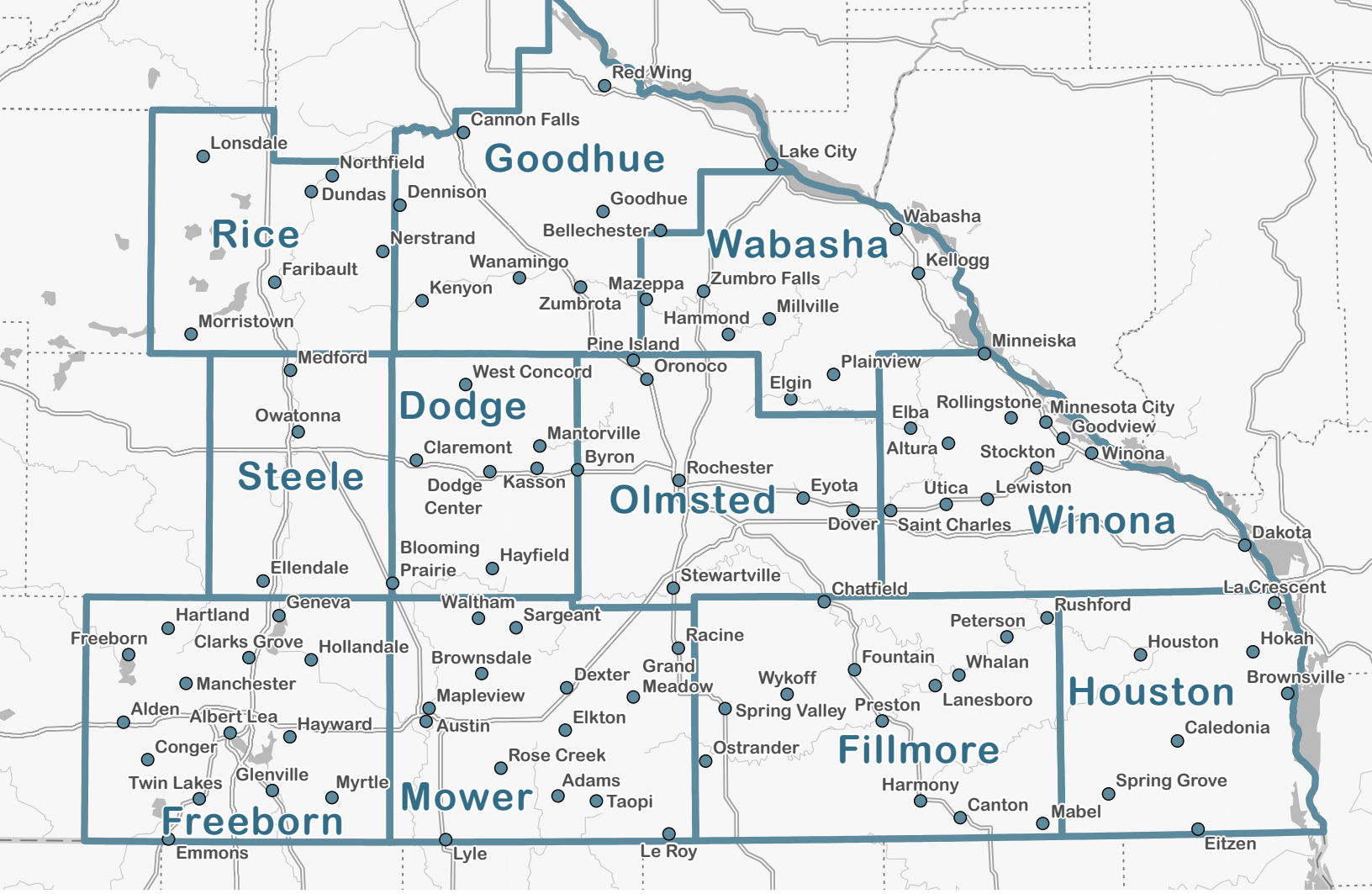
What is Next?

Launching a TMO in Southeast Minnesota will require continued education and outreach to gain broad support, secure partnership agreements from local and regional governments, transportation providers, human services organizations, employers, and other partners, and secure funding. To maintain the study's momentum, next steps include:

- **Continue engaging with steering committee members to maintain momentum and leverage their collective knowledge and expertise.** Steering committee members can help facilitate the next steps to gain support for a TMO, assist with advocacy and funding applications, and further guide TMO service priorities.
- **Develop and launch a compelling roadshow presenting study findings.** This study confirmed what many stakeholders in the region intuitively knew: there is a great need and opportunity to create an organization that will improve transit and other transportation options in the region. This step involves creating materials and scheduling presentations at existing meetings of city councils, regional governmental and non-profit organizations, MnDOT representatives, and employers to share study findings and gain support.
- **Create resolutions to obtain commitments from transit agencies, municipal partners, and others.** Create sample resolutions that formalize an organization's commitment to supporting a regional TMO.
- **Develop a hosting services agreement with Southeast Service Cooperative** to formalize the partnership.
- **Develop funding requests and applications:**
 - A funding request to the state legislature based on the work plan developed as part of this study to fund employer/commuter-focused work.
 - Work with Region 10 Council to apply for 5310 funding in early 2026 to support work plan items serving seniors and people with disabilities.

Technical Appendices

- Appendix A: Past Plans and Studies Review
- Appendix B: Transportation and Behavior Analysis
- Appendix C: Economic Benefits Analysis
- Appendix D: Organizational Structure
- Appendix E: Funding Sources
- Appendix F: Engagement Summary
- Appendix G: Implementation Plan



Southeast Minnesota TMO Study

Appendix A: Past Plans and Studies Review



Appendix A: Southeast Minnesota TMO Past Studies Review

Introduction

This document provides an overview of previous studies and plans related to existing and future transportation services in Southeast Minnesota's 11 counties (Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona). This plan and study review helps inform and evaluate the feasibility of developing a transportation management organization (TMO) for the region.

The studies covered a range of topics, which included demographics, transportation management, existing industries, challenges to economic development, economic benefits of transportation services, input from stakeholders (e.g., transit providers, transit riders, employers, and community representatives), and ongoing and future initiatives to improve the overall transportation system.

The region's largest county is Olmsted County, which accounted for approximately 31% of the total population in 2019. Much of the population growth occurred in Olmsted County. Freeborn, Houston, Wabasha, and Winona counties lost population between 2010 and 2020. The region's percentage of senior residents continues to increase. The aging population will rely more on transit services as they become less likely to drive personal vehicles. Immigrant populations also continue to grow, which has helped to offset population decline and labor shortages within the region.

Health care, manufacturing, and government are the region's largest industry employers; combined, they make up more than 50% of the region's jobs. Many of these industries are located within higher-density areas.

The studies highlighted the economic benefits of rural and small urban transit services for the economic vitality of the region's businesses and residents. Residents without a personal vehicle or who experience mobility limitations rely on transit services as their primary transportation option. Without transit services, companies would lose potential employees or customers, and residents would be unable to access services.

The studies and plans also provided insights into the transportation challenges experienced by the region's transportation providers and riders. Key challenges included the following:

- Need for a more cohesive regional transportation network
- Lack of service coordination between transit providers
- Transportation services are limited in much of the region's rural areas
- Labor shortages and costs impact transit provider's ability to hire and retain staff
- Lack of consistent and reliable funding sources for transit services

The plans highlighted the importance of implementing initiatives that will help address key transportation challenges and improve regional transit services. They recommended investing in improvements for transit services and alternative travel modes and developing a more comprehensive region-wide transit network.

Content

The following is a review of applicable studies from MnDOT and local agencies for key insights into the transportation system and Transportation Management Organization (TMO) research.

1. [Southeast Minnesota Travel Study - 2016](#)
2. [Manufacturers' Perspectives on Minnesota's Transportation System District 6 / Southeastern Minnesota - 2018](#)
3. [Southeast Minnesota Regional Economic Study - 2018](#)
4. [Southeast MN Regional Transportation Coordinating Council \(RTCC\) – 2019](#)
5. [Southeast Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council Implementation Plan - 2019](#)
6. [Measuring the Economic Benefits of Rural and Small Urban Transit Services in Greater Minnesota - 2020](#)
7. [Region 10 Local Human Services-Transit Coordination Plan 2022](#)
8. [Funding Shared Mobility as an Extension of Existing Public Transit Services - 2022](#)
9. [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2023](#)

1. Southeast Minnesota Travel Study (MnDOT, Updated January 2016)

Main Purpose

The study aims to assess the feasibility and recommendations of new regional transportation services in 11 counties in Southeast Minnesota. The study acknowledges the importance of improving existing transit services and expanding those networks to accommodate anticipated growth throughout the region.

The key takeaways include:

- **Existing conditions and market assessment of the study area:** The study area is mainly rural, with sparsely distributed populations and limited transportation options. Rochester is the primary destination for work, medical, and shopping trips. The transit systems in the area have different fare mechanisms, service hours, and information resources.
- **Travel behavior analysis based on census and mobile phone data:** The study identifies the primary trip pairs for home-based trips. The analysis also shows the peak travel times and the internal commuting patterns within each analysis zone.
- **Public input from household and onboard surveys and focus groups:** Public input highlighted transit user habits and key destinations, as well as the public's desires and top priorities for future transit investment. It helped identify opportunities to better serve existing and future transit riders.
- **Opportunities for improving the regional transportation services:**
 - **Identifies core demographic groups** and their needs for potential services, including millennials, baby boomers and older adults, commuters, college students, and people with disabilities.
 - **Proposes several service concepts, such as:**
 - New/expanded commuter routes
 - Scheduled transit to Twin Cities
 - Specialized group trips
 - Promotion and expansion of vanpools
 - Improved marketing/information
 - Financial incentives
 - Rideshare matching
 - Enhancements to local transit services
 - **Provides preliminary ridership estimates along several corridors.**

Relevant Data

- **Market Assessment:** includes previous studies and plans, demographic and employment characteristics, and existing transportation services and infrastructure (p. 5)
 - **Population density (p.6):** The City of Rochester in Olmsted County has the largest population density within the region.
 - **Transit dependency based on multiple factors (p. 7):** High-density areas typically had higher dependency on transit services.

- **Concentration of businesses employing 100 or more people (p. 8):** The City of Rochester had the highest concentration of companies employing 100 or more people within the region.
- **The concentration of businesses employing 500 or more people (p.9):** The City of Rochester (Olmsted County) and the City of Owatonna (Steele County) had the highest concentration of businesses employing 500 or more people within the region.
- **Transit systems and populations they serve (p. 12):** Transit systems primarily serve the areas with higher densities throughout the region, including the Cities of Rochester, Owatonna, Albert Lee, Austin, Red Wing, and Winona.
- **Input from employers (p. 10):** Most surveyed employers (90%) provide free parking.
- **Public input summary (p. 24):** Most commuters (in all counties) drive alone. Mower County and Fillmore County had the smallest percentage of "drive-alone commuters." Dodge County and Fillmore County had the longest commute travel times. Olmsted County had the highest number of transit users in the past 12 months.
- **Preliminary opportunities and needs based on core markets and demographic groups (p. 43):** Each demographic group has different needs, including:
 - Millennials expect alternative transportation options.
 - Baby boomers and older adults (50 years and older) prefer to “age in place” and have alternatives to driving.
 - Half of all Minnesota workers commute to a different county. Job growth in MnDOT District 6 will continue, with clustering around Rochester.
 - College students have lower automobile use rates and higher dependency on alternative travel modes. Students will take occasional regional trips.
 - People with disabilities have lower automobile use and a higher dependency on transit services. They also have lower non-work trips compared to other demographic groups.
- **Potential routes and services (p. 46):** The study identified several corridors for potential transit services, including a line that would connect to the Twin Cities.

Transportation Challenges

Transportation challenges highlighted in the document include:

- **The region’s rural communities and character** make it challenging to offer alternative transportation choices for some commuters, especially those living or working in more isolated areas. Rural areas' lack of alternative transportation options makes it challenging to retain employees due to the additional cost and time burden of commuting to work.
- **Limited transit service options exist**, especially in rural areas with lower density. A lack of knowledge of existing services was also a key challenge experienced by transit riders.
- **Another struggle for transit riders was the lack of service coordination** among existing providers. Regional transit providers use different systems, such as fare mechanisms, information sources, and service hours.

Public Engagement Insights

Public engagement activities included 1) a household travel survey, 2) an onboard survey for transit riders, and 3) focus groups with riders and non-riders. The following are key themes:

- The **household survey** revealed the percentage of drive-alone commuters by county, average commute travel times, awareness and use of transit systems, and the likelihood of using commuter/express bus services.
 - Dodge and Fillmore counties had the highest PM and AM commute travel times, while Houston had the lowest.
 - Olmsted County had the highest transit use (within the past 12 months of study).
- The **onboard survey** collected information from users of various transit systems, including primary trip purpose, frequency of riding transit, length of time using transit service, satisfaction with the availability of transit service in the community, and primary factors in mode choice.
 - The purpose of trips varied by use, but work and shopping were the most common destinations.
 - About 86% of participants responded that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the transit services in their community.
 - Most survey participants use transit services multiple times per week. About 44% use transit five to seven days per week, and 32% use it two to four days per week.
- The **focus groups** identified key destinations, transit investment priorities, and challenges of alternative transportation modes.
 - **Commuting to work** was the primary reason for accessing destinations.
 - **Key destinations included** Rochester for work, medical services, and shopping trips. Mankato and La Crosse were other cities participants frequently traveled to.
 - **The top transit investment priorities highlighted** were:
 - 1) new regional transit services
 - 2) incentives for using alternative travel modes (transit, biking, rideshare, etc.)
 - 3) new or expanded providers
 - 4) more and better information about available services
 - 5) special groups trips
- **The public input revealed:**
 - 1) differences between potential markets regarding service priorities and preferences
 - 2) older adults seek more personalized and convenient service, while younger riders are more sensitive to travel times
 - 3) Onboard amenities may appeal to commuters and encourage mode shift to transit

Recommendations

Key recommendations were:

Identify core markets for new regional transportation services, including millennials, baby boomers and older adults, commuters, college students, and people with disabilities. Regarding age, trends show millennials prefer diverse mobility options, older populations want to "age in place," and alternatives to driving, and college students drive less. Regarding commuting, about half of Minnesota workers commute to a different county, and the Rochester area will experience the largest job growth in the region. People with disabilities tend to have higher transit dependency.

Transit demand is not a priority for many southeast Minnesota residents. However, they **prefer regional public transit services, such as express or commuter routes, if new transportation services are offered.**

- **Limited choices, a lack of service coordination**, low levels of knowledge of transit options, separate fare mechanisms, service hours, and information resources continue to be challenges.
- **Next steps include:**
 - developing evaluation criteria
 - revising ridership estimation
 - developing a set of service investment alternatives

2. Manufacturers' Perspectives on Minnesota's Transportation System (MnDOT District 6, 2018)

Main Purpose

This study aimed to collect and analyze information on manufacturers' perspectives and priorities for the transportation system in southeastern Minnesota, and to build relationships with them for future improvement. It used a regional industry cluster analysis to identify and interview 115 businesses from various sectors and locations. The input gathered as part of this study focused on freight travel and was not relevant to the TMO Feasibility Study.

Business input revealed that businesses value transportation infrastructure that keeps them safe and efficient. They appreciated MnDOT's communication and maintenance efforts and highlighted the importance of transportation for their economic vitality and expansion plans. The next steps and recommendations suggested that MnDOT District 6 incorporate business feedback into its short- and long-term planning and operations, address safety and efficiency issues at specific locations, explore innovative ways to partner with businesses and stakeholders, and communicate with companies about progress and opportunities. The study also suggested that the MnDOT Central Office should use the feedback to improve existing systems and policies, incorporate business needs into statewide planning, and strengthen communication and collaboration across districts.

3. Southeast Minnesota Regional Economic Study (Southeastern Minnesota League of Municipalities, 2018)

Main Purpose

The Southeast Minnesota Regional Economic Study provides communities in the region with long-range population, employment, and economic forecasts at the county- and region-wide scales. Forecasts serve as tools for southeast Minnesota communities to inform long-range planning and guide investments and policies. The following are key trends identified by this study:

- Five counties (Dodge, Goodhue, Mower, Olmsted, and Winona) within the region have experienced growth since 2000. According to the State Demographer Center, some counties within the region will experience population stagnation or loss.
- There is a large senior population throughout the region.
- Health care, manufacturing, and government are the region's largest industry employers; combined, these industries make up more than 50% of the region's jobs. Tourism is a rapidly growing industry in some counties.
- The region experiences labor shortages and retention challenges.
- There is a growing need for housing options throughout the region.
- The region has a strong demand for regional transportation, including public transit.
- The region's growth can be tied to the growing international immigrant population.
- Healthcare insurance costs are above average for the state due to a small market of insurers, higher average care costs, and more.

The study highlighted challenges experienced throughout the region and evaluated key regional initiatives. The study used REMI Software to assess the economic impacts of not implementing initiatives to address current and anticipated challenges.

Relevant Data

- **Population changes.** The population of Southeast Minnesota grew from 276,800 in 1970 to over 366,850 in 2015. The region saw its highest rate of population growth between 1990 and 2000 (p. 24).
- **Changes in senior age groups.** The region's population is aging, with the share of residents aged 55 or older increasing from 25% to 29% between 2009 and 2016 (p. 26).
- **Changes in employment.** The region's annual job growth between 1970 and 2015 was 0.2% lower than the statewide average in the same period (p. 26).
- Key economic drivers, trends, and initiatives (p. 32).
- REMI Software was used to project growth in the region (p. 34)
- **Projected population changes between 2016 and 2040.** The SDC Forecast projects largely stagnant populations and implies minimal regional employment growth, with some growth in Olmsted and Goodhue counties. (p. 35).

Projected employment changes between 2016 and 2040. The SDC Forecast finds that employment in the region is expected to grow in Olmsted County, driven by the expansion of healthcare, services, and retail in

Rochester. Elsewhere, employment is expected to stagnate as the labor force shrinks due to the aging population. Goodhue and Winona may see the sharpest employment decline (p. 35).

- **Overview of economic impacts created by planned regional initiatives:**
 - Growing need for housing is not met by stock (p. 42)
 - Labor supply continues to be limited and impact labor costs (p. 44)
 - Demand for regional transportation and commuting travel times will increase as the denser areas continue to develop (p. 49)
 - International Migration can help counteract the population decline and expand the labor supply (p. 56)
 - Tourism and recreation opportunities are growing in many areas throughout the region (p. 60). This industry has the potential to increase employment opportunities and business revenues.
 - Healthcare insurance costs are comparatively higher in Region 10 relative to the state and the nation (p. 65). The higher costs are a challenge for the region when attracting and retaining businesses, as the cost of providing insurance is prohibitive for employers and individuals purchasing insurance from the individual market.

Transportation Challenges

As the population continues to grow, there will be a higher demand for regional transportation to support employment and population centers throughout the region. Nearly 90% of residents in the Southeast Region commute to work by private vehicle, while just 3% commute by public transportation, a reflection of the fact that the region is not currently served by a cohesive transportation system.

Regions with robust transit access often attract more and higher-skilled workers, given the desirability of car-light environments. Public transit is generally more effective at connecting workers to dense employment hubs rather than sparsely populated centers. Much of the region is in a rural setting, which makes it challenging to provide robust transit services. Transit investments can help address the labor shortage prevalent throughout the region.

Increasing transportation access has significant positive impacts on the region's economic output. To realize these benefits, municipalities and counties should coordinate efforts across jurisdictions to advocate for a cohesive transportation system, leveraging existing work conducted by regional transportation groups.

Public Engagement Insights

There was no known public engagement as part of this project. The study relied on demographic information and studies/initiatives conducted by local government agencies.

Recommendations

The study compares the baseline scenario results with the scenario that includes all the initiatives being implemented. The study projects that addressing the housing gap and labor participation rates are the most important for the region's economic growth. The study estimates that implementing all the initiatives can result in an increase of 38,700 residents, 37,400 net jobs, \$6.14 billion in output, and \$1.87 billion in wages

by 2040. The study recommends that government agencies work collaboratively to implement initiatives and reap collective benefits.

4. Southeast MN Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) Presentation (2019)

Main Purpose

An RTCC coordinates transportation services through a network of existing public, private, and non-profit providers in a region.

RTCC Planning Timeline:

2015 - Established RTCC, developed framework.

2017 – Developed grant program and solicitation

2018 (Spring/Summer 2018 – Secured planning grant

2018 (Fall) – Hired consultant, participated in the already planned workshop, developed steering committee, developed engagement plan

2019 (Winter/Spring) – Hosted engagement events

2019 (Summer) – Hosted engagement events, call for members

The Work Plan for the RTCC includes administration and coordination, identifying regional emphasis areas, developing local coordination strategies, and identifying statewide emphasis areas.

Organizational structure of the RTCC: The organizational structure consists of a board, an executive committee, a general membership, county committees, municipal committees, and various work plan priority committees.

Public Engagement

- **Purpose of the public engagement:** The public engagement was aimed at establishing goals, developing a work plan, and presenting the implementation plan for the SE MN RTCC.
- **Methods of public engagement:**

12 workshops over three rounds

- Round 1 – Establishing goals
- Round 2 – Developing Work Plan
- Round 3 – Implementation Plan and Call for Members

Steering Committee Meetings

Comment Cards

Human Services District 10 Directors Meeting

Resources

- Three Rivers and MCOTA online resources
- Fact Sheet

5. Southeast Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council Implementation Plan (2019)

Main Purpose

The Implementation Plan recommends developing a Regional Transportation Coordinating Council in Southeast Minnesota (SE MN RTCC). The document outlines the purpose, goals, activities, structure, and budget of the SE MN RTCC, which aims to improve regional transportation accessibility, efficiency, and innovation. The SE MN RTCC will serve as an entity that addresses various transportation issues experienced in the region.

The Council has four main goals and multiple objectives to guide its work. The goals are to:

- Increase the accessibility of transportation by providing diverse and equitable options
- Improve the efficiency of existing transportation services and resources
- Define innovative solutions to enhance transportation service and community development
- Identify opportunities for consistent communication for customers of all ages and abilities.

The plan proposes that Olmsted County serve as the administrative agency for the Council. Olmsted County will receive and manage grant funds, provide office space and equipment, and monitor the Council's compliance and performance. The Council will have a board of representatives from various transportation and human service sectors who provide leadership and decision-making.

The SE MN RTCC has a work plan that describes anticipated activities, timing, and sequencing of its efforts to address regional transportation coordination issues and opportunities. The plan covers the initial two-year implementation period and aligns with the Council's goals and objectives. The SE MN RTCC has a budget of \$1,252,732 for the initial two-year implementation period.

Relevant Data

- **Organizational structure of the Council.** A Board will be established to lead the SE MN RTCC (p. 4).
- A **work plan** outlines anticipated activities, timing, and sequencing for the Council (p. 6).
- **Overview of staffing and resources.** The Council aims to include 4.5 full-time equivalent employees (p. 9).
- **Funding and budget.** The plan outlines an initial two-year budget for the Council (p. 13).

Transportation Challenges

The study recommends developing the SE MN RTCC to address various inter-jurisdictional transportation topics and challenges, including the following:

- Regional accessibility effects on quality of life and community and economic development
- Public transportation barriers
- Geographic and temporal public transportation service gaps
- Public transportation service inefficiencies and redundancies
- Public transportation costs for riders and providers
- Regional policies and procedures for public transportation
- Grant and funding opportunities for regional public transportation

Public Engagement Insights

The Implementation Plan was developed using input from representatives from various stakeholders. Participants included Three Rivers Community Action (administrative agency for the planning phase), Southeast Minnesota Area Agency on Aging, Southeast Minnesota Center for Independent Living, the cities of Albert Lea, Winona, Northfield, and Rochester, Olmsted County, Hiawathaland Transit, Rolling Hills Transit Service (Semcac), Southern Minnesota Area Rural Transit (SMART), La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility, Rochester Public Transit, members of SEMN Together (CEDA, Inc., SEH, Inc., and Rochester City Lines), policymakers and the general public. These stakeholders participated in monthly Steering Committee meetings or participation in eight community meetings held throughout the 11-county area in February and March 2019.

Stakeholder insight helped inform the Council's organizational structure, mission, goals, and work plan.

Recommendations

The Implementation Plan recommended the development of the Regional Transportation Coordinating Council in Southeast Minnesota (SE MN RTCC). The plan includes a work plan that outlines anticipated activities and sequencing to address regional transportation coordination issues.

6. Measuring the Economic Benefits of Rural and Small Urban Transit Services in Greater Minnesota (MnDOT, 2020)

Main Purpose

This research aimed to measure the economic benefits of rural and small urban transit services in Minnesota. This research provides information to assess the benefits of public spending on transit and gives decision-makers the data needed to inform investment decisions.

The methodology of evaluating transit service benefits included:

- Identifying and classifying potential transit benefits by analyzing previous studies, performing six (6) case studies throughout the state, and conducting stakeholder surveys.
- Developing a method to measure benefits. Where possible, benefits were quantified in dollar values. Otherwise, benefits were evaluated using qualitative criteria. Most of these can be categorized as societal benefits, and some are economic impacts.

The study's main findings showed that transit services in Greater Minnesota provide significant benefits to their users and communities, exceeding the costs of providing the service, and that the benefits vary depending on the characteristics of the transit system and the service area.

Relevant Data

- **A review of the literature and past projects/studies** measure the benefits of transit services (p. 24).
- **Survey Results**

The project surveyed transit stakeholders across the state to obtain feedback on the perceived benefits of rural and small urban transit in Minnesota. Stakeholders included human service agencies, transportation providers, public health departments, health care providers, county or city employees, local elected officials, community organizations, private businesses, schools, or other organizations interested in the public transit system (p. 20).

The stakeholder survey had two main objectives. The first was to help inform the development of the framework for estimating transit benefits. The second objective was to provide qualitative evidence to complement the quantitative findings.

The following are key findings from stakeholder input:

- A total of 417 respondents completed the survey
- Most survey participants were highly dependent on available transit services. Participants highlighted that they would not be able to take trips without transit.
- Most respondents agreed that transit provides a wide range of benefits within their communities. The benefit they identified as most important is providing transportation to people who otherwise would not be able to make trips, especially older adults, people with disabilities, low-income individuals, and others.

The survey results categorized potential transit benefits into five areas:

1. Benefits to transit users who otherwise would not be able to make trips due to the inability to drive or lack of access to transportation.

2. Benefits to communities and states that could result from improved access to jobs, health care, and other activities.
 3. Benefits that could result when individuals switch from traveling by automobile to traveling by transit.
 4. Benefits to the community from providing an alternative transportation option.
 5. Economic benefits to the community.
- **Case studies.** Total benefits and benefit-cost ratios were estimated for the six transit agencies—all showed transit benefits exceeding costs.

Transportation Challenges

The study found it difficult to develop quantitative methods for evaluating transit service benefits since many variables exist. Many factors (e.g., time savings, environmental impacts, costs, etc.) can be incorporated into the evaluation of transit service benefits. The number of assumptions and parameters involved in the evaluation methodology creates a margin of error and a level of uncertainty.

- The consequences of missing trips are significant and multi-faceted, affecting the individual, community, and society. Missed trips mean individuals have decreased access to essential activities and amenities. For communities, missed trips could have economic consequences: fewer trips to local businesses are made; they also have important social implications because they reduce social interaction between community members, and some of those who miss trips may feel less connected to their town. Society is also affected if individuals cannot access work, education, or health care. Productivity could decline, and spending on public assistance programs could increase to support those who cannot access work. Further, the loss of trips would lead to an inequitable transportation system that does not serve the population's segments that rely more on this form of transportation.

Recommendations

- The study developed a spreadsheet tool that any transit agency can use to calculate the benefits of its services. This tool is available and intended for use by transit agencies.
- The report outlines a series of benefits that should be considered when determining the cost-benefits of funding existing and future transit services. This research provides information to assess the benefits of public transit spending, giving decision-makers the data needed to inform investment decisions.

7. Region 10 Local Human Services -Transit Coordination Plan (MnDOT District 6 Planning, 2022)

Main Purpose

This document evaluates existing transportation providers, identifies unmet needs and services, identifies coordination opportunities, and establishes transportation-related goals for Region 10, which includes eleven (11) counties.

Key Topics included:

- Existing Conditions: Demographics, major trip generators, existing transportation service providers
- Transportation Challenges
- Public engagement insights
- Recommendations

Relevant Data

Demographics (P. 5): The document summarizes the existing demographics and projections throughout the region and how certain demographic groups may have greater needs for transit services.

Study area demographics include population projections, age, and other vulnerable populations.

Population size: In 2019, Olmsted County had the largest population (30.6% of the county's population), followed by Rice County (13.1%) and Winona County (10.0%). Rochester is also the largest city in Olmsted County and Region 10.

Senior population: Freeborn County has the highest percentage of seniors in the region.

- **Populations with disabilities:** Wabasha County (13.5% of the county's population) and Freeborn County (13.0%) had the highest percentages of individuals with disabilities.

Low-income population: Mower County contains the largest percentage of the population living below the poverty level (13.5%) by county.

- **Zero-vehicle households:** Winona County (8% of the county's total households) had the highest percentage of households with zero vehicles.
- **Places of work and commuting:** The percentage of individuals who worked within the county of their residence varied. Less than half of the working population work in their county of residence. Dodge County (42.8% of the county's total population) and Houston County (45.7%) have the lowest percentages of individuals who work in the county of residence. Olmsted County (92.3%) has the highest percentage of individuals who work in the county of residence. It also has the highest rate of individuals who use public transit to access employment.
- **Minority Communities:** The Counties of Olmsted, Rice, and Steele are the most ethnically diverse in Region 10.
- **Major trip generators (P. 31):** The healthcare industry, which continues to grow rapidly, is one of the largest trip generators throughout the region. This industry is typically concentrated in areas with higher population density. The senior cohort, which makes up 15% of the region's population,

frequently relies on public transit to access health services. The Destination Medical Center and Mayo Clinic are expected to continue to increase the healthcare industry in the region.

- **Existing transportation service providers** (P. 32): Over forty groups, organizations, and government agencies provide transit service within the region. Most providers only offer transit service Monday through Friday.

Transportation Challenges

- **COVID-19 pandemic impacts on public transportation** (p. 4): The COVID-19 pandemic created many long-lasting challenges for service providers, including reduced ridership and driver/operator staffing shortages. Social distancing regulations and safety concerns drastically decreased the use of public transit. This will make it challenging to reach the pre-pandemic goal of meeting 90% of the public transit needs in Greater Minnesota by 2025. During the pandemic, engagement was limited to virtual meetings, eliminating the possibility of conducting in-person meetings, which led to a smaller representation of riders engaged.
- **The increased labor** cost has made recruiting and retaining transit drivers/operators more challenging.
- **Spatial limitations** make it challenging to expand services in rural areas.
- **Fare fees are a burden** on lower-income individuals.
- **Limited service hours** during weekends and nights.

Public Engagement Insights

The project primarily engaged service providers and transit riders through various in-person activities (e.g., steering committee meetings, workshops, focus groups, etc.) and online surveys. The key themes highlighted by transit riders and service providers are included below.

Provider Survey (p. 42)

A provider survey was conducted to understand the types of services provided, populations served, challenges providers experience, and provider needs. The key themes from the survey were:

Desire to extend service hours and destinations

Desire for improved service reliability

Need to invest in ADA accessibility

Leverage new technologies to improve services and amenities

Issues with hiring and retaining drivers/operators

Need to secure consistent funding to continue to provide services

Rider / Customer Survey (p. 52)

A rider/customer survey (156 participants) was conducted to evaluate their opinions towards available services, transit service needs, and ideas for improvements. The key themes from the survey were:

Desire for extended service hours and destinations

Desire for improved service reliability

Desire for ADA accessibility improvements

Support for non-English or limited-English speakers

Recommendations

Mobility Tomorrow: Goals and Strategies (p. 65)

The following are goals and strategies that aim to address challenges experienced by transit riders and service providers:

- **Goal 1: Increase the Number of Paid and Volunteer Drivers**
 - Strategies include reviewing funding opportunities to increase wages and salaries, providing incentives for volunteers, and improving training programs.

- **Goal 2: Improve Accessibility**

Strategies include purchasing equipment to provide accessible transit stops and vehicles, improving winter maintenance, expanding door-to-door and curb-to-curb pick-up services, and expanding the loaner program.

- **Goal 3: Coordinate and Consolidate Transportation Services and Resources**
 - Strategies include creating a Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) that meets routinely, improving service maps, coordinating dispatch technology, developing a shared website, implementing a regional pass or fare system, and working to reduce regulatory barriers.

- **Goal 4: Improve Mobility Strategies and Service Convenience**

Strategies include improving routes to popular destinations, expanding service hours, investing in translation services, and developing low-cost partnerships with ride-share programs.

8. Funding Shared Mobility as an Extension of Existing Public Transit Services (University of Minnesota - Center for Transportation Studies, 2022)

Main Purpose

This study evaluates how public transit may be used to fund shared mobility services in small urban and rural areas. This study seeks to identify funding opportunities available for this purpose and the limitations in federal and state regulations for the use of the funding. The study also evaluates barriers to obtaining funding and strategies to overcome these. In addition, the study researchers explore how transit agencies across the U.S. have funded similar projects and identified opportunities for Minnesota.

Relevant Data

Table 2 details four grants for the state of Minnesota and their local match requirements. These include funding for new services, operations, facilities, and capital, as well as funding specific to greater Minnesota transit operations. A wide variety of grants are provided by the State of Minnesota to provide funding for mobility services. Each grant requires a local match of varying percentages ranging from 5% for areas up to 20% for Small Urban areas. The Public Transit Facilities and Capital Grant and the Greater Minnesota Public Transit Operating Grant require a flat 20% local share for all entities receiving the grant.

Table 2. Eligible organization by grant (State of Minnesota)

Grant	Eligible Organizations	Local Match Requirement
Public Transit New Service Grant	Legislatively established public transit commission or authority, county or statutory or home rule charter city providing financial assistance to or operating public transit, private operator of public transit, tribal government	*Small Urban - 20% *Small Urban Paratransit - 15% *Rural: 5%
Public Transit Operating Grant	Legislatively established public transit commission or authority, county or statutory or home rule charter city providing financial assistance to or operating public transit, private operator of public transit, tribal government	*Small Urban - 20% *Small Urban Paratransit - 15% *Rural: 5%
Public Transit Facilities and Capital Grant (1)	Local governments, non-profits, and Tribal governments are eligible for projects greater than \$5,000	20%
Greater Minnesota Public Transit Operating Grant (1)	Legislatively established public transit commission or authority, county or statutory or home rule charter city providing financial assistance to or operating public transit, private operator of public transit, tribal government	20%

Notes: (1) Previously listed as part of the 2024-2025 program but not currently available in the 2023 program.

Source: (MnDOT, 2020a; Sec. 174.24 MN Statutes, 2021).

Table 3 outlines federal funding sources. Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) are the most frequently used source of federal funding for mobility services. Other formula grants, including Section 5310 (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities) and Section 5307 (Urbanized Areas), are used

less frequently but still make up a significant amount of funding. Other common funding sources include AIMI, CMAQ, and IMI.

Table 3. Federal funding used for shared mobility services

State	Federal Grants Used	Total project costs covered by federal funding (in percentage)
Delaware	Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) (1) Formula Grants for Urbanized Areas (Section 5307) (1) Carpool and Vanpool Projects (Title 23 Section 146) (1) Formula Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) (1)(2) AIM (Section 5312) (2)	75%
Iowa	Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311), Formula Grants for Urbanized Areas (Section 5307), Formula Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) IMI (Section 5312) AIM (Section 5312)	80%
Massachusetts	Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) Formula Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) Other	50%
Michigan	Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) IMI (Section 5312) CMAQ (Title 23 Section 149)	
Montana	Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) Formula Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) CMAQ (Title 23 Section 149)	100% minus the local share requirement
New Hampshire	Formula Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310)	80%
Ohio	Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) Formula Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310)	2%
Vermont	Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) Enhancing Mobility Innovation Competitive Program (Section 5312) MOD Sandbox (Section 5312) Carpool and Vanpool Projects (Title 23 Section 146)	80% (some ops at 50/50)

Virginia	Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) IMI (Section 5312) CMAQ (Title 23 Section 149) Other	70%
Washington	Formula Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) CMAQ (Title 23 Section 149)	80% operating projects 50% capital projects

Notes: (1) Mentioned by the state DOT. (2) Mentioned by the Delaware Transit Corporation. (3) The local share requirement for the programs is up to 20 percent. (4) The percentage of total project costs covered by federal funding is considerably low.

Transportation Challenges

Challenges experienced by transit providers included:

- Lack of state and local funding for mobility services
- Prioritization of resources for existing services
- Record keeping

Challenges experienced by riders included:

- Lack of coordination at regional levels creates gaps in the network
- Lack of knowledge and training around carsharing and requirements associated with it

Public Engagement Insights

An online survey was distributed across the 50 states to explore the mechanisms used to fund shared mobility as an extension of existing public transit services. Nineteen states responded to the survey.

- Types of shared mobility services funded by states
 - Eleven states fund shared mobility services in rural areas as an extension of public transit, using:
 - Microtransit
 - Ridesharing
 - Vanpool Services
 - Other, less common types
- Funding sources and challenges for shared mobility services
 - Most states use a combination of federal and state funding to fund shared mobility services, with Section 5311 and Section 5310 as the most frequent federal sources. Other funding challenges include:
 - Difficulty in obtaining the local share.
 - The prioritization of resources for existing services.
- Infrastructure investments to support shared mobility services.

- States fund various infrastructure investments to support shared mobility services in rural areas, such as electrification and charging infrastructure, park-and-ride facilities, technology investments, and multimodal mobility hubs.

Table 4 documents the shared mobility funding options in other states. State funding comes from various sources, as indicated in the table below. Sources include rental car taxes, fuel taxes, targeted funding bills, etc.

Table 4. State funding sources for shared mobility services

State	State Funding Sources Used
Delaware	Funding from the State of Delaware Transportation Trust Fund
Massachusetts	State operating funds (State Contract Assistance). These were allocated through a competitive process.
Michigan	State Comprehensive Transportation Fund (revenue comes from fuel tax and auto-related sales tax) is used to fund certain state programs, such as Service Initiatives and Transportation to Work. One-time general funds were earmarked to fund the \$8M Michigan Mobility Challenge.
Montana	TransADE- revenue from a rental car tax. Approximately \$1.5M annually for statewide services.
Ohio	GRF Funds
Oregon	Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF)
Vermont	Transportation Bill funds. Vermont's public transit budget includes up to \$8.5M in State funds. Coupled with the FHWA Flex, these two sources make up more than 60% of the total budget (in addition to the basic FTA formula funds received).
Virginia	State Transportation Trust Fund and Innovation and Technology Transportation Fund
Washington	Vanpool Investment Program, State Multimodal Transportation Fund, and the Zero-emissions Access Program grant program required match from dollars from private operators or public agencies

Recommendations

Key recommendations were:

- Make the state definition of public transit consistent with the federal definition to improve funding opportunities for shared mobility.
- Include a definition for shared mobility.
- Provide shared mobility funding eligibility status under state law.
- Create and improve webpages for state-level grant programs.
- Use FTA Formula Grants to fund core shared mobility services in rural areas in Minnesota.

- Use FTA Competitive Grants to develop shared mobility software and pilot programs in rural areas in Minnesota.
- Use grant transfers from the FHWA to support funding shared mobility services in rural areas in Minnesota.
- Take advantage of new and revised programs from the IIJA.
- Consider the creation of a state-level grant program for shared mobility.

These recommendations create the potential to identify and advocate for funding shared mobility services and pilot programs in rural Minnesota.

9. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation and Economic Development Authority Region 10, 2023)

Main Purpose

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) highlights southeastern Minnesota's current strengths and identifies goals for future growth in the region. The study analyzed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). It included robust stakeholder engagement that helped identify findings based on four measures: human capital, economic competitiveness, community resources, and foundation assets.

Based on findings, a vision statement was developed for Southeast Minnesota. An Action Plan outlines a set of goals and strategies to address the region's challenges and leverage its opportunities and achieve the vision statement.

The document also includes tools and an evaluation framework to measure the region's vulnerabilities and progress in achieving goals.

Relevant Data

- **Review the region's past, present, and future demographic changes** (p.3). The region grew by 46,619 people between 2000 and 2019. Much of the population growth occurred in Olmsted County. Freeborn, Houston, Wabasha, and Winona counties lost population between 2010 and 2020.
- **Overview of employment and industry types** in the region and the recent challenges experienced by employers and employees (p. 4). Healthcare is a major component of the region's economy, providing one in five jobs. Other robust sectors include manufacturing and professional services.
- **Overview of community resources and assets**, such as childcare, transit, housing availability and affordability, medical services, and broadband (p.8). Housing availability and affordability and availability of childcare options are concerns in Southeast Minnesota.
- **SWOT analysis** of the region included the engagement of various stakeholders, including city and county leaders, economic development professionals, business and industry, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and community leaders (p.10). Groups and organizations included the City of Red Wing, City of Chatfield, City of Kasson, City of Wabasha, Houston County, Olmsted County, Goodhue County, Winona County, Alberta Lea Economic Development Agency (ALEDA), SE MN Together, Mayo Clinic, Community & Economic Development Associates, Rebound Partners, Riverland Community College, and Molina Tax Solutions.
- **A Strategic Direction and Action Plan** outlines goals and strategies to achieve a Vision Statement (p. 16).
- **Regional Resilience strategies** were developed to highlight challenges experienced within the region and ways to mitigate/address them. The section also included indicators to measure resilience (p. 22).
- **The Evaluation Framework** is a tool that assesses the progress of strategies and goals (p. 25).

Transportation Challenges

SWOT Analysis

The study highlights regional weaknesses and threats within the SWOT analysis. The following weaknesses were highlighted within four focus areas:

- Human Capital (demographics)
 - Shortage of workers to fill existing labor needs of the region's employers, limiting long-term growth
 - Slow adaptation to changes in cultural and racial demographics among communities and employers
- Economic Competitiveness
 - Inadequate access to risk capital for emerging entrepreneurs
 - Low levels of industry collaboration and cohesiveness throughout the region
 - Lack of a shared regional identity
 - No centralized economic development district or formal infrastructure for collaboration
- Community Resources
 - With the region's unique geology, intensive farming practices and unchecked development negatively impact surface and groundwater quality
 - Intensified land use and transitioning agricultural land from production to development
 - Limited resiliency planning among local governments and agencies
- Foundational Assets
 - Lack of entry-level workforce housing options
 - Lack of affordable and available childcare
 - Limited coordinated regional transit options
 - Aging public infrastructure coupled with limited ability for local governments to invest in modernization and resiliency

The following threats were highlighted within four focus areas:

- Human Capital (demographics)
 - The tilt toward remote work is a potential threat to workforce retention
 - Race relations and low BIPOC participation in government and some industries
 - Aging population and population stagnation in some parts of the region
- Economic Competitiveness
 - The region is home to a handful of large employers serving as anchors. The loss of a major employer can have significant economic consequences.
 - Climate change is affecting how many sectors can do business
 - Extreme weather is affecting a variety of economic elements – from agricultural production to river transportation

- Aging infrastructure in communities and inflationary pricing affecting upgrades and investments
- Shifting state and federal regulatory environment for business
- Community Resources
 - Emerald Ash Borer is damaging the regional tree canopy
 - Poor water quality is affecting homeowners
 - Agricultural lands are being consolidated, the average farm size is increasing, and institutional investors are gaining a controlling interest in the region's productive land.
- Foundational Assets
 - Infrastructure is aging (water lines and wastewater treatment facilities, streets, roads, bridges, and public buildings), and communities face increasing costs for construction and repairs
 - Climate change is having a significant impact on public infrastructure

The study's Regional Resilience section highlights potential risks that leave the region vulnerable, as well as ways to address those. The following were key risks:

- Human Capital
 - Aging population
 - Lack of coordination on regional issues such as transit and other infrastructure
- Economic Competitiveness
 - High concentration of regional employment in the healthcare sector
 - Low levels of industry collaboration and coordination
 - Transition to remote work
 - Labor force shortage
 - Inadequate broadband coverage
- Community Resources
 - Water quality
 - Development of productive land
 - Climate change
 - Aging infrastructure
- Foundational Assets
 - Resistance to change
 - Race relations
 - Low participation of the BIPOC population in civic leadership
 - Lack of regional identity or brand
 - Lack of affordable housing
 - Lack of childcare

- No regional development district

Public Engagement Insights

Stakeholder engagement was key in developing the SWOT analysis. Stakeholders included city and county leaders, economic development professionals, business and industry, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and community leaders. Engagement activities included three focus groups and an online survey.

The topics used to guide the focus group discussion were childcare, transportation/transit, housing, regional workforce, economic environment, assets/ infrastructure, demographics/diversity, and schools/education. Participants were encouraged to add any missing discussion topics, including climate change, natural resources, agriculture/agritourism, and tourism.

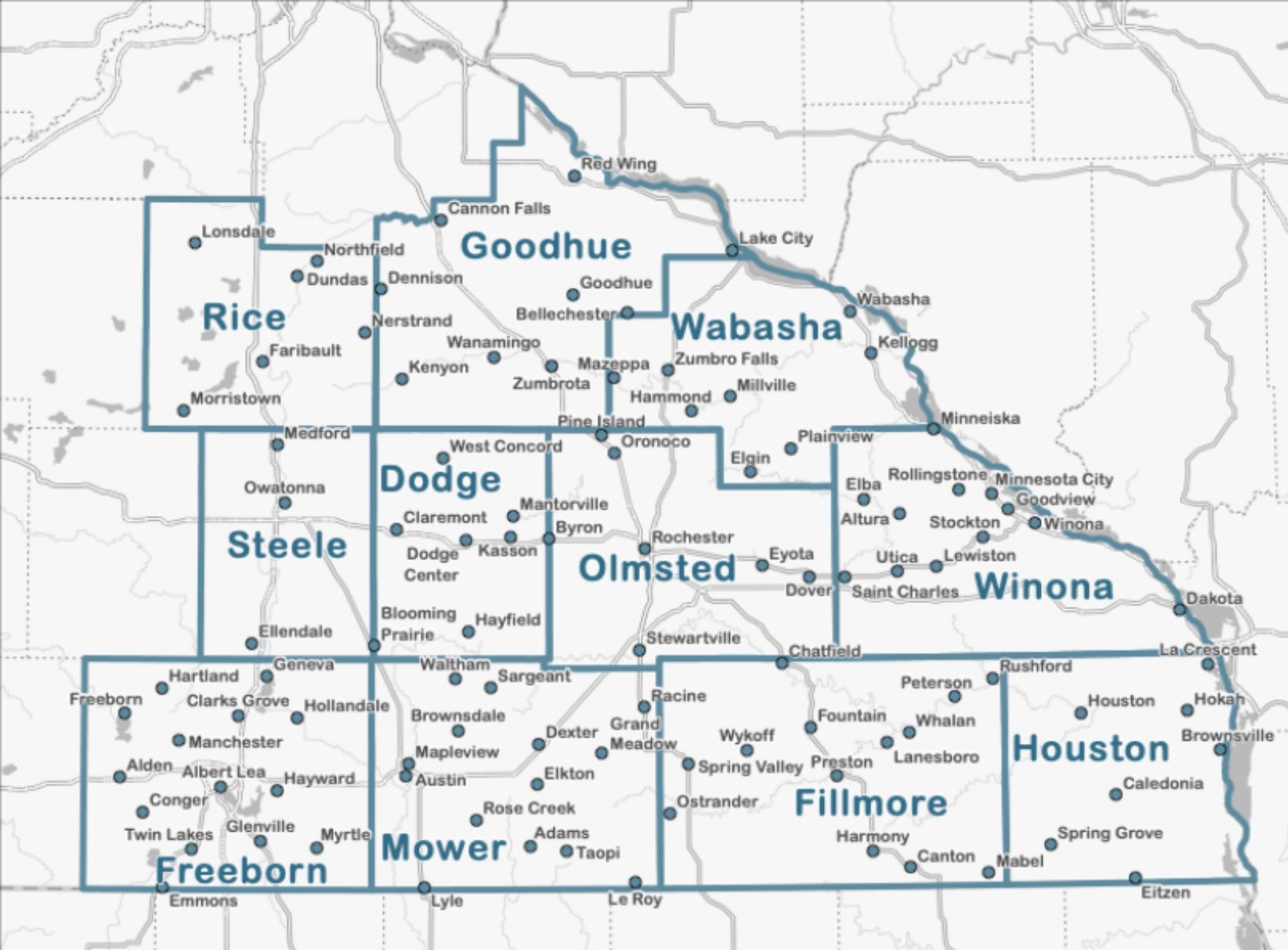
A total of 169 individuals representing 11 counties participated in the online survey.

Recommendations

Based on public input and the SWOT analysis, six goals and supporting strategies were developed to address challenges and threats. The goals were categorized into four categories: human capital, economic competitiveness, community resources, and foundational assets. Three goals defined under the foundational assets category were related to transportation.

- Foundational assets, goal 1: Quality and capacity of physical infrastructure, including broadband, water and wastewater, roads, and energy, meet the needs of residents and businesses.
 - Strategy 2: Develop capacity and technical assistance for small and rural cities to apply for federal and state financing and grant programs.
- Foundational assets, goal 4: Communities in the region have established climate-readiness and resilience plans.
 - Strategy 1: Connect local government leaders to existing programs that provide guidance for sustainable community development approaches and infrastructure investments.
 - Strategy 3: Invest in electric vehicle charging infrastructure to ensure adequate coverage across the region.
 - Strategy 5: Promote regional collaborations to highlight and leverage existing resources.
- Foundational assets, goal 6: Sustain interregional commerce, trade, and access to services by building a resilient and collaborative transit and transportation network.
 - Strategy 1: Establish a regional Transit Management Organization to identify and implement transportation solutions.
 - Strategy 2: Support community planning and investment for “park and ride” sites.
 - Strategy 3: Encourage development that locates transit hubs for commuters near childcare centers, healthcare providers, and elder care facilities.
 - Strategy 4: Leverage state and federal funding for all forms of transit and transportation (water, rail, roads).

As part of the implementation, the study also outlines an evaluation framework to measure the progress of outcomes and impacts. The implementation matrix defines a five-year goal to track the status of each desired outcome.



Southeast Minnesota TMO Study

Appendix B Transportation and Behavior Analysis



Appendix B: Transportation and Behavior Analysis

For the 11-county Southeast Minnesota region, Alta performed a transit services and ridership inventory and a set of transportation and behavior analyses to better understand transit availability, trip generators, changes in travel patterns since COVID, latent travel demand, and equity considerations. These analyses informed TMO feasibility, helped with strategy identification and to shape the focus of a potential TMO, and identified challenges and opportunities transit faces in the region. The process and findings for each of these analyses is provided below.

Transit Services and Ridership

This section includes an overview of the region's transportation services, covering three key areas: the transportation providers available, the impact of COVID-19 on transit ridership and service costs, and the status of commuter services. It highlights the different transportation options, ongoing challenges related to post-pandemic recovery, and the gap in commuter services that has yet to be addressed.

Transportation Provider Inventory

The transportation provider inventory revealed a wide range of services available across the region. These services span multiple sectors and provide essential transportation options for residents, visitors, and various organizations.

