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Executive Summary

This plan is required by Federal transit law, as amended by MAP-21 and the FAST Act, to access federal funding for transit. The Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC) has engaged a variety of stakeholders to analyze how the transit options available to the elderly, low income and disabled have changed since the 2011 Local Human Service – Public Transit Coordination Plan update.

This plan update looks at the existing conditions in Region 6W with respect to geography, demographics and transportation resources. The region is in West Central Minnesota and the current transportation options are specifically tailored to the unique needs of this region.

The population is sparse and declining, so it is important for transit agencies to constantly reassess their efforts to ensure they are functioning effectively. The current transportation resources offer a broad range of services, including: city systems, a regional provider, program specific providers, specialized systems, facility-owned systems, commercial intercity systems, charter providers, as well as a regional volunteer driver program and other volunteer programs.

A common thread throughout all the data collected is the need for weekend and evening service

Data Collection Tools

- Organizational Questionnaire
- Rider Survey
- Organizational Focus Group
- Individual Focus Group

As part of this plan process, four data collection tools were used to gather information about the region: an organizational questionnaire, a rider survey, an organizational focus group and an individual focus group. Stakeholders from the region were also invited to participate in a planning workshop to identify transit needs of the region and projects that could be implemented to address them. The needs were grouped into the categories of: service limitations, gaps & unmet needs, centralized information, geographic limitations, time limitations, program eligibility and trip purpose limitations and service quality/miscellaneous issues.

A common thread throughout all the data collected is the need for weekend and evening service. Also, a need for increased reliability emerged repeatedly. Reliability is a broad topic but some common themes included: service bottlenecks during peak times, scheduling errors and delays in getting transportation in a timely enough fashion to meet the need. The largest challenge in this regard is service to outlying areas. This is largely because regional rides are dependent upon volunteer drivers, who are increasingly hard to recruit. The rider survey data seems to suggest that the region is even more transit-dependent than the rest of Greater Minnesota. The high volume of clients needing door-through-door service could be a challenge as the public transit systems currently serving the region do not officially provide door-through-door service but have historically provided it with their regional ride service.

There are several appendices containing: a map series illustrating transit services, transit-dependent populations and key destinations, transportation resources, a list of the public workshop participants, a project idea summary, a project analysis and a proposed new transportation model for rural systems.



Introduction

The goal of transit coordination is to enhance transportation access by minimizing duplication of services and facilitating the most appropriate and cost-effective transportation possible with available resources. The purpose of coordination between human services and public transit coordination is to improve transportation services for all, but with special focus on persons with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes. By coordinating communities can maximize use of transportation resources funded through public and private sources.

This document is an update of the 2011 Local Human Service – Public Transit Coordination Plan and will assist stakeholders, as they determine ways to coordinate human service transportation and transit services in Region 6W. The 2017 Local Human Service – Public Transit Coordination Plan documents technical analysis that evaluates existing transportation services in Region 6W and assesses needs and gaps of transportation service provision among public transit agencies, social service agencies, and other providers. The plan also records public participation efforts and stakeholders’ preferred strategies and projects to improve transportation coordination in Region 6W.

A Local Human Services-Public Transit Coordination plan is a federal requirement under the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). Federal regulations state that projects eligible for funding under the Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310) program must advance strategies identified in a Local Human Service-Public Transit Coordination Plan. This planning process fulfills federal requirements by engaging transportation providers, social services agencies, and members of the public in identifying strategies for regional transportation coordination.

Beyond fulfilling federal requirements, this planning process encouraged representatives of diverse organizations to join together in articulating specific projects that could advance transportation services in Region 6W. Through public participation activities, stakeholders brainstormed project ideas and refined these ideas in a collaborative setting. The final project list reflects input from a broad range of regional stakeholders and provides a 5-year blueprint for future coordination efforts in Region 6W.

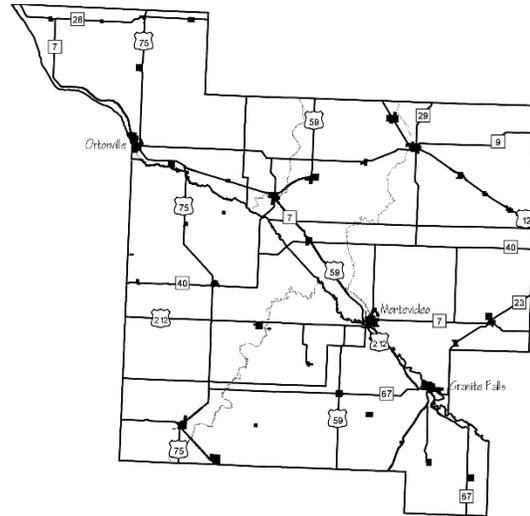


The goal of transit coordination is to enhance transportation access by minimizing duplication of services and facilitating the most appropriate and cost-effective transportation possible with available resources

Existing Conditions

Geography

The Upper Minnesota Valley region is located along the South Dakota border in West Central Minnesota. The region consists of Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine counties and covers 3,346 square miles of land area. There are 37 cities and 99 townships in the region. The region is home to 45,190 per the 2010 Census, which is slightly less than the 46,140 that was anticipated by the Minnesota State Demographer's Office. Aging populations, overall population decline and outmigration continue to be significant regional challenges. The region is referred to as the Upper Minnesota Valley thanks to its namesake, the Minnesota River, bisecting the region between the Big Stone, Swift and Chippewa counties to the north and the Lac qui Parle and Yellow Medicine counties to the south. Region 6W is located roughly in the middle of a triangle of three metro areas: Minneapolis/Saint Paul, MN, Fargo, ND and Sioux Falls, SD. It is approximately 150 miles to each metro area from Milan, MN, which is situated roughly in the center of Region 6W.