In total, six public transit agencies operate in the region with one operating mainly in Wisconsin but providing service to La Crescent, MN. Three intercity train and bus providers, and approximately a dozen human services transportation providers, which include both non-profit and government organizations, were identified as well. In addition, there are several private services offering airport transportation, as well as multiple organizations that provide transportation to their affiliates or clients, such as universities, casinos, veterans, and K-12 students. Additionally, dozens of providers focus on non-emergency medical transportation, while the region also has a limited number of general taxi service providers, private companies offering charter and contracted motorcoach services, and a vanpool provider. A summary of some of the public transit providers is shown in Table 1 below with a full list of transportation providers attached in Appendix A.

Table 1: SEMN Transit Providers

Transportation Provider	Service Type	Organization Type	Fare payment Type	Transit App Support	Service Area	Website (if applicable)
Rochester Public Transit	Fixed-Route Public Transit	Public	Cash, Ticket book, Monthly and Annual Pass, Transit App	Yes	City of Rochester	https://www.rochestermn.gov/departments/rochester-public-transit
Rolling Hills Transit (SEMCAC)	Public Transit (scheduled by rider)	Public	Cash, Transit App	Yes	Dodge, Olmsted, Winona, Fillmore, and Houston Counties	https://rhtbus.com/

SMART Transit (Southern Minnesota Area Rural Transit)	Fixed-Route and Demand Response Public Transit	Public	Cash, Token, Monthly Pass	Yes	Freeborn, Mower, Steele, and Waseca Counties	https://smartbusmn.org/
Three Rivers Hiawathaland Transit	Fixed-Route Public Transit	Public	Cash, Token, Monthly Pass	No	Goodhue, Wabasha, and Rice Counties	https://www.threeriverscap.org/hiawathaland-transit/
Winona Transit Service	Fixed-Route Public Transit, Call-n-Ride	Public	Cash, Token, Monthly Pass	Yes	Cities of Winona and Goodview	https://www.cityofwinona.com/175/Winona-Transit-Service
La Crescent Apple Express (La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility)	Fixed-Route Public Transit	Public	Cash, Token, Monthly Pass	No	Cities of La Crescent, MN and La Crosse, WI	https://www.cityoflacrosse.org/your-government/departments/municipal-transit-mtu

Despite the variety of available services, there is no centralized source of transportation information in the region. Minnesota’s Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services maintain a directory of transportation service providers searchable by county; however, this directory provides limited information about the specific services offered. Similarly, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) offers a [map of transit providers](#), but like the directory, it lacks comprehensive details about the full range of available services and how to use them. This fragmentation of information makes it challenging to fully understand and navigate the transportation options across the region.

Ridership Changes since before the COVID-19 Pandemic

The impact of COVID-19 on public transit service and ridership in the region has been notable. Despite many providers restoring service levels to pre-COVID numbers, they are facing continued challenges with low ridership. Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 illustrate this trend by showing service and ridership data from 2019 to 2023 for a selection of transit agencies, including Rolling Hills Transit, Three Rivers Community Action, and Rochester Public Transit. While Rolling Hills Transit has largely recovered its ridership to pre-COVID levels, Three Rivers Community Action is still experiencing a shortfall of approximately 100,000 trips compared to its 2019 numbers. Rochester Public Transit’s ridership remains at less than half of what it was before the pandemic, highlighting the uneven recovery across the region.

Figure 1: Three Rivers Community Action Transit Service and Ridership 2019 - 2023

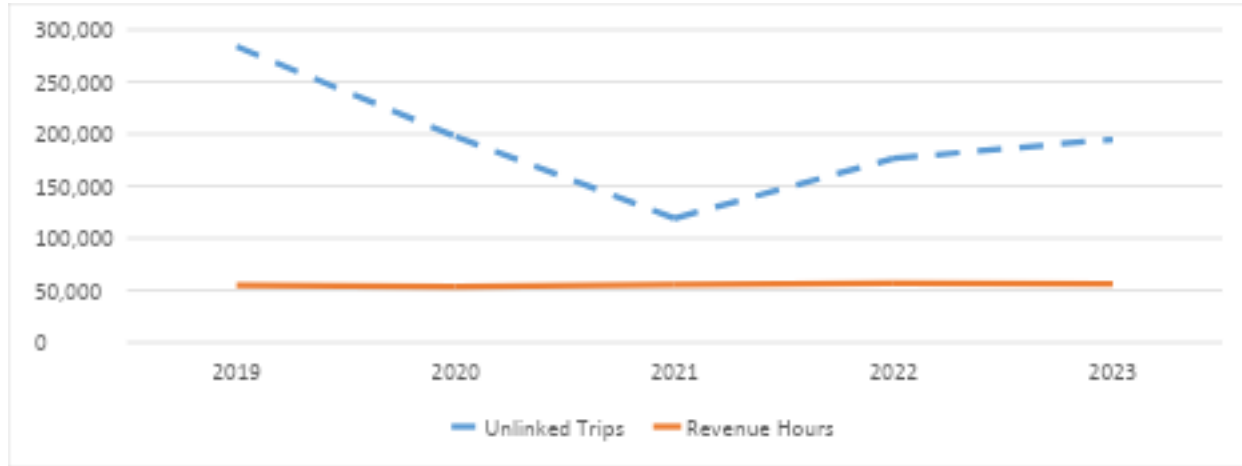


Figure 2: Rolling Hills Transit Service and Ridership - 2019 - 2023

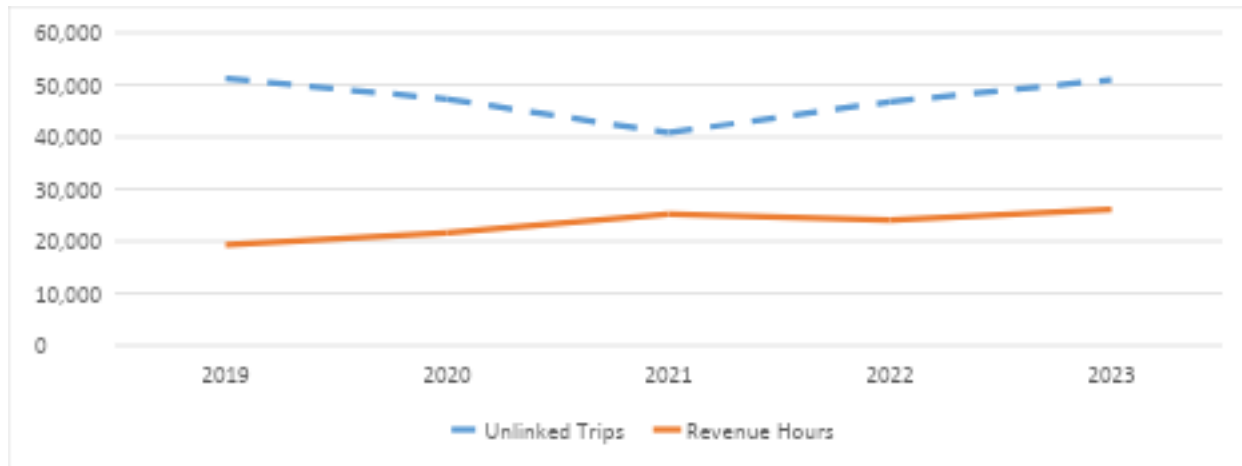
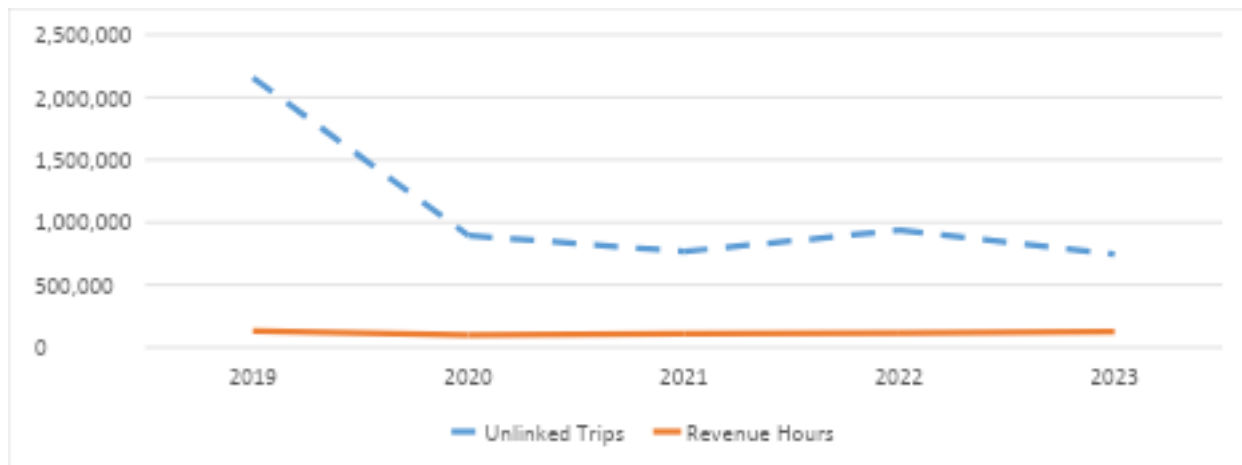


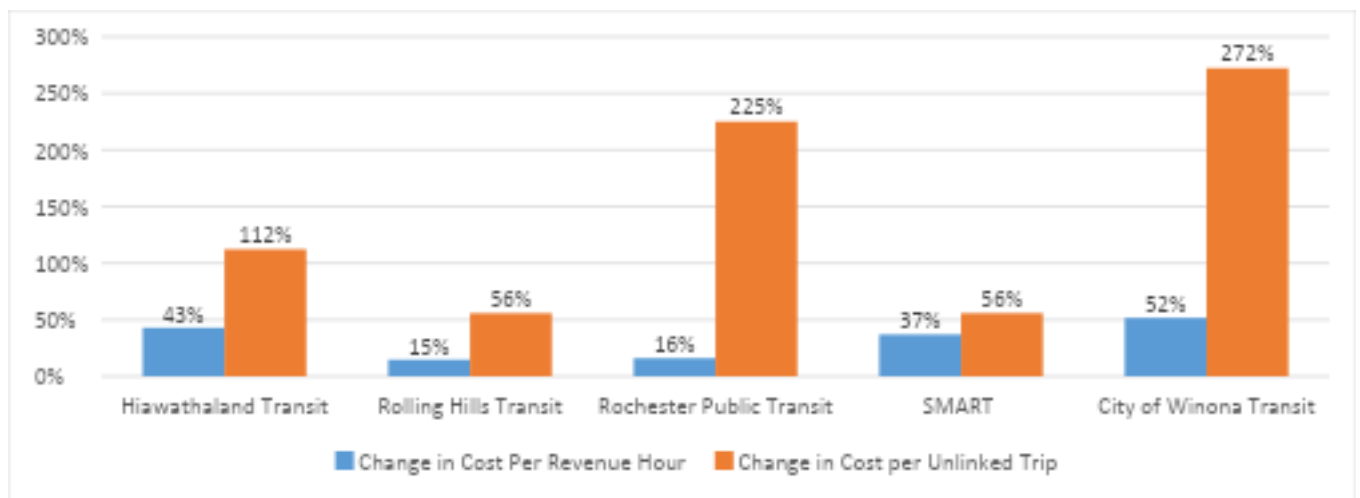
Figure 3: Rochester Public Transit Service and Ridership - 2019 – 2023



In terms of service provision, the agencies have largely restored their vehicle revenue hours to pre-COVID levels, which reflect the hours vehicles are on the road providing transit services. However, rising labor costs and fuel prices have led to a significant increase in the cost per revenue hour since 2019. These rising operational costs have strained the finances of transit agencies, making it more expensive to maintain service at previous levels.

The combination of higher costs to provide service and lower ridership has led to a significant increase in the cost per unlinked trip. This is reflected in Figure 4, which juxtaposes the change in cost per revenue hour (driven by increased labor and fuel costs) with the change in cost per unlinked trip (driven by the combination of increased costs and lower ridership). As an example, City of Winona Transit paid nearly three times as much in 2023 to provide one passenger trip than it did before COVID.

Figure 4: Change in Cost per Revenue Hour and Unlinked Trip between 2019 and 2023



Commuter Services

Before it was put on hold in March 2020, Rochester City Lines provided an essential commuter service that connected 34 communities across ten counties to Rochester. Supported and subsidized by the Mayo Clinic but open to the public, the service offered two to four runs each weekday morning and evening on ten routes going into Rochester. It also included free transfers to the City of Rochester’s bus routes, making it a convenient option for commuters. Unsubsidized monthly costs for riders ranged from \$197 to \$337, depending on the zone, and the service averaged 1,717 monthly riders from October 2019 to March 2020. Suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it left a gap in regional transit options.

Factors such as a shift to remote work, changes in commuting patterns, and a general decline in demand for long-distance transit have impacted the demand for commuter transit and the feasibility to reinstate it. In early 2025, Mayo Clinic began reviving commuter bus service for its employees, connecting cities in the region to the Downtown and St. Mary’s Campuses in Rochester. By summer of 2025, the following bus routes are expected to be available for Mayo employees, providing service between Rochester and the following cities:

- Kasson (west of Rochester via US-14)
- Winona (east of Rochester via US-14)
- Spring Valley (south of Rochester via US-63)

- Lake City (northeast of Rochester via US-63)
- Cannon Falls (north of Rochester via Highway 52)
- Preston (southeast of Rochester via US-52)
- Austin (south of Rochester via I-90)

The pilot program offers morning rides to the campuses and afternoon returns, with one departure in each direction. The service is subsidized by Mayo Clinic, and riders pay a small fee for each ride.

An additional commuter route, the service between Leroy and Rochester, managed by the LeRoy Economic Development Authority (EDA) from 2016 to 2020, failed to attract enough riders when it attempted to reboot in 2021, further highlighting the broader struggles with commuter service demand in the post-pandemic environment.

Behavior and Location Analysis

The transportation and behavior analysis conducted across the region aimed to better understand travel patterns and shifts in mobility behaviors, particularly in light of the changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis focused on a variety of factors, such as the location of trip destinations, work and school travel, the impact of the pandemic on trip frequency, and demographic breakdowns related to accessibility and transportation choices. It also explored shifts in trip distance, mode of transportation, and other travel behavior changes over time, with specific attention to different population groups, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income communities. The analysis primarily focused determining trip clusters and common destinations for all the study focus areas.

Study Focus Areas

- **Travel Behavior Across the Region**

The analysis studied travel behavior across the 11-county region of Southeast Minnesota to determine:

- The location of clusters of trip destinations within the region.
- Where work and school trips between Southeast Minnesota and the Minneapolis-Saint Paul (Twin Cities) area terminate.
- Whether the number of trips and trip takers has changed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the locations where trip clusters end within the region that originated outside urban areas.

- **Analysis of Trip Origins within the Twin Cities Area and Demographics**

A follow-up analysis was conducted to examine where trips originating from each trip origination cluster end, with a focus on the following:

- A demographic evaluation comparing the proportion of seniors and individuals with disabilities in these clusters to those in the Twin Cities area.

- **Behavioral Shifts Since the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The analysis examined changes in travel behavior since the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Average trip distance.
- Trip purpose.
- Mode of transportation.

- **Trip Distance for Work and School**

The average trip distance to work or school was evaluated for all trips, as well as for those households with income below the median.

- **Variation in Travel Behavior**

- The study explored potential variations in trip distance, mode, and trip purpose among specific groups, including:
- Trip takers aged 65 or older.

Data Tools

This analysis was aided using a data platform called Replica, which is a tool that uses recent data to provide insights about where people travel, how they travel, for which purposes. Replica was selected for this analysis because it offers dynamic, up-to-date insights into actual travel behavior, rather than relying on static demographic information. Unlike the U.S. Census, which provides a snapshot of population data that is often outdated or generalized, Replica tracks real-time movements and travel patterns, allowing for a more detailed and accurate understanding of how people move around.

For each of the trip generator and demographic analyses, separate studies were established using relevant geographic boundaries and filters to reveal insights that are difficult to obtain using Census data alone. Replica's ability to provide real-time data on travel behavior makes it especially useful for identifying trends and patterns that change over time, such as shifts in commuting trends over time or the impact of trip purposes on travel patterns.

In some cases, such as analyzing trip generator data for populations with disabilities, Census data was used due to limited availability of that specific information in Replica. Together, Replica and the Census served as the foundation for all the analyses presented in the following section, complementing each other by providing both detailed travel behavior data and demographic context.

Travel Behavior Across the Region

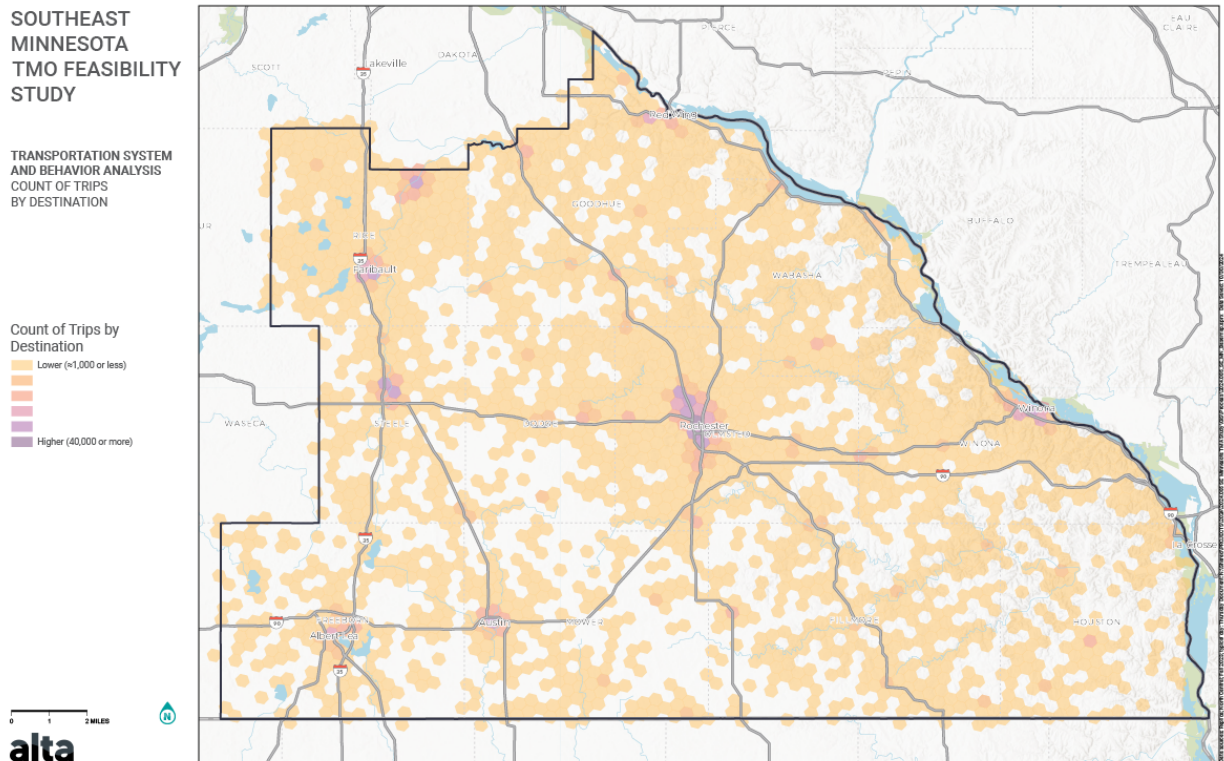
Major Trip Generators

The region-wide analysis of major trip generators in Southeast Minnesota revealed several key insights into travel behavior, particularly with respect to major destinations, trip rates, and changes over time. According to Figure 5, which presents a density map of all trips in the region (excluding commercial freight, lodging, pass-through traffic, and regional departures), the total trip count in Fall 2023 was 1.95 million, with 493,000 trip takers. This is an increase from 2019, where the total trip count was 1.56 million with 495,000 trip takers. Despite the slight decrease in the number of trip takers, the overall number of trips has increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting a higher frequency of trips per individual.

Outside of Rochester, which is the main trip destination attracting more than 20% of trips in the region, major destinations in the region are primarily concentrated along the I-35 corridor. Notable exceptions are Red Wing and Winona, which are located along U.S. Route 63 near the Wisconsin border. These cities are significant trip generators, along with other regional hubs like Albert Lea, Austin, Faribault, Northfield, Owatonna, and Winona. When looking at solely trips not originating in urban areas, there were 820,000 daily trips and 300,000 daily trip takers in 2023. This highlights the continued importance of rural-to-urban travel flows in Southeast Minnesota.

Another key finding is that while the total number of trip takers has decreased slightly since before the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall number of trips has risen. This reflects a trend toward more frequent trips per individual. Additionally, trips originating outside urban areas continue to predominantly end in one of the major destination clusters, indicating a strong connection between rural and urban areas. These findings underline the importance of understanding regional travel patterns, especially as they shift post-pandemic. The Appendix includes stand-alone map figures showing the origin analysis for all major trip generators in the region.

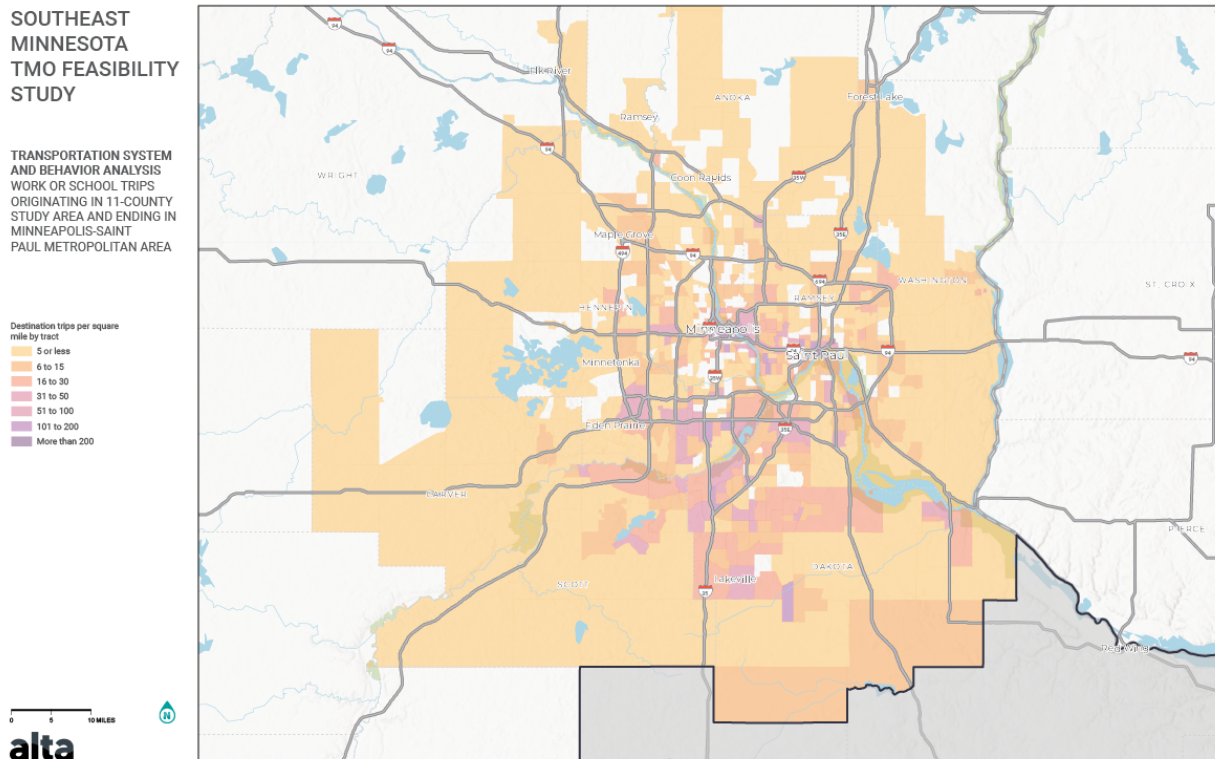
Figure 5: Major Destinations – Fall 2023



Analysis of Trip Origins within the Twin Cities Area and Demographics

This analysis shows the major trip destinations in the Twin Cities Area that originated in Southeast Minnesota. As illustrated in Figure 6, which shows a destination map of these trips, the majority of work and school trips originating in Southeast Minnesota and ending in the Twin Cities area are concentrated on the south side of the metro region, particularly along the I-494 corridor near Bloomington and Eden Prairie. Other notable destination points include MSP International Airport and Downtown Minneapolis. These areas represent the primary destinations for work and school-related trips from Southeast Minnesota, highlighting key transportation corridors and areas of significant commuter flow.

Figure 6: Work and School Trips Between SE MN and Minneapolis-Saint Paul Area



Additionally, when comparing the demographic characteristics of destination clusters in Southeast Minnesota to Minneapolis and Minnesota as a whole, Figure 7 and Figure 8 reveal several differences. Overall, the population in Southeast Minnesota’s destination clusters is older than that of Minneapolis, with a higher proportion of individuals aged 65 or older. Cities like Albert Lea, Owatonna, and Red Wing stand out for having a significantly higher percentage of people aged 65 or older compared to the state average, as seen in Figure 7. Similarly, Figure 8 shows that cities such as Albert Lea, Faribault, and Red Wing also have a higher proportion of individuals with disabilities than the state average, underscoring the need for transportation planning that accounts for the unique needs of these populations.

The concentration of work and school trips in specific areas of the Twin Cities metro, combined with the older and more disabled populations in the destination clusters, highlights areas where tailored transportation solutions may be required.

Figure 7: Proportion of Population Over 65 Years Old

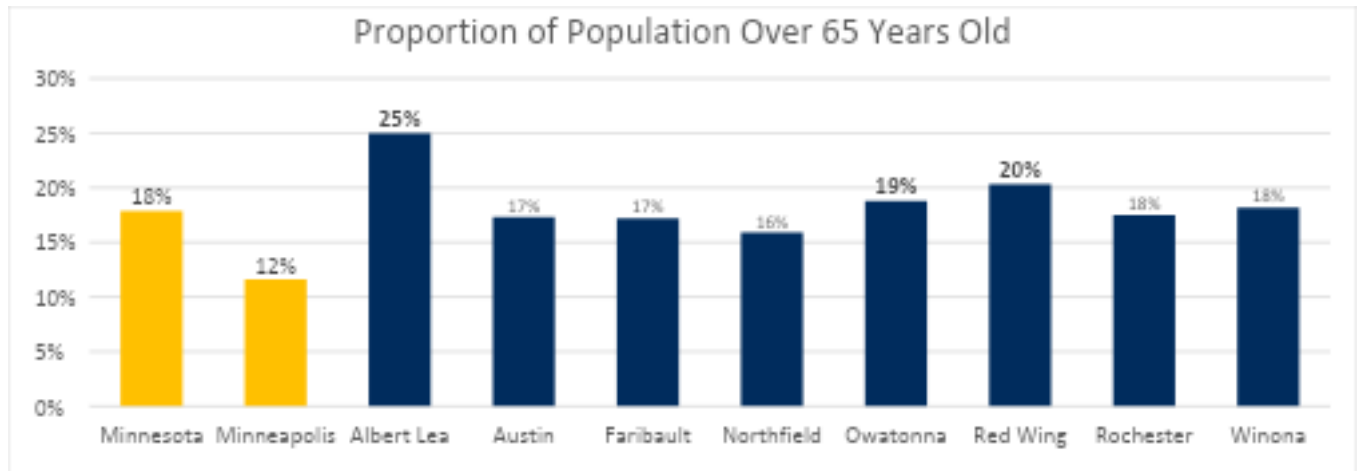
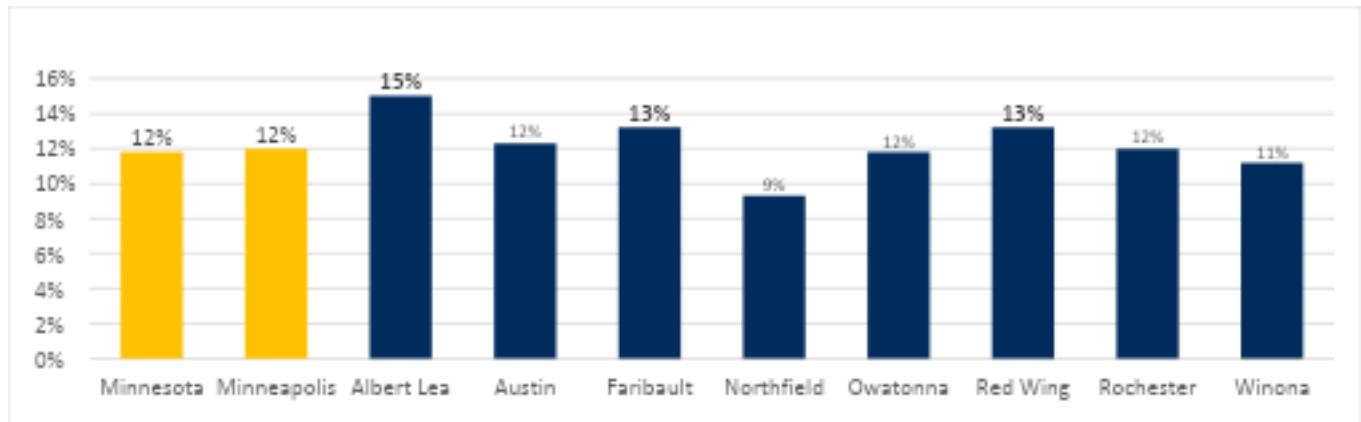


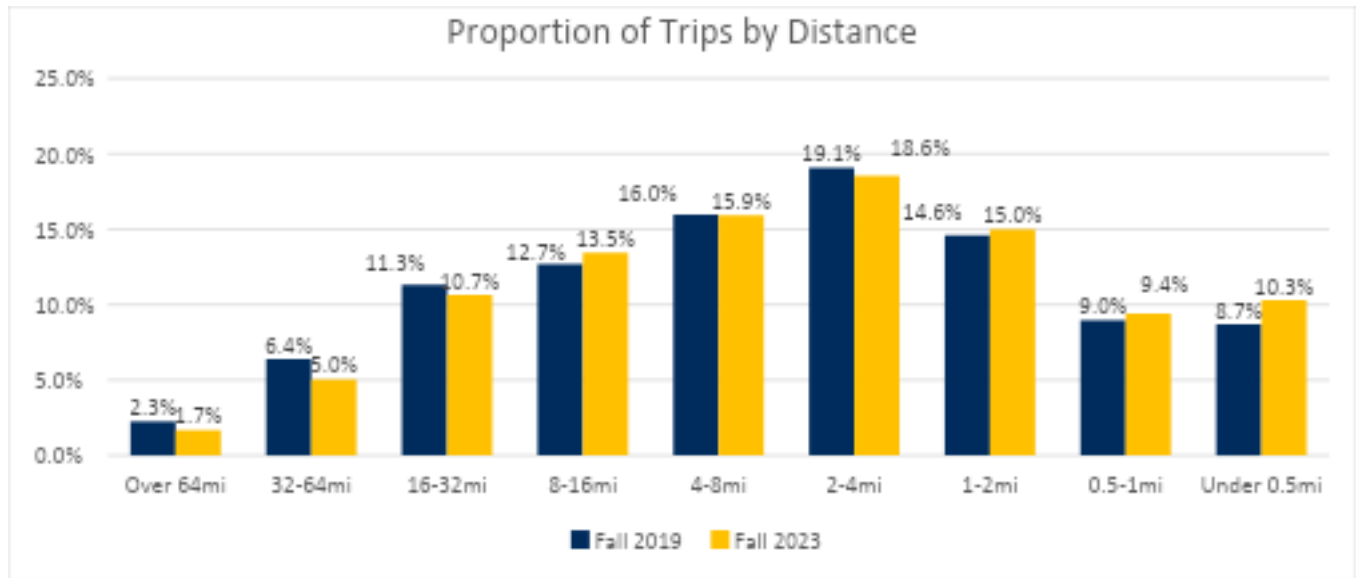
Figure 8: Proportion of Population with Disability



Behavioral Shifts Since the COVID-19 Pandemic

This analysis compares pre-COVID trends (2019) to Fall 2023 and reveals a few changes in trip patterns with respect to trip distance, purpose, and mode of transportation. Figure 9 reveals a notable shift in the proportion of trips taken by distance. Specifically, the proportion of trips under 0.5 miles increased from 2019 to 2023, while trips over 2 miles generally decreased. This change may be attributed to a variety of factors, including a reduction in commuting frequency, less trip chaining, and a rise in one-off trips close to home. This trend could be influenced by hybrid work schedules, where individuals may travel for meals, errands, or recreational purposes during the day while working from home. Additionally, people may be taking more short recreational trips as they spend more time in their local communities.

Figure 9: Changes in Travel Behavior (before COVID vs. Fall 2023)



In terms of trip purpose, Figure 10 shows an increase in trips taken for recreation, errands, and shopping when compared to pre-pandemic data. This shift could reflect a lifestyle change in response to the pandemic, with people opting for shorter, more frequent trips for personal and leisure activities. Conversely, work and school-related trips have decreased slightly, which is likely linked to the staying power of work-from-home arrangements.

Figure 10: Proportion of Trips by Purpose

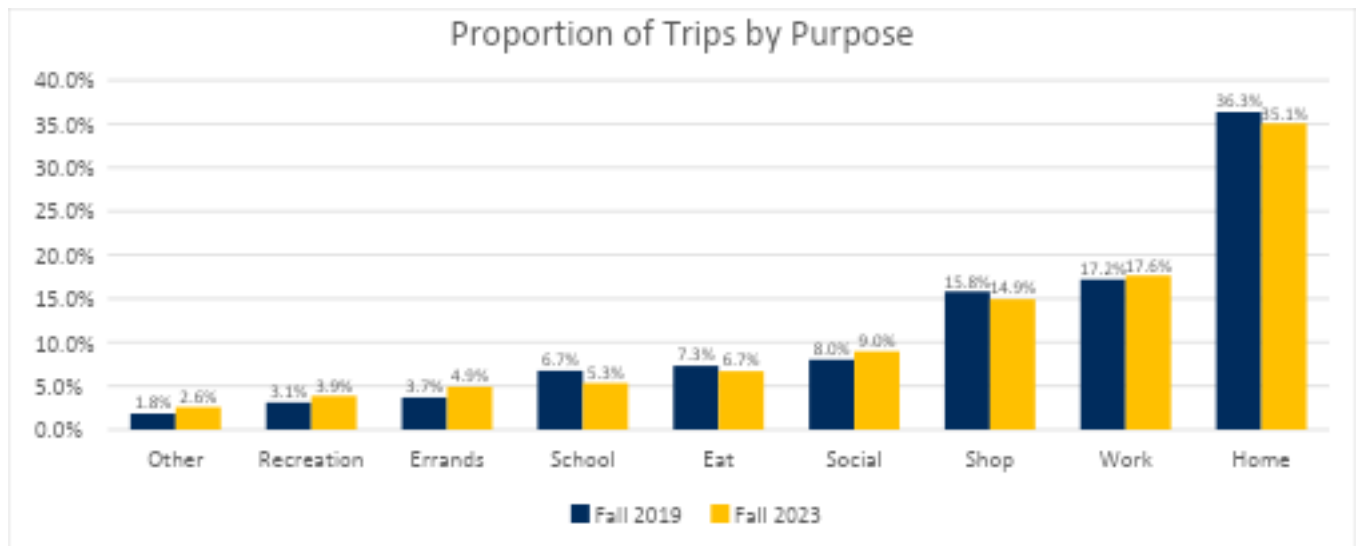


Figure 11: Proportion of Trips by Primary Mode

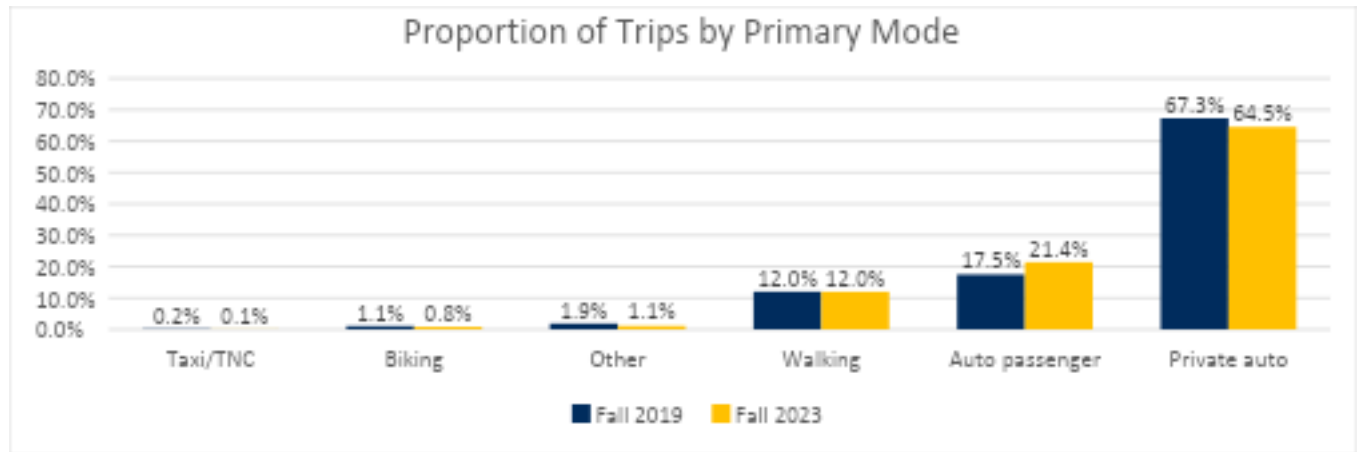


Figure 11 shows a small shift in the primary mode of transportation, with a decrease in the number of people driving alone and a corresponding increase in those riding as passengers. This shift may reflect work from home trends and fewer drive alone commutes balanced out by more trips for other purposes. These findings highlight an apparent lasting impact of the pandemic on travel behaviors, particularly in terms of trip frequency, purpose, and transportation choices.

Disparity in Transportation Access and Latent Transportation Demand

In the following section, the analysis compares trips taken by disadvantaged populations, such as those in lower-income households and individuals aged 65 or older, with the average trip patterns of the general population. The goal with this analysis was to identify potential disparities in transportation access, particularly trips that might not be taken due to limited mobility options. While we cannot conclusively state that these trips would be made if disadvantaged communities had better access to transit, the differences observed in travel behavior highlight significant inequalities in access to transportation.

Distance for Work and School and Household Income

The analysis of trip distances for work and school trips in Southeast Minnesota reveals slight differences between households below the median income and the general population. Figure 12 shows that, for trip takers below the median income, the total number of work or school-related trips is 176,000, with 148,000 trip takers, resulting in a trip rate of 1.19. In comparison, the overall population of trip takers has a total of 373,000 trips with 317,000 trip takers and a slightly lower trip rate of 1.17. This indicates that people living in households below the median income take work and school-related trips more frequently than the general population. Additionally, the trips taken by those in lower-income households are generally shorter in distance, as compared to the overall population.

Figure 12 Trip Distance for Work and School by Household Income

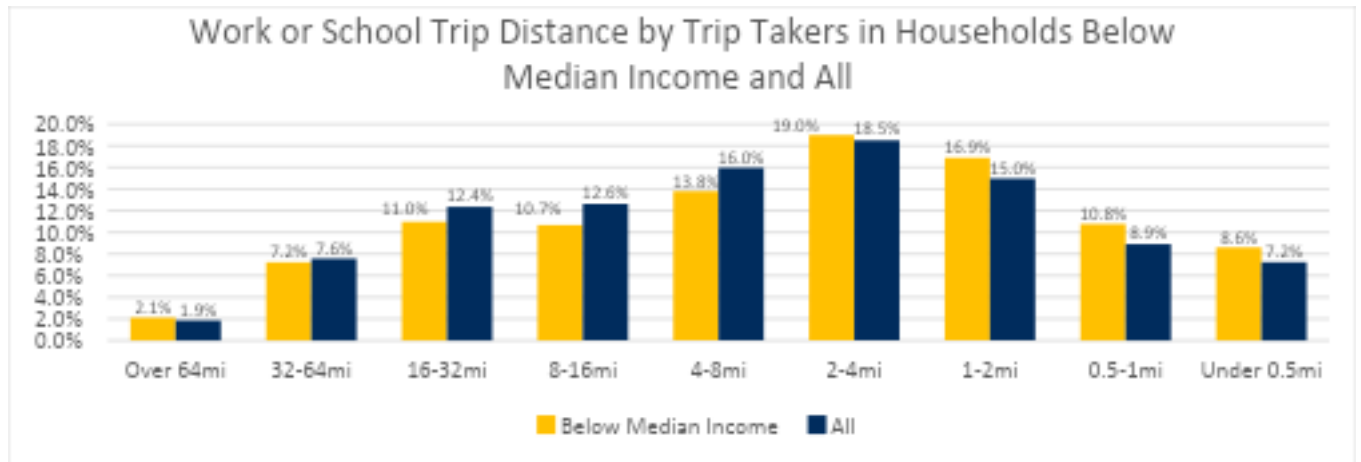
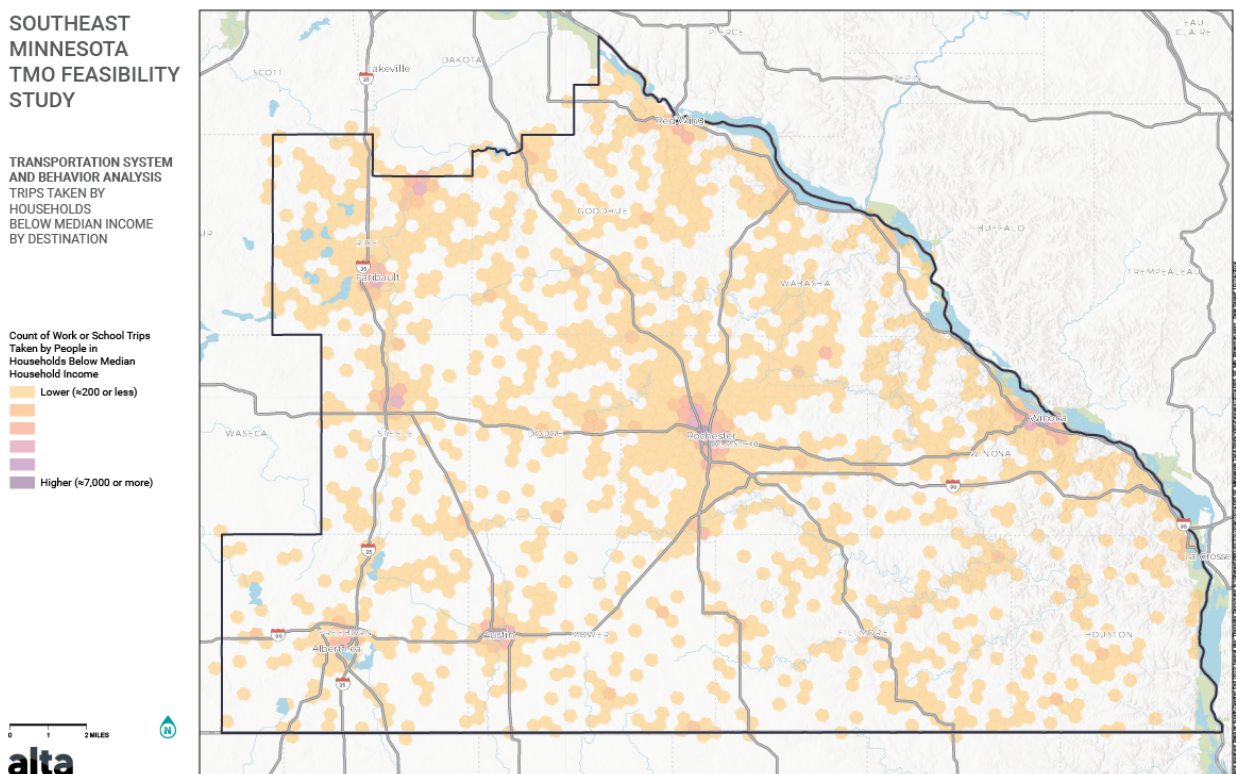


Figure 13 reveals the destinations for these work or school trips, illustrating the locations that tend to be concentrated in areas closer to home, and supporting the observation that their trips are shorter on average. These findings suggest that individuals in lower-income households may be relying more on local destinations for work and school, possibly due to limited access to long-distance travel options or transportation constraints.

Figure 13: Trips Taken by Households Below Median Income by Destination



Variations in Travel Behavior by Age

The final analysis looked at variations in travel behavior among individuals aged 65 or older. Figure 14 and Figure 15 reveal that this group generally takes longer trips, with many trips exceeding 16 miles, and they rely more heavily on automobiles for transportation. The older demographic's travel behavior tends to involve fewer short trips and more long-distance travel compared to the overall population.

Figure 14: Trip Distance of 65+ Trip Takers and All Trip Takers

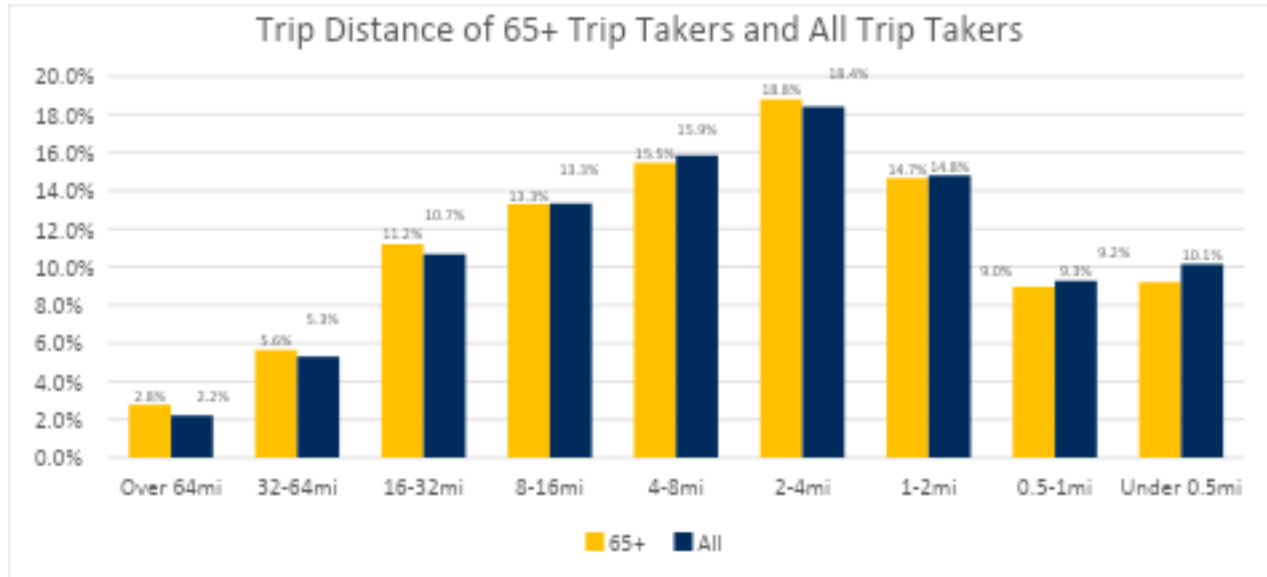


Figure 15: Primary Mode of 65+ Trip Takers and All Trip Takers

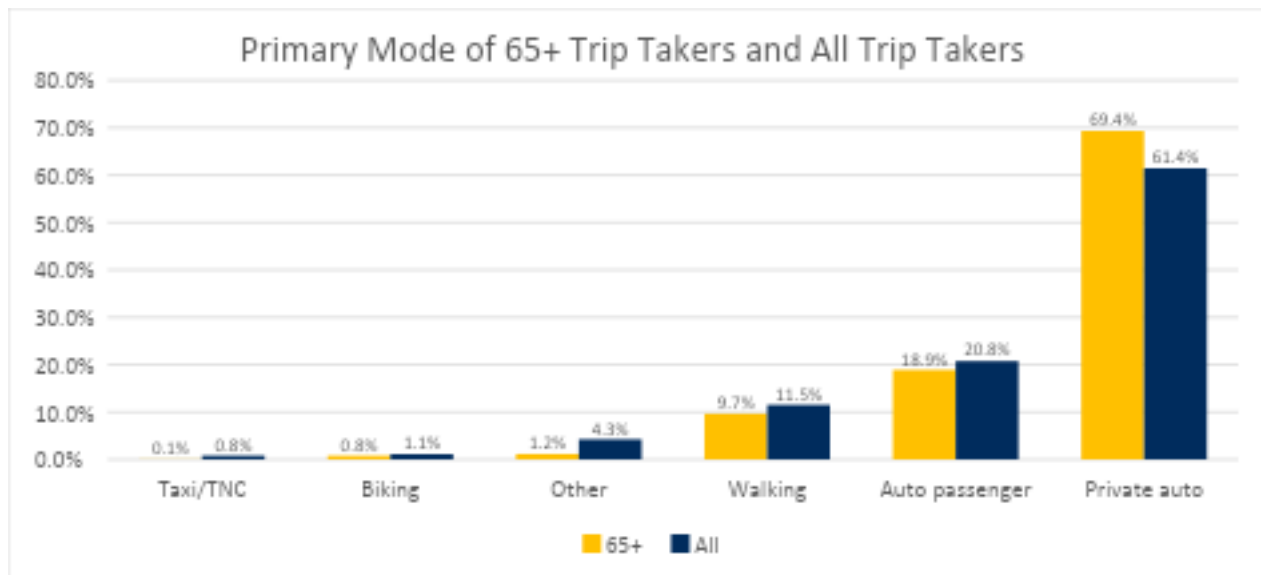
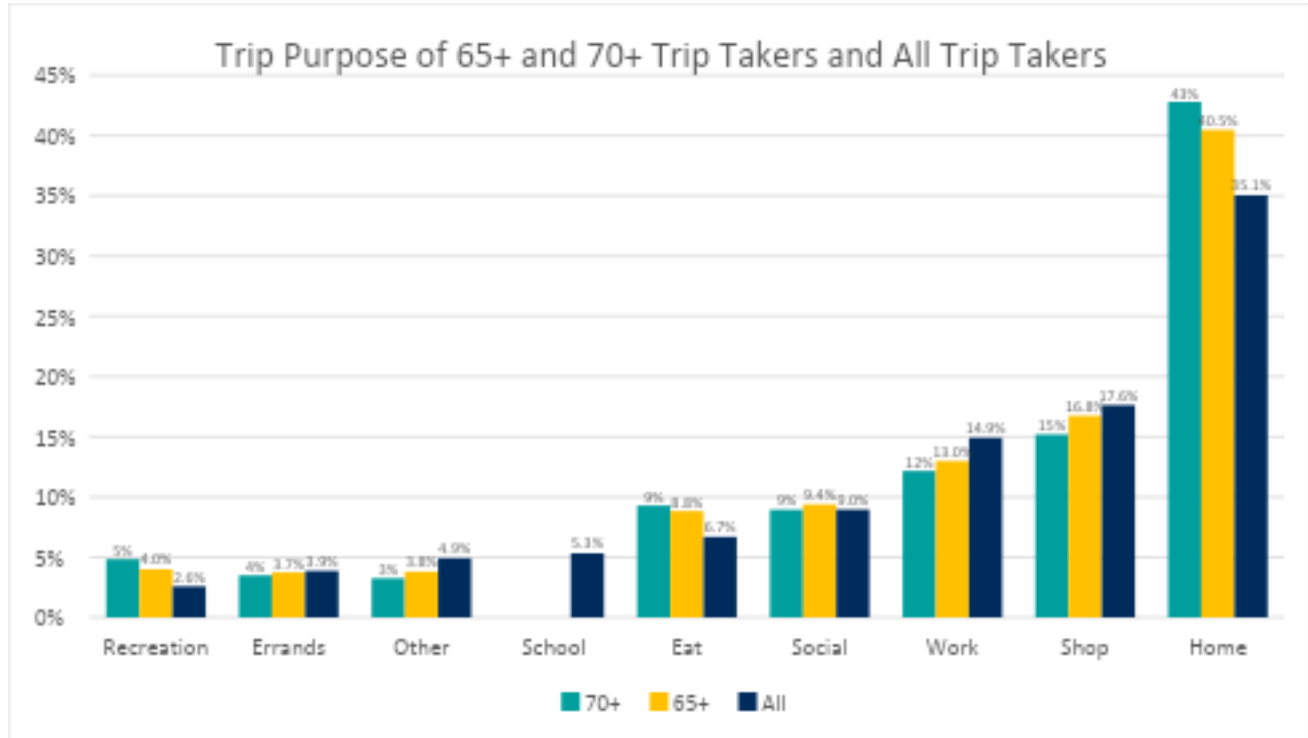


Figure 15 highlights that trip takers aged 65 or older travel less frequently for work or school and more frequently for recreation, food, and social reasons. This trend reflects lifestyle changes related to retirement, with older individuals traveling for leisure and social activities rather than work. Their lower trip rate of 2.76, compared to the regional average of 3.96, further emphasizes this pattern. The data underscores the need for targeted transportation options that support the longer trips and automobile reliance typical among this demographic, as well as more focus on non-work-related transportation needs such as recreation and socialization.

Figure 16: Trip Purpose of 65+ and 70+ Trip Takers and All Trip Takers



These findings suggest that individuals aged 65 or older have distinct transportation needs and travel behaviors that require tailored solutions. Addressing these differences could help improve transportation equity and accessibility across the region, ensuring that all demographics are well-served by existing infrastructure and policies.

Conclusion

This analysis of travel behavior reveals shifts in patterns, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as distinct differences among various demographic groups. Overall, due to increased remote work and hybrid schedules, there has been an increase in short-distance trips and a decrease in long-distance commuting, with more people taking trips for recreation, errands, and social reasons. Individuals aged 65 or older exhibit unique travel behaviors, including longer trips for older adults, who also travel more frequently for non-work purposes. Additionally, households below median income tend to take more frequent, shorter trips, particularly as analyzed for work and school. These findings highlight the need for targeted transportation solutions that address diverse trip distances, modes of travel, and specific needs across different communities. Ensuring that infrastructure and services are inclusive and accessible to all residents is crucial, especially given the challenges of low ridership and the slow recovery of commuter transportation services.

As a preliminary deliverable, this memorandum informs several key next steps, including elements to indicate overall TMO feasibility and transit service enhancements that could be made in the future. The insights derived from this analysis will help shape a potential TMO work plan by identifying areas where mobility management strategies and transit services are most needed. Additionally, these findings can provide critical context for evaluating transit feasibility and aligning transit solutions with the specific areas of need, helping to ensure that any proposed strategies are effective.

Appendix: Origin Analysis for All Major Trip Generators in the Region

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA TMO FEASIBILITY STUDY

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS ORIGIN TRIPS ENDING IN ALBERT LEA

Count of Trips Ending in Albert Lea by Destination origin

- Lower (<50 or less)
- Higher (>4,000 or more)

0 1 2 MILES
alta

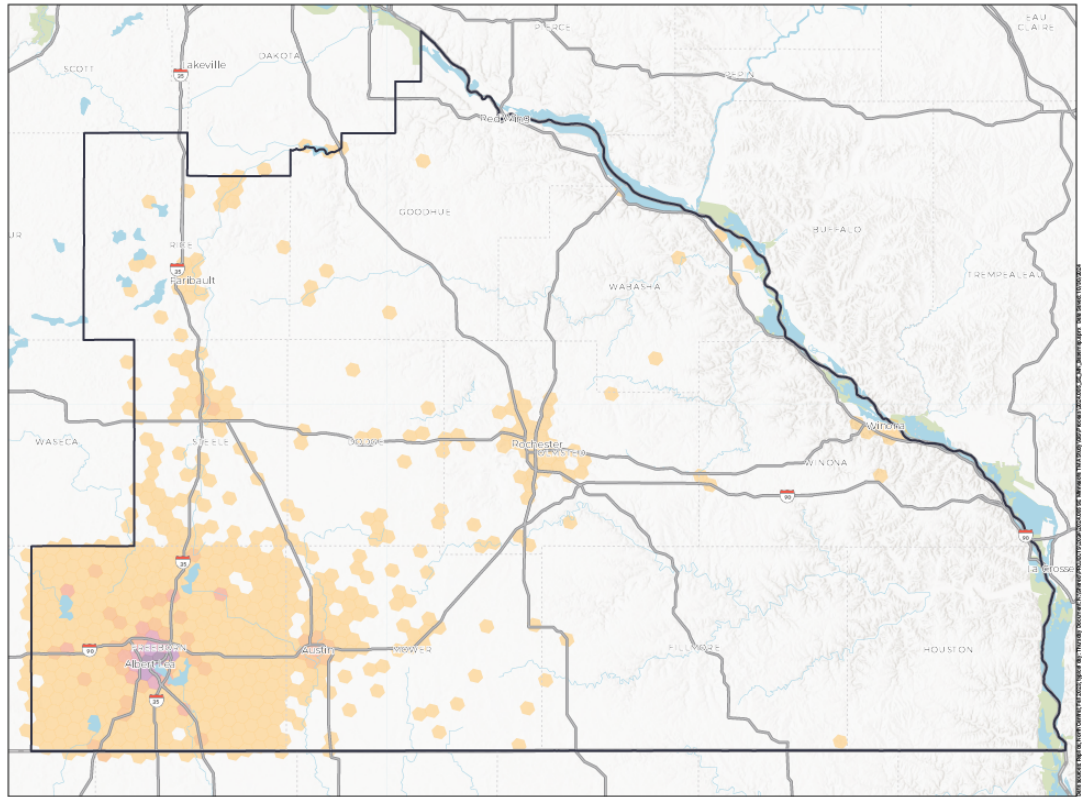


Figure 19: Origin Analysis by Major Destinations – Albert Lea

Total Trip Count: 56,600

Trip Takers: 25,700

Top Destination

Clusters

- Austin
- Faribault
- Owatonna
- Rochester

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA TMO FEASIBILITY STUDY

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS ORIGIN TRIPS ENDING IN AUSTIN

Count of Trips Ending in Austin
by Destination

- Lower (<60 or less)
- Higher (>7,000 or more)

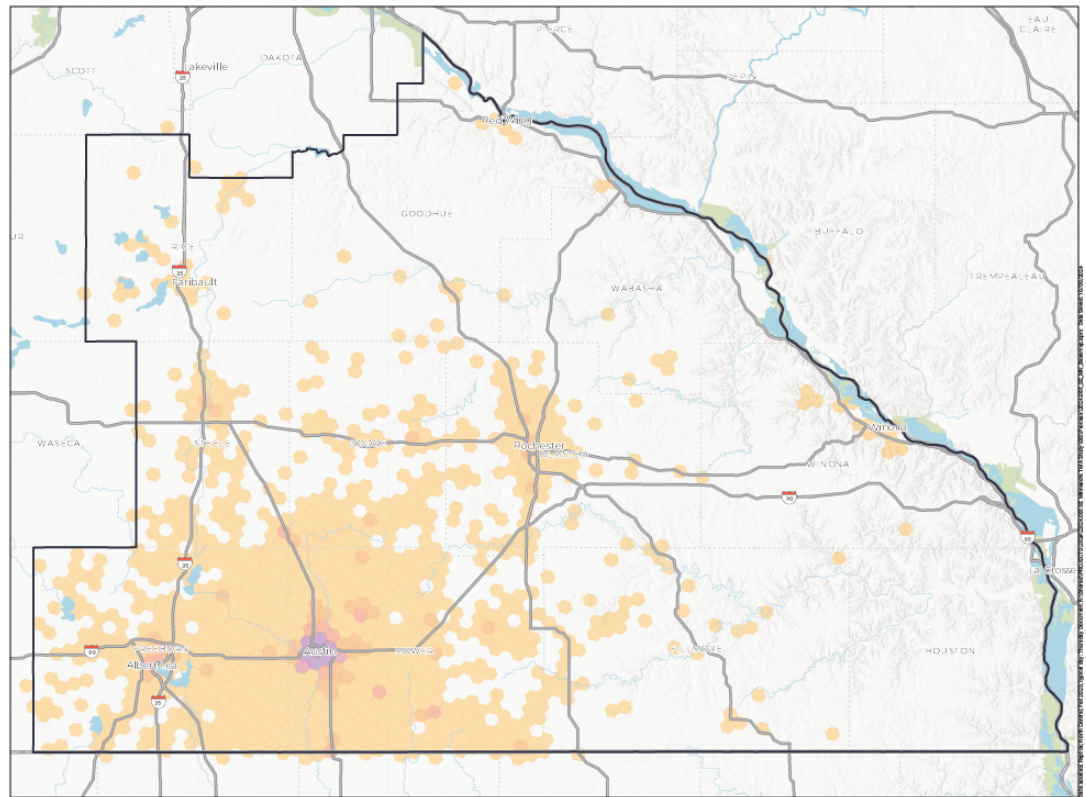


Figure 20: Origin Analysis by Major Destinations – Austin

Total Trip Count: 73,200

Trip Takers: 33,300

Top Destination

Clusters

- Albert Lea
- Faribault
- Owatonna
- Rochester

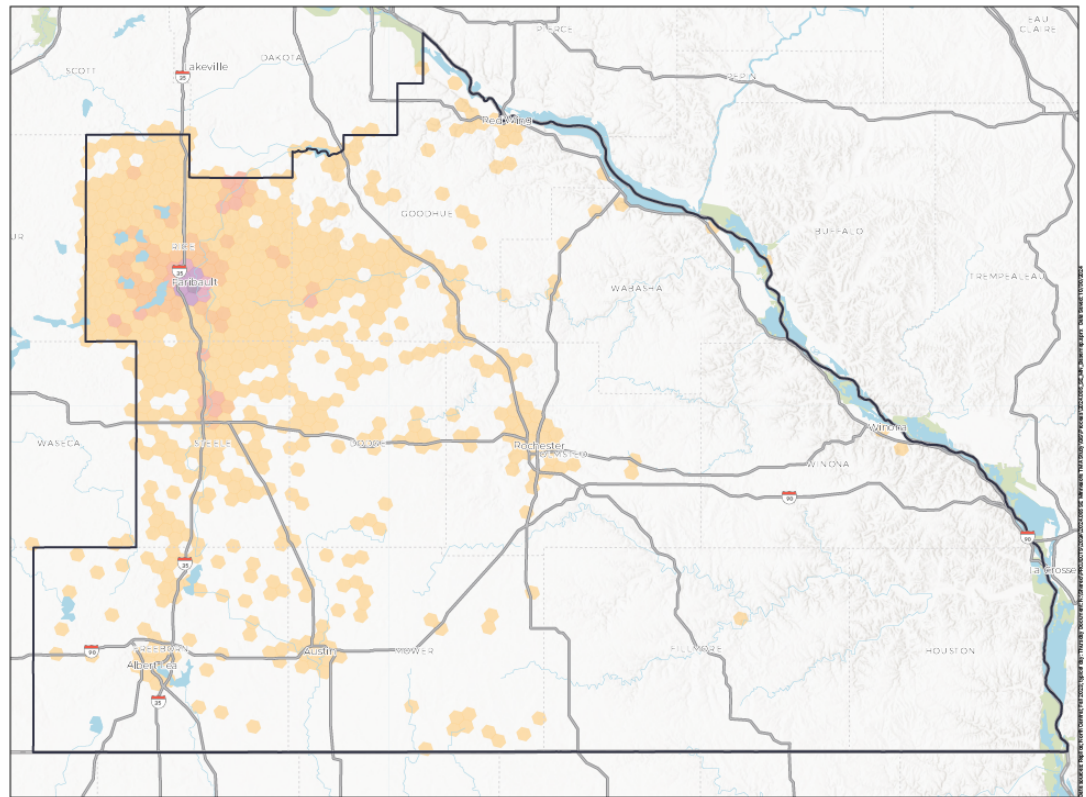
SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA TMO FEASIBILITY STUDY

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS ORIGIN TRIPS ENDING IN FARIBAUT

Count of Trips Ending in
Faribault by Destination

Lower (≤60 or less)

Higher (≥7,000 or more)



SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA TMO FEASIBILITY STUDY

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS ORIGIN TRIPS ENDING IN NORTHFIELD

Count of Trips Ending in Northfield by Destination

Lower (≤100 or less)

Higher (≥7,000 or more)

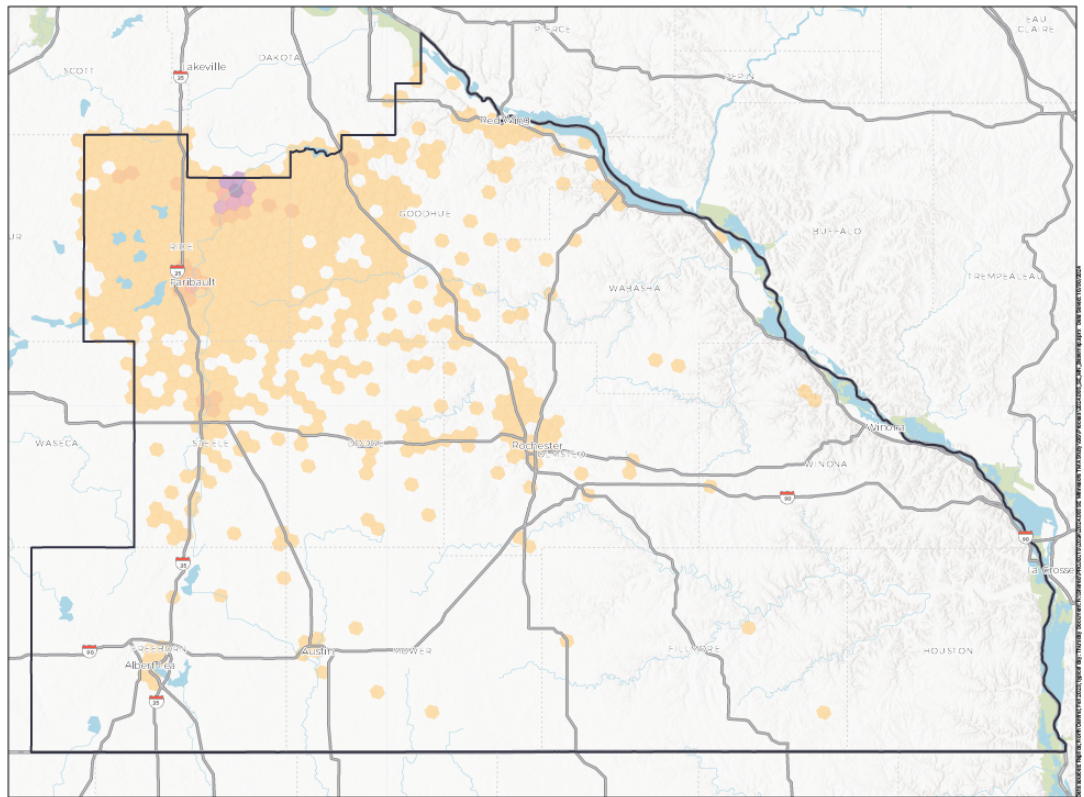


Figure 22: Origin Analysis by Major Destinations – Northfield

Total Trip Count: 59,000

Trip Takers: 29,900

Top Destination Clusters

- Faribault
- Owatonna
- Red Wing
- Rochester

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA TMO FEASIBILITY STUDY

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS ORIGIN TRIPS ENDING IN OWATONNA

Count of Trips Ending in
Owatonna by Destination

Lower (≤200 or less)

Higher (≥10,000 or more)

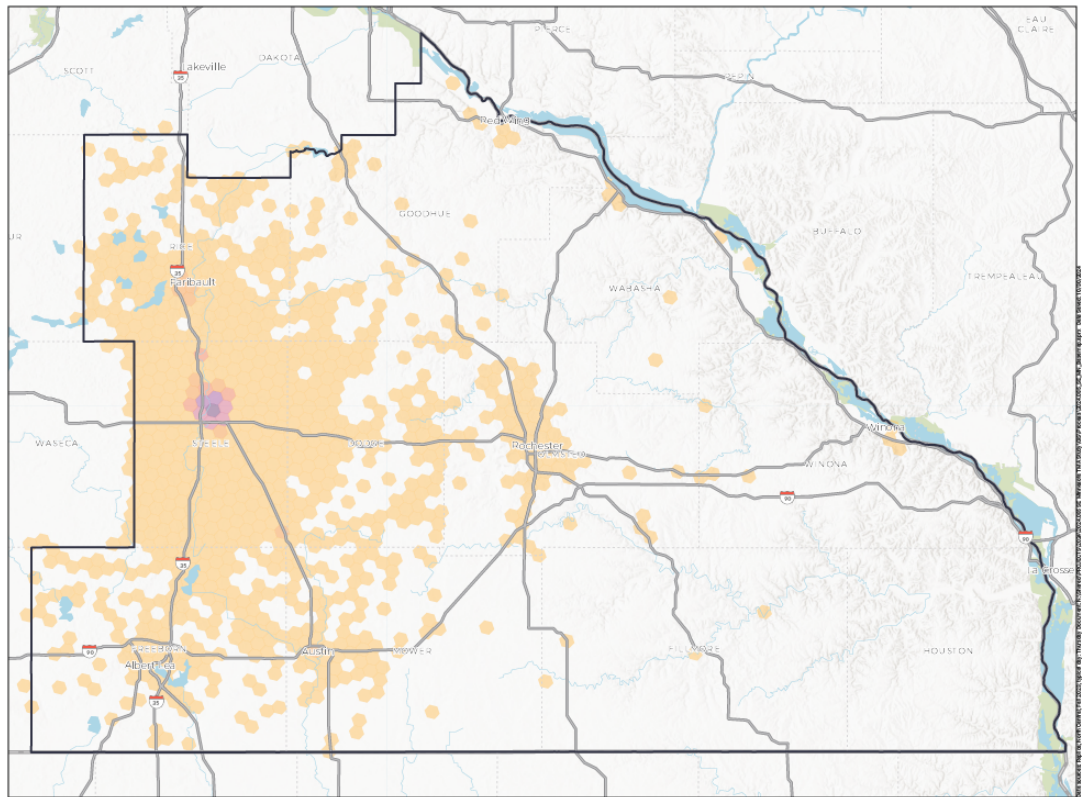


Figure 23: Origin Analysis by Major Destinations – Owatonna

Total Trip Count: 79,000

Trip Takers: 36,100

Top Destination Clusters

- Albert Lea
- Austin
- Faribault
- Northfield
- Rochester

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA TMO FEASIBILITY STUDY

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS ORIGIN TRIPS ENDING IN RED WING

Count of Trips Ending in Red Wing by Destination

- Lower (<60 or less)
- Higher (>2,000 or more)

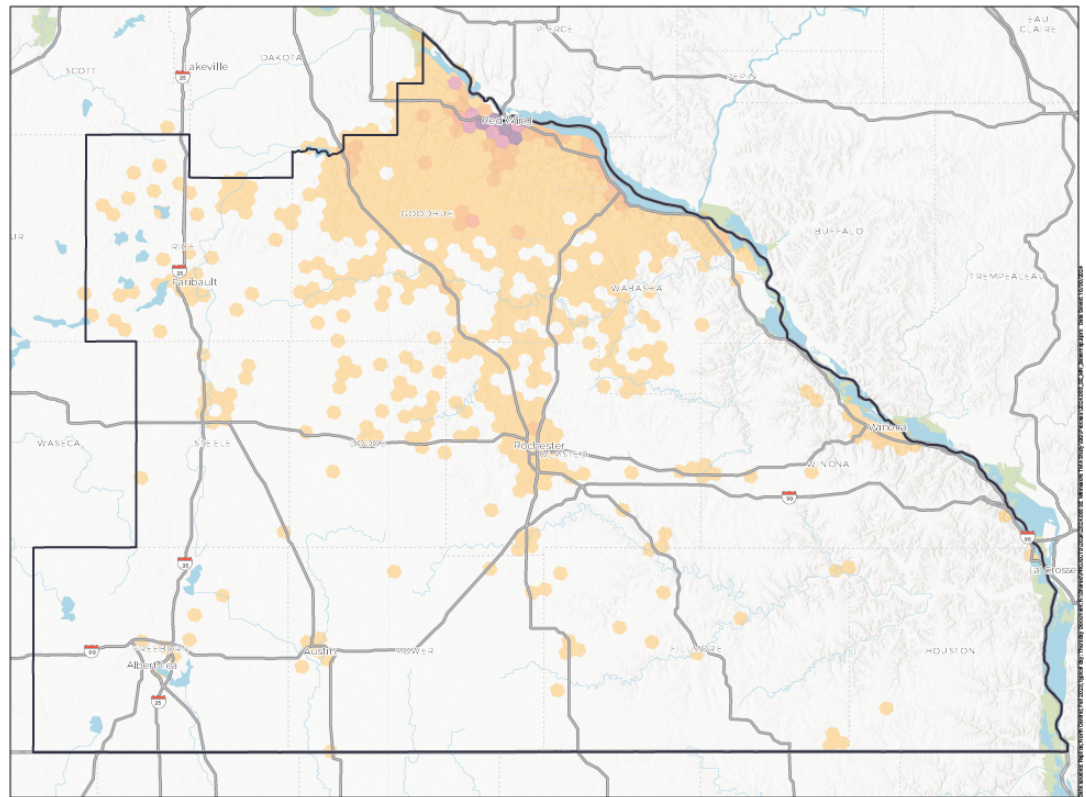


Figure 24: Origin Analysis by Major Destinations – Red Wing

Total Trip Count: 58,200

Trip Takers: 26,400

Top Destination Clusters

- Faribault
- Northfield
- Owatonna
- Rochester
- Winona

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA TMO FEASIBILITY STUDY

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS ORIGIN TRIPS ENDING IN ROCHESTER

Count of Trips Ending in
Rochester by Destination

Lower (≤400 or less)

Higher (≥15,000 or more)

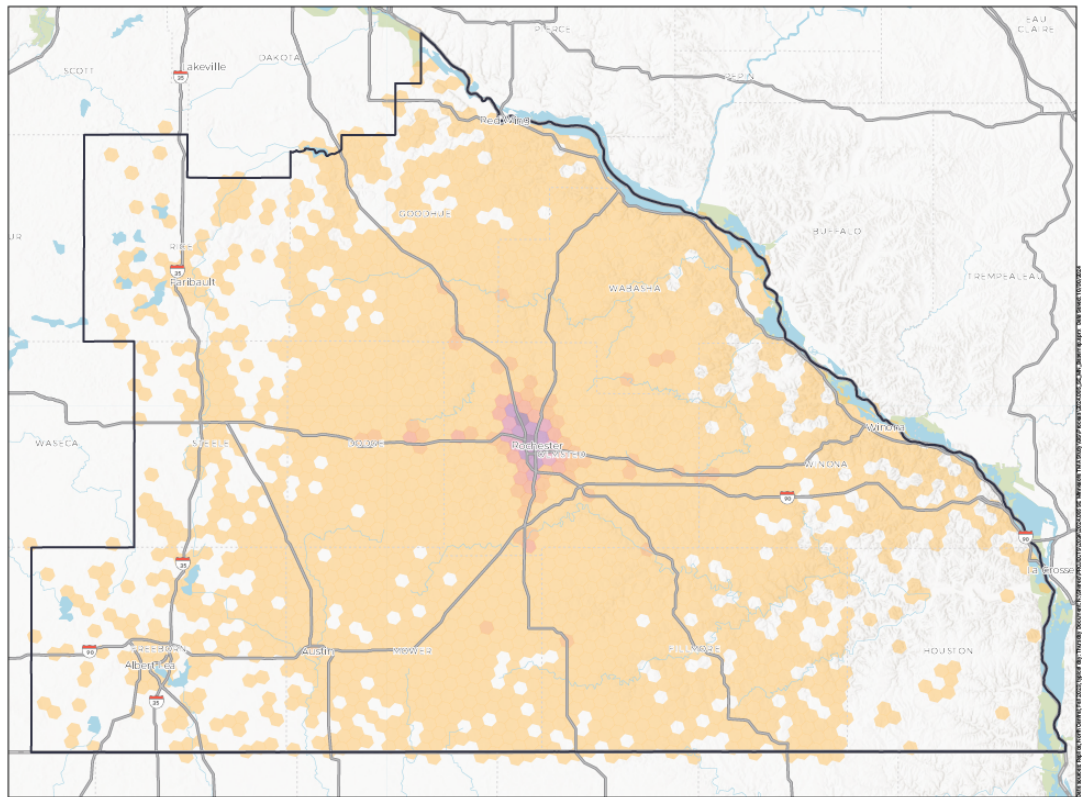


Figure 25: Origin Analysis by Major Destinations – Rochester

Total Trip Count: 412,000

Trip Takers: 168,000

Top Destination Clusters

- Albert Lea
- Austin
- Faribault
- Northfield
- Owatonna
- Red Wing
- Rochester
- Winona

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA TMO FEASIBILITY STUDY

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS ORIGIN TRIPS ENDING IN WINONA

Count of Trips Ending in
Winona by Destination

Lower (≤80 or less)

Higher (≥10,000 or
more)

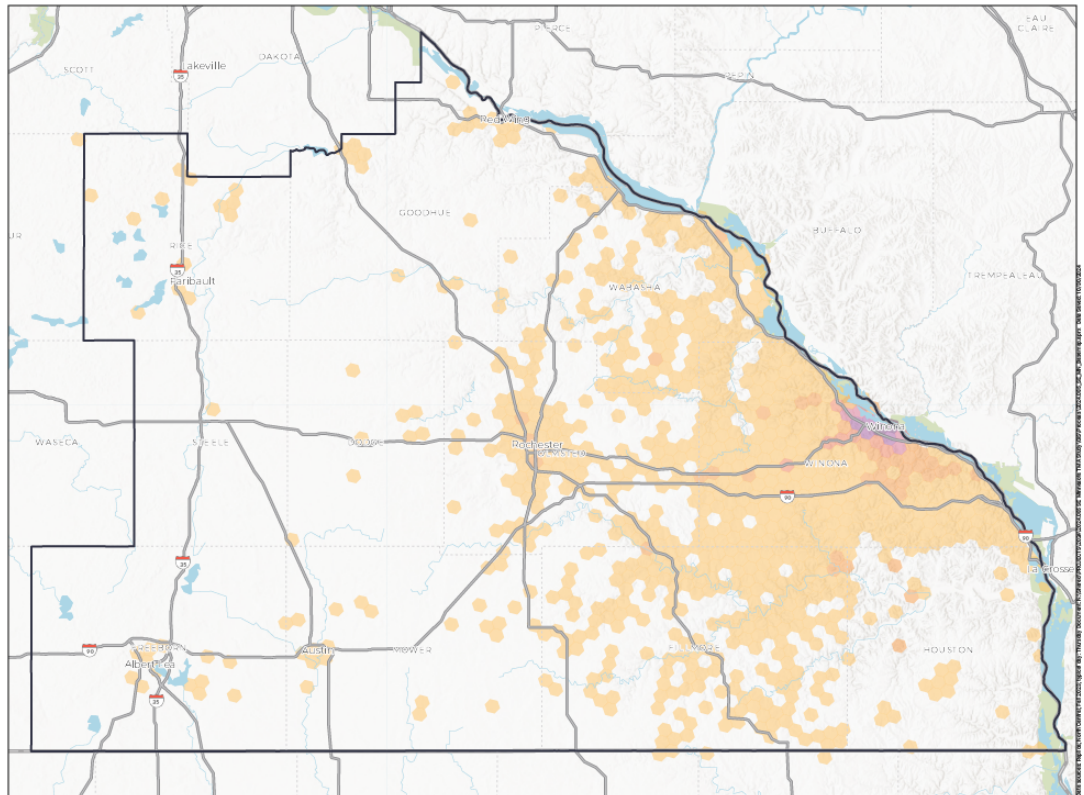


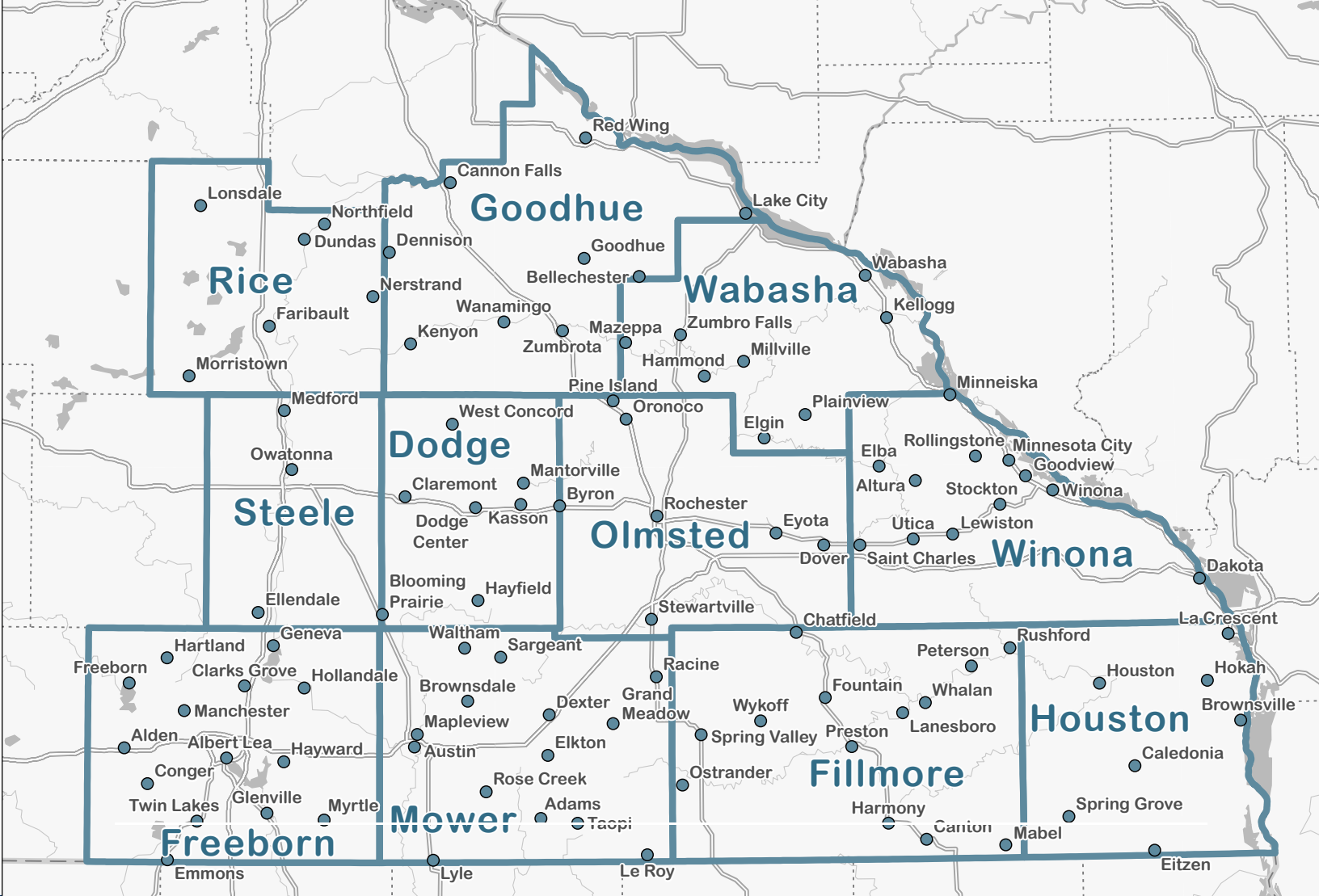
Figure 26: Origin Analysis by Major Destinations – Winona

Total Trip Count: 97,900

Trip Takers: 41,200

Top Destination Clusters

- Red Wing
- Rochester



Southeast Minnesota TMO Study

Appendix C: Economic Benefits Analysis



Appendix C: Social and Economic Benefits of Transit Service in SE Minnesota

Introduction

Public transit plays an important role in the vitality of regions, connecting people to opportunities and fueling economic growth. In Southeast Minnesota, this is no different. This analysis, conducted as part of the SE MN TMO Feasibility Study, quantifies and documents the economic benefits that the five independently operating transit systems, including Hiawatha Transit/Three Rivers, SMART Transit, Rolling Hills Transit/SEMCAC, Rochester Public Transit, and Winona Transit Service, bring to the region. It estimates the benefits for current service levels, potential ridership growth scenarios (5%, 10%, and 25%), and pre-pandemic service levels. The analysis does not include benefits from private transit providers or school transportation services not provided by a public transit agency.

Key Takeaways

- **Transit is a Lifeline in SE Minnesota:** Rural and small urban transit agencies provide critical access to jobs, healthcare, education, shopping, and social connections—especially for residents with limited transportation options.
 - **Work Access Drives Benefits:** Most transit riders reported using the service to access employment and said that they could not maintain their jobs without it. Transit access reduces the need for public assistance by enabling sustained employment.
 - **Transit Strengthens Communities:** Reliable transit services support community stability by helping residents remain in their preferred housing, thereby reinforcing local economic vitality and quality of life in small towns.
- **Substantial Economic and Social Value:** In 2023, transit services in SE Minnesota generated approximately **\$29 million in monetized mobility and efficiency benefits**. These include savings in healthcare costs, public assistance, and vehicle expenses. **Over \$3 million in local spending** by transit riders supported small businesses and the regional economy.
- **Transit Pays for Itself:** Nearly all agencies demonstrated a positive cost-benefit ratio, meaning the monetary benefits of their transit systems outweigh the costs. On average, the cost-benefit ratio among the five agencies was 1.4.
- **COVID-19 Impact:** Since 2019, the region experienced a **55% decline in quantified benefits**, equating to a **\$35 million loss**. While reduced service levels due to the COVID-19 pandemic have partially contributed to this loss, service levels have recovered much faster than ridership levels, which remain at 44% of pre-pandemic levels. This indicates a need and an opportunity for a strategic and coordinated approach to restore and grow ridership.
- **Potential for Future Growth:** A **25% increase in ridership would add nearly \$8 million** in annual economic benefits to the region. Restoring pre-pandemic ridership levels would more than double the economic benefit to **\$64 million per year**. By coordinating regional transit services, enhancing customer communications, and improving information access, the future TMO can address barriers to ridership recovery and growth.

Study and Model Background

The economic benefits assessment uses a model and methodology documented in *Measuring the Economic Benefits of Rural and Small Urban Transit Services in Greater Minnesota*, a research project by North Dakota State University for the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) published April 2020. This study provides a framework for understanding the value of transit in these communities and the larger region. A spreadsheet-based tool accompanies this report to estimate benefits and benefit-cost ratios for individual transit agencies in Minnesota.

The study and tool build on the results from a comprehensive survey that collected data through onboard rider surveys for six representative transit agencies throughout the state. The representative transit agencies were selected to represent various densities and locations in Minnesota including community transit, large and very rural, multi-county near metro area, regional transit systems, and smaller systems. The survey gathered information on demographics, trip purposes, transportation alternatives, and the benefits of transit services. Conducted onboard buses over seven days, it provided insights into rider behavior, preferences, and the impact of transit on their lives.

The study found that transit systems in Southeast Minnesota provide essential services that generate significant economic and social benefits for the region. Rural and small urban transit agencies offer critical access to jobs, healthcare, education, shopping, and social connections, particularly for residents with limited transportation options. For many, transit is not just a convenience but a lifeline.

The majority of riders use transit primarily to reach their jobs, with many indicating that they could not maintain employment without it. By providing consistent access to employment, these systems reduce the need for public assistance, support local businesses, and strengthen the regional economy.

Reliable transit services help residents remain in their preferred housing, supporting community stability and reinforcing local economic vitality. This stability is essential for the quality of life in small towns, where transit can be a critical factor in maintaining a connected, resilient community.

In addition to the rider surveys, the study cites several additional data sources to quantify the benefits of transit services in Greater Minnesota, including:

1. **National Transit Database (NTD):** Operational and safety data, such as vehicle revenue miles, ridership, expenses, crash rates, and injury statistics, were used to calculate costs, operational metrics, and safety impacts.
2. **Economic Multipliers:** The economic benefits calculated include the multiplier effect of money spent locally as opposed to outside of the system. RIMS II multipliers from the Bureau of Economic Analysis were used to estimate the broader economic impacts, capturing direct, indirect, and induced effects of spending within the local economy. These include impacts from transit operations and maintenance, shopping trips made by transit riders, and spending that would have shifted to online platforms without transit. Transit investment supports local businesses, generates jobs, and amplifies economic activity through income re-spending by employees and suppliers, ensuring that dollars largely stay within the local community.
3. **Health Care Cost Studies:** Tools developed by Hughes-Cromwick et al. (2005) were used to estimate the cost of forgone health care trips, including impacts on quality of life and reduced emergency care costs.

4. **Value of Time and Cost Parameters:** MnDOT's recommended values for travel time, vehicle operating costs, crash costs, and emissions costs were used to calculate efficiency benefits.
5. **Demographic Data:** Population characteristics such as income, age, and disability status were sourced from the American Community Survey (ACS) and other demographic studies.
6. **Previous Research:** Studies on transit benefits provided methodologies for estimating benefits like consumer surplus, public assistance cost savings, and productivity gains.
7. **Transit Agency Data:** Local transit agencies provided operational details, such as service areas, trip types, and ridership patterns.
8. **Other Studies and Reports:** Research on the benefits of transit for disadvantaged populations, equity principles, and relocation cost savings.
9. **Default Values:** Default values for rural and urban transit systems based on case study surveys in Minnesota.

These data sources were integrated to calculate benefits such as mobility, efficiency, safety, environmental impacts, and economic contributions.

Benefits Associated with Transit Services Framework

The tool calculates a range of societal and economic benefits, depicted in green in Figure 1.

Societal Benefits

Societal benefits encompass a range of advantages that extend beyond direct financial gains, positively impacting individuals and communities. These benefits included in the tool are categorized into **Mobility Benefits** and **Efficiency Benefits**.

Mobility Benefits

Mobility Benefits focus on providing crucial access and reducing reliance on public assistance. Specific mobility benefits included in the tool:

- Low-cost mobility benefits: Value to users who cannot afford other transportation options.
- Access to healthcare benefits: Savings from providing health care trips that would otherwise be missed.
- Public assistance cost savings: Reduced government spending on public assistance programs by enabling access to jobs.

Efficiency Benefits

Efficiency Benefits highlight the resource optimization and risk reduction associated with transit use. Specific efficiency benefits include:

- Vehicle operating cost savings: Savings from riding transit instead of driving.
- Chauffeuring cost savings: Savings from riding transit instead of relying on others for transportation.
- Travel time benefits: Differences in travel time between transit and other modes.
- Safety benefits: Reduced crash risks compared to other modes of transportation.
- Environmental benefits: Reduced emissions and pollution compared to other modes.

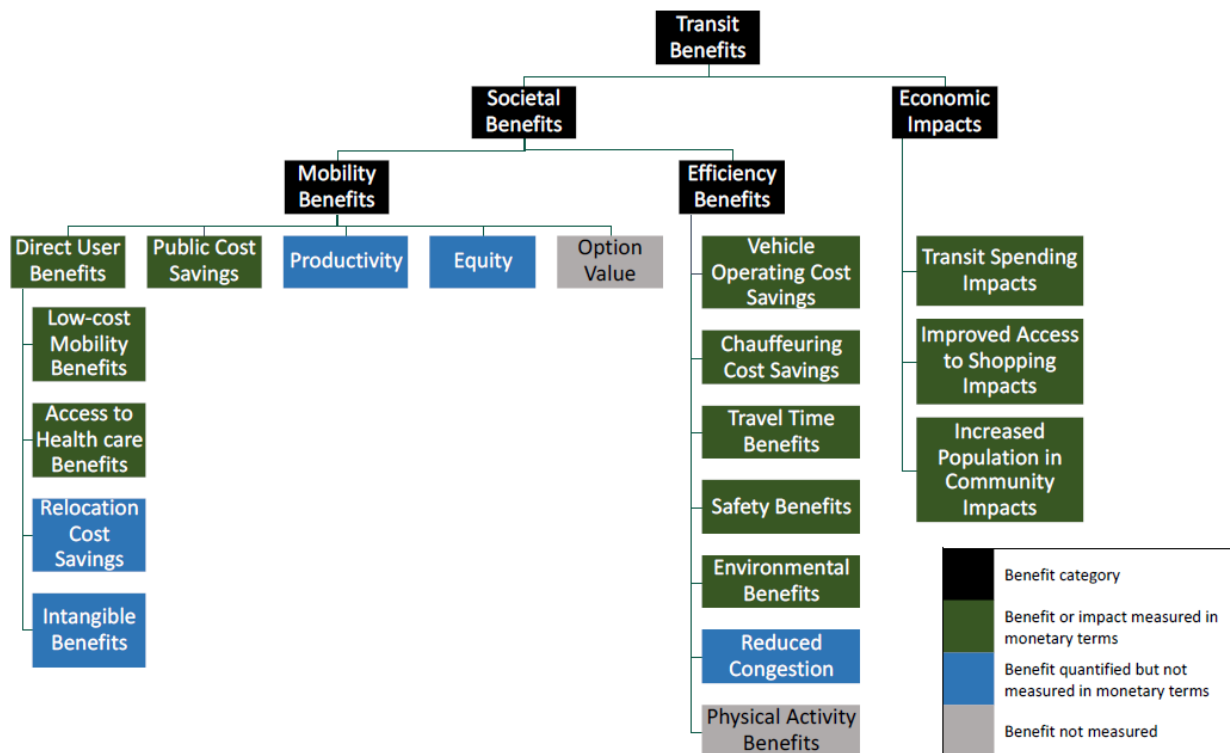


Figure 1 Transit Benefits Assessment Tree from *Measuring the Economic Benefits of Rural and Small Urban Transit Services in Greater Minnesota (2020)*.

Other Mobility and Efficiency Benefits

Beyond the direct economic impacts, the tool also identifies and quantifies several significant mobility and efficiency benefits that are not measured in monetary terms. These benefits are highlighted in blue in Figure 1. These are represented in blue in Figure 1 and are described below.

Non-Monetized Benefits

- **Mobility Benefits:**
 - Relocation cost savings: Avoided costs for individuals who can remain in their current residence instead of relocating due to lack of transit.
 - Intangible benefits: Improved social interaction, reduced stress, independent living, and enhanced quality of life.
 - Productivity: Transit is shown to expand the labor pool for businesses and improve workforce development.
 - Equity: Promotes fairness by serving disadvantaged populations.
- **Efficiency Benefits**
 - Reduced congestion: The number of transit trips that would have been made by automobile if transit were not available. This includes trips made alone in personal vehicles, chauffeured trips, and trips made by taxis or Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) like Uber or Lyft.

Unquantified Benefits

Besides the benefits that were measured in monetary terms or otherwise quantified, the benefits below were also noted but not quantified. They are represented in grey in Figure 1.

- **Mobility Benefits:**
 - **Option Value:** The value of having access to a service, such as transit, even if individuals do not currently use it.
- **Efficiency Benefits**
 - Physical activity benefits: The benefits of increased walking or biking activity associated with using transit services.

Economic Impacts

The second category of monetized benefits are referred to as “economic impacts”. Economic impacts refer to the effects of transit services and investments on the local economy, including job creation, income generation, and increased business activity. These impacts arise from transit spending on operations and capital investments, as well as the ripple effects of improved access to employment, education, shopping, and community resources.

- Transit spending impacts: Jobs and economic activity generated by transit operations and capital investments.
- Improved access to shopping: Economic benefits from increased access to local businesses.
- Increased population in community: Economic impacts from keeping people living in the community.

Model User Inputs

The model was applied to the five public transit agencies that provide services within SE Minnesota, which were categorized as follows:

1. Hiawatha Transit/Three Rivers – Regional transit system
2. SMART Transit – Regional transit system
3. Rolling Hills Transit/SEMCAC – Small system
4. Rochester Public Transit - Urbanized
5. Winona Transit Service – Community Transit

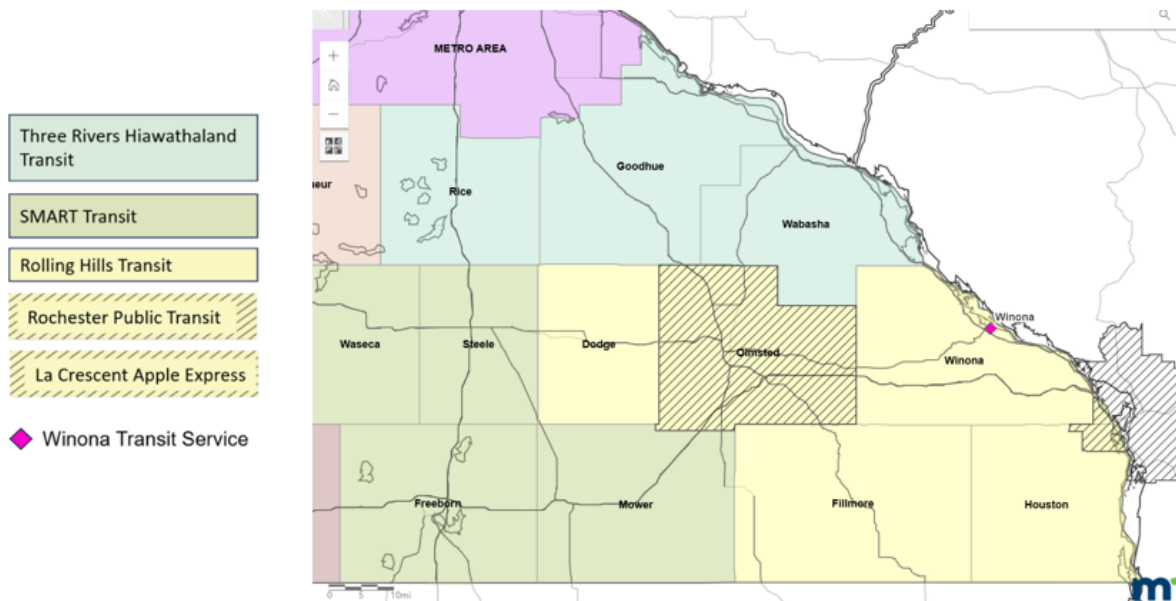


Figure 2 Transit Service Providers across Southeast Minnesota. Source: Minnesota Department of Transportation (June 2025). Find your transit provider. <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/find-your-transit-provider.html>

To assess each agency’s monetized benefits, the following inputs were collected from the 2023 National Transit Database (NTD) agency profiles.

- Total annual ridership
- Total directly generated revenue (\$)
- Total Annual vehicle revenue miles
- Total annual Vehicle revenue hours
- Total annual operating expenses (\$)
- Total annual capital expenses (\$)

This data was input into the model to calculate current (2023) benefits, pre-COVID benefits, and three potential growth scenarios, yielding the following results.

Current (2023) Benefits Analysis

Monetized societal benefits and economic impacts associated with regional transit were calculated using the tool and are discussed below. Societal Benefits and Economic Impacts are analyzed separately because they represent distinct types of outcomes. Economic Impacts focus on changes in the local economy, such as job creation, income generation, and business activity, often including transfer payments that may not be net benefits. Societal Benefits, on the other hand, measure broader advantages to society, such as improved mobility, access to healthcare, reduced

public assistance costs, and enhanced quality of life. Analyzing them separately avoids double-counting and ensures a clear understanding of both economic contributions and societal value.

Societal Benefits

In 2023, transit services in SE Minnesota generated approximately **\$29 million in societal benefits**, consisting of monetized mobility and efficiency benefits. Most of the monetized benefits can be attributed to access to healthcare benefits which amounted to \$26 million regionally. With potential anticipated Medicaid and Medicare cuts impacting specialized transportation providers, the value of access to healthcare provided by public transit may rise in the future. Other monetized benefits include low-cost mobility benefit and public assistance cost savings.

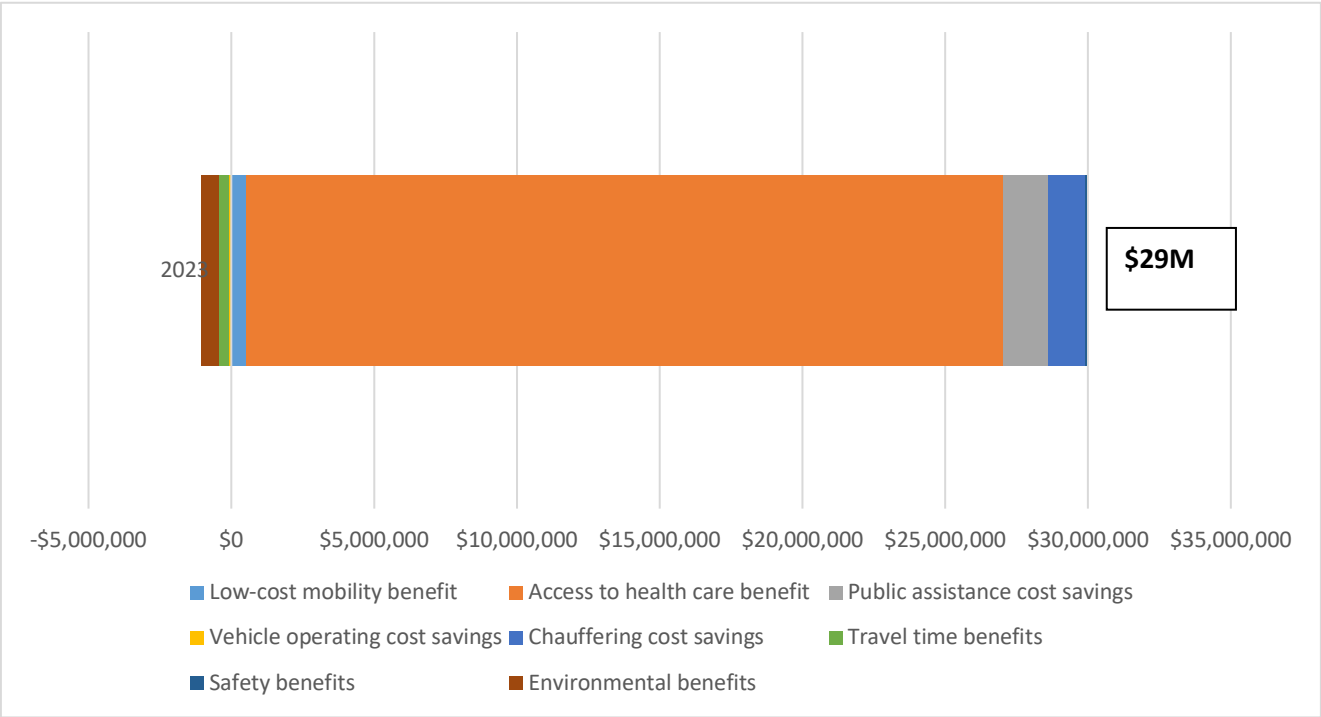


Figure 1 Regional Monetized Benefits Breakdown (2023)

Economic Benefits

In addition to the \$29 million in societal benefits, **\$3.1 million is estimated to have been spent locally** by transit riders supporting small businesses and the regional economy. These benefits are illustrated in Figure 4, below.