Of the region's 37 cities, 70% have populations of less than 500. The larger communities in the region include: Appleton (1,412), Benson (3,240), Canby (1,795), Clara City (1,360), Dawson (1,540), Granite Falls (2,897), Madison (1,551), Montevideo (5,383) and Ortonville (1,916). These communities are the commercial/industrial centers of the region based on their respective population densities. Many of the downtowns feature U.S. Highways, county roads or railroads bisecting the town along the main street. While these corridors have helped establish dense downtown districts (some cities boast population densities of over 900 people per square mile), the thoroughfare traffic often presents challenges to walking and biking safely in the region. Outside these cities, a rural atmosphere including smaller communities, parks, farms, lakes, and prairielands all contribute greatly to the local and regional economies.

Large Cities in Region 6W

- Appleton (1,412)
- Benson (3,240)
- Canby (1,795)
- Clara City (1,360)
- Dawson (1,540)
- Granite Falls (2,897)
- Madison (1,551)
- Montevideo (5,383)
- Ortonville (1,916)

The focus groups and steering committee meetings revealed that Minneapolis/Saint Paul, MN, Fargo, ND and Sioux Falls, SD are frequent destinations outside of the region, predominantly for medical trips. The rider surveys conducted as part of this plan update indicated nearby destinations like Willmar, MN (approximately 45 miles from Region 6W, population: 19,610) and Marshall, MN (approximately 55 miles from Region 6W, population: 13,680) are also frequent destinations

outside of the region. Public transit to these locations is a significant challenge for the region as these trips frequently rely on volunteer drivers, who continue to be difficult to recruit and retain.

The overall population is declining and aging. As seen in Table 1, over twenty percent of the regional population is aged 65 years or older, prompting growing demand for healthcare, social service assistance and transportation. In the last column, Table 2 shows Population Change since 2000. The average loss for the region was 9.64%. Swift County and Chippewa County were the two outliers at -18.17% and -4.94% respectively.

The overall population is declining and aging

Some contributing factors to the outliers include the closing of the Prairie Correctional Facility in Appleton, MN causing the loss of 1,600 inmates; it officially closed in February 2010. While Chippewa County’s population changed the least of all five counties, it hosts the largest city in the region, Montevideo is home to over 5,000 residents and the largest retail trade area in the region that includes healthcare - including a Veterans Administration Clinic, a variety of specialty and discount shopping options, the local workforce center office, and a variety of industry and government offices. The recently released 2016 County Census data seems to confirm the 2010 Census projections as the U.S. rural population shrank -0.04 percent from 2015-2016.

Table 1: Population by Age

2010 Population	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Total
Big Stone	1,105	297	972	1,571	1,324	5,269
Chippewa	2,914	885	2,717	3,525	2,400	12,441
Lac qui Parle	1,534	370	1,333	2,296	1,726	7,259
Swift	2,183	674	2,112	2,848	1,966	9,783
Yellow Medicine	2,475	756	2,259	2,917	2,031	10,438
Totals	10,211	2,982	9,393	13,157	9,447	45,190
Percent	23%	6%	21%	9%	21%	100%

Source: 2010 Census

Table 2: Population Trends & Projections

Jurisdiction	2000 Population	2010 Actual	% of Pop Change from 2000
Big Stone	5,820	5,369	-9.47%
Chippewa	13,088	12,441	-4.94%
Lac qui Parle	8,067	7,259	-10.04%
Swift	11,956	9,783	-18.17%
Yellow Medicine	11,080	10,438	-5.79%
6W Region	50,011	45,190	-9.64%

Source: Minnesota State Demographer Center & 2010 Census

Table 3 illustrates the unemployment trends of the region from 2011-2017. Swift County has experienced the most significant unemployment in 2011 and 2012 with rates of 7.51 and 7.19 respectively, exceeding the regional unemployment rate in both years. Yellow Medicine County had had the lowest unemployment rate since 2012 and remains consistently less than the other counties, the regional and US unemployment rates.

Table 3: 24-month Average Unemployment Rates

Year (May)	Big Stone County	Chippewa County	Lac qui Parle County	Swift County	Yellow Medicine County	Region 6W	United States
2016	4.48	4.39	4.19	5.55	3.77	4.47	5.39
2015	4.57	4.60	4.87	5.25	4.25	4.69	6.32
2014	5.22	5.15	5.37	5.77	4.88	5.26	7.36
2013	5.68	5.57	5.41	6.35	5.19	5.63	8.20
2012	6.27	6.32	6.00	7.19	5.67	6.29	8.94
2011	5.92	7.09	5.90	7.51	6.10	6.62	9.53

Source: STATS America

Per Minnesota’s ISEEK Solutions, a program to provide Minnesotans with information resources about careers, education, and jobs; cashiers and waiters/waitresses are expected to have the most job openings. The fastest growing industries in Minnesota include Management & Technical Consulting along with Medical & Diagnostic

The fastest growing jobs throughout the state include Home Health Aides and Personal & Home Care Aides

Laboratories. The fastest growing jobs throughout the state include Home Health Aides and Personal & Home Care Aides. It is reasonable to assume that with Region 6W’s quick growing aging population that those careers related to home health will be increasingly important and in-demand.

Table 4 illustrates the breakout of businesses, jobs, total payroll and weekly wages in this region in 2015. This chart shows that the highest total numbers of jobs in the region are in the healthcare field. One could tie these jobs to the high percentage of seniors in the region. This field has an average weekly wage that is slightly below the regions average for all industries. To give a larger context, a map illustrating the relative employment densities by census block for the State of Minnesota can also be found in Appendix A.