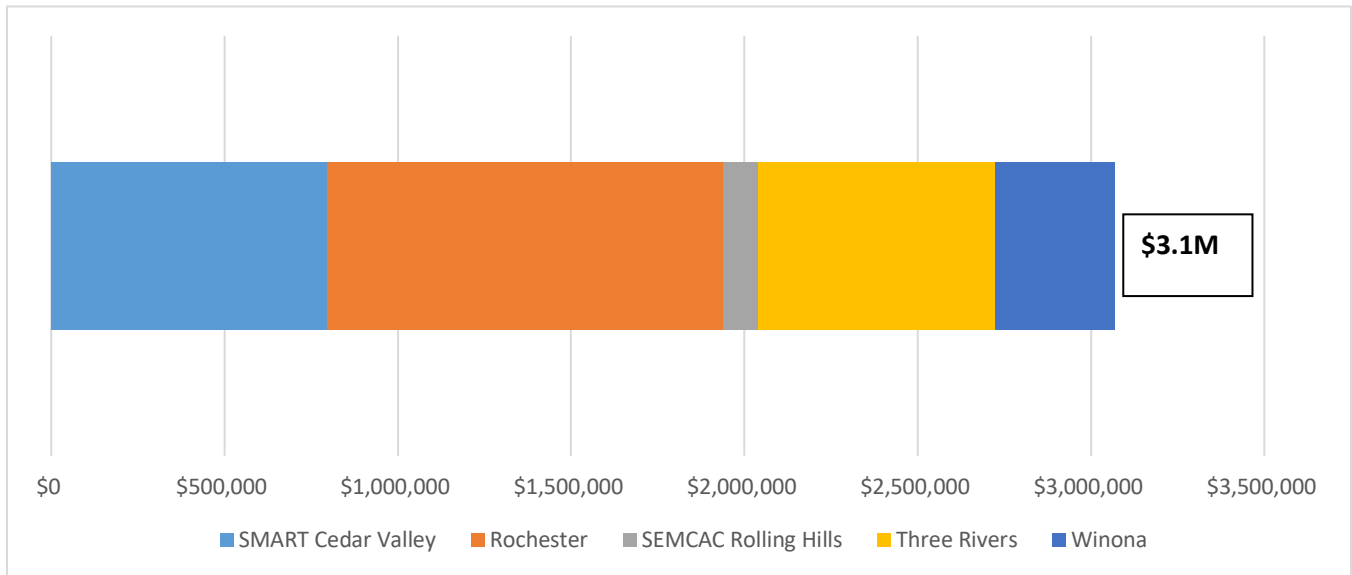


Figure 2 Estimated Local Spending by Transit Riders Displayed by Agency (2023)

Impacts by Transit System

The individual results of the societal benefits and economic impacts of each transit system are depicted below.

Hiawatha Transit/Three Rivers – Regional transit system

RESULTS

Estimated Monetary Benefits			Per trip statewide averages for Greater Minnesota	
	Total	Per trip	Rural	Peer Group
<i>Mobility Benefits</i>				
Low-cost mobility benefit	\$ 142,670	\$ 0.73	\$ 0.93	\$ 0.84
Access to healthcare benefit	\$ 4,450,416	\$ 22.84	\$ 26.46	\$ 22.84
Public assistance cost savings	\$ 238,329	\$ 1.22	\$ 2.49	\$ 1.22
<i>Efficiency Benefits</i>				
Vehicle operating cost savings	\$ (3,339)	\$ (0.02)	\$ 0.01	\$ -
Chauffeur cost savings	\$ 345,898	\$ 1.78	\$ 2.75	\$ 1.98
Travel time impacts	\$ (250,869)	\$ (1.29)	\$ (0.40)	\$ (0.88)
Safety benefits	\$ 8,847	\$ 0.05	\$ 0.04	\$ 0.05
Environmental benefits	\$ (94,048)	\$ (0.48)	\$ (0.65)	\$ (0.54)
Total	\$ 4,837,904	\$ 24.83	\$ 31.63	\$ 25.51

Comparison of Benefits and Costs			Per trip statewide averages for Greater Minnesota	
	Total	Per trip	Rural	Peer Group
Total Benefits	\$ 4,837,904	\$ 24.83	\$ 31.63	\$ 25.51
<i>Costs</i>				
Operating	\$ 4,774,214	\$ 24.50	\$ 12.62	\$ 11.94
Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1.66	\$ 1.66
Total	\$ 4,774,214	\$ 24.50	\$ 14.28	\$ 13.61
Benefit-cost ratio	1.0		2.2	1.9

Reduced Congestion	
Number of unlinked transit trips that replaced an automobile trip	98,471

Economic Impacts of Shopping Trips	
Amount spent by transit riders	\$ 683,426
Spending that would have been lost to online shopping without transit	\$ 99,097
Economic Impacts of Total Shopping Trips Made by Transit Riders	
Earnings	\$ 86,292
Jobs	3
Value-added	\$ 180,382
Economic Impacts of Shopping That Would Have Occurred Online	
Earnings	\$ 12,512
Jobs	0
Value-added	\$ 26,155

Economic Impacts of Keeping People Living in the Community	
Number of riders who would move to a different community	63
Economic Impacts of Keeping People in the Community	
Earnings	\$ 323,485
Jobs	9
Value-added	\$ 621,342

SMART Transit – Regional transit system

RESULTS

Estimated Monetary Benefits				Per trip statewide averages for Greater Minnesota	
	Total	Per trip		Rural	Peer Group
<i>Mobility Benefits</i>					
Low-cost mobility benefit	\$ 181,004	\$ 0.80	\$	0.93	\$ 0.84
Access to healthcare benefit	\$ 5,188,417	\$ 22.84	\$	26.46	\$ 22.84
Public assistance cost savings	\$ 277,850	\$ 1.22	\$	2.49	\$ 1.22
<i>Efficiency Benefits</i>					
Vehicle operating cost savings	\$ (1,936)	\$ (0.01)	\$	0.01	\$ -
Chauffeur cost savings	\$ 432,610	\$ 1.90	\$	2.75	\$ 1.98
Travel time impacts	\$ (217,657)	\$ (0.96)	\$	(0.40)	\$ (0.88)
Safety benefits	\$ 10,314	\$ 0.05	\$	0.04	\$ 0.05
Environmental benefits	\$ (112,386)	\$ (0.49)	\$	(0.65)	\$ (0.54)
Total	\$ 5,758,217	\$ 25.35	\$	31.63	\$ 25.51

Comparison of Benefits and Costs				Per trip statewide averages for Greater Minnesota	
	Total	Per trip		Rural	Peer Group
Total Benefits	\$ 5,758,217	\$ 25.35	\$	31.63	\$ 25.51
<i>Costs</i>					
Operating	\$ 3,702,085	\$ 16.30	\$	12.62	\$ 11.94
Capital	\$ 501,741	\$ 2.21	\$	1.66	\$ 1.66
Total	\$ 4,203,826	\$ 18.51	\$	14.28	\$ 13.61
Benefit-cost ratio	1.4			2.2	1.9

Reduced Congestion	
Number of unlinked transit trips that replaced an automobile trip	114,800

Economic Impacts of Shopping Trips	
Amount spent by transit riders	\$ 796,757
Spending that would have been lost to online shopping without transit	\$ 115,530
Economic Impacts of Total Shopping Trips Made by Transit Riders	
Earnings	\$ 100,602
Jobs	4
Value-added	\$ 210,295
Economic Impacts of Shopping That Would Have Occurred Online	
Earnings	\$ 14,587
Jobs	1
Value-added	\$ 30,493

Economic Impacts of Keeping People Living in the Community	
Number of riders who would move to a different community	74
Economic Impacts of Keeping People in the Community	
Earnings	\$ 377,128
Jobs	10
Value-added	\$ 724,378

Rolling Hills Transit/SEMCAC – Small system

RESULTS

Estimated Monetary Benefits				Per trip statewide averages for Greater Minnesota	
	Total	Per trip		Rural	Peer Group
<i>Mobility Benefits</i>					
Low-cost mobility benefit	\$ 18,376	\$ 0.36	\$	0.93	\$ 0.30
Access to healthcare benefit	\$ 2,117,656	\$ 41.55	\$	26.46	\$ 41.55
Public assistance cost savings	\$ 106,296	\$ 2.09	\$	2.49	\$ 2.09
<i>Efficiency Benefits</i>					
Vehicle operating cost savings	\$ -	\$ -	\$	0.01	\$ -
Chauffeur cost savings	\$ 142,420	\$ 2.79	\$	2.75	\$ 2.10
Travel time impacts	\$ (73,834)	\$ (1.45)	\$	(0.40)	\$ 0.03
Safety benefits	\$ 6,458	\$ 0.13	\$	0.04	\$ 0.16
Environmental benefits	\$ (51,813)	\$ (1.02)	\$	(0.65)	\$ (0.65)
Total	\$ 2,265,559	\$ 44.45	\$	31.63	\$ 45.57

Comparison of Benefits and Costs				Per trip statewide averages for Greater Minnesota	
	Total	Per trip		Rural	Peer Group
Total Benefits	\$ 2,265,559	\$ 44.45	\$	31.63	\$ 45.57
<i>Costs</i>					
Operating	\$ 1,642,079	\$ 32.22	\$	12.62	\$ 13.56
Capital	\$ 8,100	\$ 0.16	\$	1.66	\$ 1.10
Total	\$ 1,650,179	\$ 32.38	\$	14.28	\$ 14.66
Benefit-cost ratio	1.4			2.2	3.1

Reduced Congestion	
Number of unlinked transit trips that replaced an automobile trip	32,280

Economic Impacts of Shopping Trips	
Amount spent by transit riders	\$ 101,938
Spending that would have been lost to online shopping without transit	\$ 14,781
Economic Impacts of Total Shopping Trips Made by Transit Riders	
Earnings	\$ 12,871
Jobs	1
Value-added	\$ 26,905
Economic Impacts of Shopping That Would Have Occurred Online	
Earnings	\$ 1,866
Jobs	0
Value-added	\$ 3,901

Economic Impacts of Keeping People Living in the Community	
Number of riders who would move to a different community	17
Economic Impacts of Keeping People in the Community	
Earnings	\$ 70,602
Jobs	2
Value-added	\$ 135,611

Rochester Public Transit - Urbanized

RESULTS

Estimated Monetary Benefits				Per trip statewide averages for Greater Minnesota	
	Total		Per trip	Urban	
Mobility Benefits					
Low-cost mobility benefit	\$ 129,189	\$ 0.17	\$ 0.49		
Access to healthcare benefit	\$ 11,616,636	\$ 15.58	\$ 15.58		
Public assistance cost savings	\$ 868,844	\$ 1.17	\$ 1.17		
Efficiency Benefits					
Vehicle operating cost savings	\$ (69,317)	\$ (0.09)	\$ (0.01)		
Chauffeur cost savings	\$ 284,439	\$ 0.38	\$ 0.92		
Travel time impacts	\$ 189,155	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.26		
Safety benefits	\$ 25,921	\$ 0.03	\$ 0.03		
Environmental benefits	\$ (328,765)	\$ (0.44)	\$ (0.09)		
Total	\$ 12,716,101	\$ 17.06	\$ 18.36		

Comparison of Benefits and Costs			Per trip statewide averages for Greater Minnesota	
	Total	Per trip	Urban	
Total Benefits	\$ 12,716,101	\$ 17.06	\$ 18.36	
<i>Costs</i>				
Operating	\$ 12,627,682	\$ 16.94	\$ 5.40	
Capital	\$ 11,460,402	\$ 15.37	\$ 1.03	
Total	\$ 24,088,084	\$ 32.32	\$ 6.43	
Benefit-cost ratio	0.5		2.9	

Reduced Congestion	
Number of unlinked transit trips that replaced an automobile trip	390,834

Economic Impacts of Shopping Trips	
Amount spent by transit riders	\$ 1,142,154
Spending that would have been lost to online shopping without transit	\$ 217,009
Economic Impacts of Total Shopping Trips Made by Transit Riders	
Earnings	\$ 144,213
Jobs	6
Value-added	\$ 301,459
Economic Impacts of Shopping That Would Have Occurred Online	
Earnings	\$ 27,401
Jobs	1
Value-added	\$ 57,277

Economic Impacts of Keeping People Living in the Community	
Number of riders who would move to a different community	252
Economic Impacts of Keeping People in the Community	
Earnings	\$ 1,455,457
Jobs	40
Value-added	\$ 2,795,605

Winona Transit Service – Community Transit

RESULTS

Estimated Monetary Benefits			Per trip statewide averages for Greater Minnesota	
	Total	Per trip	Rural	Peer Group
<i>Mobility Benefits</i>				
Low-cost mobility benefit	\$ 27,646	\$ 0.29	\$ 0.93	\$ 0.56
Access to healthcare benefit	\$ 3,162,132	\$ 33.49	\$ 26.46	\$ 33.49
Public assistance cost savings	\$ 83,525	\$ 0.88	\$ 2.49	\$ 0.88
<i>Efficiency Benefits</i>				
Vehicle operating cost savings	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 0.01	\$ -
Chauffeur cost savings	\$ 83,727	\$ 0.89	\$ 2.75	\$ 1.50
Travel time impacts	\$ (3,973)	\$ (0.04)	\$ (0.40)	\$ (0.05)
Safety benefits	\$ 1,516	\$ 0.02	\$ 0.04	\$ 0.02
Environmental benefits	\$ (41,614)	\$ (0.44)	\$ (0.65)	\$ (0.23)
Total	\$ 3,312,958	\$ 35.08	\$ 31.63	\$ 36.16

Comparison of Benefits and Costs			Per trip statewide averages for Greater Minnesota	
	Total	Per trip	Rural	Peer Group
Total Benefits	\$ 3,312,958	\$ 35.08	\$ 31.63	\$ 36.16
<i>Costs</i>				
Operating	\$ 1,238,069	\$ 13.11	\$ 12.62	\$ 5.63
Capital	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1.66	\$ 1.40
Total	\$ 1,238,069	\$ 13.11	\$ 14.28	\$ 7.04
Benefit-cost ratio	2.7		2.2	5.1

Reduced Congestion	
Number of unlinked transit trips that replaced an automobile trip	47,215

Economic Impacts of Shopping Trips	
Amount spent by transit riders	\$ 342,305
Spending that would have been lost to online shopping without transit	\$ 49,634
Economic Impacts of Total Shopping Trips Made by Transit Riders	
Earnings	\$ 43,221
Jobs	2
Value-added	\$ 90,348
Economic Impacts of Shopping That Would Have Occurred Online	
Earnings	\$ 6,267
Jobs	0
Value-added	\$ 13,100

Economic Impacts of Keeping People Living in the Community	
Number of riders who would move to a different community	40
Economic Impacts of Keeping People in the Community	
Earnings	\$ 223,428
Jobs	6
Value-added	\$ 429,154

Pre-COVID Conditions

While transit agencies in the region continue to deliver critical mobility services, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in sharp ridership declines that have yet to fully recover. Figure 5 compares pre-pandemic regional aggregated annual ridership to 2023 levels. Overall, ridership is down 56%.

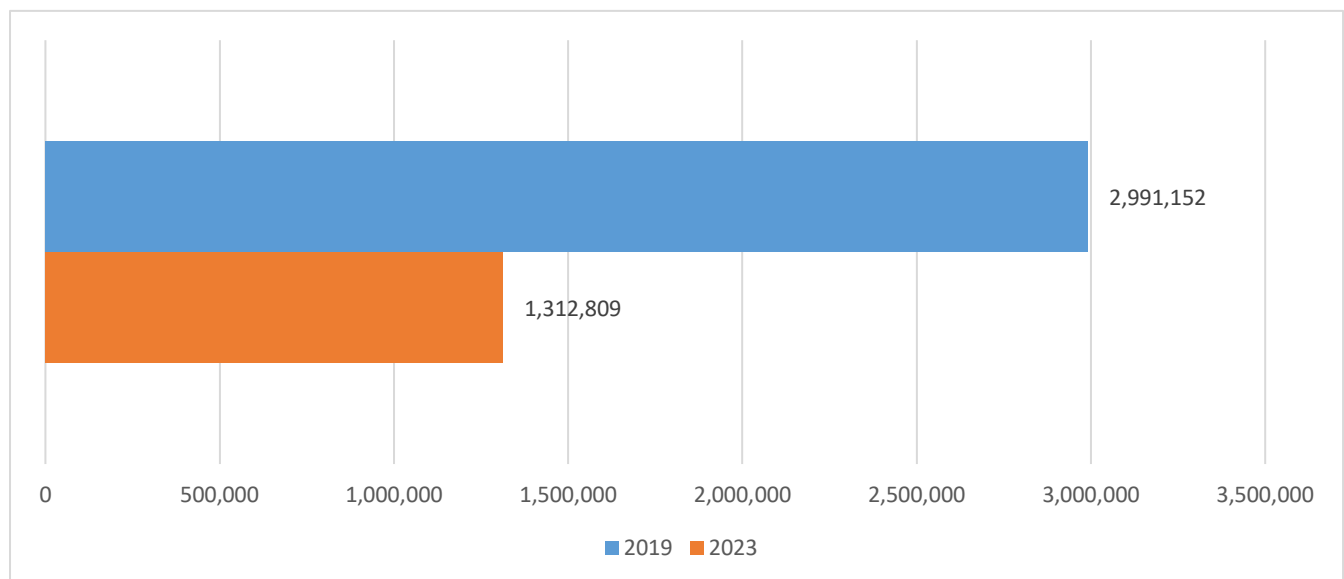


Figure 3 Aggregated Regional Annual Ridership, 2019 to 2023

The agencies listed below experienced notable ridership losses.

- Rochester: 65% reduction
- Winona: 59% reduction
- Three Rivers: 31% reduction
- SMART Cedar Valley: 17% reduction

Rolling Hills Transit stands out as the only agency that not only maintained pre-pandemic service levels but expanded them, increasing vehicle revenue miles by 27% and vehicle revenue hours by 35%. This strategic investment likely contributed to its resilience, helping to sustain ridership despite broader regional declines.

Table 1 contains a thorough breakdown of ridership statistics for the five agencies in the region for 2019 and 2023,

	SMART Cedar Valley			Rochester			SEMCAC Rolling Hills Transit			Three Rivers			Winona		
	2019	2023	% change	2019	2023	% change	2019	2023	% change	2019	2023	% change	2019	2023	% change
Total annual ridership	272,878	227,158	-17%	2155230	745,406	-65%	51,207	50,969	0%	283,931	194,847	-31%	227,906	94,429	-59%
Total annual fare revenue (\$)	\$336,628	\$385,310	14%	3480933	\$2,291,238	-34%	\$95,866	\$162,491	69%	\$222,606	\$408,552	84%	\$134,093	\$225,931	68%
Total annual vehicle revenue miles	720,843	670,721	-7%	1941977	1,807,568	-7%	222,223	281,847	27%	662,310	564,627	-15%	232,495	227,783	-2%
Total annual vehicle revenue hours	62,048	58,720	-5%	132686	128,629	-3%	19,305	26,083	35%	55,108	56,127	2%	20,671	20,620	0%
Total annual operating expenses (\$)	\$2,855,210	\$3,702,085	30%	11221992	\$12,627,682	13%	\$1,058,968	\$1,642,079	55%	\$3,278,958	\$4,774,214	46%	\$824,422	\$1,238,069	50%
Total annual capital expenses (\$)	\$271,071	\$501,741	85%	5142421	\$11,460,402	123%	\$135,484	\$8,100	-94%	\$0	\$0		\$4,957	\$0	-100%

Table 1 Summary of Transit Operating, Ridership, and Expenses 2019 and 2023

While most agencies realized ridership losses, the losses were not commensurate with the reduced levels of transit service. Figure 6 illustrates the percentage change in key transit metrics from 2019 to 2023, providing a visual comparison of the impact of the pandemic on service levels and ridership. Notably, the graph highlights that while service, measured in vehicle revenue hours and miles, experienced relatively modest reductions, ridership declined far more dramatically across the region. This disparity underscores that the decrease in ridership cannot be solely attributed to reduced service and suggests other factors, such as changes in travel behavior or public perception, are influencing ridership levels.

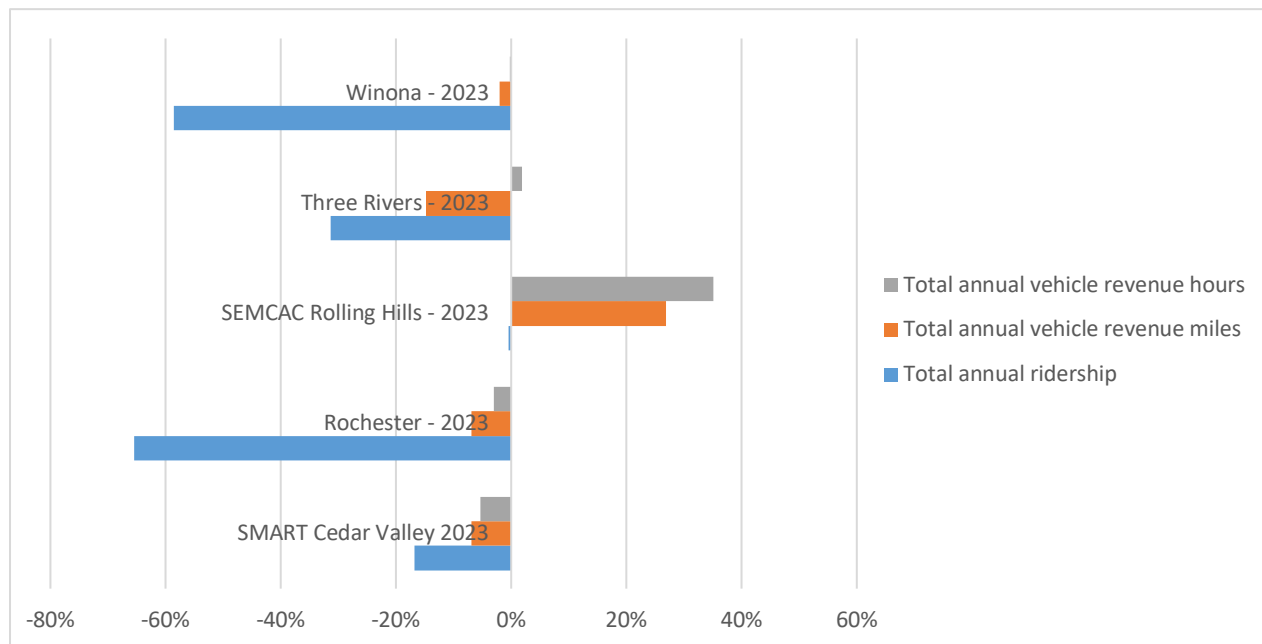


Figure 4 Percent Change in Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours, Vehicle Revenue Miles, and Ridership by Agency 2019 to 2023

The substantial ridership declines have had a significant negative impact on the region's mobility and efficiency benefits (quantified in monetary terms). These benefits decreased from \$64.1 million across the region in 2019 to \$28.9 million in 2023, a loss of \$35.2 million for local economies. Furthermore, spending by transit riders has also decreased, falling from \$6.1 million in 2019 to \$3.1 million in 2023, representing a \$3 million reduction.

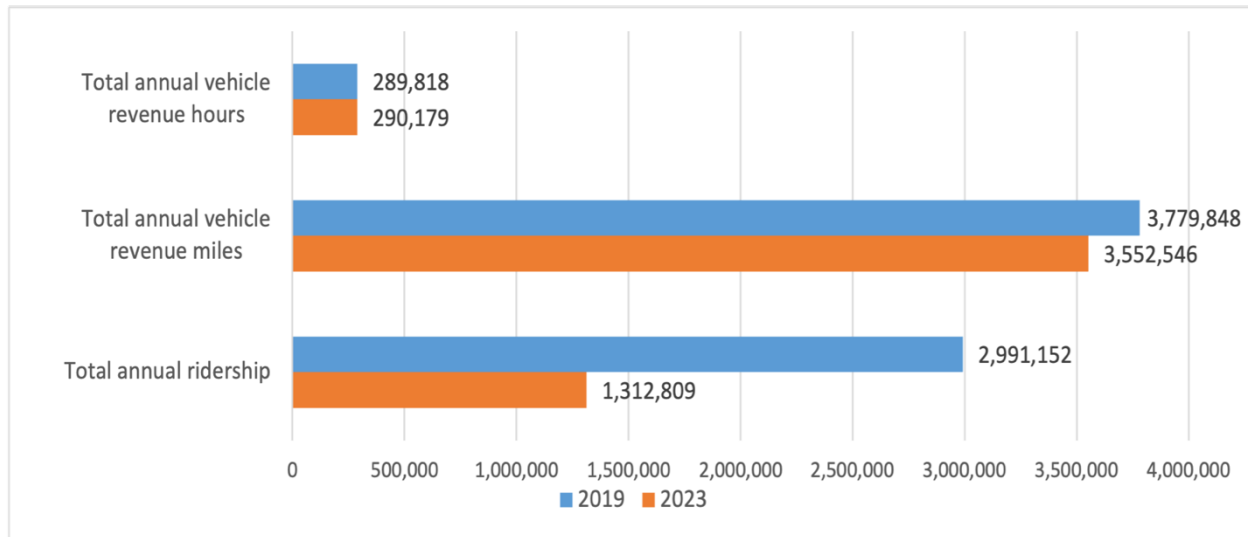


Figure 5 Percent Change in Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours, Vehicle Revenue Miles, and Ridership - Aggregated Regional 2019 to 2023

The growth scenarios that follow are designed to address these challenges, exploring opportunities to rebuild ridership and restore lost economic benefits.

Ridership Growth Scenarios

This section discusses the projected benefits of three ridership increase scenarios: 5%, 10%, and 25%.

The increase in ridership is associated with a direct, cumulative relationship in mobility and efficiency benefits, meaning that as ridership grows, the associated monetized benefits increase at an accelerating rate. For example, a **25% increase in ridership** results in a **27% increase in monetized benefits** as the effects compound over time. Figure 8 shows the projected mobility and efficiency benefits associated with three ridership increase scenarios (5%, 10%, and 25%) and compares these projections to 2023 and 2019 levels.

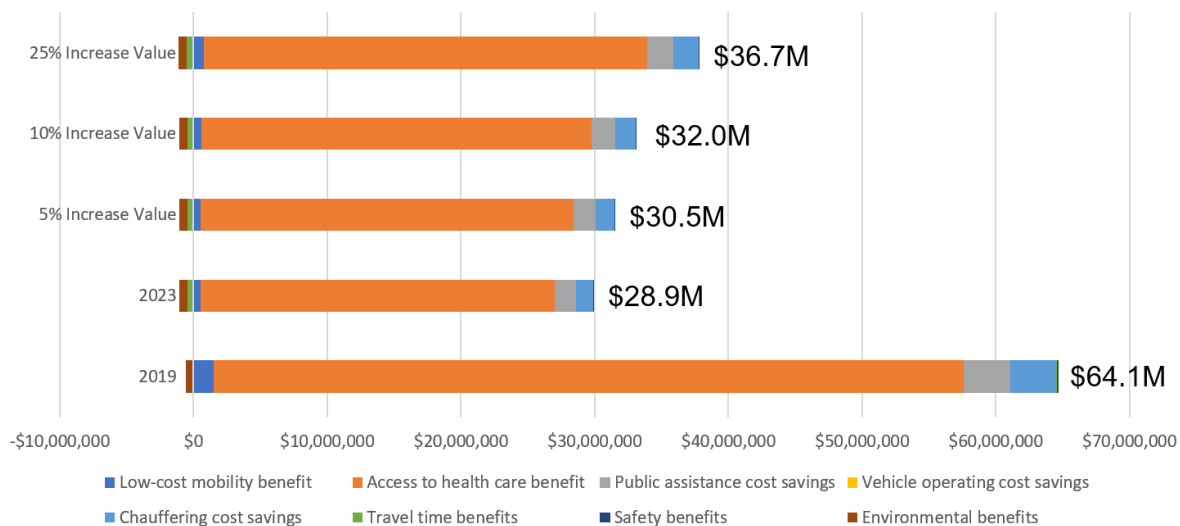
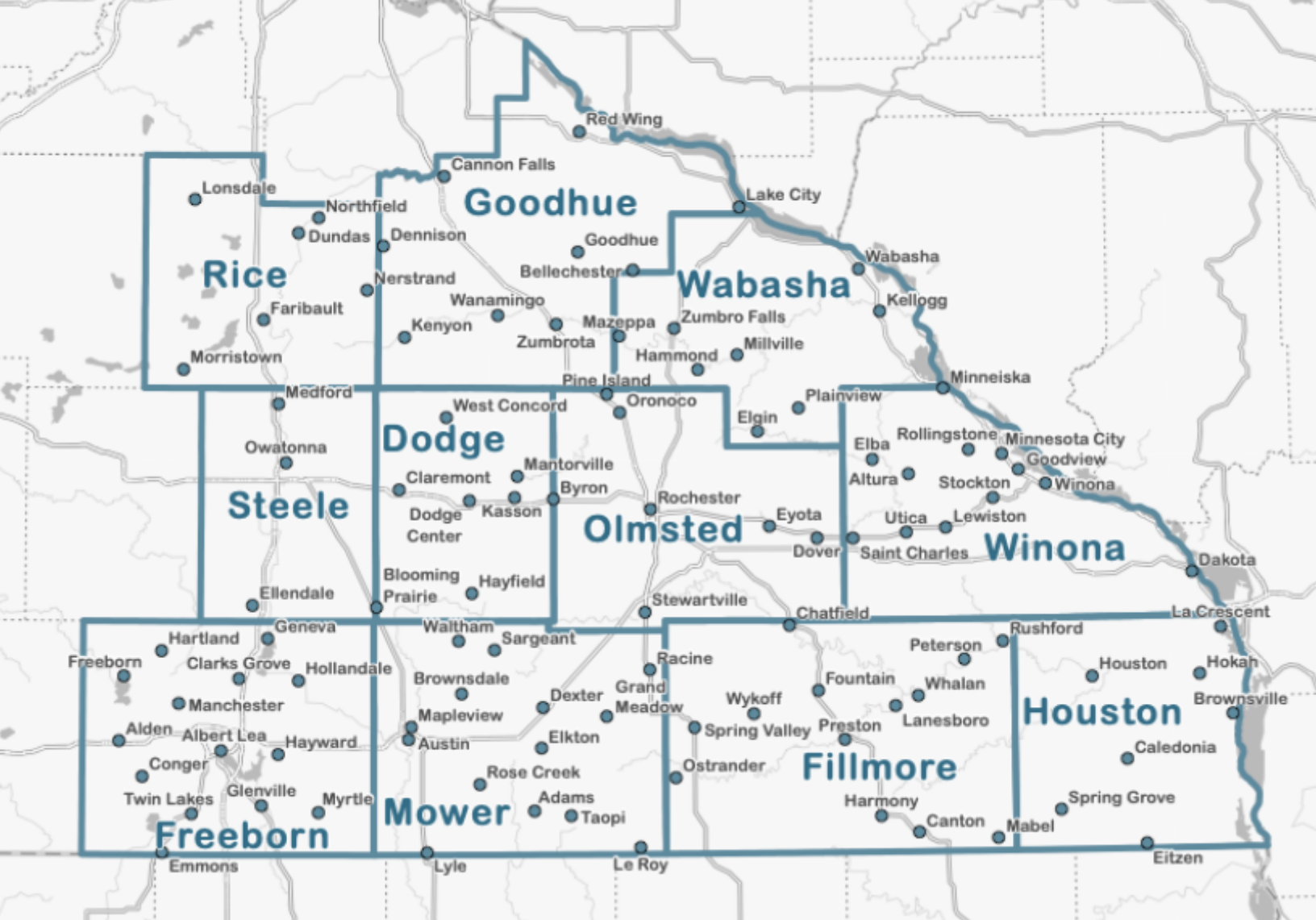


Figure 6 Comparison of Mobility and Efficiency Benefits 2019, 2023, and Three Ridership Increase Scenarios

Conclusion

The analysis reveals that transit services in Southeast Minnesota deliver substantial economic and social benefits, playing a vital role in the lives of residents by providing access to employment, healthcare, and essential services. While the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a decline in ridership and a corresponding loss in economic benefits, there is a clear opportunity to restore and enhance these benefits through strategic efforts to rebuild ridership. By focusing on service coordination, customer communication, and improved information access, the region can capitalize on transit's potential to support economic growth, community stability, and an improved quality of life for its residents.



Southeast Minnesota TMO Study

Appendix D: Organizational Structure



Appendix D: Southeast MN TMO Organizational Structure

Introduction

Transportation management organizations (TMOs) come in various organizational structures. Some are stand-alone non-profit organizations; others are programs operated by a non-profit host organization. The TMO feasibility analysis completed to date determined that a stand-alone non-profit organization would likely be too expensive to form and operate in the region. However, strong stakeholder support indicated the host organization model would be well-suited. A suitable host organization would be one that already works with the eleven counties in the TMO service area, has an interest in adding TMO services, and whose services have some alignment with the TMO services. The project team held several exploratory conversations with potential host organizations, including Rolling Hills Transit and the Southeast Service Cooperative (SSC).

Host Organization

While details will need to be worked out, SSC's leadership agreed to host the TMO, with the assumption that the TMO will be financially self-sufficient. SSC is a non-profit agency that serves public and private school districts, cities, counties, and other organizations in the 11-county southeast region of Minnesota. The administration of the TMO will be nested within SSC, and in turn, SSC will charge an administrative fee to cover all the services it will provide to the TMO. These are expected to include accounting, HR, and IT support, and possibly office space as needed.

Governance

The Southeast Minnesota TMO's governance will operate with a three-tiered governance model that includes an Executive Committee, an Advisory Board, and Regional Committees. This model ensures a strong foundation for decision-making, regional representation, and community-informed coordination while promoting collaboration across sectors and geographies. Each governing entity is summarized below, along with a suggested composition, charter, and meeting frequency.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee serves as the de facto Board of Directors for the TMO. This group provides high-level strategic oversight, fiduciary guidance, and operational support to ensure the TMO's long-term success and alignment with its mission. The Executive Committee is expected to evolve from the existing SE MN Together Action Team, leveraging established partnerships and regional insight. It will also hire and oversee the TMO Manager.

Composition

The Executive Committee should consist of 7 to 9 members to ensure a manageable size that still allows for diverse regional representation. To the extent possible, members should reflect a balance of sectors, including local government, public health, business and industry, transportation, and non-profit

organizations. Members should also represent a mix of urban and rural perspectives across Southeast Minnesota.

Charter and Purpose

The Executive Committee provides governance, strategic direction, and accountability for the overall performance of the TMO. It oversees budgeting, funding development, annual work planning, and performance evaluation. Members will support staff in aligning programs with regional transportation goals and serve as champions of the TMO across the region.

Responsibilities

- Approve and monitor the TMO’s annual work plan and budget
- Provide oversight of program implementation and financial sustainability
- Assist the TMO Manager with identifying and pursuing strategic funding opportunities
- Appoint or confirm members of advisory and regional committees
- Serve as ambassadors for the TMO within their respective networks and communities

Meeting Frequency

The Executive Committee should meet monthly, virtually or in person, with additional special meetings as needed.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board provides strategic insight and a regional perspective to support the mission and programming of the SE MN TMO. While some members of the Steering Committee are expected to be interested in joining, the board will be open to other interested organizations and individuals. The Advisory Board should strive to continue the Steering Committee’s commitment to inclusive representation, thought leadership, and implementation support.

Purpose and Charter

The Advisory Board functions as the TMO’s primary strategic advisory body. It advises on emerging opportunities, regional needs, and policy alignment while ensuring the TMO’s programs remain relevant and impactful. The board serves as a regional sounding board for major initiatives and provides a venue for cross-sector collaboration.

Responsibilities

- Advise on program priorities, implementation strategies, and regional partnerships
- Provide expertise and perspectives from across Southeast Minnesota’s sectors and communities
- Offer feedback on TMO planning, outreach, and public engagement activities
- Promote alignment with local and regional transportation and mobility efforts
- Act as champions for equitable and effective transportation solutions

Meeting Frequency

The Advisory Board should meet at least every other month during the first two years of TMO implementation. Once the TMO has been established, quarterly meetings may be sufficient. The board may

also be available for additional engagement opportunities through workshops or joint meetings with the Executive Committee as needed.

Working Groups

These are issue-focused and geographically attuned working groups that support collaboration and implementation of TMO services across Southeast Minnesota. They facilitate direct stakeholder coordination and provide on-the-ground insight into transportation challenges and opportunities.

Initial Focus: Transportation Coordination

The first working group to be formed will be a Transportation Coordinating Working Group. This group will bring together representatives from transit agencies, cities and towns, employers, human services, and regional planners to advance the TMO's initiative to improve transit through regional coordination. The goal is to increase service efficiency and improve accessibility across jurisdictions.

Representation and Size

Each working group should comprise approximately 15 members, depending on the topic and geographic scope. Representation could include, but is not limited to:

- Public and private transit providers
- City and county staff
- Employers and business associations

Responsibilities

- Provide localized insight into transportation needs and barriers
- Facilitate collaboration between agencies and public and private partners
- Support targeted outreach and data collection in the region
- Report progress and findings to the Executive Committee and Advisory Board

Meeting Frequency

Working groups should meet quarterly or more often if needed, with flexibility for more frequent meetings during high-priority coordination efforts or program launches.

Future Working Group Formation

The TMO may establish additional working groups over time to address specific needs such as rural mobility, employer commute services, communication coordination, mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities, or other potential TMO initiatives. All working groups will report to the Executive Committee and provide regular updates and recommendations to the Advisory Board.

TMO Staffing

The TMO Program Manager will manage the TMO's daily operations. This role will be essential to the day-to-day coordination of the TMO's programs and advancement of the TMO workplan. Responsibilities include but are not limited to liaising with board members and the Southeast Service Cooperative, procuring and

maintaining steady funding sources through a combination of membership dues, sponsorships, grants, and other funding sources. The sample job description below will be updated based on the TMO workplan.

Sample Job Description

The TMO Program Manager will lead the day-to-day operations of a newly formed Southeast Minnesota TMO. This dynamic role is central to coordinating and advancing the TMO's priority initiatives to Improving Transit Through Regional Coordination and facilitating Communication Around Travel Options in the Region. The Manager will execute and evolve the TMO workplan while fostering strong relationships with partners, employers, communities, and stakeholders.

This role includes overseeing programs and initiatives that promote transit and other transportation options, building awareness and behavior change among residents and workers, and ensuring financial and organizational sustainability through strategic outreach, partnerships, and funding development.

Key Responsibilities

Program Leadership and Implementation

Design and deliver the services of the TMO, including supporting a regional working group of transit agencies and other transportation operators, developing, and maintaining a regional transportation tool/website, coordinating unified transit advocacy for the region, creating travel options resources, and coordinating with employers to help deliver employer programs and facilitate commuter engagement.

Partner and Employer Engagement

Serve as the primary point of contact for employers, board members, and community partners. Facilitate outreach activities such as presentations, tabling events, and one-on-one support to promote commuting alternatives. Facilitate partnerships with educational institutions to expand staff capacity. This could include internships, class projects, competitions, or similar collaborations.

Organizational and Funding Development

Develop and execute strategies for long-term sustainability of the TMO through diversified funding (grants, sponsorships, memberships), including grant proposals, execution, and reporting. Support and collaborate with the Executive Committee and the Advisory Board and to align on priorities and impact. Hire vendors and support staff as needed to complete the work plan.

Data-Informed Strategy

Collect, analyze, and report data to assess the performance and impact of programs. Use data insights to drive decision-making and guide continuous improvement.

Regional Collaboration

Coordinate with transportation agencies, local governments, and regional employers to align strategies and support broader mobility and access goals.

Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

Strategic Leadership & Program Management

- Strong organizational and project management skills; ability to balance multiple priorities and initiatives.
- Experience designing and executing outreach and engagement programs.
- Ability to develop and lead workplans, manage timelines, and measure outcomes.
- Experience hiring and managing vendors and staff.

Relationship-Building & Communication

- Excellent verbal and written communication, with the ability to tailor messages to a variety of audiences.
- Ability to engage, support, and collaborate with a diverse set of stakeholders, including employers, government officials, community organizations, and commuters.
- Comfortable facilitating meetings, presentations, and public-facing events.

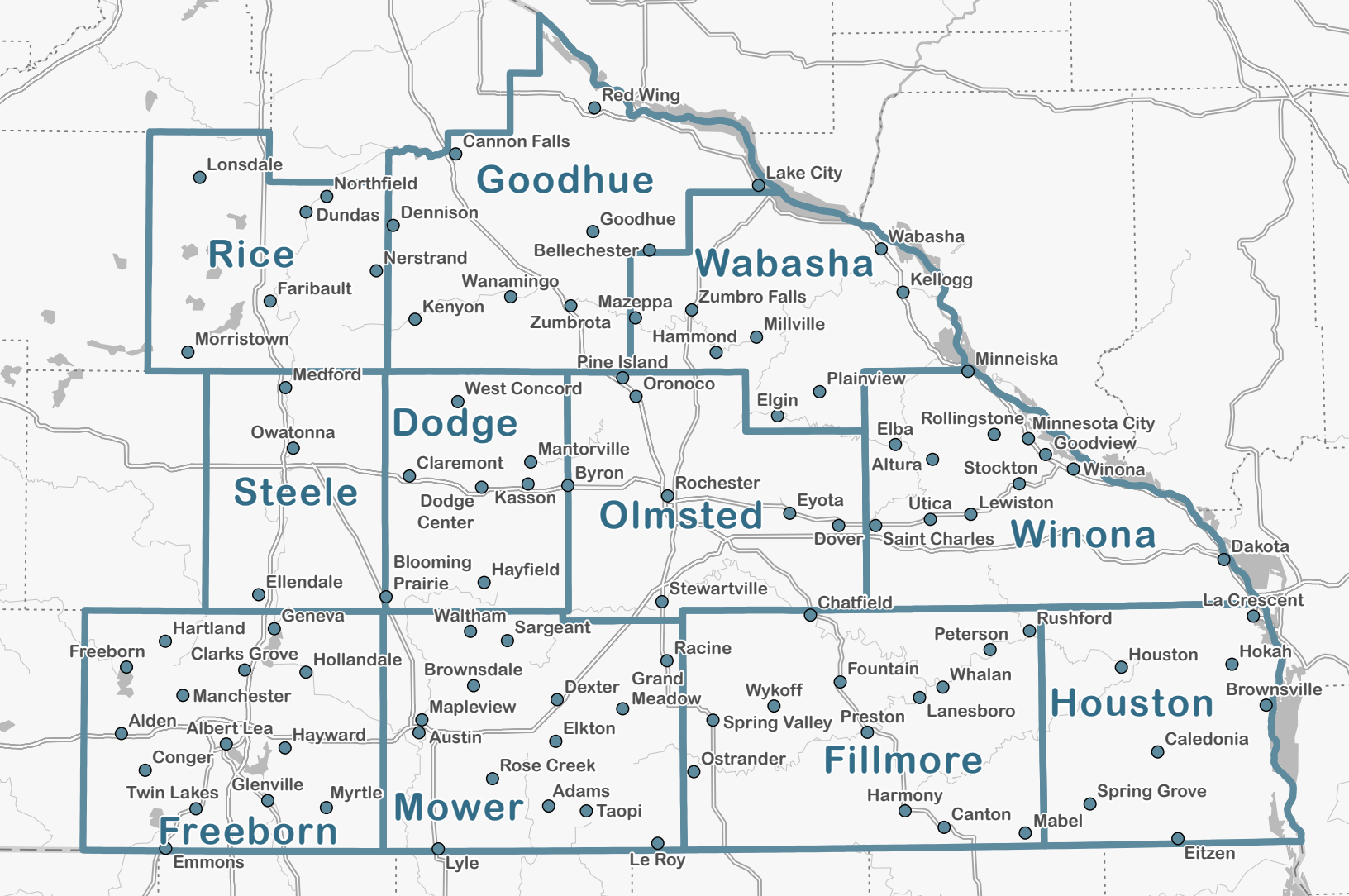
Analytical Thinking & Adaptability

- Proficiency in interpreting data and applying insights to improve programs.
- Problem-solving mindset with the ability to navigate challenges with flexibility and creativity.
- Commitment to equity, accessibility, and inclusivity in transportation services and community outreach.

Technical & Digital Literacy

- Comfortable using project management tools and communication platforms.
- Working knowledge of data sources, software, or systems relevant to transportation or community development is a plus.

This position plays a critical role in shaping Southeast Minnesota’s approach to sustainable and equitable mobility. From working with employers to supporting active transportation to maintaining organizational health, the TMO Manager will have a direct hand in improving transportation outcomes for communities across the region.



Southeast Minnesota TMO Study

Appendix E: Funding Sources



Appendix E: Southeast Minnesota TMO Potential Funding Sources

This memo reviews a broad spectrum of funding opportunities from federal, state, and local sources to support the development of a transportation management organization (TMO) and the implementation of its services. To investigate potential funding, we examined rural transportation programs operating in other parts of the counties, researched local foundation opportunities, and analyzed relevant federal and state grant programs. We also incorporated our expertise in alternative funding sources, such as member-funded options. While funding options such as competitive grants are available for specific transportation projects—such as vehicle purchases, capital construction, and infrastructure improvements—and other sources like CMAQ, state, and partnership funding exist, there are currently few funding sources specifically dedicated to covering the start-up or ongoing operations of a TMO. Establishing a TMO will require a diversified funding strategy that leverages multiple sources and builds a strong network of local stakeholders, including government entities, businesses, and community organizations. Table 1 at the end of this memo summarizes grant opportunities for related transportation and community development projects a TMO could spearhead or support.

TMO Funding Model

The TMO feasibility analysis found limited ability to raise funds for TMO operations through a membership structure in the short run. This is consistent with most TMOs in North America relying on grant funding for some of their operations. TMO funding sources can include:

- Legislative appropriation from the State of Minnesota to fund start-up and ongoing expenses of a TMO.
- A Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) grant to fund part of the work plan that focuses on the transportation needs of seniors and people with disabilities following the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 funding requirements.
- Member contributions
 - Membership dues paid by participating organizations.
- Fee for service
 - The TMO can provide specific services, such as preparing employee transportation plans, to its members for a fee.
- Grant funding
 - Grant funding from public and private sources may be available to fund specific transportation improvements, such as technology improvements, enhanced service, pilot projects, etc. Community foundations, such as the Hormel Foundation, have previously funded local transportation improvements.

Potential for RTCC Funding

Starting in 2026, the TMO may be able to apply for a Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) grant to help cover a portion of the TMO manager's salary. The grant, which uses Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 funds to enhance mobility for seniors and people with disabilities and State of Minnesota funding, could cover specific projects and programs that improve transit and transportation options for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Grants can be used for administrative

activities that implement mobility management and coordination. In alignment with the grant language, the activities of the TMO contribute to a more efficient transportation system and improve access for residents across the state.

This funding opportunity is administered through a competitive grant process. The application period for this funding source is expected to open in early 2026, with a likely deadline in April 2026. The TMO manager should monitor this opportunity and prepare an application that aligns with the program's requirements. In addition to a thorough review of grant requirements, the application should highlight the TMO's ability to enhance access by coordinating and making use of the existing transportation network through its key initiatives.

Legislative Funding Request

Additional funding sources may be available at the state level. Other TMOs in Minnesota have received funding from the state legislature to support ongoing programs and operations. For example, in 2025, House File 1087 (HF 1087) allocated \$300,000 annually for 2026 and 2027 to support programming and service expansion for the I-494 Corridor Commission. The TMO should submit a legislative request in coordination with State Senate and House representatives to pursue similar funding. This request should include:

- A clear breakdown of proposed funding uses, categorized by operational expenses and specific activities that support key initiatives.
- Expected outcomes, including estimated reductions in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) resulting from the funded activities.

If successful, one-time appropriations like these could provide a pathway to long-term funding, established through collaboration with state representatives as part of the typical legislative process.

Supplementing Funding Through Memberships

Some TMOs are partially or fully funded through membership dues. Unless an ordinance requires participation, membership dues are typically not a primary funding source because they require significant and ongoing administrative efforts. Stakeholder outreach for this study indicated that employers and other organizations expressed a higher willingness to contribute to a transportation service than to an organization that coordinates and promotes transportation options in the region. Some also indicated that in-kind contributions are more viable than financial contributions.

Dues from member organizations—such as employers, municipalities, and institutions—can be structured based on factors like organization size or employee count, while service fees for offerings like shuttle operations or carpool matching add an additional income stream.

Potential Use of CMAQ Funds

The [Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality \(CMAQ\)](#) program provides funding to help state and local governments comply with the Clean Air Act. To be eligible, areas must be designated as nonattainment or maintenance areas by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). CMAQ funds are typically administered through the federally required Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process, managed by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). In Southeast Minnesota, Olmsted County is a designated EPA maintenance area. The TMO should explore with the Rochester-Olmsted Council of Governments (ROCOG)—the MPO responsible for developing the TIP and allocating federal CMAQ funds—whether and

how CMAQ funds could be used in the future to support the TMO on initiatives affecting travel to and from, and within Olmsted County. A local match would be needed to access CMAQ funds. If possible, CMAQ funds could become a long-term funding source for the TMO.

Future Project-Specific Funding

Appendix E documents a broad range of funding sources that can contribute to implementing transportation improvements and TMO-led projects or services in the region. This resource is not exhaustive, and the TMO should update it as new funding sources and options become available.

Federal

Federal funding sources are limited, but several options exist for funding programs and capital construction projects. Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, new transportation funding opportunities have emerged, though many of these competitive grants are scheduled to end by 2026, and final calls for projects have been issued in some instances. The remaining grants focus on community resilience or on reconnecting communities previously cut off from economic opportunities by transportation infrastructure. Nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for the Reconnecting Communities Grant. However, it is important to note that this funding is intended for capital construction projects rather than for the start-up or operational costs of a TMO. Two grants are included in Table 1, and additional federal funding opportunities can be found in the dashboard linked below.

DOT Competitive Grants Dashboard: <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/dashboard>

State Funding Sources

In Minnesota, MnDOT allocates transportation funding through formula-based sources and competitive grants, each with its specific eligibility criteria and project scopes. Most State funds are directed toward initiatives such as purchasing transit vehicles, supporting Medicaid transit operations, and executing various capital construction projects. Funding sources are either competitively awarded or distributed by formula—with distinct allocations for urban and rural areas. Southeastern Minnesota, which falls under Region 10, is eligible for rural transportation funds administered through MnDOT’s Regional Development Organizations (RDOs) and Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs), as well as the Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) program that expands public input in project selection.

Other available funding sources include competitive Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Grants (which target safety improvements for students) and Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) funds, which reimburse approved transportation providers for services delivered to eligible Medicaid beneficiaries.

Regional and Local Funding Sources

Local and regional funding sources can be crucial in supporting a TMO. Counties can allocate budget funds, while collaborative efforts across counties may enhance regional transportation solutions. Additionally, exploring tax initiatives—such as regional transportation sales taxes and local property tax allocations—could provide further revenue streams.

- **County Contributions:** Counties such as Rice, Goodhue, Wabasha, Steele, Dodge, Olmsted, Winona, Freeborn, Mower, Fillmore, and Houston can allocate funds from their budgets to support the TMO. Collaborative funding from multiple counties can enhance regional transportation solutions.

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- **Regional Transportation Sales and Use Tax:** As of October 2023, a 0.75% regional transportation sales tax was implemented in the seven-county metropolitan area surrounding Minneapolis-St. Paul. While this tax currently applies to the metropolitan area, similar tax initiatives could be explored in Southeast Minnesota. For example, a request could be made to legislatively designate the 11-county area as a special transit taxing district to fund regional transportation projects. metro council.org
 - **Local Property Taxes:** In Minnesota, local property taxes are a significant source of transportation funding, accounting for approximately 52% of all roadway spending. Advocating for a portion of these funds to be allocated to the TMO could be beneficial. minnesotago.org

Community Foundations and Private Sector Funding

Local community foundations, private sector partnerships, and competitive grants offer promising funding avenues for projects that enhance community well-being and transportation. Local foundations may provide grants, while partnering with major local businesses can lead to sponsorships. Additionally, several competitive private sector grants—summarized in Table 1—support projects ranging from mobility enhancements for seniors to innovative placemaking and cycling infrastructure improvements.

- **Local Community Foundations:** Local foundations such as the Hormel Foundation and Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation offer grants for projects that enhance community well-being and economic vitality. While these foundations currently do not provide opportunities that explicitly target transportation or mobility initiatives, there might be some flexibility if a project can contribute to community vitality or economic development.
- **Private Sector Partnerships:** Engaging local businesses, especially major employers, can lead to sponsorships or partnerships. Businesses benefit from improved transportation options for their employees, making them potential stakeholders in the TMO.
- **Private Sector Grants:** Several private sector competitive grants are available that support a range of projects, from transportation improvements to public space revitalization. Table 1 below summarizes four key grant opportunities, including programs that fund mobility enhancements for seniors, innovative community placemaking, accelerated cycling infrastructure, and projects to build or refresh community gathering spaces.

Table 1 Grant Opportunities for Transportation and Community Development Projects

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Federal Funding Sources						
Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation Program (PROTECT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the PROTECT program provides funding for surface transportation resilience to natural hazards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change, sea level rise, flooding, extreme weather events, and other natural disasters through support of planning activities, resilience improvements, community resilience and evacuation routes, and at-risk coastal infrastructure. 	<p>Formula funding distributed to States via formula <u>and</u> competitive grants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> States MPOs Cities Counties FLMAs Tribes 	<p>\$23M annually for Minnesota through 2026 administered through MnDOT.</p> <p>Next funding cycle for competitive projects closes 2/24/2025.</p> <p>MnDOT includes 2026 funding on Protect webpage.</p>	<p>Minimum of \$100,000 and no maximum award size.</p>	<p>https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/protect_fact_sheet.cfm#:~:text=The%20BIL%20establishes%20the%20Promoting,events%2C%20and%20other%20natural%20disasters</p> <p>More information https://www.dot.state.mn.us/stateaid/protect.html</p>

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program (RCP)	The IIJA established the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) discretionary grant program, funded with \$1B annually from 2022 to 2026. It is the first Federal program dedicated to reconnecting communities that were previously cut off from economic opportunities by transportation infrastructure. Funding supports planning grants and capital construction grants, as well as technical assistance, to restore community connectivity through the removal, retrofit, mitigation, or replacement of eligible transportation infrastructure facilities.	Capital construction grants may be used for projects for which all necessary studies and other planning activities have been completed to remove, retrofit, mitigate, or replace an existing eligible facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States • Units of local government • Federally recognized Tribal governments • Metropolitan planning organizations • Nonprofit organizations 	Applications for the FY25 Notice of Funding Opportunity are anticipated to open in July 2025.	<p>The maximum Community Planning Grant award funded with RCP funds is \$2M. The minimum Capital Construction Grant award funded with RCP funds is \$5M.</p> <p>Funds must be obligated by September 30, 2026.</p>	https://www.transportation.gov/grants/rcn-program
State Funding Sources						

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Carbon Reduction Program (CRP)	United States Code (U.S.C.) 175 of IIJA authorized the CRP with an overarching goal to reduce transportation emissions through the development of State carbon reduction strategies and by funding projects designed to reduce transportation emissions.	Transportation alternatives projects as described in 23 U.S.C. 101(a)(29) including construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation.	Allocated to States via formula. Allocated to ATPs by MnDOT.	<u>\$20.9M</u> annually for Minnesota with an annual increase of approximately 1.9%.	80% of project costs - – must have a 20% local match or more. Funding obligation due the year following the application. Deadline for applications Jan. 10, 2025.	MnDOT https://www.dot.state.mn.us/carbon-reduction-program/
Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation Program (PROTECT)	Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the PROTECT program provides funding for surface transportation resilience to natural hazards.	Climate change, sea level rise, flooding, extreme weather events, and other natural disasters through support of planning activities, resilience improvements, community resilience and evacuation routes, and at-risk coastal infrastructure.	Allocated to States via formula. MnDOT distributes via ATPs.	<u>\$280,000 remaining for FY28</u> <u>For projects within the 11-county Southeast Minnesota ATP area</u>	Minimum of \$100,000 and no maximum award size. Deadline for applications Jan. 10, 2025.	https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/protect_fact_sheet.cfm#:~:text=The%20BIL%20establishes%20the%20Promoting,events%2C%20and%20other%20natural%20disasters More information https://www.dot.state.mn.us/stateaid/protect.html

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Transportation Alternatives (TA)	<p>TA set-aside from the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) (23 U.S.C. 133(h)) under the IIJA (Pub. L. 117-58).</p> <p>The IIJA codified SRTS at 23 U.S.C. 208 and expanded eligibility from kindergarten through 8th grade to kindergarten through 12th grade.</p> <p>SRTS projects are eligible under the TA set-aside under the STBG program.</p>	<p>Generally smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities; construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas; community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management; environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity; recreational trails; safe routes to school projects; and vulnerable road user safety assessments.</p> <p>Access enhancements to public transportation, bus shelters, crosswalks, curb cuts and ramps, shared use paths/sidewalks, bicycle parking, racks, and storage.</p>	<p>In Minnesota, each ATP is allocated a determined amount to be competitive for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any unit of local government below a State government agency, except for an MPO. Regional transportation authorities Transit agencies Natural resource or public land agencies Natural resource or public land agencies School districts, local education agency, or school. Tribal governments 	<p>TA programmed to MnDOT¹</p> <p>2024 - \$28.8 M</p> <p>2025 – \$29.3 M</p> <p>2026 - \$29.9M</p>	<p>No min request, max request for total funds available by ATP.</p> <p>Deadline for applications Jan. 10, 2025.</p> <p>A 20% match is required.</p>	<p>MnDOT</p> <p>https://www.dot.state.mn.us/ta/</p> <p>Metropolitan Council (for 7 county Twin Cities metropolitan area)</p> <p>https://metro council.org/Transportation/Planning-2/Transportation-Funding/Regional-Solicitation.aspx?source=child</p>

¹ [Administration - State Aid - MNDOT](#)

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	RTP provides funds to States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses. The IIJA reauthorized the RTP through Federal fiscal years 2022 through 2026.	Hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, equestrian use, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, off-road motorcycling, all-terrain vehicle riding, four-wheel driving, or using other off-road motorized vehicles.	In Minnesota, each ATP is allocated a determined amount to be competitive.	<u>\$2.4M</u> in 2024 for Minnesota.	<p>Minimum \$2,500, maximum \$200,000 with 25% match.</p> <p>2025 applications due February 28, 2025.</p> <p>Funds must be expended by June 30, 2026.</p>	<p>MnDNR</p> <p>https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_federal.html</p>

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Active Transportation (AT) Infrastructure Grant	The Minnesota AT Program was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 2017 and is defined in Minnesota Statute 174.38. MnDOT Office of State Aid for Local Transportation (SALT) and the Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT) share responsibilities for the administration and oversight of the AT program. The AT Program provides grants and to improve walking, biking, and rolling conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements: pedestrian curb ramps, intersections or midblock crossings, median refuges, raised crossings, raised intersections, speed humps and curb extensions • Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities: exclusive multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trails, sidewalks, pedestrian bridges, pathways that are separated from a roadway <p>On-road facilities: bicycle lanes, bicycle boulevards, and cycle tracks.</p>	<p>Townships, non-state aid cities, and registered nonprofit applicants must have a lead agency sponsor. Eligible applicants include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater MN Non-profits or tax-exempt organizations (registered as a 501(c)(3)) (including entities within Chisago County) • Greater MN Townships (including townships within Chisago County) • Greater MN State Aid and non-State Aid Cities (including cities within Chisago County) • Greater MN Counties (including Chisago County) <p>Greater MN Federally Recognized Indian Tribes</p>	\$13.2M in 2023, \$17.7M in 2024, and \$17.7M in 2025.	<p>Minimum \$50,000, maximum \$1 M with no match.</p> <p>Funds must be expended within the two years following the application.</p>	<p>MnDOT</p> <p>https://www.dot.state.mn.us/active-transportation-program/infrastructure-grants.html</p>

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Grants	<p>The Minnesota Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Program was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 2012 and is defined in Minnesota Statute 174.40. MnDOT Office of State Aid for Local Transportation (SALT) and the Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT) share responsibilities for the administration and oversight of the SRTS program. SALT administers solicitations for the SRTS infrastructure funds to local agencies (city, county, township), federally recognized Indian tribes, and schools and school districts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements: pedestrian curb ramps, intersections or midblock crossings, median refuges, raised crossings, raised intersections, speed humps and curb extensions. • Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities: exclusive multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trails, sidewalks, pedestrian bridges, pathways that are separated from a roadway. • On-road facilities: bicycle lanes, bicycle boulevards, and cycle tracks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools, both public and private • School districts • Townships • Non-State Aid Cities • State Aid Cities • Counties <p>Federally Recognized Indian Tribes</p>	<p><u>\$10.9M</u> in 2023, <u>\$15.3M</u> in 2024, and <u>\$10.5M</u> in 2025.</p>	<p>Minimum \$50,000, maximum \$1 M with no match.</p> <p>Funds must be expended within the two years following the application.</p>	<p>MnDOT https://www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes/infrastructure-grants.html</p>
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Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic control and safety devices: signs, bicycle and pedestrian activated signals, flexible bollards, pavement markings, pedestrian-scaled lighting <p>Note: Electronic devices must be permanent – not mobile.</p> <p>Basic curb, roadway, or turf replacement due to removals required to install the improvements listed above</p>				

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Grants	<p>The Minnesota Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Program was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 2012 and is defined in Minnesota Statute 174.40. MnDOT Office of State Aid for Local Transportation (SALT) and the Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT) share responsibilities for the administration and oversight of the SRTS program. SALT administers solicitations for the SRTS infrastructure funds to local agencies (city, county, township), federally recognized Indian tribes, and schools and school districts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements: pedestrian curb ramps, intersections or midblock crossings, median refuges, raised crossings, raised intersections, speed humps and curb extensions. • Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities: exclusive multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trails, sidewalks, pedestrian bridges, pathways that are separated from a roadway. • On-road facilities: bicycle lanes, bicycle boulevards, and cycle tracks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools, both public and private • School districts • Townships • Non-State Aid Cities • State Aid Cities • Counties • Federally Recognized Indian Tribes 	<p><u>\$10.9M</u> in 2023, <u>\$15.3M</u> in 2024, and <u>\$10.5M</u> in 2025.</p>	<p>Minimum \$50,000, maximum \$1 M with no match.</p> <p>Funds must be expended within the two years following the application.</p>	<p>MnDOT https://www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes/infrastructure-grants.html</p>
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Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic control and safety devices: signs, bicycle and pedestrian activated signals, flexible bollards, pavement markings, pedestrian-scaled lighting Note: Electronic devices must be permanent – not mobile. Basic curb, roadway, or turf replacement due to removals required to install the improvements listed above 				

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program – Vehicle Capital Program	The Vehicle Capital Program supports the purchase of transit bus(s), minivan(s) and full-size van(s). This opportunity includes Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant funding financial assistance administered by MnDOT. It's an opportunity to apply for Formula Grants for Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (FTA Section 5310) funding as part of the Public Transit Participation Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Vehicle Capital Program supports the purchase of transit bus(s), minivan(s) and full-size van(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private nonprofit organizations State or local governmental organizations approved by the state to coordinate services for seniors and individuals with disabilities For-profit organizations only if there are no nonprofit organizations readily available in the area to provide the services for seniors and individuals with disabilities 		Annual application cycle. LOI was due Jan. 30, 2025.	https://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/5310-vehicle-grant.html

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Vehicle Replacement Grant (funded through Rural Transportation Assistance Program – 5311)	The Rural Transit Assistance Program (49 U.S.C. 5311(b)(3)) provides a source of funding to assist in the design and implementation of training and technical assistance projects and other support services tailored to meet the needs of transit operators in nonurbanized areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States may use RTAP funds to support nonurbanized transit activities in four categories: training, technical assistance, research, and related support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural subrecipients with a current public transit operating agreement with MnDOT under Minn. Stat. 174.24 are eligible to apply for the 2026 Rural Replacement Vehicle Grant Program. 	MnDOT receives \$65,000 through formula allocation annually to distribute to rural transit providers. Funds are available the year appropriated plus two years (total of three years).	MnDOT releases RFP 5/1/2025	https://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/vehicle-replacement-grant-rural.html

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Intercity Bus Grant (funded through Rural Transportation Assistance Program – 5311)	MNDOT Rural Transportation Assistance & The Rural Transit Assistance Program (49 U.S.C. 5311(b)(3)) provides funding to State Departments of Transportation through the Federal Transit Administration's 49 U.S.C Section 5311 Formula Grants for Other than Urbanized Areas (CFDA 20). The FTA requires states to spend at least 15% of 5311 apportionment to develop and support intercity bus (ICB) transportation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to Federal Transit Administration (FTA Circular 9040.1G) eligible intercity bus services that operate between two or more urban areas over long distances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligible applicants include new or existing private, for-profit operators of bus transportation, private, nonprofit organizations, a public transportation provider, or another public entity (FTAC. 9040.1G). New applicants must submit a Letter of Interest before applying 	MnDOT receives \$65,000 through formula allocation annually to distribute to rural transit providers. Funds are available the year appropriated plus two years (total of three years).	<p>For existing intercity bus services, MnDOT will fund 50% of the net operating deficit (the federal match portion) for 2025 intercity bus grants using 5311(f) funds and up to 50% of the net operating deficit with state funds.</p> <p>MnDOT releases RFP 5/1/2025</p>	https://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/intercity-bus-grant.html

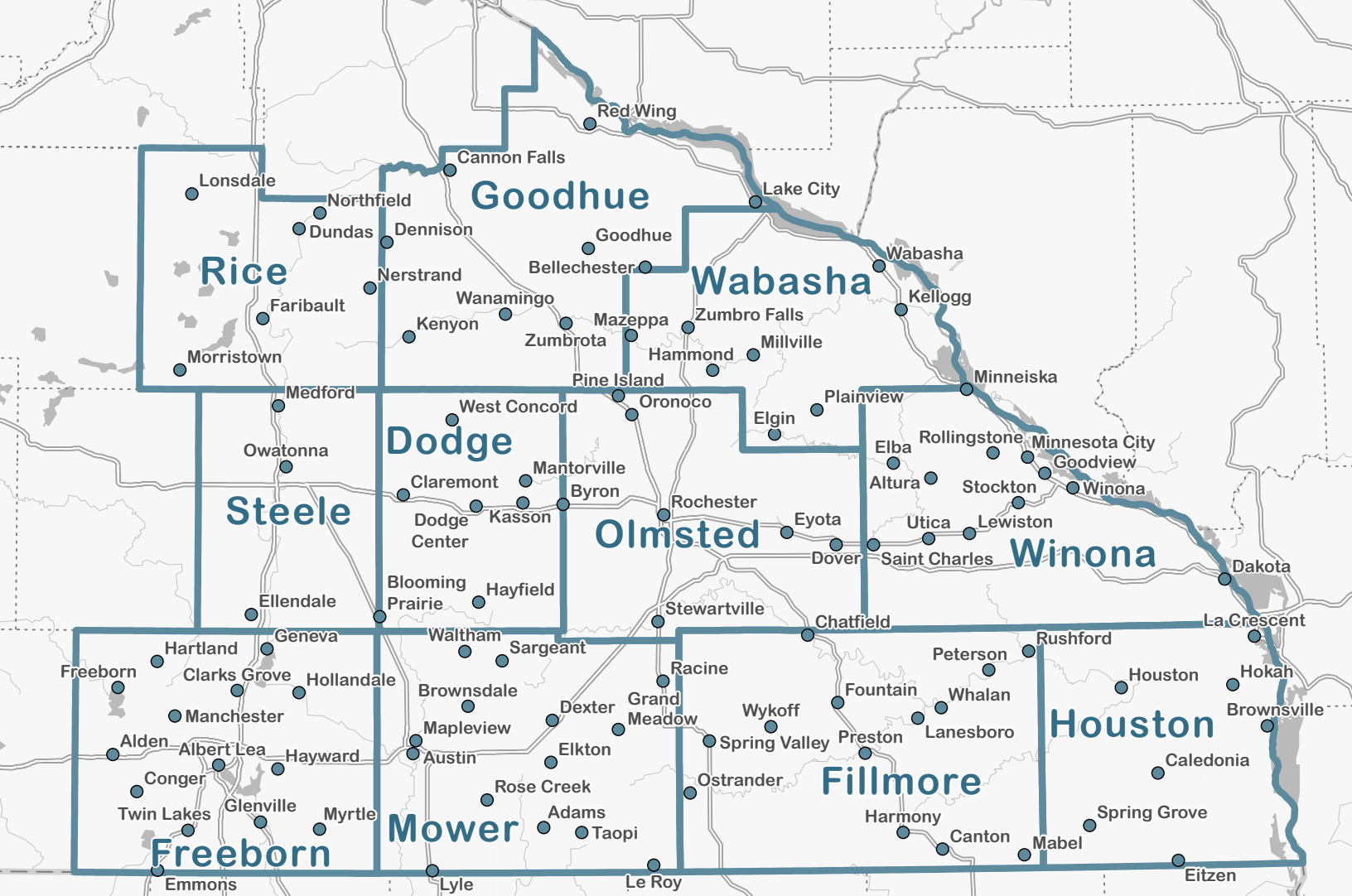
Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) in Minnesota	Minnesota administers Medicaid through the Minnesota Health Care Program (MHCP), which offers NEMT through a combination of fee-for-service and managed care models. Transportation providers contract directly with MHCP or managed care organizations (MCOs) to provide services. This ensures that Medicaid recipients, especially in rural areas, have access to necessary medical transportation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) in Minnesota funds rides that help eligible Medicaid beneficiaries get to and from non-urgent, medically necessary appointments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Minnesota, Medicaid NEMT funds are available to transportation providers that are approved and contracted by the state to deliver non-emergency medical transportation services to eligible Medicaid beneficiaries. 	<u>unknown</u>	Varies (the state reimburses approved transportation providers on a fee-for-service basis)	https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/medicaid/benefits/
Other Grant Opportunities						
AARP Grants	AARP offers two grant opportunities (Flagship Grants and Demonstration Grants) through their Community Challenge program that could fund transportation infrastructure improvements that focus upon a benefit to those 50 and older.	Transportation and mobility projects that increase walking, biking, and access to transit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government entities 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4) and 501(c)(6) nonprofits <p>Other types of organizations considered on a case-by-case basis</p>	From 2021 to 2023, <u>\$3.2M</u> to <u>\$3.6M</u> has been distributed annually.	Minimum \$500, maximum \$50,000 with no match.	https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/info-2023/2023-challenge.html

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Project for Public Spaces' Community Placemaking Grants: Civic Spaces	Project for Public Spaces' Community Placemaking Grants enable US-based nonprofits and government agencies to address inequality of access by working directly with local stakeholders to transform public spaces or co-create new ones by providing direct funding, technical assistance, and capacity building.	The placemaking projects funded through this grant program will take a "lighter, quicker, cheaper" approach, which emphasizes high-impact, low-cost improvements that contribute to long-term community goals.	Regional and local governments or nonprofits.	Varies by cycle	Two grantees are selected for the Community Placemaking Grants: Civic Spaces cycle with each grantee receiving \$60,000	https://www.pps.org/community-placemaking-grants https://www.pps.org/community-placemaking-grants#civicspaces
The Bloomberg Initiative for Cycling Infrastructure (BICI)	The BICI Program is focused on accelerating the implementation of cycling infrastructure.	Streetscape improvement projects, facilities that put cyclists first, complete networks, cycle parking, cycle path lighting, cycle-hire equipment, and equipment used for metrics collection.	Regional and local governments.	Up to \$10 million annually	Awards 10 cities up to \$1 million	https://globaldesignin.gcities.org/bici-launch/

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program	Since the program's start, T-Mobile has given more than \$12 million dollars to kickstart 275 community development projects across 46 states, with projects like upgrading tech at local libraries, building new hiking trails and revitalizing historic buildings.	T-Mobile Hometown Grants program fund projects to build, rebuild, or refresh community spaces that help foster local connections in your town. For example, this might include the town square pavilion, a historic building, an outdoor park, a ball field, or a library— every town has places where friends and neighbors connect.	T-Mobile is focusing on revitalizing community spaces in towns with 50,000 people or less.	unknown	unknown	https://mainstreet.org/about/partner-collaborations/t-mobile-hometown-grants
Hormel Foundation	The Hormel Foundation primarily supports organizations and projects that directly benefit the Austin, Minnesota (and Mower County) community.	<p>Projects must fall within areas such as providing food, shelter, clothing; advancing quality healthcare, education and research; and generally enhancing the quality of life.</p> <p>Note: The Rainbow Route project—an initiative by United Way of Mower County that provides safe and affordable preschool transportation—was funded through a Hormel Foundation grant in partnership with SMART.</p>	Recipients be tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations. Must be located in and/or directly affect the Austin, Minnesota area.	in 2025 the Foundation approved a total of about \$26 million in grants .	The next application period begins June 1, 2025	https://www.thehormelfoundation.com/pages/grant-requirements/

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation – Economic Development Grants	<p>Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF), a donor-supported foundation, invests for economic growth in the 20 counties of south central and southeastern Minnesota. SMIF's key interests include entrepreneurship, early childhood development and community vitality. SMIF offers various grant programs including: Early Care and Education, Early Literacy, Economic Development, Inclusive and Equitable Communities, Community Art/Public Space projects, Small Town Grants, PROMISE Act Grants. While none of these categories explicitly target transportation or mobility initiatives, there might be some flexibility if a project can be framed in terms of economic growth.</p>	The goal of SMIF's Economic Development Grant is to support initiatives which enable communities to create more prosperous local economies.	IRS-designated 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations, units/agencies of government or public institutions in SMIF's 20-county region are eligible to apply.	\$63,000 in Economic Development Grants was awarded in 2021	Requests of up to \$20,000 will be considered. Past awards have ranged from \$4,200 to \$20,000	https://smifoundation.org/blog/2021/12/smif-awards-63500-in-economic-development-grants/

Grant	Program Description	Eligible Projects	Applicant Requirement	Funding	Award	Link
Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation –Inclusive and Equitable Communities Grant	<p>Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF), a donor-supported foundation, invests for economic growth in the 20 counties of south central and southeastern Minnesota. SMIF’s key interests include entrepreneurship, early childhood development and community vitality. SMIF offers various grant programs including: Early Care and Education, Early Literacy, Economic Development, Inclusive and Equitable Communities, Community Art/Public Space projects, Small Town Grants, PROMISE Act Grants. While none of these categories explicitly target transportation or mobility initiatives, there might be some flexibility if a project can contribute to community vitality.</p>	<p>This grant supports organizations which are providing direct resources and services to start and expand business opportunities within diverse and/or traditionally underserved populations in southern Minnesota. SMIF seeks applications which foster communities to build inclusive, welcoming entrepreneurial environments to advance equitable entrepreneurship opportunities in the lives of all people.</p>	<p>IRS-designated 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations, units/agencies of government or public institutions in SMIF’s 20-county region are eligible to apply.</p>	unknown	Grant will open in 2026	https://smifoundation.org/grants/for-grant-seekers/inclusive-and-equitable-communities/



Southeast Minnesota TMO Study

Appendix F: Engagement Summary



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1. Overview, Approach, and Engagement Objectives

Community engagement is essential for the development of a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) because it ensures the organization reflects local needs, priorities, and challenges. Meaningful input from community members and stakeholders builds trust, strengthens partnerships, and supports long-term success. The Engagement Plan for the Southeast Minnesota TMO Study employed a two-phase approach to build understanding, secure buy-in, and set the foundation for implementation.

Phase 1 focused on evaluating feasibility by engaging key groups to identify regional challenges, assess interest in a TMO, and cultivate champions committed to its success.

Phase 2 engagement finalized the TMO feasibility study and shifted toward coalition building, leveraging Phase 1 findings to refine strategies and establish a network of support. The primary goal of Phase 2 was to set the stage for obtaining stakeholder buy-in and creating actionable pathways to bring the TMO vision to life in Southeast Minnesota.

This document summarizes engagement activities and results as part of the TMO Feasibility Study. It also outlines anticipated next steps to keep the momentum going beyond the study completion.

Engagement Approach

The engagement team utilized concepts from the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation to guide partnership development. The team applied the following approaches for this study:

Evaluate: Created a baseline understanding of stakeholders by understanding each stakeholder's influence on the project and the potential impact of the project on each stakeholder.

Inform: Created access to information to ensure that all stakeholders have a thorough understanding of the current community conditions and project scope.

Consult: Listened to our stakeholders as the foundation of this work and actively pursued feedback from key stakeholders.

Collaborate: Identified key partners through the stakeholder mapping for long-term collaboration. These key partnerships were developed to create momentum toward realization of key objectives.

Engagement Objectives

The initial phase of project work was dedicated to thoroughly understanding the opportunities and challenges across the region. The second phase activities focused on determining commitment from key groups and securing champions invested in making a TMO successful over time. It also identified the most pressing needs and initial priorities a future TMO should address.

Engagement Commitment and Objectives

During *Phase 1*, this project was committed to collaborating with key groups to inform the key decision of whether a TMO is feasible to advance the initiatives of the Southeast Minnesota Together Action Team. The objectives of engagement in *Phase 1* were:

- **Evaluate** and understand who the stakeholders are for this study.

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- **Inform** all stakeholder groups of the study and increase our understanding of transportation challenges and concerns throughout the region. Confirm the challenges and opportunities identified in previous planning and engagement processes.
 - Conduct targeted outreach to high influence/high impact groups to:
 - **Inform** these groups on the TMO feasibility study and potential benefits of a regional TMO, and why their participation is critical to its success.
 - **Consult** with these groups to understand their perspective on transportation challenges and concerns throughout the region. Identify their level of interest in a TMO, and if they are interested in a partnership.
 - **Collaborate** with potential partners to understand what TMO services are most needed in the region, and to evaluate political and financial support for a future TMO.

During *Phase 2*, the project was committed to collaborating with key groups to create actionable pathways for a TMO in Southeast Minnesota. The objectives of engagement in *Phase 2* were:

- **Evaluate** stakeholder groups that would be influential in the development and sustainability of a future TMO.
- **Inform** all stakeholder groups of the work completed, potential next steps, and opportunities for engagement on future TMO activities.
- Conduct targeted outreach to high influence/high impact groups to:
 - **Consult** with these groups to gain buy in on TMO activities and highlight opportunities for partnership, as well as identify initial priorities and tasks for a future TMO.
 - **Collaborate** with potential partners to build the foundation of the TMO including services, political support, and financial support.

Engagement Activities

The consultant team worked closely with the client project team to conduct the following engagement activities soliciting input to the study process:

- **Phase 1:**
 - Evaluate:
 - Stakeholder mapping
 - Inform:
 - Project website
 - Communications
 - Consult:
 - Online engagement
 - Survey
 - Employer interviews
 - Discussion groups
 - Collaborate:
 - Stakeholder Steering Committee

- **Phase 2:**

- Evaluate:
 - Continue to use stakeholder mapping to engage key groups
- Inform:
 - Project website
 - Communications (i.e., email campaign, networking with partners)
- Consult:
 - Online engagement
 - Survey
 - Stakeholder group follow-up conversations
- Collaborate:
 - Stakeholder Steering Committee

2. Phase 1 Activities and Key Findings

2.1. Evaluate: Stakeholder Mapping

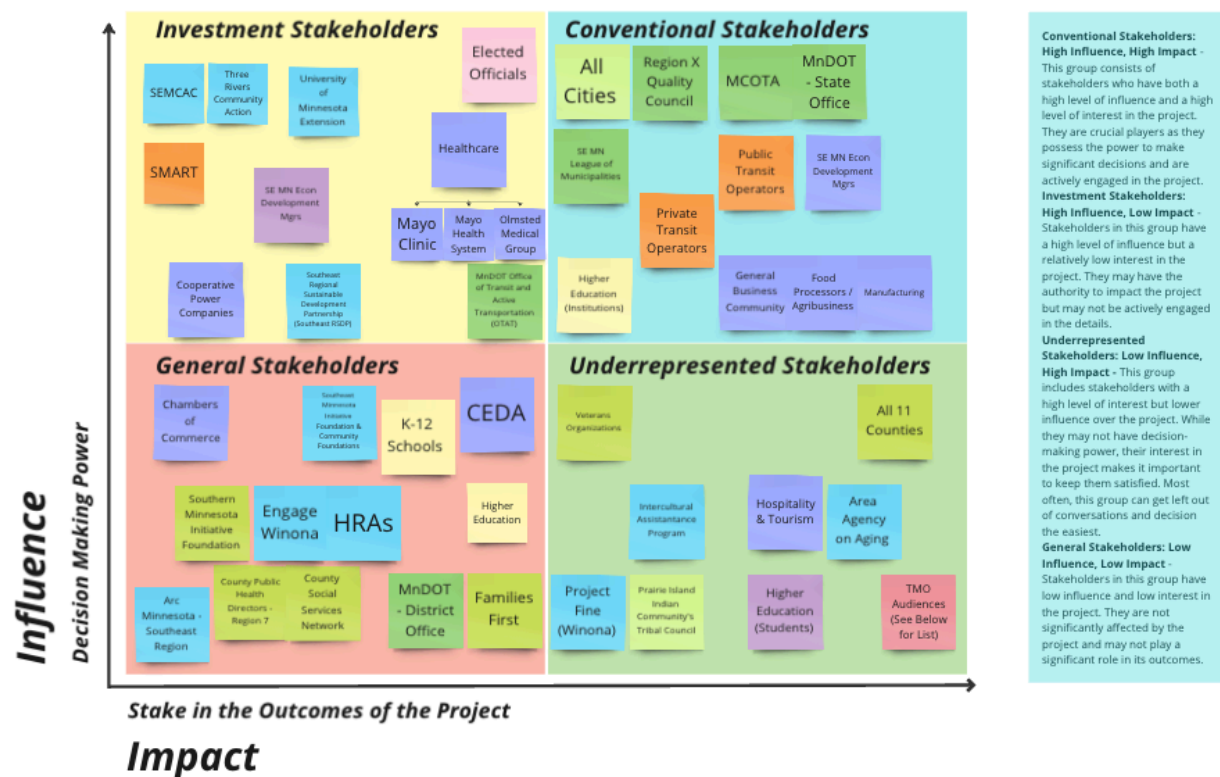
On June 5, 2024, the project team and consultant team came together to identify all groups and potential partners to engage in the TMO feasibility study during both phases, understand these groups on a deeper level, and align them with the engagement framework. Attendees included representatives from the SE MN Together Team, the CEDA project manager, University of Minnesota staff, and the consultant team. During the workshop, the team conducted a stakeholder mapping process, which aids in identifying and categorizing individuals or groups who have an interest or stake in a TMO in the region.

Stakeholders were evaluated on the following scales:

Stakeholder Influence: Also known as power; the ability to influence outcomes of this project. *Keep in mind: Sources of power may be very different: some people may be in official positions, but others may simply hold power without position.*

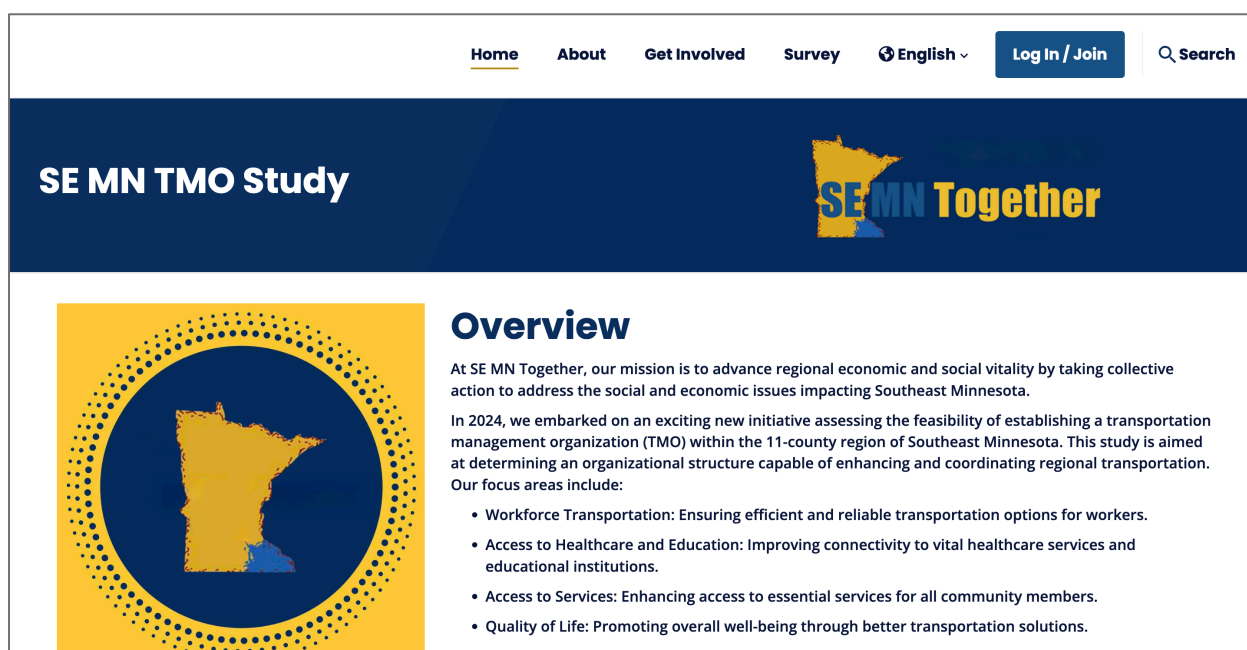
Stakeholder Impact: Also known as stake; the potential value that a stakeholder can get out of this project. *Keep in mind: Stakeholder interests may not only be different, they may also be in conflict with each other.*

The following shows the outcome of the exercise. The evaluation exercise served as the foundation for designing and targeting participation in all engagement activities of Phase 1.



2.2. Inform: Project Website

The SE MN TMO project website, www.SEMNtransportation.com, served as the central location for informing the public about the initiative's objectives, progress, and opportunities for involvement. Designed to directly tie into digital engagement methods, the website provides a project overview and updates to ensure transparency in the project. The primary purpose is to allow regional stakeholders and community members to quickly understand the initiative and its importance to the region. The website was updated throughout the project to provide updates and milestones.



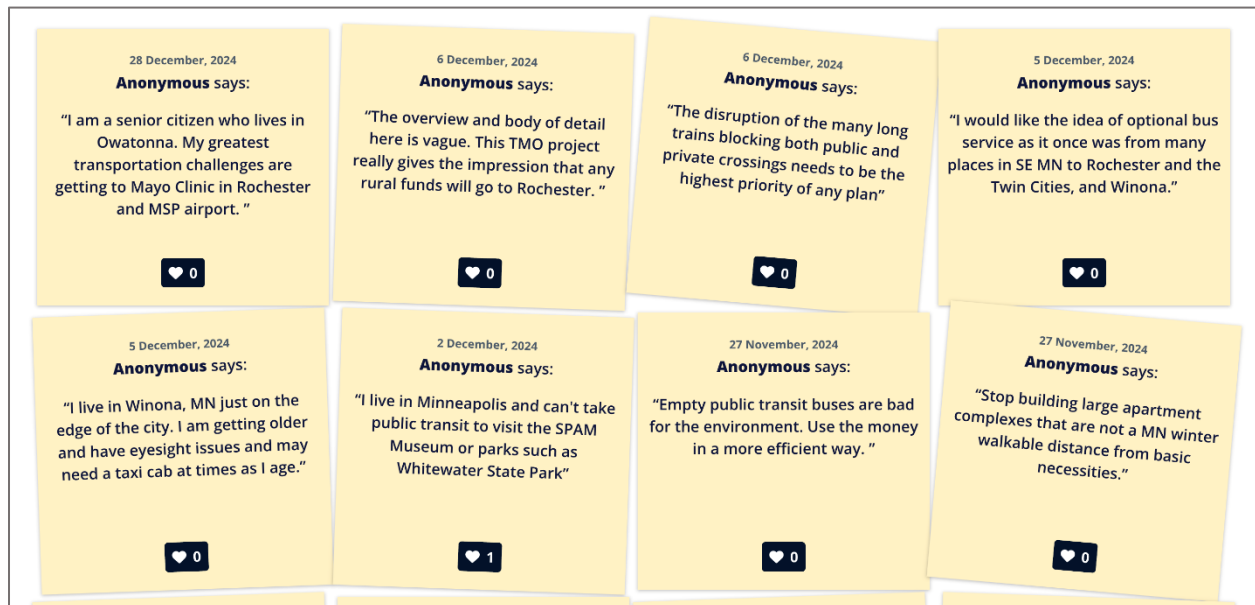
2.3. Inform: Communications

A key component of keeping stakeholders informed was through project communications to ensure they were well-informed about the initiative's progress and significance.

- **Press Releases:** The project team worked with the Project Manager to craft and distribute press releases about the project at several milestones.
- **Legislative Update:** A legislative update was provided to the Minnesota Legislature, emphasizing the project's alignment with statewide transportation priorities and moving the conversation towards collaboration with state offices.
- **General Project Updates:** General project updates were provided to stakeholders as needed to inform about engagement opportunities, answer questions about the project, and build engagement.

2.4. Consult: Online Engagement

The project utilized Social Pinpoint, an online engagement platform, to facilitate virtual engagement through an interactive idea wall. With this activity, community members were invited to share their transportation challenges. Participants were asked: “Do you live and/or work in Southeast Minnesota? Please tell us about your number one transportation challenge!” Responses were displayed publicly on the website to a shared dialogue.



Key Challenges:

The following outlines the key challenges highlighted by the public, followed by their direct quotes.

Lack of Public Transit Options and Accessibility:

- "I live in Minneapolis and can't take public transit to visit the SPAM Museum or parks such as Whitewater State Park."
- "We need a regular route to get to and from the Twin Cities!!! Train, bus, light rail, whatever."
- "Public transportation frequency is limited—would need to rework the way we live our life in order to take a cheaper, more sustainable option."
- "Visitors traveling by Amtrak do not have a safe and reliable way to get around Winona once they arrive at our station."
- "SMART is my only transportation. The hours aren't long enough for me to get where I need/want to go."
- "The number one transportation challenge facing people VRS works with is bussing that serves rural areas and later into the evening."

Infrastructure Challenges

- "Terrible condition of the Winona Transit buses, terrible roads, and unprofessional driving standards."
- "Stoplights take too long with no traffic flow in the area. The lights are set on a timer and not based on current traffic flow."

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- "Poor roadway conditions."
 - "Stop light metering! Far too many lights are timed and not based on traffic. Stopping many for no one is bad for MPG and bad for the Earth."

Dependence on Personal Vehicles

- "I live and work in SE MN; the biggest challenge is getting around without using a car and not being run over by cars in the process."
- "I live in SE MN. I drive almost everywhere because I live near the highway, and there are few walking paths that safely cross or go under it."
- "For someone who doesn't have a car, getting to and from places (such as grocery stores) is such a challenge."
- "I'm 6 miles from the nearest small town. On a gravel road. Stuck with fossil fuels. A bus wouldn't help reduce fossil fuel use."

Demand for Rail and Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure

- "We have such a need for expanded rapid travel and expanded train and bus schedules. It benefits all! Winona could be a hub for rural public transit."
- "Missing sustainable rapid transit (train/commuter rail) connecting to Twin Cities and through the region. Want more EV infrastructure, too!"
- "My husband and I own an EV and would like to buy another, but the infrastructure is not easy enough for our teenage drivers to use."

Accessibility Concerns

- "People who live in our region need to be able to drive or ask helpers to take them to essential activities."
- "I am getting older and worry that I will have to move to another community due to the limited transportation services available in my town."
- "Transportation drivers being rude, messing up wheelchairs, and being significantly late all the time."

Ideas for Service Improvements

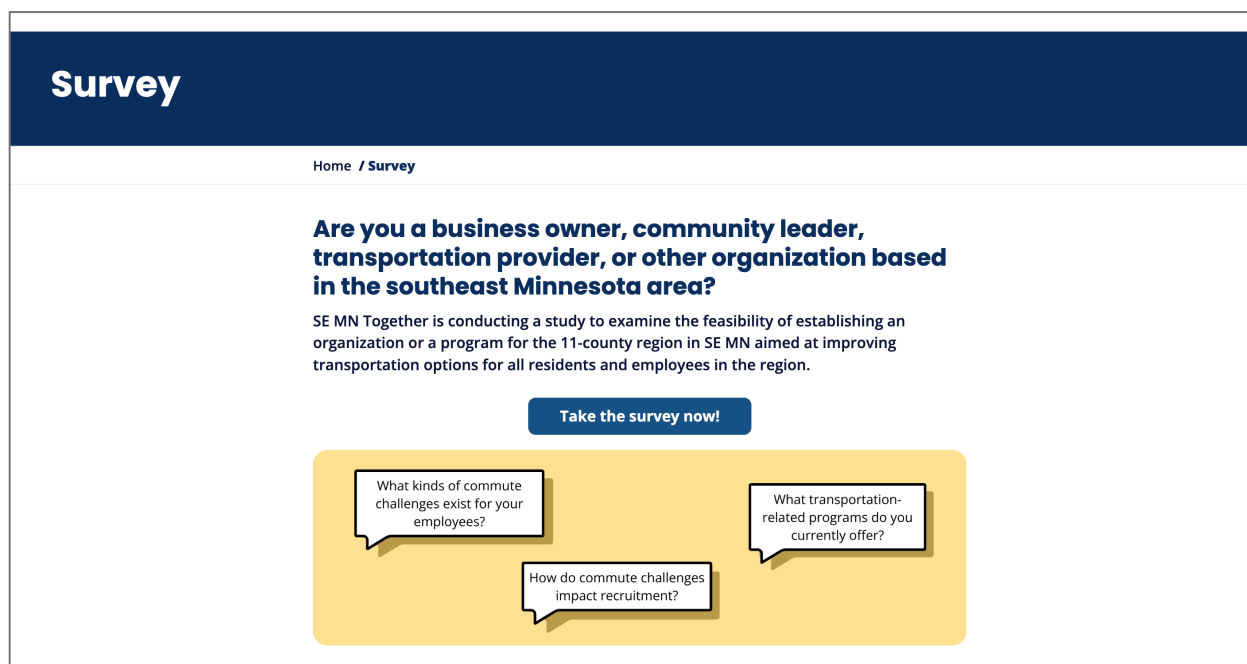
- "Would really be nice if you set up a website or app that allowed passengers to log in to see all their rides scheduled."
- "Would really be nice if there was a pass that worked all 7 days/all buses."

Other Concerns

- "Empty public transit buses are bad for the environment. Use the money in a more efficient way."
- "Stop building large apartment complexes that are not a MN winter walkable distance from basic necessities."

2.5. Consult: Survey

The study included an online survey targeting business owners, community leaders, transportation providers, and other organizations in the 11-county Southeast Minnesota region. The survey sought feedback on the feasibility of establishing a program or organization to enhance transportation options for residents and employees across the area.



Participation

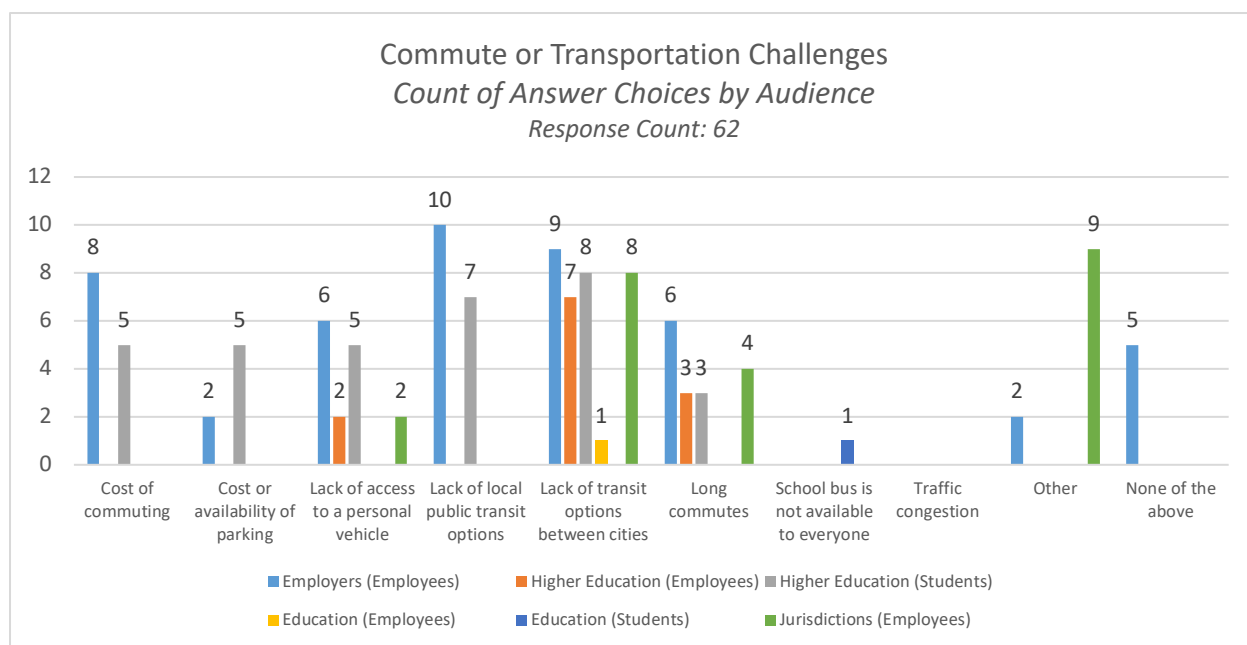
A total of 65 participants responded to the survey. Nine responses came from representatives of higher education organizations, and one response was submitted by a K-12 education representative. Employers contributed 21 survey responses. Additionally, 13 responses were received from human services organizations, and 21 from local and regional jurisdictions.

Results

The following outlines the key findings highlighted by survey respondents.

Commute or Transportation Challenges

Respondents were asked to identify what kinds of commute or transportation challenges do their employees or students experience. This question was asked only to the following audiences: Employers, Higher Education, Education (K-12), and Jurisdictions. Those representing Human Services organizations were not asked this question.

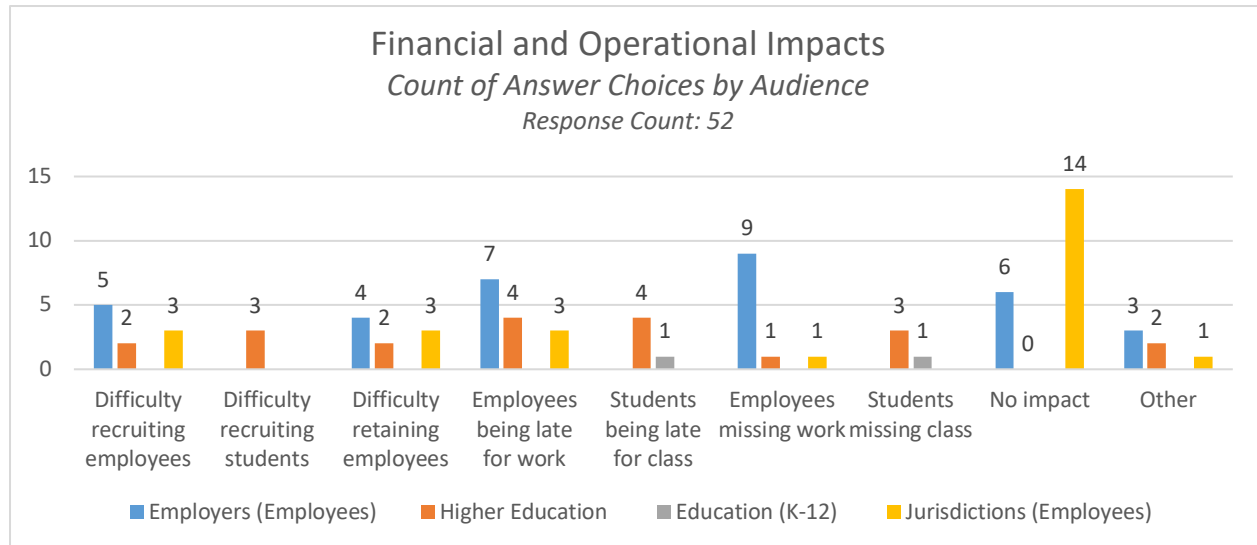


Key Themes

- The most common transportation challenge is the lack of transportation options between cities. A lack of local transit options was also a common challenge for employees and higher education students.
- Costs associated with commuting, including the cost of parking and commuting itself, were a challenge specifically for students and employees at higher education institutions.
- Lack of vehicle access and long commutes were challenges specifically for employers and jurisdictions and higher education students.

Financial and Operational Impacts

Respondents were asked if they were impacted financially or operationally by transportation challenges. This question was only asked to the following audiences: Employers, Higher Education, Education (K-12), and Jurisdictions. Those representing Human Services organizations were not presented this question.