Table 4: 2015 Industry Employment Statistics for the UMRDC Region

NAICS Industry Title	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Percent of Jobs	Total Payroll (\$1,000s)	Average Annual Wage	2010-2015 Change in Jobs	2014-2015 Change in Jobs
Total, All Industries	1,508	17,282	100.0%	\$613,040	\$35,412	-5.1%	-0.2%
Health Care & Social Assistance	109	3,583	20.7%	\$121,798	\$33,956	-9.3%	-0.3%
Manufacturing	79	2,270	13.1%	\$96,257	\$42,432	-6.1%	-0.2%
Retail Trade	194	1,746	10.1%	\$36,486	\$20,852	-0.9%	-0.9%
Educational Services	35	1,657	9.6%	\$58,578	\$35,360	-1.7%	0.5%
Public Administration	82	1,173	6.8%	\$43,054	\$36,764	-3.5%	-1.2%
Wholesale Trade	85	1,146	6.6%	\$58,228	\$50,908	-6.6%	3.3%
Construction	198	1,011	5.9%	\$51,572	\$50,856	-0.3%	-2.7%
Accommodation & Food Services	91	913	5.3%	\$10,054	\$10,972	-4.6%	-1.0%
Transportation & Warehousing	103	604	3.5%	\$21,161	\$35,100	-1.6%	-1.0%
Other Services	125	582	3.4%	\$12,905	\$22,100	-11.6%	4.3%
Finance & Insurance	102	533	3.1%	\$25,156	\$47,216	-8.6%	3.1%
Arts, Education, & Recreation	28	453	2.6%	\$11,097	\$24,544	-0.9%	-3.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	88	388	2.2%	\$14,457	\$36,972	-12.0%	1.0%
Professional & Technical Services	71	363	2.1%	\$15,362	\$42,328	-11.7%	1.1%
Utilities	12	198	1.1%	\$16,673	\$84,500	48.9%	5.9%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Svcs.	41	198	1.1%	\$5,710	\$28,912	-20.8%	-13.9%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	31	177	1.0%	\$3,227	\$18,252	5.4%	-2.2%
Information	23	156	0.9%	\$4,846	\$31,148	-8.2%	-2.5%
Management of Companies	6	83	0.5%	\$3,763	\$45,500	38.3%	9.2%
Mining	6	45	0.3%	\$2,657	\$57,720	40.6%	9.8%

Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW)

Demographics

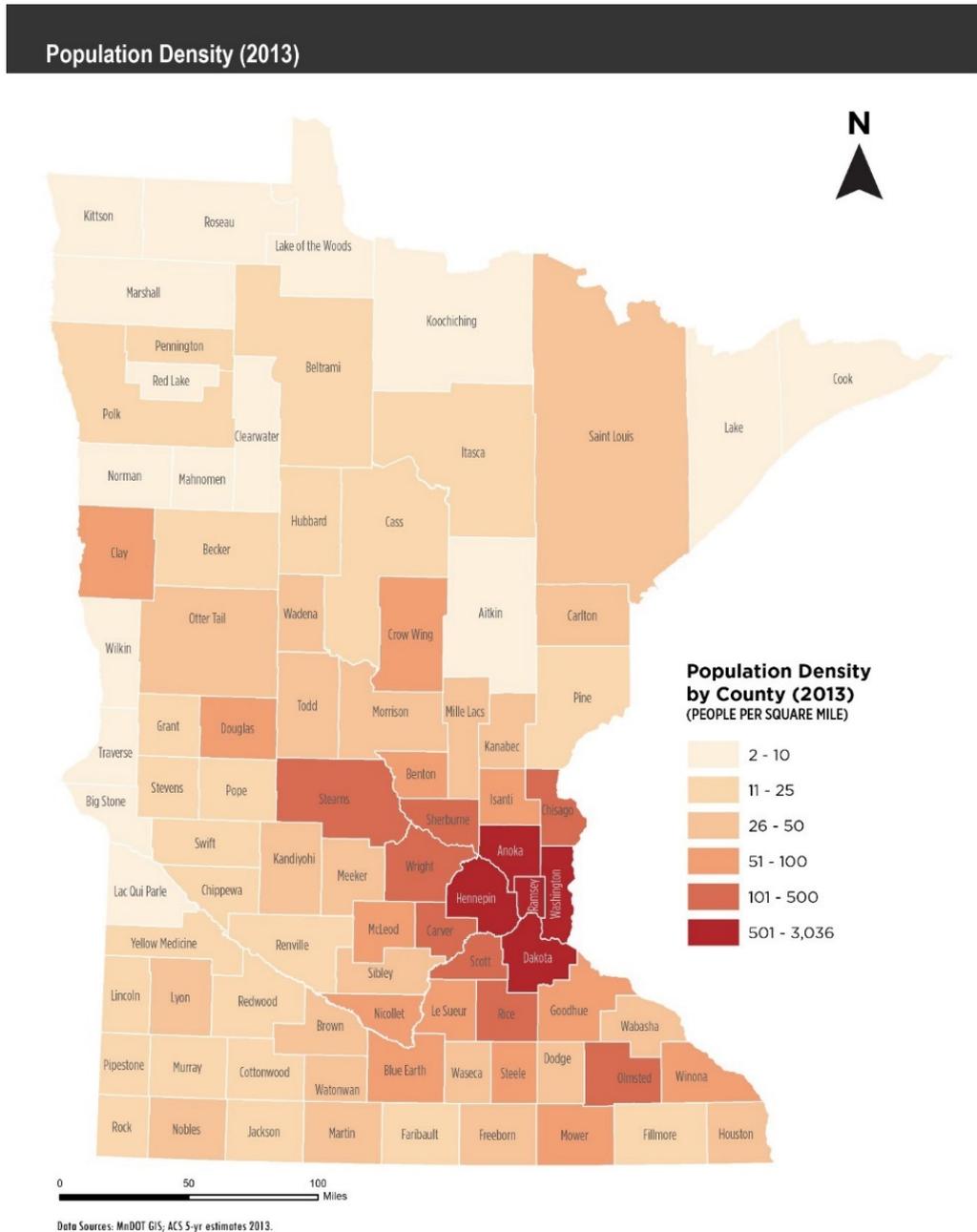
To better understand the relationship between regional demographics, transportation options, and key destinations, a series of maps were created depicting these elements in this region. These are included in Appendix A.

Population Density

The population density in Region 6W is decreasing overall. Certainly, concentrations are higher in cities that are served by local public transit. Rural locations, outside of cities do present a challenge as population densities are decreasing. It is difficult to provide transit in these very rural areas efficiently and economically. The challenge in this region is the low service numbers and the long distances that may be traveled for rides, not making for good economies of scale. Map 1 illustrates the population density of the State of Minnesota in 2013 by county. West Central and

Northern Minnesota are the two least dense areas in the state. Big Stone and Lac qui Parle fall into the 2-10 people per square mile category; Chippewa, Swift and Yellow Medicine are categorized in the 11-25 people per square mile category. These are the two lowest of the six categories defined by this map.

Map 1: MnDOT Statewide Population Density by County



Households in Poverty

The number of households in poverty in Region 6W is wide and varied. The highest concentrations seem to be in the far western and north eastern Yellow Medicine County, the western third of Swift County, the eastern half of Lac qui Parle County and the cities of Benson, Ortonville and Montevideo. While the cities are served by citywide transit systems, the rural areas are underserved due to lack of availability of vehicles/drivers and poor economies of scale.

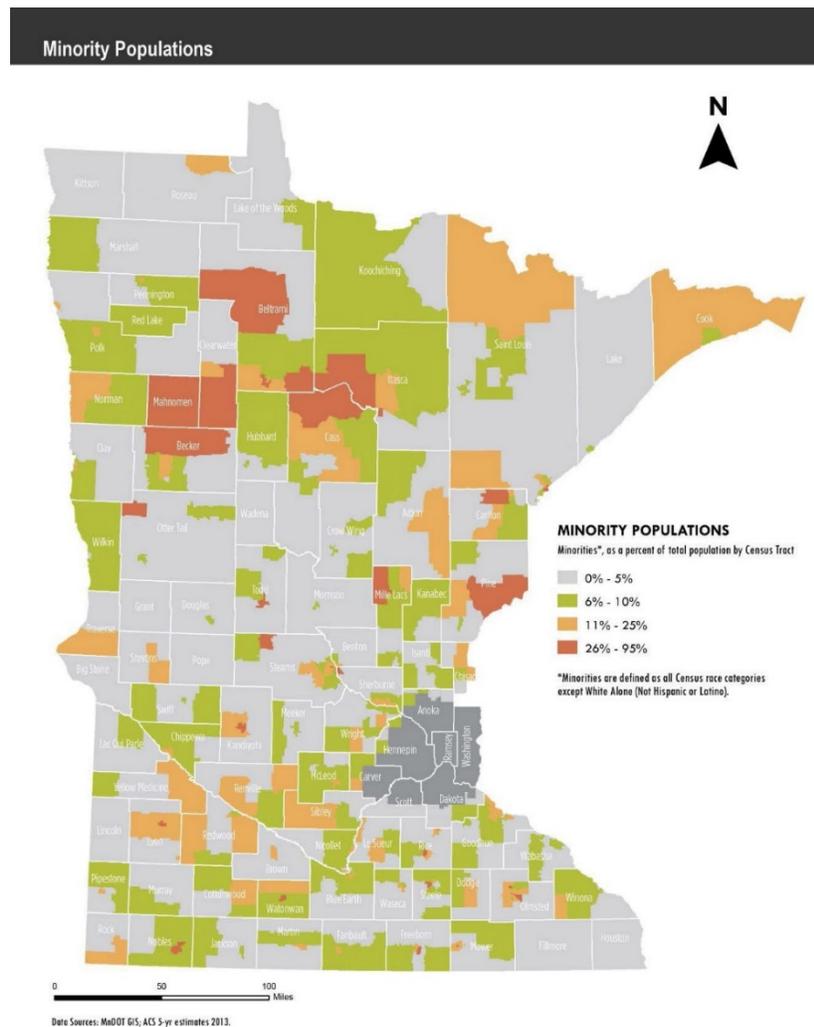
Minority Populations

Minority populations in Region 6W are limited. Map 2 illustrates the statewide minority

populations by census block. Big Stone is the least diverse county in Region 6W with the entire county consisting of 5% or less minority population. Swift and Lac qui Parle each feature areas of 0-5% and 6-10% minority population. Chippewa and Yellow Medicine Counties are the most diverse, as they both feature areas with 11-25% minority population. Map 2 may reflect a higher density of minority population in Swift County than is accurate. The Prairie Correctional Facility in Appleton did house a high percentage of minority inmates which were recorded in census records but did not use public transit. A small increase of Hispanic population has been noted in the region and but is widely dispersed. Smaller concentrations are located

in Ortonville, Benson and Montevideo, where city-wide public transit is available. There is a large increase of Micronesians in the city of Milan, and a Native American population in the Upper Sioux Community, located near Granite Falls. Neither has a city transit system, but both are served by Prairie Five RIDES.

Map 2: MnDOT Statewide Minority Populations by Census



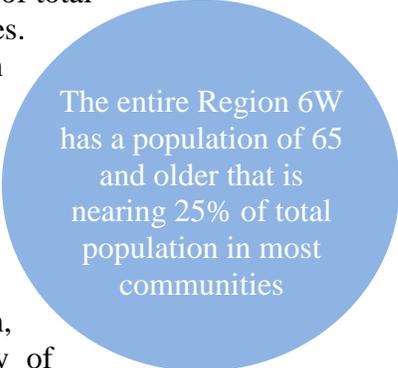
LEP Populations

The Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population parallels the minority populations' explanation above. Prairie Five RIDES does have literature in Spanish.

Seniors

The entire Region 6W has a population of 65 and older that is 20% of total population and nearing 25% of total population in most communities.

A variety of initiatives encourage seniors to age in place - to stay in their homes, in their small towns, and in their rural residences longer. For these initiatives to be successful, transit systems must be able to serve their needs, especially those who choose to stay in their rural homes or in the smallest towns that do not have regular city transit. Seniors in cities have a higher likelihood of using public transit systems but again can be limited by availability due to other demands on transit systems. The region-wide transit system, Prairie Five RIDES is available but constrained by availability of vehicles and drivers.