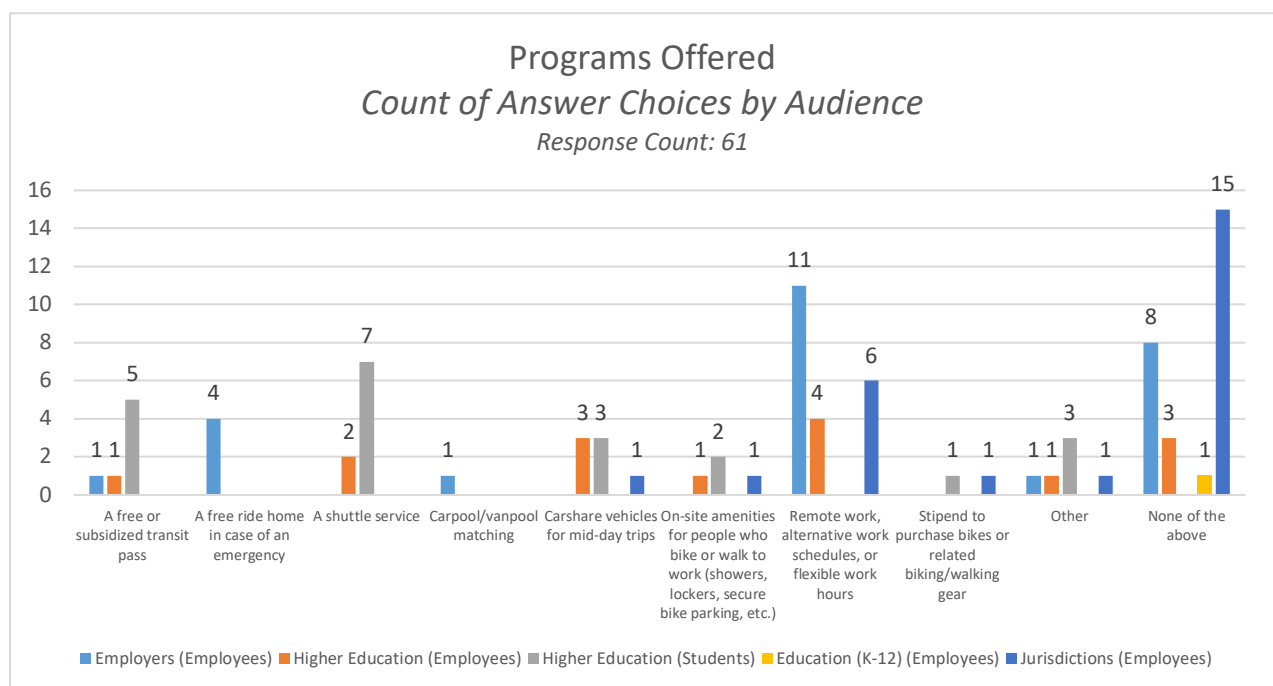


Key Themes

- Employers reported significant operational and financial impacts due to employee transportation challenges: employees missing work was reported by 43% of employers, while nearly a quarter reported having difficulties recruiting employees.

Transportation/Commute Programs Offered

Respondents were asked to indicate what programs they offer to employees, students, and the community. This question was only asked to the following audiences: Employers, Higher Education, Education (K-12), and Jurisdictions. Those representing Human Services organizations were not presented this question. Survey respondents working in education were asked to list the programs that are offered to both students and employees.



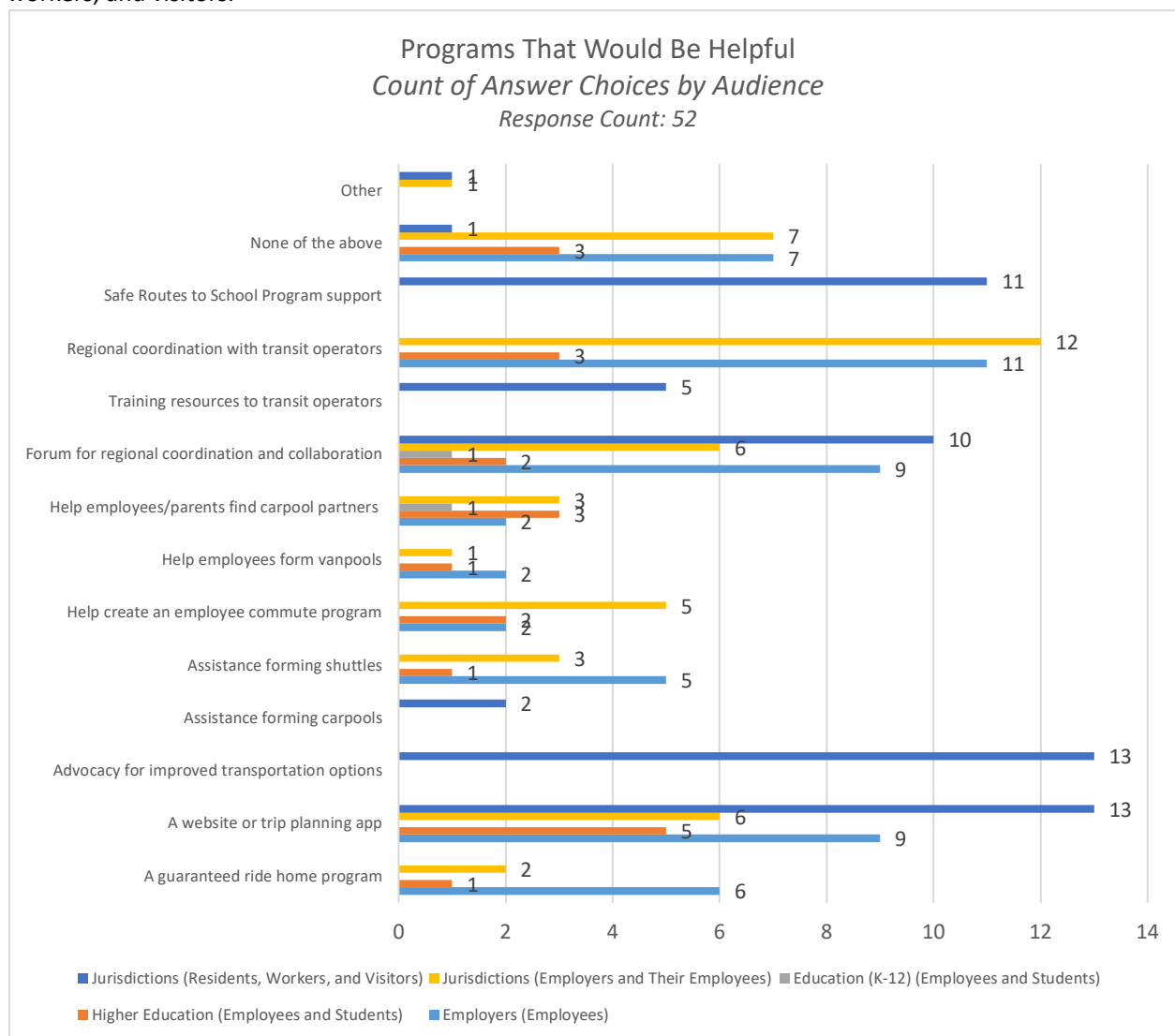
Key Themes

- Most of the organizations surveyed do not provide any commute programs.
- Remote work, alternative schedules, and flexible hours are the most commonly offered type of employee benefit.
- Higher Education institutions are most likely to offer programs for students and in some cases employees. Programs include shuttle services, free or subsidized transit passes, and carshare vehicles.
- Other programs that are offered included EV chargers and vehicle rentals.

Programs That Would Be Helpful to Address Challenges

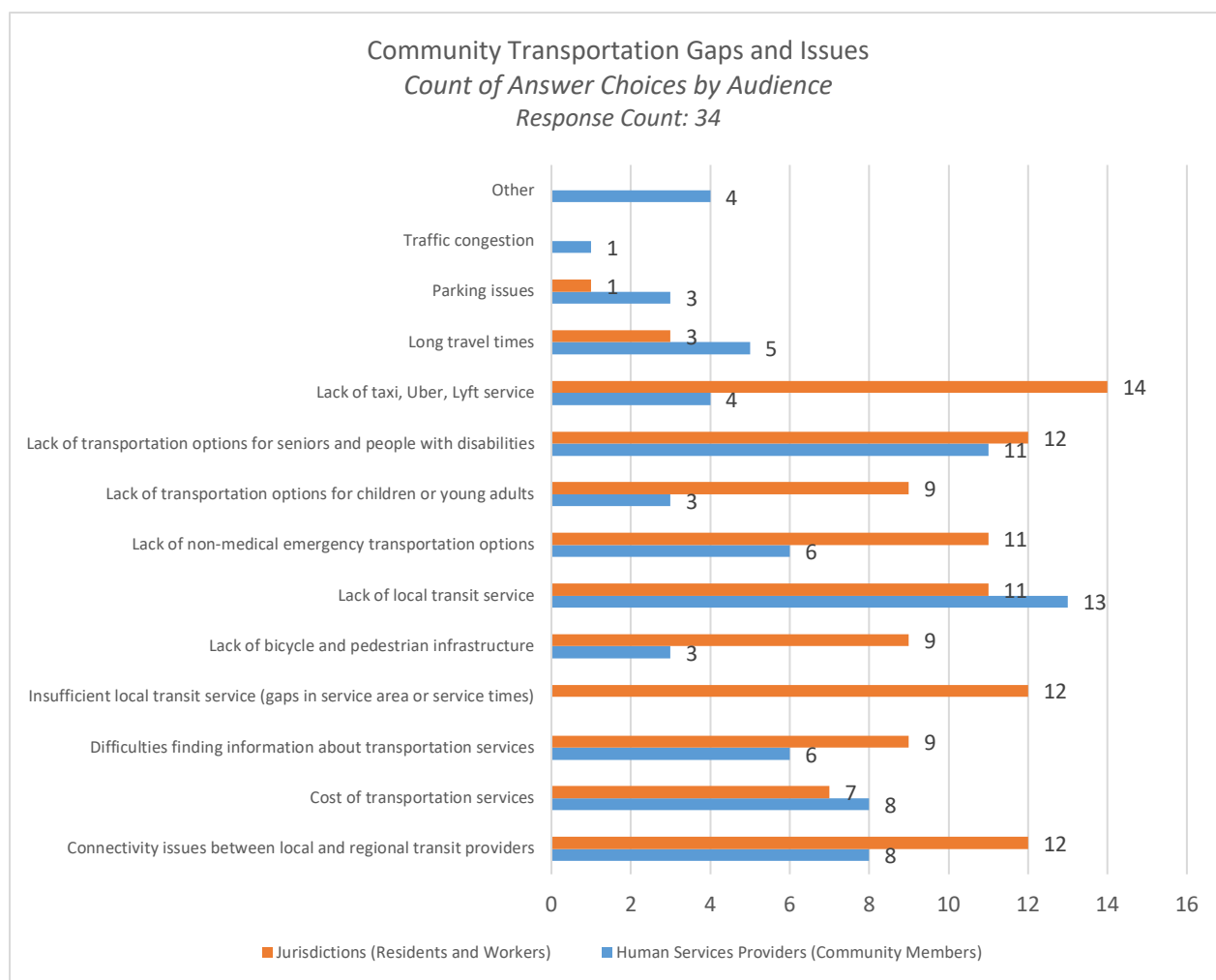
Respondents were asked to identify which types of programs and services would be helpful to them and their employees if a program or organization offered support for commuting and general transportation. This question was asked to the following audiences: Employers, Higher Education, Education (K-12), and Jurisdictions. Those representing Human Services organizations were not asked this question.

Educational organization representatives were asked to indicate useful programs for both employees and students, and jurisdiction representatives were asked to consider programs for employees, and residents, workers, and visitors.



Transportation “Gaps” and Issues

Respondents representing Human Services organizations and Jurisdictions were asked to identify transportation “gaps” or issues their clients experience.



Four respondents selected “Other,” all of whom provided more information. These comments included mention of a lack of services for rural residents outside of city areas, inadequate transportation options for medical appointments and work commutes, poor communication between dispatchers, drivers, and riders, and a need for assistance getting from the front door to transit options.

Transportation Options and Programs that are No Longer Offered

Organizations with employees or students were asked to list any transportation options or programs that were previously offered but are no longer available, and to describe what would be needed to reinstate them. A similar question was asked of human services organizations and jurisdictions.

Several transportation options and programs were discontinued due to low usage, funding issues, or changes in organizational needs. Discontinued programs include Zipcar and reduced-cost carshare programs, remote work options for employees, and bus routes between Plainview and Mayo Clinic, as well as a shuttle service between Winona and Rochester. Additionally, a commuter bus service for Mayo employees and a shuttle service were discontinued after the pandemic and changes in Mayo Clinic's employee work arrangements.

Other discontinued services include funding for transportation providers like REM and ARSYS, evening and Sunday public transit services, and commuter buses from small towns to Rochester. Some organizations expressed interest in reinstating services like the self-driving goMARTI shuttle, funding for transportation providers, or regional commuter routes. Based on the respondents' comments, these would require addressing funding and ridership concerns.

One Thing a Regional Organization Could do to Better Serve the Community

Representatives from jurisdictions and human services organizations were asked to identify one thing (outside of additional funding) that a regional organization or program could offer to help them serve their community better. This was not asked of employers or educational organizations. Key inputs included:

- Expanding transportation options across the region, particularly for rural areas and smaller towns, with a focus on affordable and frequent trips to Rochester for medical and other essential appointments.
- The need for more consistent and reliable bus routes, including mid-day options and routes between communities like Plainview and Rochester.
- Research into successful rural transit models from other regions and states.
- Increased advocacy at the state level, especially when working with MNDOT.
- Centralized access for people with disabilities.
- Improving access to ride-sharing services like Lyft and reinstating subsidized transportation programs.
- A regional conversation to coordinate efforts.
- Increased transportation options for underserved populations.

Additional Thoughts to Solve Community's/Organization's Transportation Challenges

The survey asked respondents if they had any additional thoughts to solve transportation challenges in their community or organization. This question was optional and was presented to all audiences. 39 respondents provided input. The following are key themes highlighted:

Regional and Commuter Transportation:

- Desire for commuter bus lines linking cities like Winona, Rochester, and La Crosse, with last mile services
- Interest in regional commuter rail or high-speed trains and more options for rural workers, particularly for Mayo Clinic employees.

Accessibility and Affordability:

- Need for affordable, reliable, and accessible transportation for low-income individuals, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- Requests for better rural transit connections to Rochester for appointments and employment.

Innovation and Environmental Sustainability:

- Interest in low-fossil fuel transit solutions, such as electric vehicles or self-driving shuttles, particularly in rural or underserved areas.

Collaboration and Coordination:

- Call for better coordination of transportation options, such as a centralized platform listing services and funding options.
- Suggestions to explore partnerships between businesses and local transportation providers to improve access.

Transportation for Specific Populations:

- Focus on improving services for older adults, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations, including more accessible vehicles and extended service hours.

Community Buy-In and Education:

- Emphasis on increasing community buy-in and educating residents about available transportation options, especially for those unfamiliar with public transit or technology.

Business and Workforce Needs:

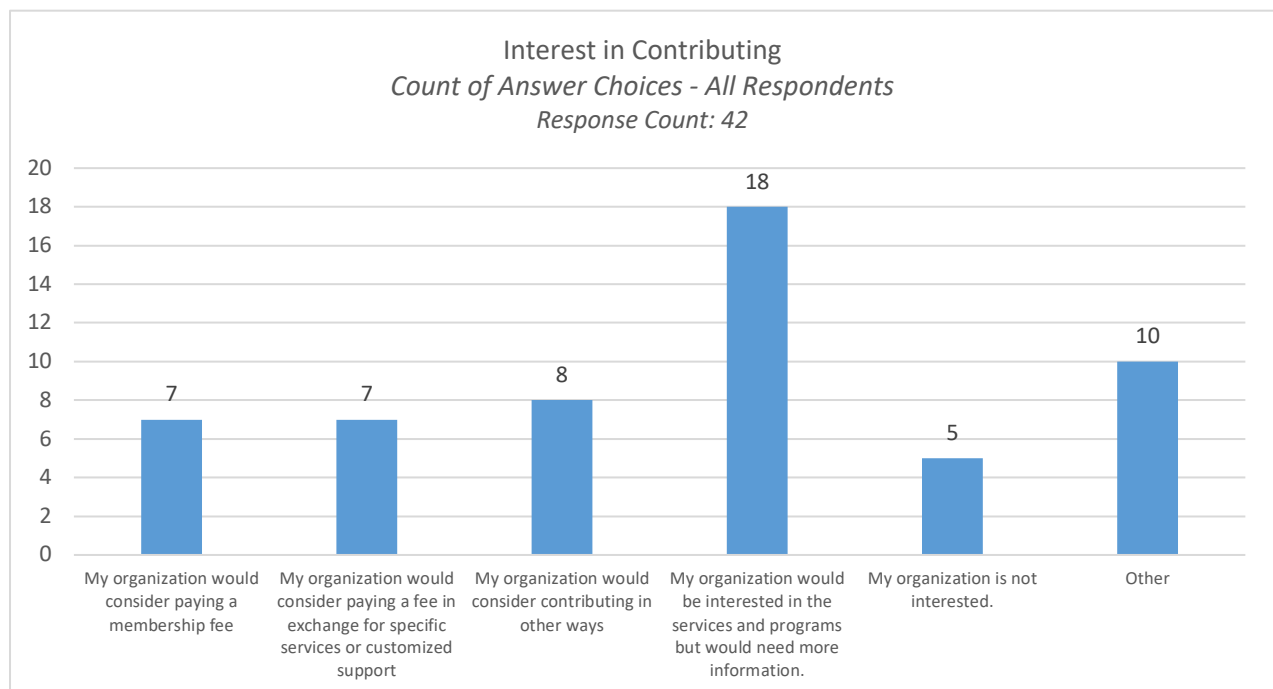
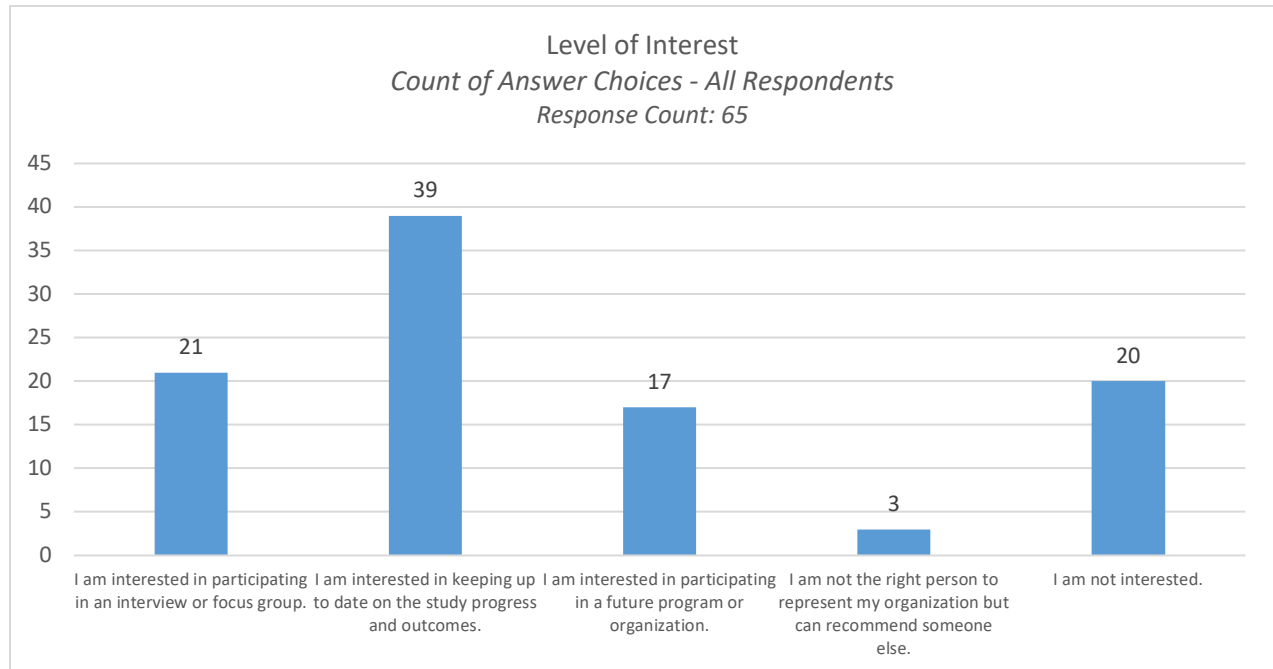
- Respondents highlighted the importance of improving transportation for the workforce, particularly for those with summer jobs or temporary work assignments.
- Some suggested including travel compensation as part of employee benefits to encourage the use of public transportation.

Service Gaps and Limitations:

- Issues with limited-service hours, inconvenient stops, and understaffing at transportation providers, especially affecting people with disabilities or those relying on public transit to access key locations. This is especially experienced by residents in smaller communities and rural areas.
- Concerns about understaffing at transportation providers and the negative impact of service reductions, particularly for people with disabilities.

Levels of Interest and Support

Survey participants were asked if they would like to stay involved in the study process through a variety of methods. They were also asked if their organization might be able to contribute financially to support a viable Southeast Minnesota program. Most respondents indicated they would like to stay involved in some capacity. Many also said they may be interested in contributing financially but would need more information.



2.6. Consult: Discussion Groups

The study facilitated four discussion groups that included representatives from:

- Higher education institutions – 7 participants
- Local and regional government agencies – 13 participants
- Transportation providers – 4 participants
- Human service organizations – 7 participants

Each discussion group was approximately 90 minutes long and all were held virtually via Microsoft Teams. The groups helped identify key transportation challenges experienced by a wide range of stakeholders throughout the region. Participants were also asked to identify current collaborations, programs, and initiatives that address transportation needs, as well as tools and resources that could address present and future challenges.

Key Themes

The following outlines the key themes highlighted throughout the four discussion groups.

Transportation-Related Challenges and Issues

- **Convenience of Driving:** Participants highlighted that it is more convenient and faster to drive a personal vehicle versus riding transit services. They mentioned that it usually takes significantly longer to reach destinations by transit.
- **Lack of Collaboration Between Groups:** There is a lack of collaboration between transportation providers, employers, government agencies, businesses, and organizations. This leads to a limited understanding of the transportation challenges and issues that occur in the region. This limits the ability to make proactive efforts to address these challenges.
- **Difficulty Servicing Rural Areas:** Public transportation services are limited in rural areas throughout the region. Transportation providers mentioned that there are not enough resources (i.e., staff, vehicles, time, etc.) to have fixed routes or services in less dense areas. Residents in rural areas who do not have access to a vehicle or may have a disability cannot access their daily needs without transit services.
- **Lack of Evening Transit Services:** Public transportation services become limited during evening hours. Transportation providers mentioned that it is hard to allocate resources (i.e., staff, vehicles, time, etc.) during time periods that typically have less riders. A lack of evening hours becomes a transportation barrier for individuals who work late or need to access medical services.
- **Difficulty Recruiting Transit Drivers and Volunteers:** Transportation providers highlighted that it has become harder to recruit and retain drivers and volunteers. This makes it more challenging to extend service hours or maintain consistent routes.
- **Lack of Awareness on Available Transit Options:** There is a lack of awareness of what transit services are available and how to use them. Many individuals do not have the technology or lack knowledge on how to use it to find information for services.
- **Cost of Living in Larger Cities is Higher:** The cost of living may be too high for many in larger cities. Individuals may prefer to live in surrounding communities with lower living costs and commute longer distances.
- **Lack of Rideshare Options:** There is a lack of rideshare options (e.g., Uber, Lyft, taxi, etc.) in most communities throughout the region.
- **MN State Regulation Limits Transportation Options for Individuals in Wheelchairs:** Current MN state regulations prohibit and limit the use of existing transportation resources available for people in wheelchairs. Regulations do not allow use of vehicles if the driver lacks a specific license and insurance, or if it is outside allotted service hours.

- **Lack of Intercity, State, and Regional Transit:** Many transit options only service a specific area of the region and do not connect to other cities, counties, or across the state lines. There is a lack of coordination or facilities that could facilitate transfers between transit providers.

Current Programs, Initiatives, or Partnerships

- **Partnerships with Employers:** Many transit providers receive funds from major employers to provide transportation services, especially in areas where many employees live in proximity of each other.
- **Partnerships with Medical Service Providers:** Many transit providers receive funds from healthcare providers to provide free or reduced-price transportation services for their patients. This primarily includes on-demand transit services.
- **Rideshare Pilot Program:** The City of Northfield launched an age-friendly initiative that works with Lyft to increase rideshare options for older adults and college students in the area. This initiative also focused on recruiting drivers from the area.
- **Park and Ride Lots in Rochester:** The City of Rochester has built numerous park and ride lots in Rochester to increase carpooling and transit use to their Downtown.
- **Development of a Transit Application:** Some transportation providers are developing a transit app to allow riders to purchase tickets ahead of time and schedule on-demand services.
- **College Van and Car Rentals:** Some higher education institutions have a fleet of vehicles that can be rented for official school activities. Vehicles can be rented for minimal charge to the students or school organizations.

Desired Programs, Initiatives, and Actions to Address Challenges and Issues

- **Facilitate Partnerships and Collaboration:** A TMO could facilitate partnerships and efforts between transportation providers, employers, government agencies, businesses, institutions, and organizations. Potential ways to facilitate relations included meet-and-greets and roundtables to introduce groups to each other.
- **Create a Centralized Platform:** A centralized platform that lists all the transportation options in the region would make it more convenient and accessible for riders. Discussions mentioned that this could be an application where riders can plan a trip to their destination and purchase tickets. The app would link multiple transit options to reach a destination, if needed.
- **Micro-transit Vehicles to Service Rural Areas:** Transportation providers could use smaller transit vehicles to service rural areas.
- **Promote Transportation Options Alternative to Driving:** A TMO could develop marketing and informational campaigns to promote transportation options alternative to driving throughout the region.
- **Transit Information Fairs or Expositions:** In-person transit information fairs or expositions could be a great opportunity to informing the public about all the available transit options, as well as how to use and access transit services. These could also be held at major employers to inform commuters.
- **Advocate to Update MN State Regulations:** The human services discussion group highlighted the need to update MN State regulations to expand transportation options for people in wheelchairs and individuals with a disability. The update should decrease the restrictions for drivers who are providing transportation for individuals in a wheelchair.
- **Assist in Grant and Funding Applications:** A TMO could assist communities throughout the region to identify and apply for grants and funding that could address transportation challenges.
- **Assist in Launching Pilot Programs:** A TMO could assist communities throughout the region in launching pilot programs that could address transportation challenges. Examples highlighted were the increase of rideshare options, bike rental programs, or car sharing program (similar to HOUR car or ZIP car).

Future Participation in the TMO

- Discussion group participants were asked how they would be willing to participate in the TMO. Overall participants mentioned that they do not have the jurisdiction to provide financial support at this moment. In general, participants want to remain engaged in the planning process and can promote the work that is being completed.
- Some higher education discussion group participants mentioned that they could recruit students to develop marketing campaigns to promote available transportation services and options.

2.7. Consult: Employer Interviews

The study conducted interviews of large employers throughout the region. Large employers influence commuter patterns and transportation demand. Employer interviews helped assess their transportation challenges, workforce commuting needs, and willingness to support or participate in a TMO. This helps determine the potential demand for transportation solutions and programs. Further understanding employer perspectives determines whether a potential TMO can address workforce mobility needs while gaining business community support, increasing the likelihood of successful implementation.

Participation

A total of eight large employers were interviewed as part of the study. Employers ranged from 85 to 43,000 employees. They provide a range of services including manufacturing, medical and healthcare services, entertainment, financial planning, and food production. The following is a list of employers who participated:

- Gunderson Health – 85 employees (this only accounts for employees employed at their Wabasha Hospital)
- Red Wing Shoes – 391 employees
- McNeilus Truck and Manufacturing – 900 employees
- Viracon – 1,000 employees
- Treasure Island Casino – 1,880 employees
- Federated Insurance – 1,600 employees
- Hormel Foods – 1,600 employees
- Mayo Clinic – 43,000 employees

Key Themes

The following outlines the key themes highlighted throughout the employer interviews.

Typical Commuting Modes

- **Driving was the most common transportation mode used by employees.** Employees who have longer commute distances, have multiple jobs, and/or must manage childcare pickups and drop offs are more likely to drive their personal vehicle.
- **Carpooling was the second most common transportation mode.** Carpooling was more common by employees who had other household members or surrounding neighbors who worked for the same employer.

Challenges and Issues

- **Necessary to have a Personal Vehicle:** Some employers mentioned that during interviews they ask candidates if they have access to a personal vehicle. Having a personal vehicle tends to reduce transportation issues during their employment. One employer mentioned that not having reliable transportation is a significant barrier to obtaining and keeping employment.

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- **One Vehicle per Household:** Some employees share one vehicle with other members of their household to access employment. When someone is asked to work overtime they cannot return the vehicle, which causes transportation issues for the other household members.
 - **Childcare Options:** Employees with children are dependent that their work schedule allows them to do childcare pickups and drop offs. Employers mentioned that employees have difficulty finding childcare, especially convenient options that align with their work schedule.
 - **Cost of Living:** The cost of living may be too high near employers, especially those located in larger cities. Individuals may prefer to live in surrounding communities with lower living costs and commute longer distances. This can cause challenges when vehicles are not reliable or during winter months. Cost of living has also led to employees turning down employment opportunities because they cannot find affordable housing.
 - **Lack of Rideshare Options:** There is a lack of rideshare options (e.g., Uber, Lyft, taxi, etc.) near most employers, especially those located in areas with less population density.

Current Programs or Initiatives

- **Vehicle Repair Assistance:** One employer mentioned they have a “hardship” program that will provide assistance for employees’ emergency car repairs.
- **Carpool Program:** Multiple employers mentioned that they have built a rideshare program that includes employees who are willing to carpool.
- **Free or Reduced-price Transit Services:** Employers mentioned that they have partnered with transportation providers to offer free or reduced-price transit services. Marketing actions to encourage employees to use transit as a commuting option have not been very successful.
- **Flexible Work Environments:** Employers mentioned that they have pivoted to offering more flexible and hybrid work environments, when possible, to reduce transportation related challenges.

Potential Programs, Initiatives, and Actions to Address Challenges and Issues

- **Shuttles and/or Vanpools:** The most common strategy employers highlighted was providing shuttles or vanpools that could transport employees, especially from locations where there are larger groups of employees. Employers mentioned that these options would need to occur throughout the day to accommodate for multiple work schedules and shifts. Some employers mentioned that they have explored working with Enterprise to provide a vanpool service.
- **Development of Commute Programs:** A TMO could assist developing programs that outline different commuting options available for each employer. These programs could identify convenient park and ride locations where employees could meet and commute together.
- **Application to Facilitate Carpooling:** Employers mentioned that an application or platform could facilitate carpool arrangements. The platform could list individuals that are interested in carpooling, identify schedules that align, and manage payments between the rider and driver.
- **Marketing Materials:** A TMO could provide marketing materials that promote alternative transportation options.

Future Participation in the TMO

- Employers were asked if and how they would be willing to participate in the TMO. All employers mentioned that they want to stay involved and informed throughout the study. They would be interested in receiving assistance in implementing programs and initiatives that help address transportation-related challenges and issues that impact their workforce.

2.8. Collaborate: Stakeholder Steering Committee

The Steering Committee served as the project's primary strategic advisory group, ensuring decisions were rooted in diverse expertise and regional priorities. Comprising representatives from local government, transit agencies, higher education, business, and underrepresented communities, the committee formed a balanced mix of conventional, underrepresented, and investment stakeholders to ensure inclusivity and long-term buy-in. Members engaged actively in discussions, contributed insights on regional challenges, and advocated for the initiative within their organizations and communities.

Participation

The Steering Committee included a diverse and comprehensive group of stakeholders representing various sectors and regions of Southeast Minnesota. This ensures that the transportation challenges and opportunities faced by the 11-county area are examined from multiple perspectives. Key participant categories and representatives include:

- **Local and County Government:** Participants from cities and counties including administrators and transportation officials brought perspectives on transportation systems and rural needs.
- **Transit Providers:** Participants contributed insights on service delivery and regional transit coordination.
- **Business Community:** The Mayo Clinic, as a major employer in the region, provided input on workforce transportation needs and opportunities for employer partnerships.
- **Higher Education:** Institutions contributed perspectives on student and faculty transportation access.
- **State and Regional Government:** Representatives from MnDOT and the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) participated from the perspective of statewide transportation planning and policies.
- **Community Partners:** Organizations such as the Arc Minnesota, Area Agency on Aging, and Veterans Services ensured that the needs of underrepresented and vulnerable populations were considered.
- **Economic Development and Advocacy Groups:** Representatives from CEDA and the SE MN League of Municipalities brought regional collaboration.

Meeting #1: August 28, 2024

The first Steering Committee meeting, held in a hybrid format, introduced the study's goals and objectives, and provided an overview of Transportation Management Organizations (TMOs). Participants discussed long-term outcomes for a TMO in Southeast Minnesota and identified key transportation challenges, including service gaps, affordability, and coordination issues. This meeting laid the groundwork for aligning stakeholders on the project's vision and priorities.

Meeting #2: December 5, 2024

The second meeting, held virtually, focused on data analysis and findings to date. Presentations covered existing transportation providers, the impact of COVID-19 on transit services, and regional travel behaviors. Overviews of focus groups and employer interviews demonstrated the region's transportation challenges. Participants provided feedback on emerging themes, such as equitable access, collaboration, and sustainability.

3. Phase 2 Activities and Key Findings

3.1. Inform: Project Website

During Phase 2, the website was updated to share updates, key milestones, and engagement opportunities.



3.2. Inform: Communications

The project team continued to release communications to ensure key stakeholders (policy makers, general public, partners, etc.) across the region were updated and informed.

- **Press Releases:** The project team crafted and distributed press releases to share next steps for the TMO's initial development.
- **Legislative Update:** A legislative update was provided to the Minnesota Legislature, emphasizing the project's alignment with statewide transportation priorities and moving the conversation towards collaboration with state offices.
- **General Project Updates:** General project updates were provided to stakeholders as needed to inform about additional engagement opportunities, answer questions about the project, and continue build engagement and support. Stakeholders continued to have the opportunity to sign up for email updates through the project website.

3.3. Consult: Budget Activity Survey

The project used Social Pinpoint to facilitate the next phase of online engagement through an interactive budgeting activity. With this activity, community members were asked to allocate a budget that would fund initial TMO activities.

Thirty-one participants responded to the budget activity.

Participants were prompted, “Resources are limited in every organization and community. As we move forward to establishing a TMO, we need your help determining which activities and services a future TMO should tackle first. If you had \$100 budget to fund initial TMO services, how would you allocate them?” Not all \$100 had to be allocated to submit their choices.

Participants could select from six different TMO services that had different costs based on the level of resources they require:

- Create User-Friendly Travel Options Resources – Cost of \$30
- Create a Unified Regional Transit Voice – Cost of \$40
- Regional Transportation Tool/Website – Cost of \$50
- Transportation Coordinating Working Group – Cost of \$25
- Employer-Based Outreach and User Education – Cost of \$50
- Lead a Regional Try Transit Campaign – Cost of \$40

Each service had a brief description to help inform participants. Responses were displayed publicly on the website to show number of votes allocated to each service.

This input helped inform recommendations for identifying initial services and tasks for a future TMO.

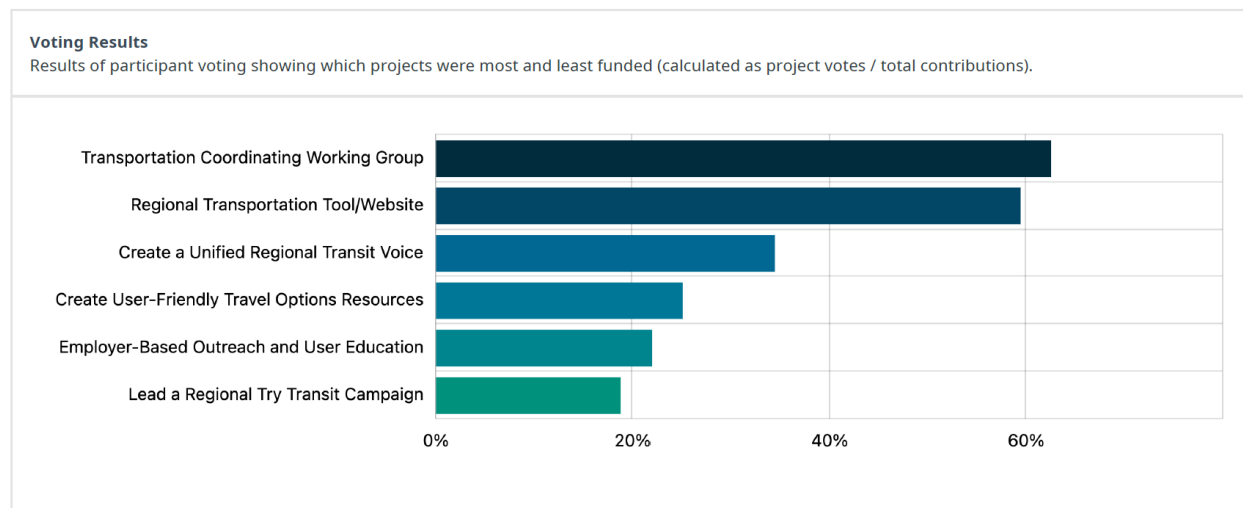
The screenshot displays a web interface titled "Budget Activity" with a sub-header "How Would You Fund Initial TMO Activities?". The page explains that resources are limited and asks participants to allocate a \$100 budget to fund initial TMO services. A "Your remaining budget: \$ 1 0 0" section shows a progress bar and a "FUNDING GOAL \$100" indicator. Below this, six service cards are displayed in a grid, each with a title, description, cost, a "Fund this" button, and a "Read More" link. The services and their costs are: Employer-Based Outreach and User Education (\$50), Regional Transportation Tool/Website (\$50), Lead a Regional Try Transit Campaign (\$40), Create User-Friendly Travel Options Resources (\$30), Transportation Coordinating Working Group (\$25), and Create a Unified Regional Transit Voice (\$40). Each card also shows the number of votes and the percentage of the budget allocated to that service.

Service	Cost	Votes	Percentage
Employer-Based Outreach and User Education	\$50	4	11%
Regional Transportation Tool/Website	\$50	7	19%
Lead a Regional Try Transit Campaign	\$40	4	11%
Create User-Friendly Travel Options Resources	\$30		
Transportation Coordinating Working Group	\$25		
Create a Unified Regional Transit Voice	\$40		

Budget Activity Results (31 Participants):

Participants spent an average of \$85.00 of their total budget. Each participant chose to fund an average of 2.22 projects. The top three projects funded were 1) Transportation Coordinating Working (20 votes), 2) Regional Transportation Tool/Website (19 votes), and 3) Create a Unified Regional Transit Voice (11 votes).

Project Details Information on the projects included for potential funding including the name, cost, voting and other details.			
Project Name	Cost	Total Votes	%
Transportation Coordinating Working Group	\$25.00	20	28.17%
Regional Transportation Tool/Website	\$50.00	19	26.76%
Create a Unified Regional Transit Voice	\$40.00	11	15.49%
Create User-Friendly Travel Options Resources	\$30.00	8	11.27%
Employer-Based Outreach and User Education	\$50.00	7	9.86%
Lead a Regional Try Transit Campaign	\$40.00	6	8.45%



3.4. Consult: Follow-up Discussions with Transportation Providers

The project team facilitated a follow-up discussion with representatives from southeast Minnesota transportation providers. The meeting was approximately 90 minutes long and held virtually Microsoft Teams. Five transportation agencies participated in the discussion.

This meeting focused on identifying the most pressing challenges experienced by providers and exploring how a TMO could best support transit providers to address them. It was instrumental in outlining initial priorities and potential tasks for a future TMO.

Key Themes

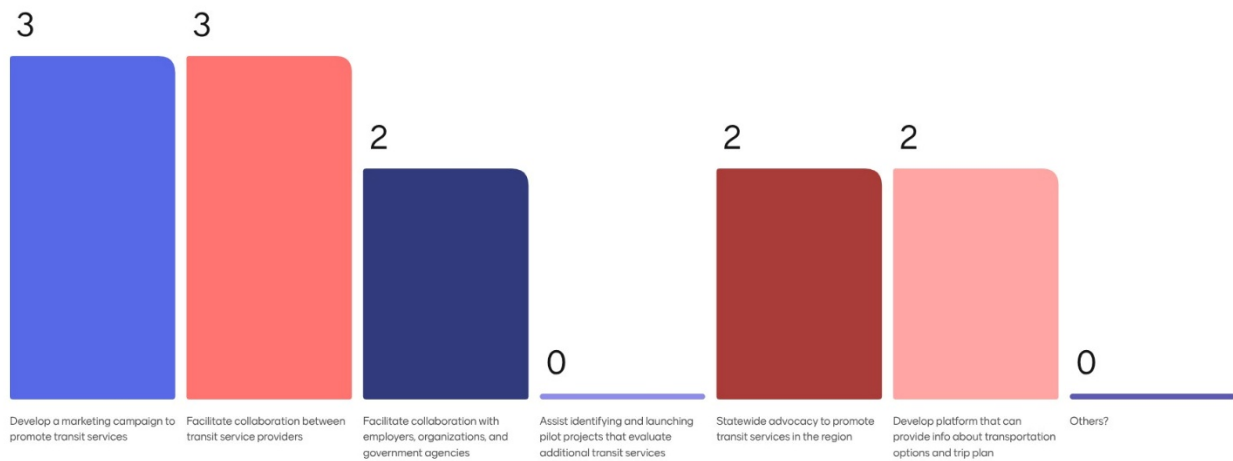
Top Priorities and Needs for Transportation Providers

The project team used a survey activity (using Mentimeter software) to facilitate the discussion. Transportation providers were asked to identify the most effective ways a TMO could support their work. They were also asked: if the TMO could achieve one goal from facilitating partnerships, what would that be? The following were key themes from the discussion:

- **Facilitate Collaboration between Providers:** Providers acknowledged a significant lack of collaboration among transit agencies and other stakeholders, which has hindered service delivery and public awareness. A TMO could serve as the agency that facilitates communication and collaboration. This can reduce overlapping services, minimize gaps, and maximize service efficiencies.
- **Public Awareness and Marketing:** There was a consensus that many community members are unaware of available transit options, emphasizing the need for effective marketing strategies. A TMO could be influential in creating a unified marketing campaign to raise awareness of available transit options and how to access services. Additionally, the marketing campaign would educate stakeholders and government agencies about the economic benefits and impacts transit provides to local communities and the southeast Minnesota region.

The following are results and responses from the Mentimeter survey activity:

What are the top 3 ways a TMO can support/assist transit providers in SE MN?



If the TMO could achieve one goal from facilitating partnerships, what would it be?

Help create vital relationships between transit agencies and city/county entities to assist with local share.

Better understanding of public transportation and importance of funding

Help promote public transit in the communities and stress the importance of transit within the community for everyone.

Assist with advocating for funding at the local and state levels

More interconnectivity between state, agencies and riders; helping the public understand why we are here.

Filling the gap between communities

In terms of transit planning, what should be the first tasks that a TMO accomplishes?

Marketing marketing marketing. Follow up with surveying

Marketing that educates the citizens of what public transit is, it's availability, and focusing on the fact that everyone can ride.

Anybody can ride

3.5. Collaborate: One-on-One Conversations

The project team held a series of one-on-one meetings with stakeholders to discuss potential partnerships and to brief them on the study findings and progress. Organizations included Southeast Service Cooperative, Rolling Hills Transit, Rochester Area Economic Development, Inc., Destination Medical Center, MnDOT, Rochester Council of Governments, and the City of Rochester's Transit Team.

3.6. Collaborate: Stakeholder Steering Committee

The Steering Committee continued to serve as the project's primary strategic advisory group, ensuring decisions were rooted in diverse expertise and regional priorities. Continued discussions contributed insights on regional challenges and advocated for the initiative within their organizations and communities. Their input helped identify the TMO's initial priorities and organizational structure.

Steering Committee members were asked to share their interest for future participation as the TMO begins.

Meeting Summaries

Two Committee meetings were held during Phase 2 of engagement. All meetings and discussions of the Steering Committee were documented through Meeting Minutes.

Meeting #3: March 6, 2025

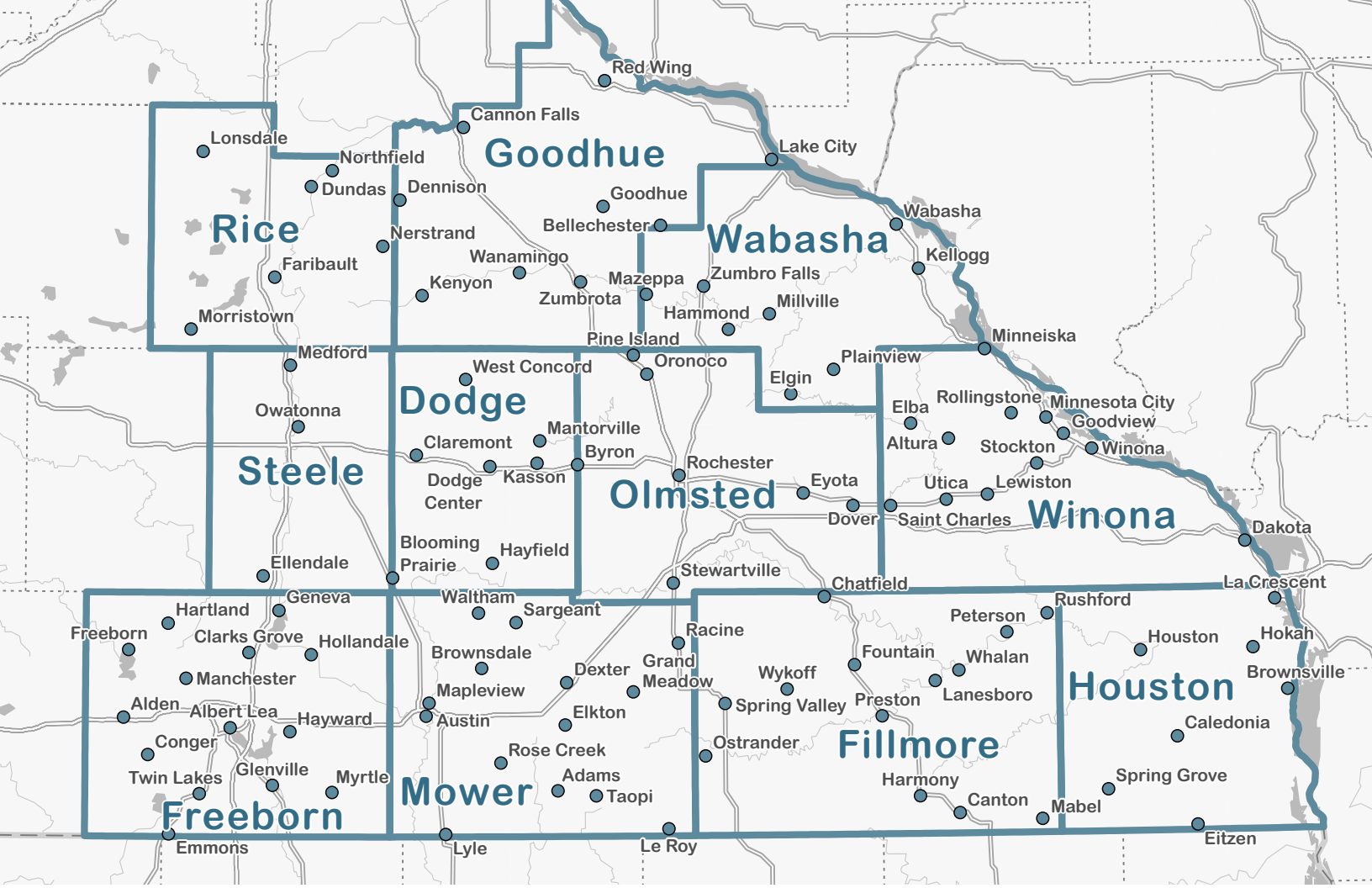
The third Steering Committee meeting, held virtually on March 6, 2024, focused on the project's current progress and regional transportation needs. Participants discussed persistent challenges such as limited intercity transit and gaps in local services. The meeting highlighted stakeholder priorities, including the desire for a centralized transportation website and stronger coordination among transit providers. A group poll identified regional collaboration as a key focus area for the TMO. The discussion also addressed engagement barriers and laid the foundation for developing an implementation plan through continued stakeholder input.

Meeting #4: May 16, 2025

The fourth Steering Committee meeting, held virtually on May 16, 2025, focused on the potential economic benefits of transit, and the organizational structure of a future TMO. The project team shared findings that a regional TMO could enhance mobility, strengthen the local economy, and address critical population needs. Discussions highlighted the four pillars of feasibility—transportation challenges, area characteristics, stakeholder commitment, and financial sustainability—as both opportunities and hurdles. The project team presented an economic analysis showing public transit in the region generates an estimated \$29 million in annual benefits, largely through improved access to healthcare. The group also reviewed potential TMO initiatives, including strategies for regional coordination, communication, and outreach. The meeting concluded with a discussion of a possible TMO organizational structure and outlined next steps, including finalizing services, developing an implementation plan, and conducting stakeholder outreach.

Conclusion

Stakeholder engagement was critical to identifying transportation challenges and needs that impact the region, as well as opportunities and strategies that can help address those issues. It also helped determine an organizational structure of a TMO, prioritize initial service priorities, and find key champions and supporters to lead its initial development.



Southeast Minnesota TMO Study

Appendix G: Implementation Plan Draft



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Introduction

This implementation plan outlines an operational pathway for launching and sustaining a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) in Southeast Minnesota. Building on the Southeast Minnesota TMO Feasibility Study findings, it provides a structured guide to help stakeholders move from concept to action. It details the organizational structure and governance framework necessary to establish the TMO and translates service priorities into a work plan that aligns with the region's mobility needs.

The work plan guides the TMO's preliminary operations from an organizational, funding, and staffing standpoint. It outlines organizational and funding recommendations and summarizes priority initiatives, followed by a detailed TMO Work Plan that breaks down specific actions, timing, and budget needs across a three-year period.

Organizational Structure and Funding

The SE MN TMO feasibility study recommends that Southeast Service Cooperative (SCC) will be the host agency providing administrative support to the TMO. SCC is a nonprofit agency that serves public and private school districts, cities, counties, and other organizations in the 11-county southeast region of Minnesota. An Executive Committee will be the TMO's decision-making body, aided by an Advisory Board, that will provide guidance. The TMO will set up subject-specific working groups to facilitate collaboration and coordination of work plan items.

The study identified potential sources for start-up and ongoing TMO funding, including a grant by the Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council and a request for funding support to the State Legislature. SE MN Together already requested permission from the Legislature to use surplus funds designated to the TMO Study for start-up activities.

Proposed TMO Services

This SE MN TMO Feasibility Study identified two priority initiatives as essential for the TMO's early success. This implementation plan adds a priority initiative containing essential TMO administration and governance activities. Each initiative includes a set of foundational activities and supporting strategies that will guide the TMO's operations and partnerships during this startup phase.

The recommended priority initiatives are:

1. **TMO Administration and Governance:** These activities create the foundation for launching and administering the TMO, including securing broad support and funding, hiring staff, and forming committees, boards, and working groups.
2. **Improving transit through regional collaboration:** These efforts strengthen collaboration among transit providers, improve service delivery, and unify regional transit messaging and advocacy. From schedule alignment to shared data systems, this work creates the foundation for a more seamless, efficient, and rider-focused transit network.
3. **Communicating travel options:** These initiatives build public awareness, rider confidence, and employer engagement through inclusive outreach and education. They focus on closing the information gap around available transportation services—especially essential workers and underserved populations—and helping employers support workforce commuting needs.

1. TMO Administration and Governance

Before the TMO can coordinate services or promote transportation options, it must first build the organizational foundation needed to operate effectively. This priority focuses on the critical early work of establishing the TMO: securing funding, hiring staff, forming leadership committees, and developing governance structures that reflect regional representation and support. These efforts will ensure the TMO launches with the institutional capacity and stakeholder backing necessary to carry out its mission.