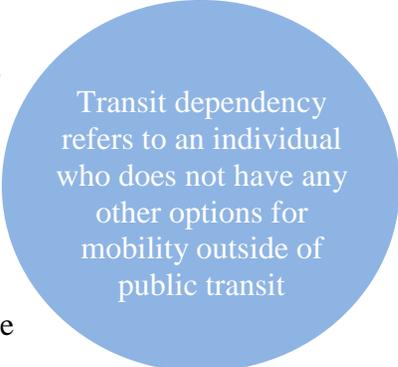
The entire Region 6W has a population of 65 and older that is nearing 25% of total population in most communities

Zero-Vehicle Households

The zero-vehicle households appear to have a concentration in the cities of Ortonville, Benson, and Montevideo. Each of these cities also has a higher concentration of elderly and low-income households. These communities are also served by several subsidized housing settings. These communities are being served by city-wide transit systems. The concern may be if the zero-vehicle household is looking for accommodations to get to and from work, the hours of availability of transit may be limited, which presents a challenge. For those of a zero-vehicle household outside of these concentrated areas, the challenge is even greater, due to limited vehicle and driver availability and poor economies of scale.

Other Demographic Indicators

It should be noted that several of the region's public transit systems report youth ridership in equal proportion to senior rides. 23% of the region's population is under age seventeen, a slightly higher percentage than those 65+. Working parents rely on public transit in small towns as a means to transport their children to daycare, after school and summer activities, and to destinations in the community. Further opportunities may exist to coordinate between school and youth based activities, daycares, and social service programs.



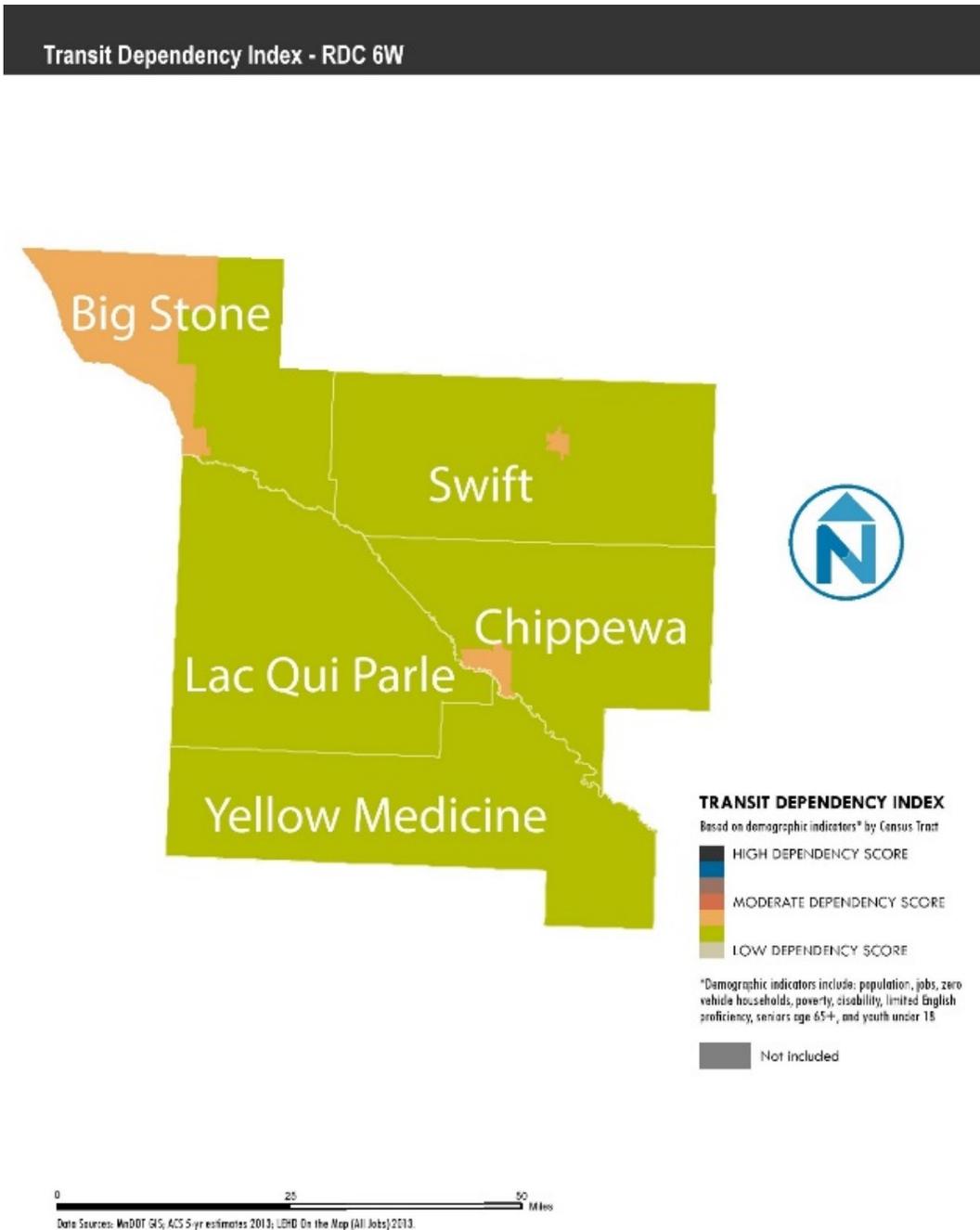
Transit dependency refers to an individual who does not have any other options for mobility outside of public transit

Transit Dependency

Transit dependency is a term that refers to an individual who does not have any other options for mobility outside of public transit. MnDOT has created a transit dependency index based up on several demographic indicators, including: population, jobs, zero vehicle households, poverty, disability, limited English proficiency, seniors age 65+, and youth under 18. This index was used to map the relative transit dependency of areas in Minnesota. Map 3, the Region 6W Transit

Dependency Index Map, shows most of the region rated low on the MnDOT transit dependency index except for Benson, Montevideo and the western half of Big Stone County. Benson and Montevideo are likely high transit dependent areas because they are the two largest cities in the region. It is unclear why the entire western half of Big Stone County was rated as a high transit dependent area. The cities in this area that may have contributed to this result are: Barry, Beardsley, Clinton, Graceville and Ortonville.