- A. Organizational Set-Up and Staffing
 - Secure operational funding from regional partners, grants, or a host organization to support initial staffing and overhead.
 - Identify and confirm a host organization to provide administrative support.
 - Hire TMO staff, beginning with a dedicated TMO manager to oversee daily operations, partnerships, and implementation activities.
 - Establish internal organizational policies and procedures, including protocols for budget management, reporting, and performance tracking.
- B. Governance and Partner Engagement
 - Form an Executive Committee and an Advisory Board that includes representatives from key stakeholder groups across the 11-county region.
 - Convene working groups, such as a Transit Coordination Working Group, to provide technical guidance and stakeholder input.
 - Refine governance structures over time to ensure they support regional representation and long-term organizational sustainability.
- C. Branding, Communications, and Visibility
 - Develop the TMO's brand identity and core communication materials to support outreach, establish credibility, and engage stakeholders.
 - Create tools and platforms for ongoing partner communication and public engagement.
- D. Performance Tracking and Strategic Planning
 - Develop and implement performance-tracking tools to measure outcomes and inform strategic decisions.
 - Perform strategic planning to inform future work plans.
- E. Financial Sustainability
 - Explore and pursue diversified funding strategies, including local match funding, member contributions, and service-based revenue.

2. Improving Transit Through Regional Collaboration

A central role of the TMO will be to unify and elevate Southeast Minnesota's transit landscape by improving coordination, simplifying access to information, and increasing public and political support for transit. This strategic priority includes three interrelated focus areas: forming a regional transit coordinating working group, developing a centralized transportation information platform, and leading a unified transit advocacy campaign. Together, these initiatives aim to improve service delivery, connect users to available options, and establish transit as a vital component of the region's infrastructure and economy.

- A. **Transit Coordinating Working Group:** Provide strategic leadership in forming and sustaining a regional transportation coordinating working group composed of transit providers, local governments, employers, workforce development partners, human service agencies, Region 10 Quality Council, and regional planners. This cross-sector body will serve as a forum for collaboration, resource sharing, and systems-level problem-solving to improve transit coordination and performance throughout Southeast Minnesota. Through this initiative, the TMO will:
- Convene transit agencies regularly to review operational alignment, identify transfer points, and improve service integration.
 - Facilitate cross-agency collaboration to reduce duplication and increase efficiency. This may include exploring mutual aid agreements for trips across agency boundaries.
 - Engage employers to co-develop workforce transportation strategies tailored to regional labor markets.
 - Share replicable models and case studies that demonstrate successful service innovations.
 - Coordinate specialized services such as non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT), ensuring continuity of service and closing critical access gaps.
- B. **Regional Transportation Tool/Website + Resource Development.** The TMO will develop and maintain a centralized, user-friendly digital platform that consolidates transportation information, trip-planning functionality, and educational resources into one accessible location for Southeast Minnesota. By combining provider information with practical education and offline outreach resources, the platform will provide a single, comprehensive entry point for riders and partners to access, promote, and support the region's full range of transportation options. Examples of online tools that allow potential riders of all abilities to find transportation providers to match their needs include:
- Arrowhead RTCC: <https://www.arrowheadrtcc.org/filter>
 - Gohio Mobility: <https://gohiocommute.com/#/mobility>

Key features may include:

- A simple, easy-to-navigate interface that brings together information from multiple transit providers.
- Complete coverage of multimodal options, including fixed-route, demand-response, vanpool, Park & Ride, and specialized services.
- ADA-compliant, mobile-responsive design with multilingual translation to serve a wide range of users.
- Built-in trip-planning functionality, with integration of provider data and potential connections to third-party mobility apps (e.g. Transit App) to support real-time trip planning, fare payment, and service notifications.
- Rider guides, employer toolkits, and educational materials that help individuals and organizations understand and use available transportation services.
- Print-ready materials that can be easily shared by providers, employers, workforce agencies, and human service organizations.

- Regularly updated service alerts, schedule changes, and announcements to keep users informed.

In addition, the TMO will work to enhance digital accessibility by integrating regional transit data into widely used platforms such as the Transit App and other third-party mobility tools.

- C. **Create a Unified Transit Voice.** The TMO will take the lead in amplifying Southeast Minnesota's transit story with a cohesive advocacy strategy that elevates the visibility, value, and impact of transit. The TMO will be a convener, messenger, and policy influencer to drive investment and support for a more connected regional system. Through this initiative, the TMO will:
- Develop compelling, data-backed messaging that positions transit as essential to economic competitiveness, health equity, and regional resilience.
 - Coordinate legislative engagement and advocacy efforts to ensure the region's voice is heard at the Capitol and beyond.
 - Deploy regional campaigns and roadshows that align stakeholders on shared priorities and increase public understanding.
 - Equip providers with branded toolkits and unified messaging, enabling them to speak with one voice.
 - Influence funding decisions and policy conversations by ensuring transit is always part of the regional planning agenda.
 - Identify and participate in state, regional, and local planning processes to advance transit.

3. Communicating Travel Options

A critical early role of the TMO will be to close the information gap around available transportation services—particularly for essential workers, underserved populations, and employers navigating workforce mobility challenges. This strategic priority focuses on building public awareness, boosting transit confidence, and empowering people to make informed travel choices. Through targeted outreach, employer engagement, and hands-on education efforts, the TMO will promote available options, foster behavior change, and build the partnerships necessary to support long-term mode shift across Southeast Minnesota.

- A. **Outreach and User Education:** The TMO will build a comprehensive, region-wide outreach and employer engagement program designed to directly tackle workforce commute barriers, boost transit awareness, and drive long-term shifts in how people access jobs and services. This initiative will serve as a cornerstone of the TMO's impact—building trust with the public, forging strategic partnerships with employers, and expanding access to reliable, affordable transportation. Through this initiative, the TMO will:
- Launch an outreach campaign that builds public understanding of transit and alternative commute options through multilingual materials, on-the-ground education, and digital outreach.
 - Support travel training and rider education workshops for new or returning riders, seniors, youth, and individuals with disabilities.
 - Partner with employers—starting with those in manufacturing, healthcare, and food processing—to deliver customized, on-site programming including commute workshops,

ride-matching support, employee travel surveys, and “Try Transit” campaigns to engage workers and gather actionable insights.

- Use employer and commuter feedback to co-design service improvements, such as new routes, flexible modes, or expanded shift-time coverage.

B. Develop a Try Transit Campaign. The TMO will lead a coordinated "Try Transit" campaign with local transit providers to encourage new and returning ridership. The initiative will offer free transit passes or a designated week of no-cost rides, providing residents and workers with a low-barrier opportunity to experience the region's transportation services. The campaign will be promoted widely through employer networks, local governments, chambers of commerce, community organizations, and social media to ensure broad regional reach and visibility. This effort will serve as both a promotional tool and a data-gathering opportunity—helping to raise awareness of available services while capturing insights from new riders to inform future outreach and service planning. Key tasks will include:

- Securing commitments from transit providers to allocate free ride opportunities during the campaign period.
- Developing branded materials and messaging to support outreach across employer and community partner channels.
- Maximizing visibility through multiple platforms, including digital marketing, public events, and targeted outreach to underserved communities.

Initiatives for Future Consideration

As the Southeast Minnesota TMO matures, it will be well-positioned to expand its impact and take on a broader set of responsibilities that respond to evolving mobility needs. While not part of the initial three-year implementation timeline, the following initiatives represent high-value opportunities that the TMO could pursue as resources grow, and partnerships deepen. These future strategies build on early priorities and are designed to enhance regional coordination, support service innovation, and expand outreach to ensure that all residents and workers can access reliable, efficient, and inclusive transportation options.

Improving Transit Through Regional Coordination

- **Driver Recruitment and Retention.** Assist with driver recruitment and retention, including working with workforce development agencies and community colleges on driver training programs. Seek grant funding to cover tuition for driver training. Advertise for drivers on a regional website. Discuss how transit agencies can share or make driver applications easier (one application, driver sharing agreements, coordinated shifts, etc.).
- **Service Integration and Expansion Planning.** Identify intercity and rural transit service gaps, recommend route adjustments, and support new service planning.
- **Support Intercity and First/Last-Mile Solutions.** Help transit agencies collaborate with local jurisdictions and employers to develop micro transit, demand-response services, and park-and-ride connections.
- **Grant and Funding Support.** Assist transit providers in identifying and applying for state, federal, and private funding to expand services.

- **Performance Tracking & Data Sharing.** Establish data-sharing agreements to improve regional ridership analysis and inform decision-making.
- **Fare and Payment Coordination.** Explore options for regional fare integration or a unified payment system across providers. Leverage third-party apps, such as Transit App, to streamline the purchase of transit fares across providers.
- **Policy Support.** Advocate for supportive policies and reducing regulatory barriers to transit expansion.
- **Pilot Programs.** Test new mobility solutions such as microtransit, commuter shuttles, and vanpool initiatives.

Communicating Travel Options

- **Real-Time Service Updates.** Work with providers to share alerts on delays, schedule changes, and disruptions through digital platforms and signage. This could include leveraging third-party apps such as Transit App to streamline service updates.
- **Expansion on Outreach and User Education.** Building on this strategy could be a series of events. This will require more staffing over time. Strategies could include:
 - Provide handouts on regional transit information to local governments and community groups, and when appropriate, participate in public events, community festivals, and local meetings to meet people where they are.
 - Engage with local chambers of commerce, workforce development partners, and economic development agencies to integrate commute support into services offered.
 - Use local media, social platforms, and partner networks to regularly share service updates and support the delivery of commute campaigns.
- **Service Awareness Campaigns.** Promote transit options through targeted outreach, focusing on underserved areas and communities beyond Rochester. Campaigns can also support public awareness and navigation during Link BRT construction in downtown Rochester.

TMO Work Plan

While the previous section outlined three strategic priority areas for the Southeast Minnesota TMO, this section translates those strategic directions into a time-bound, actionable implementation roadmap. It is organized chronologically, beginning with pre-launch activities and progressing through each phase of implementation. Each quarter includes detailed actions under key focus areas aligned with the strategic priorities. A draft budget to support the work plan activities can be found in [Appendix A](#).

The timeline chart below summarizes the schedule of the priority services and their key supporting activities.

	Pre-Launch	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3+			
1. TMO Governance & Administration													
Organizational Set-Up and Staffing													
Governance and Partner Engagement													
Branding, Communications, and Visibility													
Financial Sustainability and Long-Term Positioning													
Performance Tracking and Strategic Planning													
2. Improving Transit Through Regional Collaboration													
Transit Coordination Work Group													
Regional Transportation Tool/Website + Resource Development													
Create a Unified Transit Voice													
3. Communicating Travel Options													
Outreach and User Education													
Develop a Try Transit Campaign													
Travel Training													

Pre-Launch Activities

This phase focuses entirely on foundational steps to advance the **TMO Administration and Governance** priority, including securing funding, formalizing partnerships, and laying the groundwork for staffing, leadership, and early support structures.

TMO Administration and Governance

Organizational Set-Up and Staffing

- Finalize the **TMO Manager job description** in [Appendix B](#) of the SE MN TMO Feasibility Study and hire a TMO Manager to lead the work plan activities.

Governance and Partner Engagement

- **Continue engaging with interested steering committee members** to maintain momentum and leverage their collective knowledge and expertise. Steering committee members can help facilitate the next steps to gain support for a TMO, assist with advocacy and funding applications, and further guide TMO service priorities.
 - Schedule quarterly meetings and maintain ongoing communications.
 - Recruit steering committee members to serve on the TMO's Executive Committee or Advisory Board and actively engage in future Working Groups. The Executive Committee will be the TMO decision-making body while the Advisory Board will be a larger group of individuals representing local, regional, and state government, transit agencies, employers, human services organizations, and other stakeholders who will guide TMO staff and the Executive Committee.
- **Create resolutions to obtain commitments from transit agencies, municipal partners, and other stakeholders.**
 - Create resolutions formalizing an organization's commitment to supporting a regional TMO. Sample language is available in [Appendix C](#).
- Develop a **hosting services agreement** with Southeast Service Cooperative to formalize the partnership.

Branding, Communications, and Visibility

- **Develop and launch a compelling roadshow presenting study findings.** This study confirmed what many stakeholders in the region intuitively knew: there is a great need and opportunity to create an organization that will improve transit and other transportation options in the region.
 - Create materials, recruit and train partners to help with roadshow presentations, and schedule presentations at existing meetings of city councils, regional governmental and nonprofit organizations, MnDOT representatives, and employers to share study findings and gain support.

Financial Sustainability and Long-Term Positioning

- **Develop funding requests and applications.**
 - Create a funding request to the state legislature based on the work plan developed as part of this study to fund employer/commuter-focused work.

- Apply for 5310 funding in early 2026 to support work plan items serving seniors and people with disabilities. Based on the 2025 schedule, the application deadline is expected to be in April 2026 with funding awards made available for July 1, 2027.
- Explore other possible funding sources, including federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funding.

Year One: Launch and Initial Implementation

The first year of implementation focuses on standing up the TMO as a functional, credible organization and launching early programmatic activities. This includes establishing governance structures, initiating priority work in transit coordination and user education, and laying the groundwork for key tools such as the regional website. Activities are organized by quarter to reflect the evolving readiness of the TMO and its partners throughout the first 12 months.

Quarter 1: TMO Stand-Up and Board/Committee Recruitment

TMO Administration and Governance

Governance and Partner Engagement

- Continue Recruiting Executive Committee and Advisory Board members. It is anticipated that some SE MN Together members and participants of the study's Steering Committee will be early recruits to these committees and boards. Use relationships developed during the roadshow to recruit additional members with the goal of achieving representation across the region and stakeholder types.

Financial Sustainability and Long-Term Positioning

- Refine the work plan, budget, and schedule.

Branding, Communications, and Visibility

- Begin developing a logo and brand identity

Performance Tracking and Strategic Planning

- Set up performance measures and reporting structures to comply with funding requirements.

Improving Transit Through Regional Collaboration

Transit Coordination Working Group

- Recruit initial Working Group members (transit providers, local governments, workforce partners, human services, employers, MnDOT).

Regional Transportation Tool/Website + Resource Development

- Update transportation provider inventory

Communicating Travel Options

Outreach and User Education

- Reach out to employers who were involved in the study to introduce the TMO and continue conversations around transportation needs and potential solutions.
- Identify priority geographies/industries for employer and workforce engagement based on study findings and early outreach.

Quarter 2: Official Kick-Off and Program Development

TMO Administration and Governance

Governance and Partner Engagement

- Convene the Executive Committee and Advisory Board to formally launch TMO operations. These kick-off meetings will be used to confirm TMO goals, clarify roles and responsibilities, review Year 1 priorities and work plan, determine logistics, such as meeting schedules, file sharing, and communication protocols, and discuss the organization's brand identity.
- Start building and enhancing relationships with transit providers, employers, workforce agencies, human service organizations, MnDOT, local governments, and chambers.
- Develop a contact database and subscribe to an email platform, such as Constant Contact or Mailchimp.

Financial Sustainability and Long-Term Positioning

- Start exploring additional funding opportunities, based on pre-launch findings.

Branding, Communications, and Visibility

- Develop a logo and brand identity.

Improving Transit Through Regional Collaboration

Transit Coordination Working Group

- Hold kickoff meeting to establish purpose, roles, and meeting schedule, and facilitate initial conversations around service gaps, redundancies, unified messaging/advocacy, and early pilot ideas.
- Conduct individual stakeholder meetings to gather input on early coordination opportunities.
- Compile baseline inventory of transit services: routes, schedules, fares, transfer points, and specialized services.

Regional Transportation Tool/Website + Resource Development

- Draft functional goals for the online platform (including data needs, accessibility requirements, and integration needs)
- Research funding opportunities to support implementation
- Conduct a preliminary scan of comparable platforms or vendor solutions, identifying potential vendor options and procurement pathways.

Unified Transit Voice

- Develop a calendar for upcoming state, regional, and local transportation planning processes and engagement opportunities.

Communicating Travel Options

Outreach and User Education

- Develop outreach strategy for employer engagement, workforce partners, and community-based organizations.
- Create initial outreach collateral templates for employer meetings, community presentations, and human service partners.
- Travel Training

- Identify initial partner organizations (e.g. senior centers, disability service providers, human service agencies, and transit providers) interested in supporting travel training activities.

Quarter 3: Program Rollout

TMO Administration and Governance

Governance and Partner Engagement

- Plan and conduct recurring Executive Committee and Advisory Board meetings

Financial Sustainability and Long-Term Positioning

- Continue exploring funding opportunities

Improving Transit Through Regional Collaboration

Transit Coordination Working Group

- Complete first regional coordination assessment and identify short-term pilot opportunities.
- Facilitate second Working Group meeting to review assessment findings and prioritize pilot concepts.
- Start outlining operational details for Year 2 coordination pilot(s) (schedules, joint marketing, transfer points, Park & Ride, shared resources).
- Begin seeking funding to support potential pilot(s)

Regional Transportation Tool/Website and Resource Development

- Draft and release RFP/detailed scope of work for vendor solicitation (functional specs, data integration needs, resource library features, accessibility needs, trip-planning options, etc.).
- Conduct a full audit of existing printed and digital transit materials from providers.
- Begin developing content outlines and templates for key resources including rider guides and employer toolkits.
- Initiate data-sharing agreements between providers for ongoing service planning and website integration.

Unified Transit Voice

- Identify key stakeholders and existing advocacy groups to engage and create the basis for an Advocacy Working Group.
- Discuss unified messaging with the Transit Coordination Working Group.

Communicating Travel Options

Outreach and User Education

- Begin employer and workforce engagement with priority geographies/industries.
- Conduct employee commute surveys with the pilot employer workforce.
- Begin developing modules for community presentations, workforce development partners, and other relevant stakeholders/partners.
- *Travel Training*
 - Develop curriculum and materials for introductory travel training sessions targeted to seniors, individuals with disabilities, and case managers.

- Coordinate with human service organizations to identify target audiences for the travel training pilot.
- *Try Transit Campaign*
 - Begin internal planning for the Year 2 Try Transit campaign. Coordinate with transit providers, secure fare commitments, and draft branding concepts.

Quarter 4: Full Implementation

TMO Administration and Governance

Governance and Partner Engagement

- Plan and conduct recurring Executive Committee and Advisory Board meetings

Performance Tracking and Strategic Planning

- Prepare Year 1 annual assessment and report
- Draft Year 2 work plan, budget, and schedule

Improving Transit Through Regional Collaboration

Transit Coordination Working Group

- Finalize operational plans for Year 2 service coordination pilot(s).
- Draft Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or other relevant agreements for shared coordination efforts where applicable.
- Identify external funding sources to support Year 2 pilot implementation where needed.

Regional Transportation Tool/Website + Resource Development

- Facilitate vendor Q&A, proposal reviews, and evaluation process.
- Select vendor partner, finalize contract, and begin platform development.
- Providers begin sharing data and materials needed for a regional platform (service information, routes, schedules, resource content, etc.).
- Provide oversight, content coordination, and data verification to support vendor work.
- Finalize draft and design for the first set of print and digital resources, including rider guides and employer toolkits.
- Begin translation and ADA formatting for all materials.

Unified Transit Voice

- Bring together an extended group of stakeholders to inform the development of a Unified Transit Voice. This may form an Advocacy Working Group.
- Draft core Unified Transit Voice framework: purpose, messaging goals, target audiences.
- Outline key state/local policy priorities that may shape initial messaging.

Communicating Travel Options

Outreach and User Education

- Begin on-site educational events, travel trainings, and commute workshops with pilot employers.
- Broaden distribution of educational materials through human services, workforce boards, and local government partners.

- Conduct Year 1 evaluation to assess outreach reach, partner engagement, employer participation, and coordination progress.
- *Travel Training*
 - Conduct first pilot travel training sessions with human service organization partners.
- *Try Transit Campaign*
 - Finalize full design and branding package for Year 2 Try Transit campaign.
 - Confirm participating providers, partner commitments, and campaign structure for Year 2 Try Transit campaign.

Year Two: Scaling Up and First Campaign Launch

With foundational structures in place, the second year shifts the TMO into full-scale program delivery. This phase emphasizes expanding partnerships, launching the region’s first “Try Transit” campaign, piloting transit coordination projects, and building capacity through a train-the-trainer model and platform development. The TMO also begins asserting its voice in legislative and policy arenas, using insights from Year One to refine messaging and advocacy strategies. Year Two is about building momentum—translating planning into visible, impactful action.

TMO Administration and Governance

Governance and Partner Engagement

- Plan and conduct recurring Executive Committee and Advisory Board meetings.
- Hire part-time staff or interns to assist with program implementation.

Financial Sustainability and Long-Term Positioning

- Continue exploring funding opportunities.

Performance Tracking and Strategic Planning

- Continue to track performance measures and perform required reporting.

Improving Transit Through Regional Collaboration

Transit Coordination Working Group

- Launch first coordination pilots (e.g. schedule alignments, transfer point coordination, Park & Ride pilots, shared staffing opportunities).
- Formalize interagency agreements (MOUs) to support ongoing coordination activities.
- Facilitate quarterly Transportation Coordinating Working Group meetings to monitor pilots, troubleshoot issues, and identify additional coordination opportunities.
- Support participating providers in identifying and pursuing external grant funding for service expansion, pilot continuation, or operational efficiencies.
- Expand collaborative service planning to address additional rural, intercity, or underserved areas identified in Year 1.

Regional Transportation Tool/Website and Resource Development

- Vendor begins platform development.

- TMO provides oversight, content coordination, and data verification to support vendor work.
- Complete initial platform backend and functionality for soft launch testing.
- Conduct internal testing: trip-planning tools, navigation, accessibility features, and mobile compatibility.
- Prepare first run of print-ready materials for distribution.
- Update website content to reflect additional providers, expanded resources, and schedule updates.
- Continue expanding resource library based on employer and partner feedback.

Unified Transit Voice

- Finalize initial regional transit messaging framework with the Advocacy Working Group.
- Develop shared talking points and policy briefs.
- Plan schedule for upcoming legislative sessions, regional planning efforts, and policy conversations.
- Launch first public awareness messaging campaign aligned with regional transit priorities.
- Prepare and train partners for upcoming legislative and advocacy opportunities.
- Refine messaging based on early feedback and policy developments.

Communicating Travel Options

Outreach and User Education

- Expand employer engagement beyond the initial pilot employer.
- Expand employer engagement to additional industries, geographies, and new HR partners.
- Deliver ongoing outreach, commute workshops, and travel trainings for both employer audiences and human service agency partners.
- *Travel Training*
 - Develop train-the-trainer materials for workforce agencies, human services staff, and partner organizations that will help sustain ongoing travel training delivery.
 - Conduct follow-up travel training sessions and build organizational capacity to scale travel training in Year 2.

Try Transit Campaign

- Confirm participating providers, partner commitments, and campaign structure for Year 2 Try Transit campaign.
- Launch the first Try Transit campaign with broad regional promotion across employer networks, workforce partners, and community channels.

Year Three and Beyond: Ongoing Growth and Establishment

By Year Three, the Southeast Minnesota TMO will have transitioned from a start-up organization to an established regional entity with active programs, partnerships, and a growing presence. This phase focuses on expanding the TMO's impact, institutionalizing coordination efforts, and embedding its services and advocacy into long-term regional systems. Building on the foundation laid in Years One and Two, the TMO will deepen relationships, scale pilot programs, formalize governance structures, and broaden public engagement to ensure long-term sustainability and relevance. Key efforts during this phase include

expanding service planning collaboration, launching recurring campaigns, scaling training efforts, and advancing a unified regional transit voice.

TMO Administration and Governance

Organizational Set-Up and Staffing

- Expand staffing or volunteer leadership as needed to scale programs, maintain quality, and deepen partnerships.

Governance and Partner Engagement

- Continue planning and conducting recurring Executive Committee and Advisory Board meetings to ensure regular governance, oversight, and decision-making.

Financial Sustainability and Long-Term Positioning

- Pursue multi-year funding commitments from local, state, and federal sources to ensure long-term sustainability.

Performance Tracking and Strategic Planning

- Refine and update the TMO Work Plan and performance measures based on progress to date and evolving needs.
- Conduct a strategic planning process to revisit and refine the TMO's mission, vision, and long-term goals, incorporating lessons learned from the first two years.

Improving Transit Through Regional Collaboration

Transit Coordination Working Group

- Expand regional coordination work into new service planning (rural access, intercity connections, shared NEMT services, driver recruitment support, etc.).
- Fully formalize interagency coordination structures as ongoing governance functions.

Regional Transportation Tool/Website and Resource Development

- Continue website expansion: real-time updates, service alerts, additional providers, trip-planning tools, and third-party app integration.

Unified Transit Voice

- Expand Unified Transit Voice to serve as a permanent regional coalition for transit investment and policy coordination.

Communicating Travel Options

Outreach and User Education

- Build out year-round outreach and education calendar (employer events, travel trainings, community events, seasonal promotions).

Try Transit Campaign

- Establish an annual Try Transit campaign as a recurring regional promotion.

Travel Training

- Scale train-the-trainer programs to expand travel training capacity through partner organizations.

Appendix A: Draft Budget

	<i>TMO Manager Salary (1 FTE)</i>	<i>Benefits (Healthcare, Retirement, Legally Required)</i>	<i>Part-Time Staff</i>	<i>SCC Admin</i>	<i>Marketing + Incentives</i>	<i>Operations</i>	<i>Regional Transportation Tool Development</i>	<i>Total Budget</i>
<i>Notes</i>	Assumes 3% growth year over year	Assumes 35% of salary with 3% growth annually	Hourly	5%	Increase of \$5,000 per year	Office equipment/software, printing, transportation	\$40,000 for building the tool and \$20,000 per year for maintenance and service fees.	
Year 1: Foundation Building and Launching TMO Services	\$ 100,000	\$ 35,000	\$ -	\$ 10,975	\$ 35,000	\$ 9,500	\$ 40,000	\$ 230,475
Q1 January - March	\$ 25,000	\$ 8,750	\$ -	\$ 2,188	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ -	\$ 45,938
<i>TMO Administration & Governance</i>	<i>\$ 2,000</i>							
<i>Transportation Coordinating Working Group</i>	<i>\$ 8,000</i>							
<i>Unified Transit Voice</i>	<i>\$ 3,000</i>							
<i>Regional Tool + Website Development</i>	<i>\$ 8,000</i>							
<i>Outreach & User Education, Try Transit, Travel Training</i>	<i>\$ 4,000</i>				\$ 10,000			
<i>Try Transit</i>	<i>\$ -</i>							
Q2 April - June	\$ 25,000	\$ 8,750	\$ -	\$ 2,763	\$ 10,000	\$ 1,500	\$ 10,000	\$ 58,013
<i>Transportation Coordinating Working Group</i>	<i>\$ 5,000</i>							
<i>Unified Transit Voice</i>	<i>\$ 3,000</i>							
<i>Regional Tool + Website Development</i>	<i>\$ 10,000</i>						\$ 10,000	
<i>Outreach & User Education, Try Transit, Travel Training</i>	<i>\$ 7,000</i>				\$ 10,000			
Q3 July - September	\$ 25,000	\$ 8,750	\$ -	\$ 3,263	\$ 10,000	\$ 1,500	\$ 20,000	\$ 68,513
<i>Transportation Coordinating Working Group</i>	<i>\$ 5,000</i>							
<i>Unified Transit Voice</i>	<i>\$ 4,000</i>							
<i>Regional Tool + Website Development</i>	<i>\$ 6,000</i>						\$ 20,000	
<i>Outreach & User Education, Try Transit, Travel Training</i>	<i>\$ 10,000</i>				\$ 5,000			
Q4 October - December	\$ 25,000	\$ 8,750	\$ -	\$ 2,763	\$ 10,000	\$ 1,500	\$ 10,000	\$ 58,013
<i>Transportation Coordinating Working Group</i>	<i>\$ 6,000</i>							
<i>Unified Transit Voice</i>	<i>\$ 2,000</i>							
<i>Regional Tool + Website Development</i>	<i>\$ 5,000</i>						\$ 10,000	
<i>Outreach & User Education, Try Transit, Travel Training</i>	<i>\$ 12,000</i>				\$ 5,000			
Year 2: Scaling and Long-Term Growth	\$ 103,000	\$ 36,050	\$ 60,000	\$ 13,053	\$ 35,000	\$ 7,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 274,103
Q1 January - March	\$ 25,750	\$ 9,013	\$ 15,000	\$ 3,988	\$ 7,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 20,000	\$ 83,751
Q2 April - June	\$ 25,750	\$ 9,013	\$ 15,000	\$ 3,063	\$ 10,000	\$ 1,500	\$ -	\$ 64,326
Q3 July - September	\$ 25,750	\$ 9,013	\$ 15,000	\$ 3,063	\$ 10,000	\$ 1,500	\$ -	\$ 64,326
Q4 October - December	\$ 25,750	\$ 9,013	\$ 15,000	\$ 2,938	\$ 7,500	\$ 1,500	\$ -	\$ 61,701
Year 3: Scaling and Long-Term Growth	\$ 106,090	\$ 37,132	\$ 74,263	\$ 14,224	\$ 40,000	\$ 7,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 298,709
Q1 January - March	\$ 26,523	\$ 9,283	\$ 18,566	\$ 4,344	\$ 10,000	\$ 2,500	\$ 20,000	\$ 91,215
Q2 April - June	\$ 26,523	\$ 9,283	\$ 18,566	\$ 3,294	\$ 10,000	\$ 1,500	\$ -	\$ 69,165
Q3 July - September	\$ 26,523	\$ 9,283	\$ 18,566	\$ 3,294	\$ 10,000	\$ 1,500	\$ -	\$ 69,165
Q4 October - December	\$ 26,523	\$ 9,283	\$ 18,566	\$ 3,294	\$ 10,000	\$ 1,500	\$ -	\$ 69,165
3-Year Total	\$309,090	\$108,182	\$134,263	\$38,252	\$110,000	\$23,500	\$80,000	\$803,286

Budget Assumptions

- SCC Administrative Fee is an estimate and will need to be confirmed as part of the hosting agreement.
- Marketing and Travel Incentives refers to a variety of marketing expenses and incentives used during the promotion of transit and other alternative modes, including Try Transit and Travel Training. Incentives could include free transit passes, gift cards for prize drawings, giveaways, and similar expenses. Marketing expenses include assistance with logo development and branding and could include paid targeted social media posts, billboards, and any expenses related to events.
- Regional Transportation Tool Development includes outsourced web development and the potential for subscribing to a third-party tool trip planning and ridematching tool to create this resource.

Appendix B: TMO Manager Job Description

The TMO Program Manager will lead the day-to-day operations of a newly formed Southeast Minnesota TMO. This dynamic role is central to coordinating and advancing the TMO's priority initiatives to Improving Transit Through Regional Coordination and facilitating Communication Around Travel Options in the Region. The Manager will execute and evolve the TMO workplan while fostering strong relationships with partners, employers, communities, and stakeholders.

This role includes overseeing programs and initiatives that promote transit and other transportation options, building awareness and behavior change among residents and workers, and ensuring financial and organizational sustainability through strategic outreach, partnerships, and funding development.

Key Responsibilities

Program Leadership and Implementation

Design and deliver the services of the TMO, including supporting a regional working group of transit agencies and other transportation operators, developing, and maintaining a regional transportation tool/website, coordinating unified transit advocacy for the region, creating travel options resources, and coordinating with employers to help deliver employer programs and facilitate commuter engagement.

Partner and Employer Engagement

Serve as the primary point of contact for employers, board members, and community partners. Facilitate outreach activities such as presentations, tabling events, and one-on-one support to promote commuting alternatives and access to services and education. Facilitate partnerships with educational institutions to expand staff capacity. This could include internships, class projects, competitions, or similar collaborations.

Organizational and Funding Development

Develop and execute strategies for long-term sustainability of the TMO through diversified funding (grants, sponsorships, memberships), including grant proposals, execution, and reporting. Support and collaborate with the Executive Committee and the Advisory Board and to align on priorities and impact. Hire vendors and support staff as needed to complete the work plan.

Data-Informed Strategy

Collect, analyze, and report data to assess the performance and impact of programs. Use data insights to drive decision-making and guide continuous improvement.

Regional Collaboration

Coordinate with transportation agencies, local governments, health systems, educational institutions, and regional employers to align strategies and support broader mobility and access goals.

Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

Strategic Leadership & Program Management

- Strong organizational and project management skills; ability to balance multiple priorities and initiatives.
- Experience designing and executing outreach and engagement programs.
- Ability to develop and lead workplans, manage timelines, and measure outcomes.

- Experience hiring and managing vendors and staff.

Relationship-Building & Communication

- Excellent verbal and written communication, with the ability to tailor messages to a variety of audiences.
- Ability to engage, support, and collaborate with a diverse set of stakeholders, including employers, government officials, service providers, educational institutions, and commuters.
- Comfortable facilitating meetings, presentations, and public-facing events.

Analytical Thinking & Adaptability

- Proficiency in interpreting data and applying insights to improve programs.
- Problem-solving mindset with the ability to navigate challenges with flexibility and creativity.
- Commitment to equity, accessibility, and inclusivity in transportation services and community outreach.

Technical & Digital Literacy

- Comfortable using project management tools and communication platforms.
- Working knowledge of data sources, software, or systems relevant to transportation or community development is a plus.

This position plays a critical role in shaping Southeast Minnesota's approach to sustainable and equitable mobility. From working with employers to supporting active transportation to maintaining organizational health, the TMO Manager will have a direct hand in improving transportation outcomes for communities across the region.

Appendix C: Sample Resolution

Resolution in Support of Establishing a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) to Serve the Eleven-County Region of Southeast Minnesota

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Legislature has invested in a comprehensive study to evaluate the feasibility and benefits of establishing a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) to serve the eleven-county region of Southeast Minnesota, encompassing Houston, Fillmore, Mower, Freeborn, Steele, Dodge, Olmsted, Winona, Wabasha, Goodhue, and Rice Counties; and

WHEREAS, the findings of this study clearly demonstrate that a regional TMO would significantly strengthen transportation and transit systems across Southeast Minnesota by:

1. **Responding to regional needs** expressed by employers, schools, healthcare providers, transit agencies, social services, older adults, and individuals with disabilities;
2. **Building upon national success stories**, where TMOs have proven effective in improving transit services, even in rural areas;
3. **Leveraging existing leadership and support** and the readiness of trusted organizations to host and implement a regional TMO;
4. **Fostering community-driven solutions**, by creating a platform where residents, businesses, and public agencies can collaboratively identify transportation gaps and develop shared solutions;
5. **Driving regional economic growth**, by increasing access to reliable transportation, which helps workers maintain employment, supports businesses in retaining talent, and stabilizes the regional labor market;
6. **Improving quality of life**, by offering residents greater freedom in choosing where to live and work, while also promoting economic sustainability, better health, access to education and services, and reducing environmental impacts across all communities;

WHEREAS, the anticipated benefits of a Southeast Minnesota TMO are significant and far-reaching, including:

- **Expanded access to transportation, employment, and services**
- **Stronger regional workforce and economic competitiveness**
- **More coordinated and efficient mobility solutions**
- **Improved health, education, and equity outcomes**
- **Increased eligibility for grants and funding**
- **Greater environmental sustainability**

WHEREAS, the real-life impact of a TMO would be seen and felt in communities across the region:

- **Residents** would gain better access to work, healthcare, education, and daily necessities;
- **Employers** would benefit by accessing a broader and more diverse workforce, as improved transportation options expand the geographic reach of potential employees;
- **Workers** would benefit from more affordable and reliable transportation, reducing commuting costs and increasing access to job opportunities across the region;
- **Local businesses** would be better positioned to stay, expand, and attract new investment, as improved mobility makes the region more attractive for both workers and entrepreneurs;

- **Older adults and people with disabilities** would enjoy increased independence and community participation;
- **Transit providers** would operate more efficiently through regional coordination;
- **Cities and counties** would become more livable and resilient;

WHEREAS, [Insert Organization Name] recognizes and strongly supports the transformative potential of a TMO in advancing equitable, efficient, and sustainable transportation solutions for all people in the eleven-county region;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that [Insert Organization Name] expresses its full and enthusiastic support for the establishment of a **Transportation Management Organization** to coordinate, enhance, and expand transit and transportation services across Southeast Minnesota—for the benefit of current and future generations.



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: June 23, 2025

Agenda Item: CCTV Operations

Subject | Summary:

Agenda Category:

Submitted By: Michele Peterson

Recommended Motion: Review the proposal as presented.

Community Engagement and Outreach:

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount:

Ongoing Cost :

One-Time Cost :

Included in Current Budget?:

FISCAL DETAILS:

Fund Name(s) (Operations | Capital):

Account Code:

Background:

Attachments:

[CCTV Proposal.docx](#)

DRAFT Proposal: Transfer of CCTV Operations from the City of Chatfield to Chatfield Public Schools

Overview

This proposal outlines a mutually beneficial arrangement in which the Chatfield Public School District would assume full operational control of CCTV from the City of Chatfield. Under this arrangement, residents would continue to receive the same level of access, programming, and service, while the City would retain its local media presence without the burden of operational oversight and ongoing capital cost-sharing responsibilities.

Current Programming and Services

CCTV currently provides the following content and services to the community via Channel 11 on both Mediacom and HBC as well as through online access:

- Slideshow featuring city messaging, alerts, and public information
- Live and Tape-Delayed Events, including:
 - School Sporting Events
 - School Fine Arts and Award Ceremonies
 - Western Days Parade
 - School Board Meetings (Tape Delay)
 - City Council Meetings (Tape Delay)
 - Community Church Services (Tape Delay)
 - Live regional sports (e.g., St. Paul Saints games)
 - Community programming from other PEG channels (e.g., Insight 7)
 - National PEG programming such as *White House Chronicles* and *Eat Well Be Happy*

Financials

The current CCTV funding model consists of:

Annual cable franchise fees (HBC and Mediacom)
\$15,000 annual contribution from the School District
\$15,000 from the City's local levy

To create financial viability of this proposal, the School District requests that the City redirect its annual cable franchise fee revenue to the District. In doing so, the City would be free to reallocate its \$15,000 annual CCTV tax levy elsewhere and be relieved of any future capital purchase or program expansion costs. This reallocation maintains current service levels at no additional cost to the City, while allowing the District to realize operational efficiencies without incurring new expenses.

Note: The School District is including revenue estimations from NSPN subscriptions in the annual budget projection.

Benefits to the City of Chatfield

In exchange for the annual cable franchise fee allocation, the City will continue to receive the following services provided by the School District:

- Programming and Playback of City Council meetings (tape delayed) on Channel 11, with full video-on-demand and archiving
- Access to and editing rights for the City slideshow/messaging system available 24/7 on Channel 11 and online
- Weekly playback and online archive of Community Church Services
- Full broadcast coverage of School District events on Channel 11 and online using the NSPN platform, with all footage archived and accessible live and on-demand
- Seamless continuation of all community and PEG programming

Fund Balance Disbursement

Given the collaborative investment by both entities resulting in building up CCTV's current reserves, the School District proposes an even split of the existing fund balances as the full cost of capital expenditures will be borne by the district in future years. Note: In 2018 the School District paid the full cost (\$20,000) of upgrades for HD streaming, video-on-demand, and slideshow servers. Final fund balance for division will be determined as of July 31, 2025.

Operating Fund Balance: \$59,000

Capital Fund Balance: \$16,394.21

Conclusion

This proposal ensures the continued delivery of high-quality public access programming that Chatfield residents have come to expect. By transferring operational responsibilities to the School District, the City would be relieved of management duties, could reallocate \$15,000 in tax revenue to other priorities, and spend its share of the fund balance (\$37,697) as it sees fit. The School District portion of the fund balance dispersion would be reserved for future CCTV equipment/operational needs. The annual budget proposed nets the school district little or no cost savings compared to the current arrangement.

Proposed timeline for transfer: August 1, 2025

Potential Transfer to be discussed: School Board - June 11th, CCTV Board – June 11th, City Council – June 23rd.

Current contracts (30-day cancellation provision)

- Technical Coordinator (12/31/25) \$1,400 per month
- Programming Coordinator (12/31/25) \$607 per month
- Liaison (12/31/25) \$435 per month
- City Mtgs/School Mtgs/Memorial Day/Western Days (12/31/25) \$140 per month



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: June 23, 2025

Agenda Item: Street Project

Subject | Summary:

Agenda Category:

Submitted By: Michele Peterson

Recommended Motion: Review proposed project, budget, and timeline.

Community Engagement and Outreach:

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount:

Ongoing Cost :

One-Time Cost :

Included in Current Budget?:

FISCAL DETAILS:

Fund Name(s) (Operations | Capital):

Account Code:

Background:

Attachments:

[Chatfield_2025_MillandOverlay_8x11.pdf](#)

[2025 Street Project Cost.pdf](#)

[2026 Street Overlay Project Details.xlsx](#)

2025 MILL & OVERLAY
PROJECT

Chatfield, MN

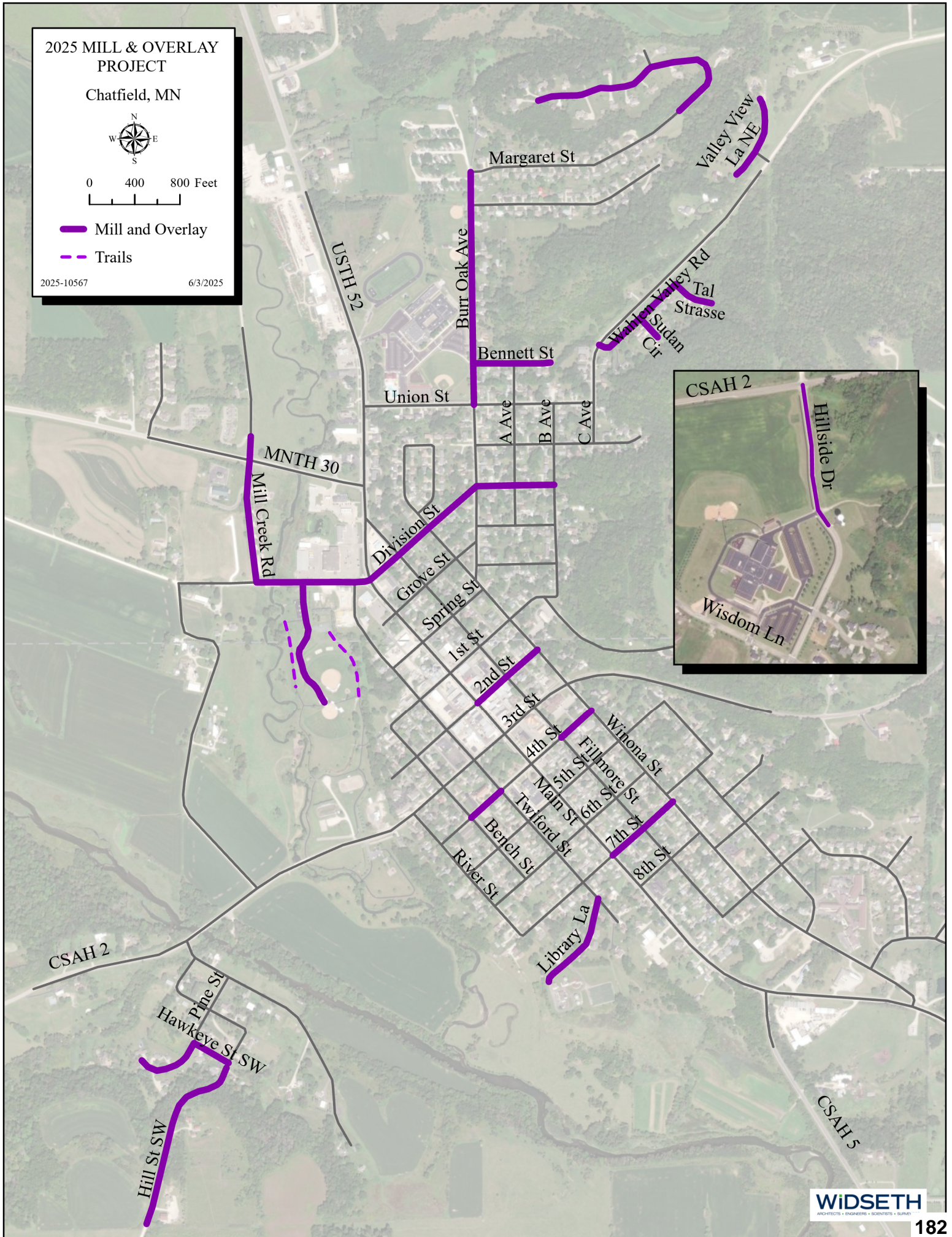


0 400 800 Feet

- Mill and Overlay
- Trails

2025-10567

6/3/2025



Mill and Overlay Areas
City of Chatfield
 Widseth Project 2025-10567

May 23, 2025

Street	From	To	Pavement Area	Estimated Cost
Burr Oak Ave	Union Street	Margaret Street	73,800	\$ 184,500.00
Bennet Street	Burr Oak Ave	Dead End	21,400	\$ 37,642.78
Division Street (East)	TH 52	Avenue B	57,344	\$ 139,627.36
Mill Creek Road	Division Street	Hwy 30	32,160	\$ 67,400.33
Division Street Bridge Approaches			1,184	\$ 15,000.00
Mill Creek Park (North)	North Driveway	Ballfields	4,550	\$ 11,726.39
Division Street (West)	Mill Creek Rd	TH 52	28,000	\$ 51,801.11
Mill Creek Road	Hwy 30	City Limits	5,280	\$ 14,848.67
Hill Street	1616 Hill Street	City Limits	25,440	\$ 62,442.67
Pine Street	Hawkeye Street	Cul De Sac	25,250	\$ 36,941.81
Hawkeye Street	Pine Street	Hill Street	7,140	\$ 10,933.83
Wahlen Valley			31,320	\$ 63,994.00
Suden Circle			14,270	\$ 24,283.31
Tal Strasse			12,600	\$ 21,645.00
Margaret Street	Pond	Cul De Sac	85,070	\$ 136,493.31
Hillside Drive	Water Tower	Hwy 30	37,720	\$ 75,155.11
Valley View			33,460	\$ 48,732.28
Library Lane			15,660	\$ 23,169.50
Second Street	Winona Street	TH 52	25,842	\$ 80,091.98
Fourth Street	Winona Street	Fillmore Street	12,240	\$ 21,118.00
Seventh Street	TH 52	Winona Street	21,390	\$ 41,003.42
Fourth Street	Twiford Street	Bench Street	12,036	\$ 35,185.03
Avenue B - Retaining Walls				\$ 175,000.00
Mill Creek Parking Lot	Ballfields			\$ 20,000.00
Mill Creek Trails				\$ 39,565.26
Twiford Street SW - Curb to CB	Sping St	LP Catch Basin		\$ 9,025.00
		Bit Total	583,156	
	Estimated Construction Total			\$ 1,447,326.13

Engineering and Construction Observation \$ 27,410.00

Estimated Project Total \$ 1,474,736.13

2026 Street Overlay Project							
Street	Dimensions	# of Manholes	# of Gate Valves	# of Catch Basins	Catch Basin Rating	Curbline Ft	Comments
Burr Oak Ave: Union St- Margaret St.	73,800 sq ft	7	5	5	2-resets, 1-reset/repair 2-culverts	1,114	#1-2'-3'; #2-2'-2';#3-2'-6'; #4-71/2'-9', #5-5'-1'=total-39'. Hydrant curb-23'
Bennet St: Burr Oak Ave-deadend	21,440 sq ft	2	2	0		48	Hydrant curb- 10'
Division St: Highway 52- Ave B	57,344 sq ft	10	6	14	8-good 4-reset/rehab	765	#12-2'-2'; #20-2'-4'; #21-1'-4'=Total 15' 202 Burr Oak-driveway approach
Mill Creek Rd: Division St-Hwy 30	32,160 sq ft	9	1	8	7-good 1-reset	363	#33-2'-6-; #34-2'-7"; #40-7'-7'=Total-31' Driveway slab 6'x24'
Division St: Hwy 52- Mill Creek Rd	27,840 sq ft	5	4	6	5-Good 1-adjust	64	#31& #32-4'-1"; #30-2 1/2'-2 1/2'=Total-13'
Mill Creek Park-North driveway to ballfields	4,550 sq ft	0	0	0		0	Gravel drive to ballfields; add parking lot
Mill Creek Rd: Hwy 30- Mill Pond Entry	5,920 sq ft	1	0	0		0	
Hill St: 1616 Hill St- City limits	25,440 sq ft	0	0	0			
Pine St: Hawkeye St-Cul de sac	18,900 sq ft+culdesac	0	0	0		0	
Hawkeye St: Pine St-Hill St	7,140 sq ft	0	0	0		0	
Wahlen Valley	31,320 sq ft	4	2	6	2-good 4-reset/rehab	229	#7-8'-5'; #9-6'-5'=Total-24' Add 86' inplace of bit. Curb
Suden Circle	7,920 sq ft+culdesac	1	0	0		32	
Tal Strasse	12,600 sq ft	2	1	0		0	
Margaret St: Pond- Cul de sac	678,240 sq ft	5	0	0		0	
Hillside Dr: Water tower-Hwy 30	36,720 sq ft	3	6	4	1-Good 1-Reset 2-Rehab	277	#54- 2'-4"; #55-3'-5"; #57-3'-3'=Total-20'
Valley View	20,760 sq ft+2 culdesacs	0	0	0		0	
Library Ln	15,660 sq ft	0	0	0		0	
2nd St: Winona St-Hwy 52	25,482 sq ft	5	4	7	3-good,2-rehab,2-new	584	#41- 2'-3'; #42-3'-3'=Total-11'
4th St: Winona St-Fillmore St	12,240 sq ft	0	0	0		52	Complete intersection.-Fillmore & 4th
7th St: Hwy 52-Winona St	21,390 sq ft	3	0	4	1-new,1-good,2-rest/rehab	108	#53-20' x 6' Alley approach. #48-3'-6'; #49-2'-3'; #50-3'-4';= Total-21'
4th St: (Priority 2) Twiford St-Bench St	12,036 sq ft	0	1	0		310	Priority 2
	1,148,902+culdesacs	57	32	46		3,946	24 Resets; 174'-CB Curb; 33'-hydrant curb-3; 264 sq ft approac



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: June 23, 2025

Agenda Item: Public Works - Wastewater Facility Plan Quote

Subject | Summary:

Agenda Category:

Submitted By: Michele Peterson

Recommended Motion: Review quotes received.

Community Engagement and Outreach:

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount:

Ongoing Cost :

One-Time Cost :

Included in Current Budget?:

FISCAL DETAILS:

Fund Name(s) (Operations | Capital):

Account Code:

Background:

Attachments:

[20250602 Letter to Chatfield with Facility Plan Proposal.pdf](#)

[6-4-2025 Widseth Proposal WWTF_Final.pdf](#)



Building a Better World
for All of Us®

June 2, 2025

RE: City of Chatfield
Wastewater Facilities Plan
SEH No. CHATF 182957 14.00

Brian Burkholder
Public Works Director
City of Chatfield
21 Second Street SEH
Chatfield, MN 55923

Dear Mr. Burkholder:

SEH emphasizes long-term value, technical depth, and strategic advantages for the City of Chatfield's Facility Planning needs.

Here is a list of items that provide added value to consider when reviewing SEH's proposal for facility planning.

1. Comprehensive, Long-Term Planning
 - a. SEH's proposal is a single, comprehensive plan that covers the wastewater treatment facility's needs over the next 20 years. If the plan is broken into phases without considering the full picture, early repairs or replacements may not align with future improvements. This could lead to inefficiencies or the need to redo work.
2. In-House Expertise Across All Disciplines
 - a. SEH has all the experts needed in-house, so there's no need to bring in outside partners. This makes coordination smoother, improves accountability, and helps keep things on track – especially when timing and accuracy matter, like during facility planning and funding applications.
3. Advanced Technical Modeling
 - a. SEH will use Biowin software to model current and proposed treatment layouts, optimizing treatment including phosphorus and nitrogen removal. This approach not only enhances the facility plan but also sets the stage for the next phase of the project lifecycle, which is design.
4. Regulatory Influence
 - a. SEH's strong connections with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the Minnesota Environmental Science and Economic Board (MESERB) provide a strategic advantage. These connections help SEH navigate complex permitting and compliance issues more effectively. Even if the City is not a member of MESERB, SEH can still use the insights from MESERB meetings to support permitting efforts.
5. Proven Experience and Leadership
 - a. Jessica Hedin, the project manager, has over 27 years of experience in wastewater, including 19 years at SEH. She has successfully led numerous facility plans and offers the leadership needed to help the City achieve its goals. Backed by SEH's broad expertise in facility planning, Jessica and the team are well-equipped to deliver a successful outcome.

Engineers | Architects | Planners | Scientists

Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc., 2351 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 300, Sartell, MN 56377-2485

320.229.4300 | 800.572.0617 | 888.908.8166 fax

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6. Funding

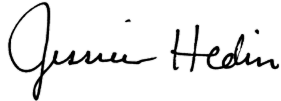
- a. SEH's funding team has proactively included assistance with a League of Minnesota Cities grant application – at no cost to the City – to help cover the costs for other funding applications. If successful, this reduces the City's out-of-pocket cost from the proposal amount of \$74,700 to \$69,700, narrowing the fee gap while adding significant value.

While SEH's proposal may carry a higher upfront cost, it delivers unmatched value through comprehensive planning, technical sophistication, regulatory insight, and experienced leadership. Choosing SEH is an investment in the City's infrastructure resilience and regulatory readiness for decades to come.

If our proposed fee presents any concerns, we would be glad to explore adjustments to the project scope and arrive at a solution that aligns more comfortably with your budget.

Sincerely,

SHORT ELLIOTT HENDRICKSON INC.



Jessica Hedin, PE
Project Manager
(Lic. MN, SD)

jah

Enclosure – Letter Proposal for WWTF Facility Plan

c: Steven Schlichter – City of Chatfield
Michele Peterson – City of Chatfield
Tim Korby - SEH

https://sehincazure-my.sharepoint.com/personal/jhedin_sehinc_com/documents/chatfield_wwtf_facility_plan/20250602_letter_to_city_with_proposal_facility_plan.docx



Building a Better World
for All of Us®

June 2, 2025

RE: City of Chatfield
WWTF Facilities Plan
SEH No. CHATF 182957 14.00

Brian Burkholder
Public Works Director
City of Chatfield
21 Second Street SE
Chatfield, MN 55923

Dear Mr. Burkholder:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal letter for providing engineering services related to the preparation of a Facilities Plan for the City of Chatfield wastewater treatment facility (WWTF) and assist with funding applications for the project.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City of Chatfield WWTF was last upgraded in the mid-2000's, which means the facility is almost 20 years old. In addition to the age of the equipment nearing its useful life, new limits for Total Phosphorus (TP) and Total Nitrogen (TN) are expected to be included in the facility's next NPDES permit. The existing facility is not capable of meeting both TP and TN limits and will require some modifications and/or additional processes to meet the anticipated limits. The operations staff at the WWTF have been trying different operational strategies that have resulted in some success in reducing both TP and TN, but not both at the same time.

While staff is planning for major improvements at the WWTF to occur in five years, the planning and funding process for projects like this can take years. The City is being proactive and is considering starting the planning process now by preparing a Facilities Plan for the WWTF. The Facilities Plan is a required document for most funding opportunities including Clean Water Revolving Fund (CWRP) and Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG). A Facilities Plan will look at projected flows and loads for a 20-year planning period, age and condition of the existing equipment and structures, and preliminary effluent limits provided by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) in order to develop alternatives to consider for meeting the needs of the facility. The alternatives will be evaluated, and cost estimates will be prepared to determine which alternative is the best fit. The cost estimates can then be used by the City in funding applications and grant requests, as well as planning for other funding resources, such as sewer rates, to pay for the project.

While the Facilities Plan is being developed, the search for funding and submittal of funding requests can begin. In addition to CWRP and PSIG funding programs mentioned above, funding can be sought from the State of Minnesota through a bonding bill appropriation and the Federal Government in the form of congressionally directed spending, also known as an earmark. All of these funding programs require submittal of requests or applications to be considered.

Engineers | Architects | Planners | Scientists

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With the intention of starting the Facilities Plan and the search for funding, the following strategy is proposed:

1. Request placement on the Project Priority List (PPL) before the first Friday in March of 2026 (deadline for FY27 funding cycle). The PPL does not obligate the City to do a project but provides the State a list of projects that are seeking funding and the cost of the project. Placement on the PPL is strongly encouraged for funding requests and will be needed to award funding.
2. Begin the Facilities Plan for the WWTF. The process of preparing a Facilities Plan with all of the required components typically takes 6-7 months. The Facilities Plan must be reviewed and approved by MPCA.
3. Submittal of funding requests and the search for other funding opportunities can get started near the end of the Facility Planning process (early 2026) for FY27 funding. The Facility Plan will provide a project cost that can be used in applications for congressionally directed spending (CDS) and Minnesota bonding bill requests.

Below you will find a detailed scope of work for the Facilities Plan and for Funding Assistance.

FACILITIES PLAN SCOPE OF WORK

SEH proposes the following work scope for preparing a Facilities Plan for the City of Chatfield Wastewater Treatment Facility. All of the items in the scope are required to be part of the Facilities Plan in accordance with Minnesota Statute.

Existing Conditions

1. Describe existing treatment system.
2. Provide a wastewater treatment facility site map including surrounding features.
3. Evaluate design and treatment capacity of existing treatment plant processes and facilities and biosolids processing and disposal. Discuss performance of existing treatment facilities as related to current effluent standards and Minnesota Rules Chapter 7041 for biosolids.
4. Analyze existing residential and non-residential flows using water records provided by the City and compare those flows to the metered wastewater flows at the WWTF.
5. A cursory evaluation of infiltration/inflow (I/I) is required by the Minnesota State Statute 7077.0272 for facility planning purposes. It is understood the City does not currently have significant I&I issues and this evaluation should confirm that.
6. Determine current wastewater influent suspended solids, BOD, ammonia nitrogen, phosphorous, and Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (TKN) loads based on existing records. Compare current loads to expected loads based on typical per capita waste contributions.

Future Conditions

1. Describe the planning area and indicate on a USGS map.
2. The MPCA under Minnesota Rules Chapter 7077 requires evaluation of treatment alternatives capable of meeting the applicable effluent, water quality, and public health requirements for 20 years.

The population within the planning area must be projected over the 20-year planning period to the year 2049. This is 20 years after 2029, which is the earliest anticipated year to initiate operation of an improved facility.

It is also proposed that City staff contact local industries or significant users, if any exist, regarding current and future potential wastewater contributions. The City needs to obtain a letter of intent from the industries for any expansion.

3. Project future residential and non-residential flows for the years 2049. These projections will be based on population projections as furnished by the City or using the State Demographic Center data. Flows will be presented in the methodology and on forms required by the MPCA and will be estimated for average dry weather, average wet weather, peak hourly wet weather, and peak instantaneous wet weather flow conditions.
4. Project future residential and non-residential BOD, suspended solids, ammonia-nitrogen, phosphorous, and TKN loads for the year 2049. Design loading will be done in the methodology and on the forms requested by the MPCA.
5. Request preliminary effluent limits from the MPCA. SEH will prepare the preliminary effluent limit application. The MPCA fee for this request is \$1,550 which shall be paid directly from the City to the MPCA and is not included in this scope of work.

Process WWTF Alternative Analysis

The Alternatives Analysis will look at in-kind equipment replacement and structure improvements due to age and condition as well as process alternatives for meeting preliminary effluent limits provided by the MPCA. **Biowin software will be used to model the existing facility and various proposed layouts to understand the performance of different alternatives.** Process alternatives may include modification to existing structures and/or addition of new structures and equipment. It is anticipated that the preliminary effluent limits will include limits for total phosphorus and total nitrogen. Below is a list of the structures or processes and improvements to be considered in the Facilities Plan. **Please note that references to replacement below will be part of a high-level condition assessment of all infrastructure and whether there is a need for replacement will be clearly defined in the Facilities Plan.**

1. Headworks Building
 - a. Equipment replacement including screening, compactor, grit removal, grit classifier, pumping
 - b. Building improvements including roof, lighting, doors, HVAC
 - c. Replacement of piping and valves as needed
 - d. Coatings for wetwell
2. Equalization
 - a. Add equalization to provide more steady, consistent flow to secondary treatment for better biological nutrient removal
 - b. Consider having plant return flows, including the filtrate from the reed beds, go to an equalization basin to temper slug loads, especially during rain events
3. Oxidation Ditch
 - a. Equipment replacement including aeration system and instrumentation (DO, ORP)
 - b. Separate aeration and mixing systems (currently both provided by diffused aeration)
 - c. Evaluate both biological and chemical phosphorus removal and biological nitrogen removal (will develop up to three alternatives to achieve TP and TN removal)
 - d. Add chemical feed system for phosphorus removal (will be needed whether it's the main treatment process for total phosphorus or a polishing/back-up system)
 - e. Protection from freezing; current tanks are open top and experience freezing in winter
 - f. Replacement of piping and valves as needed

- g. Coatings for tank walls
- 4. Secondary Clarifiers & Sludge Pumping
 - a. Equipment replacement including clarifier mechanisms, covers, sludge pumps, weir cleaners
 - b. Replacement of piping and valves as needed
 - c. Coatings for clarifier tanks
- 5. Ultraviolet Disinfection
 - a. Replacement of equipment including UV disinfection
 - b. Replacement of piping and valves as needed
 - c. Bypass valve is broken and needs to be replaced
 - d. Coatings for effluent disinfection channel
- 6. Aerobic Digesters
 - a. Replacement of equipment including blowers, diffusers, covers
 - b. Add cover to second aerobic digester to prevent freezing
 - c. Replacement of piping and valves as needed, including automated valves
 - d. Coatings for digester tanks
- 7. Reed Beds
 - a. Use non-invasive reeds when re-planting is needed (generally after sludge removal)
 - b. Replacement of piping and valves as needed
 - c. Reduce slug loads of phosphorus in red bed filtrate
 - d. Replace with sludge dewatering and land application or landfilling
 - e. Consider U of M recommendations for existing reed beds
- 8. Power/Electrical/Instrumentation
 - a. Upgrade electrical systems
 - b. Replace back-up generator (existing is old, but low hours)
 - c. SCADA was recently updated
 - d. Update VFDs
 - e. Update flow measurement instrumentation
- 9. Flood Elevation – Berms
 - a. Add valves to storm drains at flood berms
- 10. All Buildings – General
 - a. Replacement of roofs, doors, HVAC
 - b. Repair or replace exterior of buildings

11. Additional Storage

- a. Add new storage – consider both cold storage and heated storage
- b. Consider separate structure and attachment to existing garage

12. Site Improvements

- a. Replacement of and addition to fencing around the perimeter of the WWTF site. Additional fencing may be needed if additional tankage is determined during alternatives analysis.

Other Information Required for WWTF Facilities Plans

1. Review recommended wastewater treatment plant reliability in accordance with published MPCA Reliability Guidelines.
2. Completion of CWRP Cost and Effectiveness Forms.
3. Complete an Environmental Information Worksheet (EIW) and Section 106 Review as required by MPCA. This includes a review by a Natural Resource scientist for cursory review and identification potential environmental impacts based on project activities and possible permits needed. Please note that a more detailed Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is required if the plant capacity will increase by 50% or more. An EAW is not anticipated and is not included in this scope of work. If any additional environmental review is required due to award of a grant, such as a Federal earmark, it would be considered additional work and is not included in this proposal.
4. Prepare a projected timeline for the project design, MPCA review and approval, advertising and bidding, construction, and obtaining start-up/operation.

Cost Analysis

1. Estimate capital and operation and maintenance costs of the treatment facility alternatives and biosolids alternatives.
2. Develop a present worth cost analysis incorporating capital cost, operation and maintenance costs, and salvage values. The present worth analysis will be applied to the treatment process alternatives per MPCA requirements.
3. Review existing annual sewer service rates and estimate changes based on proposed capital improvements. This is not considered a rate study, but will provide an estimated impact on current sewer rates for several funding scenarios. A proper rate study is recommended during the design phase when the cost estimates are more focused.
4. Discuss opportunities for funding, including, but not limited to, Public Facilities Authority (PFA) low interest loans, the Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG), Green Project Reserve (GPR) grant funds, and funding opportunities for water reuse.

Informational Meetings

1. Meet with City and staff to discuss the Facilities Plan. This proposal includes up to four (4) meetings with staff to discuss the Facilities Plan. Two (2) in-person meetings and two (2) virtual meetings are included in this proposal. These meetings will be used to review flow and load projections, workshop alternatives for future conditions, and review costs of alternatives.
2. Assist City in conducting a public hearing. A Public Hearing is required as part of the Facilities Plan.
3. Following City authorization, SEH will submit the Facilities Plan to the MPCA for review and approval.
4. Meet with agency staff to discuss project details and respond to their comments. One (1) virtual meeting is included in this proposal.

FUNDING ASSISTANCE SCOPE OF WORK

SEH proposes the following work scope to assist the City of Chatfield with funding applications and funding requests in 2026 for a project at the WWTF. The following are the anticipated funding opportunities SEH will assist the City with pursuing.

League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) Grant Application

SEH will assist in preparing an application for the Client to submit to the League of Minnesota Cities. The following will be included with this work

- Assisting in writing, reviewing and submitting a League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) Grant Navigator application. This assistance would be provided by SEH at **no cost to the City**.
- The LMC would be in the amount up to \$5,000. You would be notified within 30 days of submittal and receive the grant dollars soon after.
- You will be responsible for completing a resolution in support of the LMC grant application.
- The Grant Navigator award of \$5,000 would be used to have SEH complete the additional infrastructure project grant applications listed below.

State Bonding Bill Application

- Preparation and submittal of one state bonding bill application to assist in funding the Client's proposed infrastructure project.

Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS/Earmark) Application

SEH will write and prepare a CDS application to a Congressional member's office in 2026. The following will be included with this work:

- Correspond with Congressional members offices to understand the local CDS application process.
- SEH will gather information to complete the application including project information and project details, and as well as supporting information to be included with the application.
- SEH will provide a template letter of support which will be available to the City of Chatfield. The City will coordinate letters of support and provide completed letters to SEH to include with the application.
- Complete the CDS application in early Spring 2026.

Public Facility Authority (PFA) Requests

- Prepare and submit forms to request proposed infrastructure project on the Project Priority List (PPL) which is due by the first Friday in March of 2026.
- Preparation and submittal requesting your infrastructure project be listed on the Intended Use Plan (IUP) with the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority.

Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) Application

- Preparation of one PSIG funding application for your proposed project, including the justification of grant eligible items, if applicable.
- Applications are due in July 2026.

Technical Advising/Lobbying Assistance

- Provide technical advising assistance and outreach to state/local legislators to help position your infrastructure project for grant approvals/awards.

Excluded Tasks

The following tasks are not included in the Scope of Work:

1. Design, bidding, and construction related services.
2. Performing hydrogeological studies or soil borings.
3. Conducting archaeological and historical surveys.
4. Conducting a site survey to identify boundary of the 100-year flood elevation if this data is not readily available.
5. Performing property surveys.
6. Advertising for a public hearing and paying related publication costs. SEH will prepare the Notice for the Public Hearing.
7. Contacting industries for future growth and expansion plans.
8. Developing treatment agreements with major contributing industries.
9. Cost of various agency (DNR, historical society, MPCA, etc.) fees for reviews involved with requesting preliminary effluent limits and preparing the environmental information worksheet (EIW) or Section 106 Review.
10. Preparing an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) or Antidegradation Review. Neither of these are anticipated for this Facilities Plan.
11. Any accounting, financial advisor, bond counsel, or legal fees.
12. Grant administration costs and expenses (after grant is awarded).
13. NPDES permit applications (reissuance or modification).
14. Rate study for any alternatives presented in the Facilities Plan.

City Requirements

The City responsibilities will be as follows:

1. Contact industries for future growth and expansion plans.
2. Advertise for public hearing and pay related publication expenses. SEH will prepare the Notice for the Public Hearing.
3. Cost of various agency (DNR, historical society, MPCA, etc.) fees for reviews involved with requesting the preliminary effluent limits and preparing the environmental information worksheet (EIW).
4. Review of facility planning documents and participation in the public hearing.

SEH will need the following data and information from the City prior to preparing the Facility Plan:

1. Plans of the existing wastewater treatment systems, including any recent upgrades.
2. Projected wastewater flows and loads from industries.

3. Three years of water use data broken down by quarter and classification.
4. Three years of Daily Monitoring Reports (DMRs) for influent flow, BOD, TSS, ammonia nitrogen/nitrates, total phosphorous, and TKN data.
5. Selected flow monitoring charts and/or data related to past and current I/I reduction efforts to be used in the cursory I/I analysis and in estimating flow peaking factors.
6. Biosolids quantities and characteristics for the past three years.
7. Wastewater operating records – expenses and revenue summaries for the past three years.
8. Current user fees and sewer access charges (SAC).
9. A copy of the current sewer use ordinance.
10. A copy of any significant industrial user agreements with industries.
11. Minutes and attendance roster from the public hearing.

FEE

The hourly estimated fee is subject to a not-to-exceed amount of \$74,700 including expenses. Details for the hourly payment method will be set forth in the agreement documents. Please note that if the application for the League of Minnesota Cities is successful and the City is awarded \$5,000, it can be used towards the assistance provided by SEH for funding applications. This means that the out-of-pocket cost for the City is \$69,700.

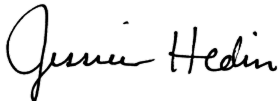
SCHEDULE

SEH proposes to complete the facility plan within 24-30 weeks of receiving a signed agreement from the City of Chatfield and receiving requested data necessary to prepare the Facilities Plan. The estimated fee in the Letter Agreement is based on receiving an executed proposal and requested data by June 30, 2025.

We look forward to working with the City of Chatfield on this project. If you should have any questions, please contact Jessica Hedin directly at 612.247.2768. Thank you.

Sincerely,

SHORT ELLIOTT HENDRICKSON INC.



Jessica Hedin, PE
Project Manager
(Lic. MN, SD)

dmk

c: Steven Schlichter – City of Chatfield
Michele Peterson – City of Chatfield
Tim Korby – SEH

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Rochester

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June 4, 2025

City of Chatfield
Attn: Michele Peterson, City Administrator
21 Second Street SE
Chatfield, MN 55923
507-867-1518
mpeterson@ci.chatfield.mn.us

**RE: Confirmation of Request for Engineering Services
Wastewater Treatment Facility – Facility Plan**

Dear Ms. Peterson,

In response to your request, we are pleased to submit our proposal to provide professional services for the evaluation of the Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF). Our proposal includes preparing a complete facility plan and outlines funding options and recommendations for future WWTF improvements.

Background Information

The existing WWTF has been in operation for nearly 20 years since the most recent facility improvements have been made. The facility has a continuous discharge to the North Branch of the Root River and is classified as a Class C facility. The facility is designed to treat:

An Average Wet-Weather (AWW) flow of 0.487 million gallons per day (MGD)

An Average Dry-Weather (ADW) flow of 0.357 MGD

A Peak Hourly Wet-Weather (PHWW) flow of 1.29 MGD

Five-Day Carbonaceous Biochemical Oxygen Demand (CBOD) of 726 pounds per day (lbs/d)

Total Suspended Solids (TSS) of 826 lbs/d

The facility consists of numerous lift stations, influent flow meter, mechanical screening, grit removal, oxidation ditch, secondary clarifiers, ultraviolet disinfection, effluent flow meter, aerobic sludge storage tanks and reed drying beds. The City was recently issued a Final National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) / State Disposal System (SDS) Permit (No. MN0021857) on Feb. 1, 2025 and the current permit coverage is set to expire on Jan. 31, 2030. The current NPDES/SDS Permit does not include Phosphorus and/or Nitrogen discharge limits.

The facility has been meeting effluent standards; however, because of the length of time required to plan, design, obtain approval/permits, secure financing and construct new infrastructure, it is time to start an evaluation of the path forward for the municipal wastewater treatment system. City Staff is seeking input and guidance on assessing the conditions of the existing WWTF and to provide recommendations for proposed infrastructure rehabilitation and replacement and funding options for such improvements.

Project Approach and Team

Widseth proposes the preparation of a wastewater facility plan in accordance with MPCA requirements detailed in Minnesota Rules 7077.0272. A facility plan must address numerous items to meet MPCA requirements and provide the solid foundation for grant and loan opportunities. The MPCA also requires numerous supplemental items that must also be submitted for approval for the facility plan. These items will be provided as part of a complete facility plan submittal. The facility plan only will be submitted to the MPCA for review and comment after an opportunity for public input and upon acceptance by the City of Chatfield.

The funding will likely be thru the Public Facilities Authority. The funding sources are likely the Clean Water Revolving Fund (CWRP), the Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) and a Water Infrastructure Fund (WIF) Grant. A project with more restrictive or new permit limits such as nitrogen and phosphorus will rank higher for the funding. PSIG is available with a new permit limit or more restrictive permit limit.

For this important City of Chatfield project, Widseth has teamed with Nero Engineering to provide comprehensive wastewater facilities planning services. Nero Engineering is a consulting firm which specializes in wastewater treatment projects, including Facilities Planning reports for municipal WWTFs.

Proposed Detailed Scope of Services

The facility plan will contain information required by regulatory agencies such as the MPCA prior to their consideration of a wastewater treatment project for grant and/or loan participation. The facility plan will also evaluate possible future nitrogen and phosphorus limits.

Upon approval by MPCA, the facility plan will become the framework for future work at the wastewater treatment facility.

The tasks described below have been developed to provide the necessary consulting services to complete the facility plan in accordance with guidelines established by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

Facility Plan Task Summary

Task 1: Existing Facilities Assessment

- Kickoff Meeting
- Site walk-through w/Team for existing facilities assessment
- Review existing and historical plant data, including existing NPDES Permit
- Determine if additional data collection is needed
- Liquid train plant hydraulics review
- Gather & assess existing equipment/process data
- Tech Memo 1- Existing Facilities Assessment

Task 2- Costing and Alternatives Evaluations

- Develop cost estimate for process/equipment improvements
- Develop cost opinions on existing facility upgrades
- Develop process flow diagrams of Alternatives
- Develop Site Plans for Alternatives
- Develop Concept Layouts for Alternatives
- Develop Cost Opinions for Alternatives
- Alternatives Brainstorming Workshop with Staff
- Tech Memo 2- Costing and Alternatives Evaluations
- Present Alternatives and Costs to Staff

Task 3- Recommendations & Funding Opportunities

- Detailed Recommendation for Upgrades
- Determine Funding/Grant Opportunities
- Detailed Recommendation for Expansion Alternative
- Develop Implementation Schedule

Task 4- Facility Plan Preparation & Submittal

- Prepare Draft Facility Plan, to include the following information:
 - **Introduction**
 - Description of Existing Background and Scope
 - **Environment**
 - Community Setting
 - Municipal Water Supply
 - Surface Water, Geological Features, and Rainfall
 - Historical, Archeological, and Cultural Elements
 - Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species
 - **Existing Wastewater Treatment Facilities**
 - Effluent Standards
 - Wastewater Treatment Plant Basis of Design/Condition and History
 - Wastewater Collection System and Lift Stations Overview
 - Historical Flows and Loadings
 - Inflow and Infiltration (I&I)
 - Existing Wastewater Facility Capabilities
 - **Design Values**
 - Planning Period
 - Planning Area
 - Population Trends
 - Historical Data
 - Projected Wastewater Flows and Loads
 - Design Flow Determination
 - Load Projection

- **Discussion of Treatment Alternatives**
 - Development of Alternatives
 - Preliminary Treatment
 - Biological Treatment
 - Disinfection
 - Biosolids Processing
 - Process Building
 - Control Building
 - Phosphorus Removal
 - **Evaluation of Alternatives**
 - Technical Considerations, including Innovative Technologies
 - Cost Considerations, including Funding Options
 - Environmental Considerations, including Anti-Degradation Requirements
 - **Conclusions, Recommendations and Implementation**
 - Conclusions
 - Recommendations
 - Implementation Schedule
- Complete Environmental Information Worksheet
 - Present Recommendations to Staff & City Council
 - Submit Final Facility Plan
 - Schedule and conduct public hearing on the proposed improvements

PROPOSED FEES SUMMARY

WiDSETH proposes to perform the services described above on an hourly basis, in accordance with the applicable attached fee schedules, for the estimated amount of \$64,400.

If you are in agreement with our proposed scope of services, please sign and return one copy of this letter to us as our authorization to proceed.

We realize this is an important project for the City of Chatfield, and for that reason, we welcome the opportunity to sit down with you and your staff to go over this proposal and review the approach and work tasks we have listed. If necessary, we will revise the proposal to better conform to the needs of the City for this project.

We thank you for giving us the opportunity to submit this proposal and look forward to working with City staff to make this proposed project a reality.

Sincerely,
Widseth Smith Nolting & Associates, Inc.

Craig Britton, P.E.

.....

Accepted by the City of Chatfield: The above proposal and attached General Provisions of Professional Services Agreement are satisfactory and WIDSETH is authorized to do the work as specified. Payment will be made monthly in accordance with the terms on the fee schedule.

By: _____

Date _____

General Provisions of Professional Services Agreement

These General Provisions are intended to be used in conjunction with a letter-type Agreement or a Request for Services between Widseth Smith Nolting & Assoc., Inc., a Minnesota Corporation, hereinafter referred to as WIDSETH, and a CLIENT, wherein the CLIENT engages WIDSETH to provide certain Architectural, and/or Engineering services on a Project.

As used herein, the term "this Agreement" refers to (1) the WIDSETH Proposal Letter which becomes the Letter Agreement upon its acceptance by the Client, (2) these General Provisions and (3) any attached Exhibits, as if they were part of one and the same document. With respect to the order of precedence, any attached Exhibits shall govern over these General Provisions, and the Letter Agreement shall govern over any attached Exhibits and these General Provisions. These documents supersede all prior communications and constitute the entire Agreement between the parties. Amendments to this Agreement must be in writing and signed by both CLIENT and WIDSETH.

ARTICLE 1. PERIOD OF SERVICE

The term of this Agreement for the performance of services hereunder shall be as set forth in the Letter Agreement. In this regard, any lump sum or estimated maximum payment amounts set forth in the Letter Agreement have been established in anticipation of an orderly and continuous progress of the Project in accordance with the schedule set forth in the Letter Agreement or any Exhibits attached thereto. WIDSETH shall be entitled to an equitable adjustment to its fee should there be an interruption of services, or amendment to the schedule.

ARTICLE 2. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The scope of services covered by this Agreement shall be as set forth in the Letter Agreement or a Request for Services. Such scope of services shall be adequately described in order that both the CLIENT and WIDSETH have an understanding of the expected work to be performed.

If WIDSETH is of the opinion that any work they have been directed to perform is beyond the Scope of this Agreement, or that the level of effort required significantly exceeds that estimated due to changed conditions and thereby constitutes extra work, they shall notify the CLIENT of that fact. Extra work, additional compensation for same, and extension of time for completion shall be covered by a revision to the Letter Agreement or Request for Services and entered into by both parties.

ARTICLE 3. COMPENSATION TO WIDSETH

A. Compensation to WIDSETH for services described in this Agreement shall be on a Lump Sum basis, Percentage of Construction, and/or Hourly Rate basis as designated in the Letter Agreement and as hereinafter described.

1. A Lump Sum method of payment for WIDSETH's services shall apply to all or parts of a work scope where WIDSETH's tasks can be readily defined and/or where the level of effort required to accomplish such tasks can be estimated with a reasonable degree of accuracy. The CLIENT shall make monthly payments to WIDSETH within 30 days of date of invoice based on an estimated percentage of completion of WIDSETH's services.
2. A Percentage of Construction or an Hourly Rate method of payment of WIDSETH's services shall apply to all or parts of a work scope where WIDSETH's tasks cannot be readily defined and/or where the level of effort required to accomplish such tasks cannot be estimated with any reasonable degree of accuracy. Under an Hourly Rate method of payment, WIDSETH shall be paid for the actual hours worked on the Project by WIDSETH technical personnel times an hourly billing rate established for each employee. Hourly billing rates shall include compensation for all salary costs, payroll burden, general, and administrative overhead and professional fee. In a Percentage of Construction method of payment, final compensation will be based on actual bids if the project is bid and WIDSETH's estimate to the CLIENT if the project is not bid. A rate schedule shall be furnished by WIDSETH to CLIENT upon which to base periodic payments to WIDSETH.
3. In addition to the foregoing, WIDSETH shall be reimbursed for items and services as set forth in the Letter Agreement or Fee Schedule and the following Direct Expenses when incurred in the performance of the work:
 - (a) Travel and subsistence.
 - (b) Specialized computer services or programs.
 - (c) Outside professional and technical services with cost defined as the amount billed WIDSETH.
 - (d) Identifiable reproduction and reprographic costs.
 - (e) Other expenses for items such as permit application fees, license fees, or other additional items and services whether or not specifically identified in the Letter Agreement or Fee Schedule.
4. The CLIENT shall make monthly payments to WIDSETH within 30 days of date of invoice based on computations made in accordance with the above charges for services provided and expenses incurred to date, accompanied by supporting evidence as available.

B. The CLIENT will pay the balance stated on the invoice unless CLIENT notifies WIDSETH in writing of the particular item that is alleged to be incorrect within 15 days from the date of invoice, in which case, only the disputed item will remain undue until resolved by the parties. All accounts unpaid after 30 days from the date of original invoice shall be subject to a service charge of 1 % per month, or the maximum amount authorized by law, whichever is less. WIDSETH shall be entitled to recover all reasonable costs and disbursements, including reasonable attorneys fees, incurred in connection with collecting amount owed by CLIENT. In addition, WIDSETH may, after giving seven days written notice to the CLIENT, suspend services and withhold deliverables under this Agreement until WIDSETH has been paid in full for all amounts then due for services, expenses and charges. CLIENT agrees that WIDSETH shall not be responsible for any claim for delay or other consequential damages arising from suspension of services hereunder. Upon payment in full by Client and WIDSETH's resumption of services, the time for performance of WIDSETH's services shall be equitably adjusted to account for the period of suspension and other reasonable time necessary to resume performance.

ARTICLE 4. ABANDONMENT, CHANGE OF PLAN AND TERMINATION

Either Party has the right to terminate this Agreement upon seven days written notice. In addition, the CLIENT may at any time, reduce the scope of this Agreement. Such reduction in scope shall be set forth in a written notice from the CLIENT to WIDSETH. In the event of unresolved dispute over change in scope or changed conditions, this Agreement may also be terminated upon seven days written notice as provided above.

In the event of termination, and upon payment in full for all work performed and expenses incurred to the date of termination, documents that are identified as deliverables under the Letter Agreement whether finished or unfinished shall be made available by WIDSETH to the CLIENT pursuant to Article 5, and there shall be no further payment obligation of the CLIENT to WIDSETH under this Agreement except for payment of an amount for WIDSETH's anticipated profit on the value of the services not performed by WIDSETH and computed in accordance with the provisions of Article 3 and the Letter Agreement.

In the event of a reduction in scope of the Project work, WIDSETH shall be paid for the work performed and expenses incurred on the Project work thus reduced and for any completed and abandoned work, for which payment has not been made, computed in accordance with the provisions of Article 3 and the Letter Agreement.

ARTICLE 5. DISPOSITION OF PLANS, REPORTS AND OTHER DATA

All reports, plans, specifications, field data and notes and other documents, including all documents on electronic media, prepared by WIDSETH or its consultants are Instruments of Service and shall remain the property of WIDSETH or its consultants, respectively. WIDSETH and its subconsultants retain all common law, statutory and other reserved rights, including, without limitation, copyright. WIDSETH and its subconsultants maintain the right to determine if production will be made, and allowable format for production, of any electronic media or data to CLIENT or any third-party. Upon payment in full of monies due pursuant to the Agreement, WIDSETH shall make hard copies available to the CLIENT, of all documents that are identified as deliverables under the Letter Agreement. If the documents have not been finished (including, but not limited to, completion of final quality control), then WIDSETH shall have no liability for any claims expenses or damages that may arise out of items that could have been corrected during completion/quality control. Any Instruments of Service provided are not intended or represented to be suitable for reuse by the CLIENT or others on extensions of the Project or any other project. Any modification or reuse without written verification or adaptation by WIDSETH for the specific purpose intended will be at CLIENT's sole risk and without liability or legal exposure to WIDSETH. CLIENT shall indemnify, defend and hold harmless WIDSETH from any and all suits or claims of third parties arising out of use of unfinished documents, or modification or reuse of finished documents, which is not specifically verified, adapted, or authorized in writing by WIDSETH. This indemnity shall survive the termination of this Agreement.

Should WIDSETH choose to deliver to CLIENT documents in electronic form, CLIENT acknowledges that differences may exist between any electronic files delivered and the printed hard-copy. Copies of documents that may be relied upon by CLIENT are limited to the printed hard-copies that are signed and/or sealed by WIDSETH. Files in electronic form are only for convenience of CLIENT. Any conclusion or information obtained or derived from such electronic documents will be at user's sole risk. CLIENT acknowledges that the useful life of some forms of electronic media may be limited because of deterioration of the media or obsolescence of the computer hardware and/or software systems. Therefore, WIDSETH makes no representation that such media will be fully usable beyond 30 days from date of delivery to CLIENT.

ARTICLE 6. CLIENT'S ACCEPTANCE BY PURCHASE ORDER OR OTHER MEANS

In lieu of or in addition to signing the acceptance blank on the Letter Agreement, the CLIENT may accept this Agreement by permitting WIDSETH to commence work on the project or by issuing a purchase order signed by a duly authorized representative. Such purchase order shall incorporate by reference the terms and conditions of this Agreement. In the event of a conflict between the terms and conditions of this Agreement and those contained in the CLIENT's purchase order, the terms and conditions of this Agreement shall govern. Notwithstanding any purchase order provisions to the contrary, no warranties, express or implied, are made by WIDSETH.

WIDSETH

ARCHITECTS ■ ENGINEERS
SCIENTISTS ■ SURVEYORS

ARTICLE 7. CLIENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

A. To permit WIDSETH to perform the services required hereunder, the CLIENT shall supply, in proper time and sequence, the following at no expense to WIDSETH:

1. Provide all program, budget, or other necessary information regarding its requirements as necessary for orderly progress of the work.
2. Designate in writing, a person to act as CLIENT's representative with respect to the services to be rendered under this Agreement. Such person shall have authority to transmit instructions, receive instructions, receive information, interpret and define CLIENT's policies with respect to WIDSETH's services.
3. Furnish, as required for performance of WIDSETH's services (except to the extent provided otherwise in the Letter Agreement or any Exhibits attached hereto), data prepared by or services of others, including without limitation, core borings, probes and subsurface explorations, hydrographic and geohydrologic surveys, laboratory tests and inspections of samples, materials and equipment; appropriate professional interpretations of all of the foregoing; environmental assessment and impact statements; property, boundary easement, right-of-way, topographic and utility surveys; property descriptions; zoning, deed and other land use restriction; and other special data not covered in the Letter Agreement or any Exhibits attached hereto.
4. Provide access to, and make all provisions for WIDSETH to enter upon publicly or privately owned property as required to perform the work.
5. Act as liaison with other agencies or involved parties to carry out necessary coordination and negotiations; furnish approvals and permits from all governmental authorities having jurisdiction over the Project and such approvals and consents from others as may be necessary for completion of the Project.
6. Examine all reports, sketches, drawings, specifications and other documents prepared and presented by WIDSETH, obtain advice of an attorney, insurance counselor or others as CLIENT deems necessary for such examination and render in writing, decisions pertaining thereto within a reasonable time so as not to delay the services of WIDSETH.
7. Give prompt written notice to WIDSETH whenever CLIENT observes or otherwise becomes aware of any development that affects the scope of timing of WIDSETH's services or any defect in the work of Construction Contractor(s), Consultants or WIDSETH.
8. Initiate action, where appropriate, to identify and investigate the nature and extent of asbestos and/or pollution in the Project and to abate and/or remove the same as may be required by federal, state or local statute, ordinance, code, rule, or regulation now existing or hereinafter enacted or amended. For purposes of this Agreement, "pollution" and "pollutant" shall mean any solid, liquid, gaseous or thermal irritant or contaminant, including smoke, vapor, soot, alkalis, chemicals and hazardous or toxic waste. Hazardous or toxic waste means any substance, waste pollutant or contaminant now or hereafter included within such terms under any federal, state or local statute, ordinance, code, rule or regulation now existing or hereinafter enacted or amended. Waste further includes materials to be recycled, reconditioned or reclaimed.

If WIDSETH encounters, or reasonably suspects that it has encountered, asbestos or pollution in the Project, WIDSETH shall cease activity on the Project and promptly notify the CLIENT, who shall proceed as set forth above. Unless otherwise specifically provided in the Letter Agreement, the services to be provided by WIDSETH do not include identification of asbestos or pollution, and WIDSETH has no duty to identify or attempt to identify the same within the area of the Project.

With respect to the foregoing, CLIENT acknowledges and agrees that WIDSETH is not a user, handler, generator, operator, treater, storer, transporter or disposer of asbestos or pollution which may be encountered by WIDSETH on the Project. It is further understood and agreed that services WIDSETH will undertake for CLIENT may be uninsurable obligations involving the presence or potential presence of asbestos or pollution. Therefore, CLIENT agrees, except (1) such liability as may arise out of WIDSETH's sole negligence in the performance of services under this Agreement or (2) to the extent of insurance coverage available for the claim, to hold harmless, indemnify and defend WIDSETH and WIDSETH's officers, subcontractor(s), employees and agents from and against any and all claims, lawsuits, damages, liability and costs, including, but not limited to, costs of defense, arising out of or in any way connected with the presence, discharge, release, or escape of asbestos or pollution. This indemnification is intended to apply only to existing conditions and not to conditions caused or created by WIDSETH. This indemnification shall survive the termination of this Agreement.

9. Provide such accounting, independent cost estimating and insurance counseling services as may be required for the Project, such legal services as CLIENT may require or WIDSETH may reasonably request with regard to legal issues pertaining to the Project including any that may be raised by Contractor(s), such auditing service as CLIENT may require to ascertain how or for what purpose any Contractor has used the moneys paid under the construction contract, and such inspection services as CLIENT may require to ascertain that Contractor(s) are complying with any law, rule, regulation, ordinance, code or order applicable to their furnishing and performing the work.

10. Provide "record" drawings and specifications for all existing physical features, structures, equipment, utilities, or facilities which are pertinent to the Project, to the extent available.
11. Provide other services, materials, or data as may be set forth in the Letter Agreement or any Exhibits attached hereto.

B. WIDSETH may use any CLIENT provided information in performing its services. WIDSETH shall be entitled to rely on the accuracy and completeness of information furnished by the CLIENT. If WIDSETH finds that any information furnished by the CLIENT is in error or is inadequate for its purpose, WIDSETH shall endeavor to notify the CLIENT. However, WIDSETH shall not be held responsible for any errors or omissions that may arise as a result of erroneous or incomplete information provided by CLIENT.

ARTICLE 8. OPINIONS OF COST

Opinions of probable project cost, construction cost, financial evaluations, feasibility studies, economic analyses of alternate solutions and utilitarian considerations of operations and maintenance costs provided for in the Letter Agreement or any Exhibits attached hereto are to be made on the basis of WIDSETH's experience and qualifications and represent WIDSETH's judgment as an experienced design professional. It is recognized, however, that WIDSETH does not have control over the cost of labor, material, equipment or services furnished by others or over market conditions or contractors' methods of determining their prices, and that any evaluation of any facility to be constructed, or acquired, or work to be performed on the basis of WIDSETH's cost opinions must, of necessity, be speculative until completion of construction or acquisition. Accordingly, WIDSETH does not guarantee that proposals, bids or actual costs will not substantially vary from opinions, evaluations or studies submitted by WIDSETH to CLIENT hereunder.

ARTICLE 9. CONSTRUCTION PHASE SERVICES

CLIENT acknowledges that it is customary for the architect or engineer who is responsible for the preparation and furnishing of Drawings and Specifications and other construction-related documents to be employed to provide professional services during the Bidding and Construction Phases of the Project, (1) to interpret and clarify the documentation so furnished and to modify the same as circumstances revealed during bidding and construction may dictate, (2) in connection with acceptance of substitute or equal items of materials and equipment proposed by bidders and Contractor(s), (3) in connection with approval of shop drawings and sample submittals, and (4) as a result of and in response to WIDSETH's detecting in advance of performance of affected work inconsistencies or irregularities in such documentation. CLIENT agrees that if WIDSETH is not employed to provide such professional services during the Bidding (if the work is put out for bids) and the Construction Phases of the Project, WIDSETH will not be responsible for, and CLIENT shall indemnify and hold WIDSETH, its officers, consultant(s), subcontractor(s), employees and agents harmless from, all claims, damages, losses and expenses including attorneys' fees arising out of, or resulting from, any interpretation, clarification, substitution acceptance, shop drawing or sample approval or modification of such documentation issued or carried out by CLIENT or others. Nothing contained in this paragraph shall be construed to release WIDSETH, its officers, consultant(s), subcontractor(s), employees and agents from liability for failure to perform in accordance with professional standards any duty or responsibility which WIDSETH has undertaken or assumed under this Agreement.

ARTICLE 10. REVIEW OF SHOP DRAWINGS AND SUBMITTALS

WIDSETH may review and approve or take other appropriate action on the contractor's submittals or shop drawings for the limited purpose of checking for general conformance with information given and design concept expressed in the Contract Documents. Review and/or approval of submittals is not conducted for the purpose of determining accuracy and completeness of other details or for substantiating instructions for installation or performance of equipment or systems, all of which remain the exclusive responsibility of the contractor. WIDSETH's review and/or approval shall not constitute approval of safety precautions, or any construction means, methods, techniques, sequences or procedures. WIDSETH's approval of a specific item shall not indicate approval of an assembly of which the item is a component. WIDSETH's review and/or approval shall not relieve contractor for any deviations from the requirements of the contract documents nor from the responsibility for errors or omissions on items such as sizes, dimensions, quantities, colors, or locations. Contractor shall remain solely responsible for compliance with any manufacturer requirements and recommendations.

ARTICLE 11. REVIEW OF PAY APPLICATIONS

If included in the scope of services, any review or certification of any pay applications, or certificates of completion shall be based upon WIDSETH's observation of the Work and on the data comprising the contractor's application for payment, and shall indicate that to the best of WIDSETH's knowledge, information and belief, the quantity and quality of the Work is in general conformance with the Contract Documents. The issuance of a certificate for payment or substantial completion is not a representation that WIDSETH has made exhaustive or continuous inspections, reviewed construction means and methods, verified any back-up data provided by the contractor, or ascertained how or for what purpose the contractor has used money previously paid by CLIENT.

ARTICLE 12. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

If included in the scope of services, WIDSETH will provide, with reasonable promptness, written responses to requests from any contractor for clarification, interpretation or information on the requirements of the Contract Documents. If Contractor's RFI's are, in WIDSETH's professional opinion, for information readily apparent from reasonable observation of field conditions or review of the Contract Documents, or are reasonably inferable therefrom, WIDSETH shall be entitled to compensation for Additional Services for WIDSETH's time in responding to such requests. CLIENT may wish to make the Contractor responsible to the CLIENT for all such charges for additional services as described in this article.

ARTICLE 13. CONSTRUCTION OBSERVATION

If included in the scope of services, WIDSETH will make site visits as specified in the scope of services in order to observe the progress of the Work completed. Such site visits and observations are not intended to be an exhaustive check or detailed inspection, but rather are to allow WIDSETH to become generally familiar with the Work. WIDSETH shall keep CLIENT informed about the progress of the Work and shall advise the CLIENT about observed deficiencies in the Work. WIDSETH shall not supervise, direct or have control over any Contractor's work, nor have any responsibility for the construction means, methods, techniques, sequences or procedures selected by the Contractor nor for the Contractor's safety precautions or programs in connection with the Work. These rights and responsibilities are solely those of the Contractor. WIDSETH shall not be responsible for any acts or omissions of any Contractor and shall not be responsible for any Contractor's failure to perform the Work in accordance with the Contract Documents or any applicable laws, codes, regulations, or industry standards.

If construction observation services are not included in the scope of services, CLIENT assumes all responsibility for interpretation of the Contract Documents and for construction observation, and the CLIENT waives any claims against WIDSETH that are connected with the performance of such services.

ARTICLE 14. BETTERMENT

If, due to WIDSETH's negligence, a required item or component of the Project is omitted from the construction documents, WIDSETH shall not be responsible for paying the cost required to add such item or component to the extent that such item or component would have been required and included in the original construction documents. In no event, will WIDSETH be responsible for any cost or expense that provides betterment or upgrades or enhances the value of the Project.

ARTICLE 15. CERTIFICATIONS, GUARANTEES AND WARRANTIES

WIDSETH shall not be required to sign any documents, no matter by who requested, that would result in WIDSETH having to certify, guarantee or warrant the existence of conditions whose existence WIDSETH cannot ascertain. CLIENT agrees not to make resolution of any dispute with WIDSETH or payment of any amount due to WIDSETH in any way contingent upon WIDSETH signing such certification.

ARTICLE 16. CONTINGENCY FUND

CLIENT and WIDSETH agree that certain increased costs and changes may be required because of possible omissions, ambiguities or inconsistencies in the plans and specifications prepared by WIDSETH, and therefore, that the final construction cost of the Project may exceed the bids, contract amount or estimated construction cost. CLIENT agrees to set aside a reserve in the amount of 5% of the Project construct costs as a contingency to be used, as required, to pay for any such increased costs and changes. CLIENT further agrees to make no claim by way of direct or third-party action against WIDSETH with respect to any increased costs within the contingency because of such changes or because of any claims made by any Contractor relating to such changes.

ARTICLE 17. INSURANCE

WIDSETH shall procure and maintain insurance for protection from claims against it under workers' compensation acts, claims for damages because of bodily injury including personal injury, sickness or disease or death of any and all employees or of any person other than such employees, and from claims against it for damages because of injury to or destruction of property including loss of use resulting therefrom.

Also, WIDSETH shall procure and maintain professional liability insurance for protection from claims arising out of performance of professional services caused by any negligent act, error, or omission for which WIDSETH is legally liable.

Certificates of insurance will be provided to the CLIENT upon request.

ARTICLE 18. ASSIGNMENT

Neither Party to this Agreement shall transfer, sublet or assign any rights or duties under or interest in this Agreement, including but not limited to monies that are due or monies that may be due, without the prior written consent of the other party. Subcontracting to subconsultants, normally contemplated by WIDSETH as a generally accepted business practice, shall not be considered an assignment for purposes of this Agreement.

ARTICLE 19. NO THIRD-PARTY BENEFICIARIES

Nothing contained in this Agreement shall create a contractual relationship or a cause of action by a third-party against either WIDSETH or CLIENT. WIDSETH's services pursuant to this Agreement are being performed solely for the CLIENT's benefit, and no other party or entity shall have any claim against WIDSETH because of this Agreement.

ARTICLE 20. CORPORATE PROTECTION

It is intended by the parties to this Agreement that WIDSETH's services in connection with the Project shall not subject WIDSETH's individual employees, officers or directors to any personal legal exposure for the risks associated with this Project. Therefore, and notwithstanding anything to the contrary, CLIENT agrees that as the CLIENT's sole and exclusive remedy, any claim, demand or suit shall be directed and/or asserted only against WIDSETH, a Minnesota corporation, and not against any of WIDSETH's individual employees, officers or directors.

ARTICLE 21. CONTROLLING LAW

This Agreement is to be governed by the laws of the State of Minnesota.

ARTICLE 22. ASSIGNMENT OF RISK

In recognition of the relative risks and benefits of the project to both the CLIENT and WIDSETH, the risks have been allocated such that the CLIENT agrees, to the fullest extent permitted by law, to limit the liability of WIDSETH, employees of WIDSETH and sub-consultants, to the CLIENT and to all construction contractors, subcontractors, agents and assigns on the project for any and all claims, losses, costs, damages of any nature whatsoever or claims expenses from any cause or causes, so that total aggregate liability of WIDSETH, employees of WIDSETH and sub-consultants, to all those named shall not exceed WIDSETH's total fee received for services rendered on this project. Such claims and causes include, but are not limited to negligence, professional errors or omissions, strict liability, breach of contract or warranty.

ARTICLE 23. NON-DISCRIMINATION

WIDSETH will comply with the provisions of applicable federal, state and local statutes, ordinances and regulations pertaining to human rights and non-discrimination.

ARTICLE 24. SEVERABILITY

Any provision or portion thereof in this Agreement which is held to be void or unenforceable under any law shall be deemed stricken and all remaining provisions shall continue to be valid and binding between CLIENT and WIDSETH. All limits of liability and indemnities contained in the Agreement shall survive the completion or termination of the Agreement.

ARTICLE 25. PRE-LIEN NOTICE

PURSUANT TO THE AGREEMENT WIDSETH WILL BE PERFORMING SERVICES IN CONNECTION WITH IMPROVEMENTS OF REAL PROPERTY AND MAY CONTRACT WITH SUBCONSULTANTS OR SUBCONTRACTORS AS APPROPRIATE TO FURNISH LABOR, SKILL AND/OR MATERIALS IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THE WORK. ACCORDINGLY, CLIENT IS ENTITLED UNDER MINNESOTA LAW TO THE FOLLOWING NOTICE:

- (a) ANY PERSON OR COMPANY SUPPLYING LABOR OR MATERIALS FOR THIS IMPROVEMENT TO YOUR PROPERTY MAY FILE A LIEN AGAINST YOUR PROPERTY IF THAT PERSON OR COMPANY IS NOT PAID FOR ITS CONTRIBUTIONS.**
- (b) UNDER MINNESOTA LAW, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO PAY PERSONS WHO SUPPLIED LABOR OR MATERIALS FOR THIS IMPROVEMENT DIRECTLY AND DEDUCT THIS AMOUNT FROM OUR CONTRACT PRICE, OR WITHHOLD THE AMOUNTS DUE FROM US UNTIL 120 DAYS AFTER COMPLETION OF THE IMPROVEMENT UNLESS WE GIVE YOU A LIEN WAIVER SIGNED BY PERSONS WHO SUPPLIED ANY LABOR OR MATERIALS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT AND WHO GAVE YOU TIMELY NOTICE.**