Map 3: Region 6W Transit Dependency Index Map



Regional Changes

- ✓ Assisted Care Facility Expansions
- ✓ Memory Care Facility Expansions
- ✓ Addition of Large Dairies

Regional Changes

There are many changes occurring in Region 6W that will affect transit ridership over the coming years. Many of the health care facilities in the region have recently expanded or are planning expansions to fill a variety of needs: more space for health care outreach and specialists (dialysis care, chemo etc.) and have added capacity for assisted living or memory care. For example, Fairway View Senior Community in Ortonville (Big Stone County) has recently expanded its facilities to include 34 new independent living units as well as 51 long-term care beds. Similar expansions have occurred in Madison, Dawson and Granite Falls and the cities of Benson and Appleton are in the planning stages of expansion. Another large change that is occurring in Region 6W is the addition of several large dairies in the region. Several large creameries have recently opened in Region 6W and the surrounding regions and have added jobs to the region.

Transportation Resources

Region 6W Transit Characteristics

The transportation network in the region includes a variety of providers and systems—city systems, a regional provider, program specific providers, specialized systems, facility-owned systems, commercial intercity systems, charter providers, as well as a regional volunteer driver program and other volunteer programs. There is one nonprofit organization funded with Section 5310 federal funds for elderly and/or disabled persons (Main Street Industries, Inc. in Clinton). Many nursing homes, assisted living facilities, developmental achievement centers, group homes and other organizations in the region including churches have their own vehicles, some handicapped equipped. These vehicles are primarily used for group outings or recreational purposes and work trips.

The Upper Sioux Community is in Yellow Medicine County, but has no formal transportation system currently in place. Public and private transit is available in all five counties. There is one regional public transportation system, Prairie Five RIDES that provides service in all five counties (5311). Dial-a-ride service is available through the Prairie Five RIDES city systems in Appleton, Canby, Madison, Benson, Montevideo, Dawson and Ortonville. Dial-a-ride service is also available in the city Granite Falls through their Heartland Express system.

Prairie Five RIDES also supplements their regional bus system with a fleet of vans purchased by the agency. Local and state funds are utilized to operate these vehicles. There are several 5310 systems within the region, including: Swift County DAC in Benson, MN and Main Street

Region 6W Transportation Network City Systems

- ✓ Regional provider
- ✓ Program Specific Providers
- ✓ Specialized Systems
- ✓ Facility-Owned Systems
- ✓ Commercial Intercity Systems
- ✓ Charter Providers
- ✓ Regional Volunteer Driver Program
- ✓ Additional Volunteer Programs

Industries, Inc. in Clinton, MN. Systems providing service in the region are all demand responsive systems. Some systems provide multi-county services while others operate within one county or one community of the region. In the appendix of this plan is a physical inventory of the public and private systems in the region and identifies service areas, service hours, fee structures and contacts for each system identified.

Prairie Five RIDES has a formal volunteer driver program to supplement their bus system that serves the entire region. It fills a huge gap in providing rides outside the five counties, low volume rides and serving the very frail. It is no surprise that volunteers are the consumer's choice of transportation. Other components of the informal network in the region are other volunteer drivers not part of a formal system; car-pooling, ride sharing, family, friends and neighbors, and faith-based programs. All are critical in transporting people in and outside the region and meeting our diverse mobility needs.

Region 6W Existing and Desired Travel Patterns

The MnDOT Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan (GMTIP) used four data collection tools in 2015 to gather 6,378 responses on information related to transit in rural regions in the state of Minnesota. They utilized an online survey to collect feedback from current riders, they administrated an online survey to gather priorities for transit, they used a survey to study common trip patterns and they targeted traditionally under-represented demographics or communities with a "Hard to Reach" survey.

An interactive online mapping tool was developed by MnDOT to better understand the travel patterns of current transit users and non-transit users. Information collected through this tool helps quantify the need for public transportation within and across communities. Analyzing destinations and travel patterns helps transit agencies and communities identify where additional or enhanced transit service is desired and where there is a need for further inquiry and outreach on existing service.

Analyzing destinations and travel patterns helps transit agencies and communities identify where additional transit service is desired

MnDOT Data Collection Tools

- Online Feedback Survey
- Online Priorities Survey
- Trip Patterns Survey
- "Hard to Reach" Survey

The interactive online mapping project was created using a Wiki-mapping platform to gather transit user and non-transit user existing and desired destination locations.

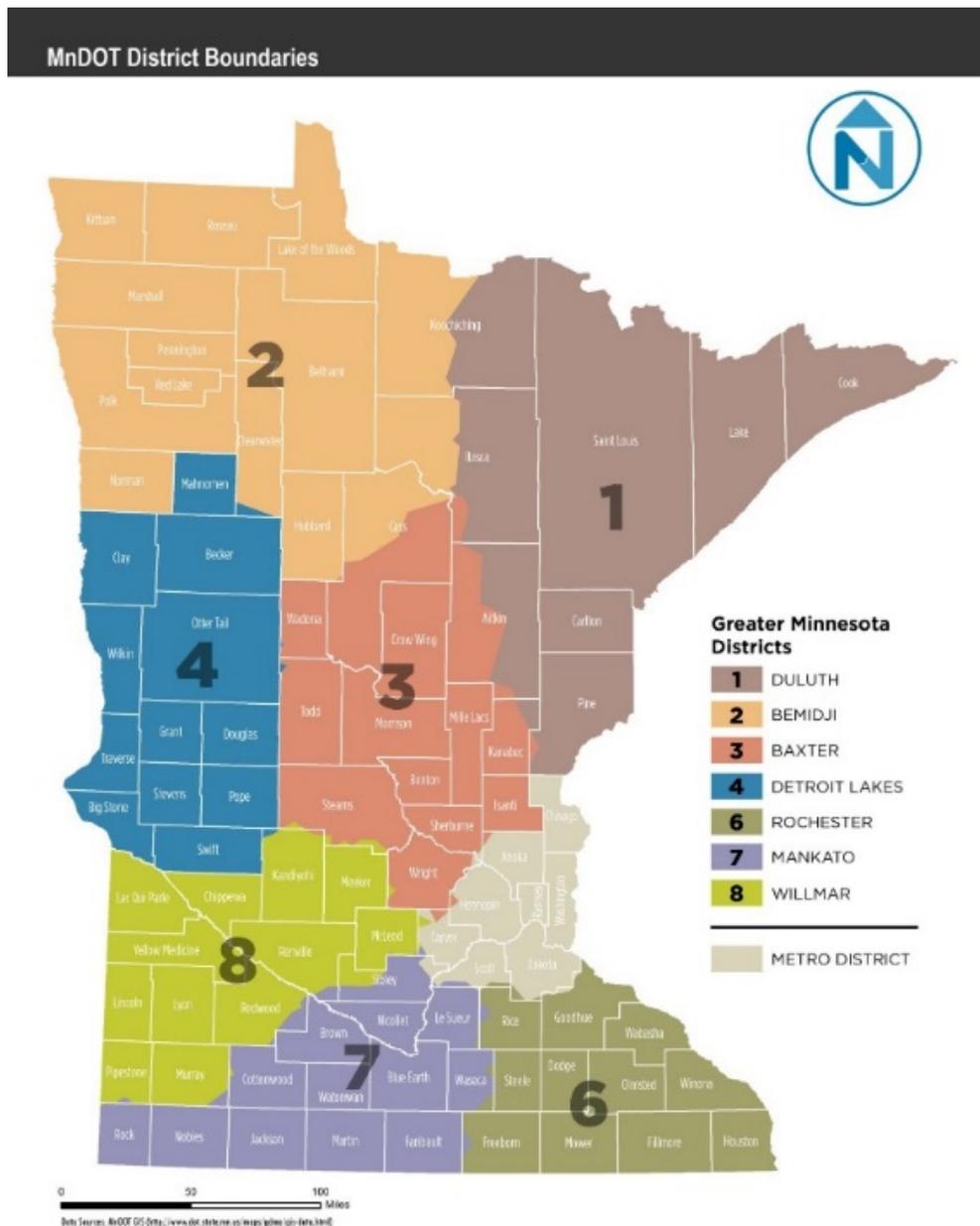
First-time participants created a login by providing an email address and choosing a username. Participants tagged their usual destinations on a Google map and could also provide the destination type such as "work." Each user's data was tied to a unique identifier, allowing for origin-destination analysis and for users to revisit and update the site multiple times without needing to create a new account.

A simpler destination survey was also available for users uncomfortable with or unable to use the Wiki-mapping tool. Similar questions were asked in the survey, including current transit use, common destinations, and trip purpose. Rather than entering destinations on a map, participants typed addresses and descriptions of destinations. These destinations were later geocoded and

combined with the destination information received through the Wiki-mapping tool to comprehensively map and analyze travel patterns.

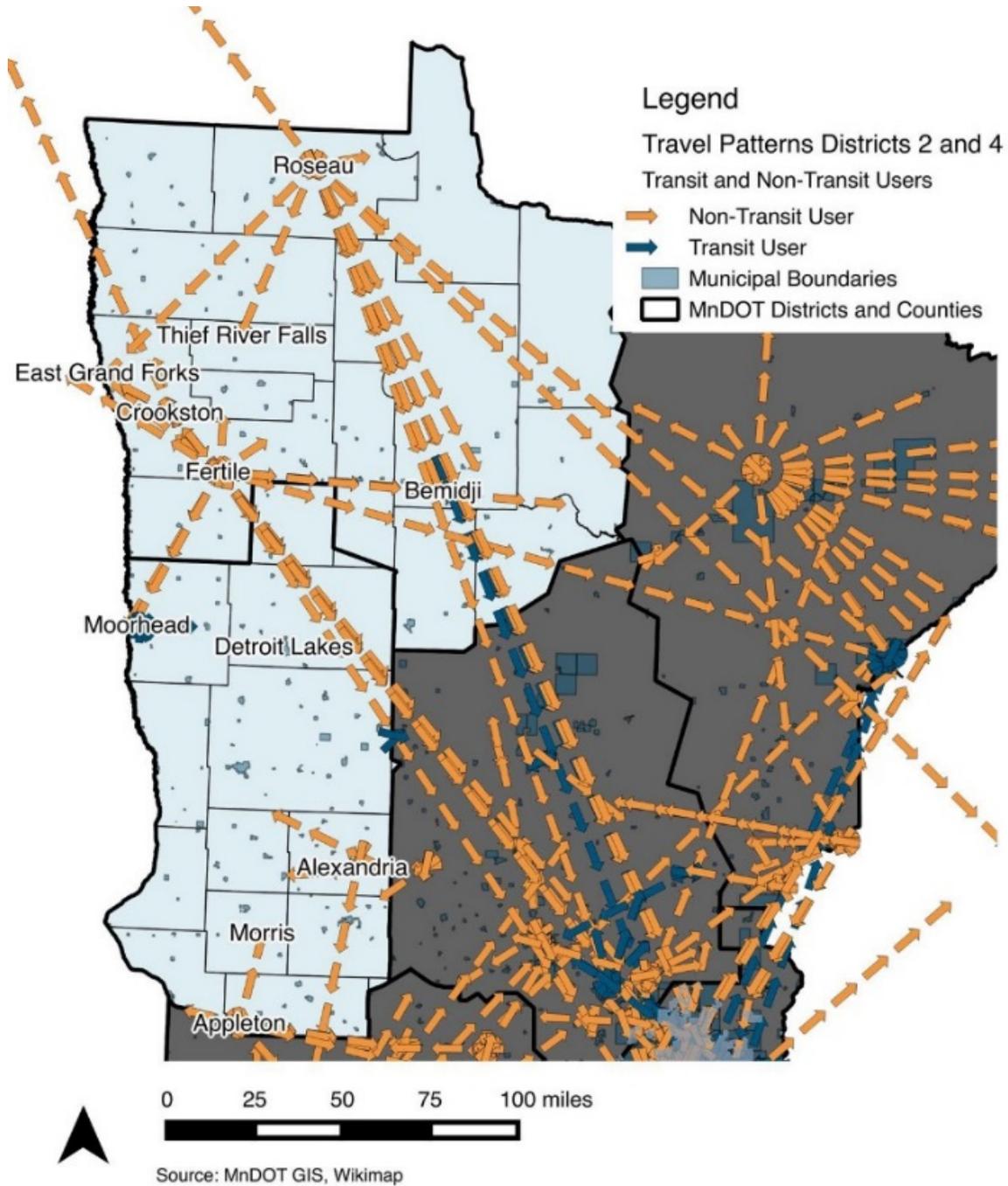
The statewide travel patterns discovered through this process are included in Appendix A. The 6W Region is covered by two MnDOT districts, District 4 and District 8. The counties of Big Stone and Swift lie within the boundaries of MnDOT District 4 and the counties of Chippewa, Lac qui Parle and Yellow Medicine lie within the boundaries of MnDOT District 8. The full state MnDOT district boundaries are illustrated in Map 4. When compiling their results, MnDOT organized their data by MnDOT District. Districts 2 and 4 were grouped together, so the data from District 2 was included in the analysis of District 4.

Map 4: MnDOT District Boundaries Map



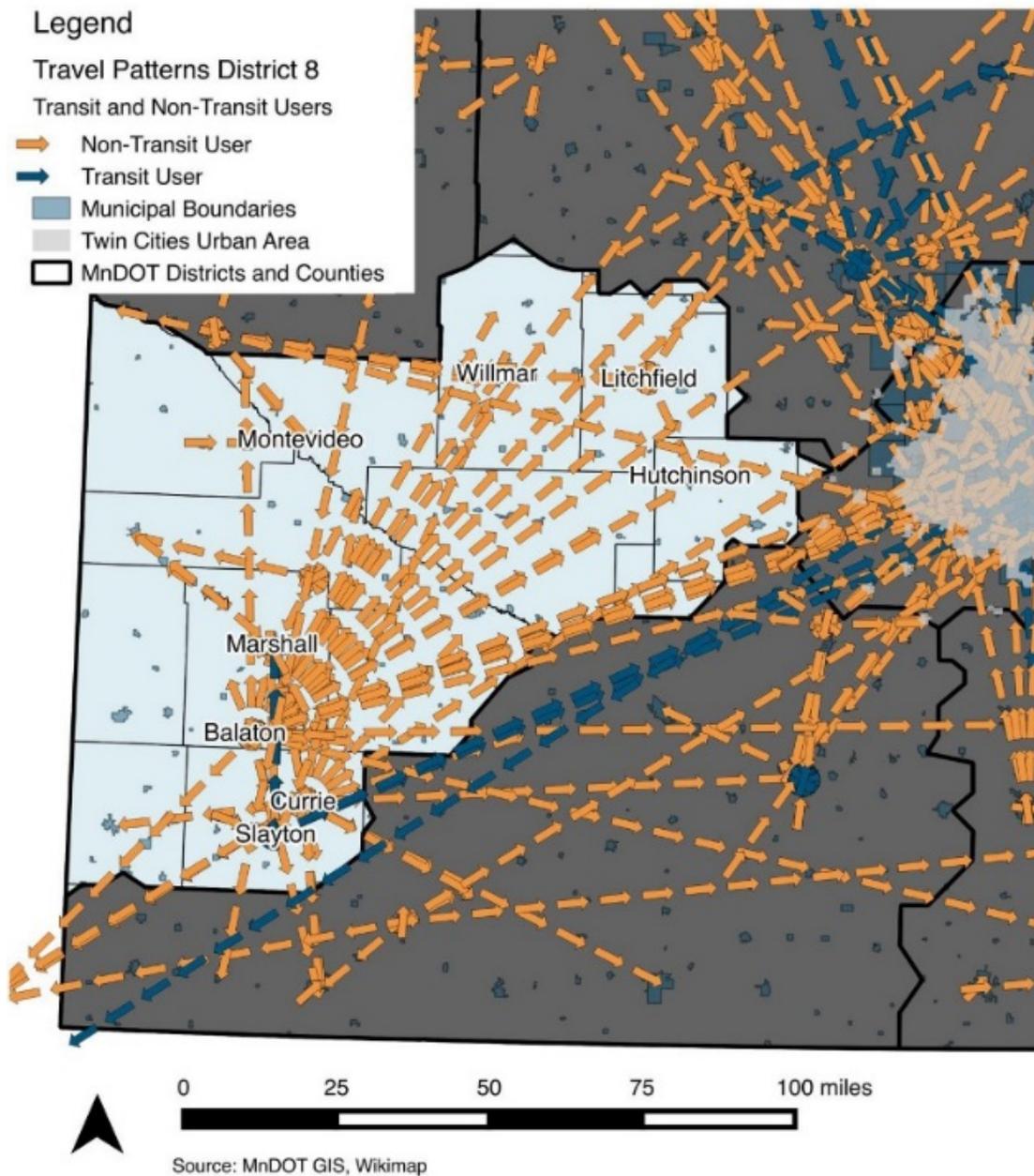
The MnDOT existing and desired travel pattern map for MnDOT Districts 2 and 4 shows only non-transit user data for Big Stone and Swift Counties. As shown in Map 5, the travel is all outward from the city of Appleton. It shows a large amount of traffic heading north from the city of Appleton to nearby Morris, MN. It also shows traffic heading south and southwest, but it is unclear from the District 2 and 4 map where this traffic is headed.

Map 5: MnDOT Districts 2 and 4 Existing and Desired Travel Patterns



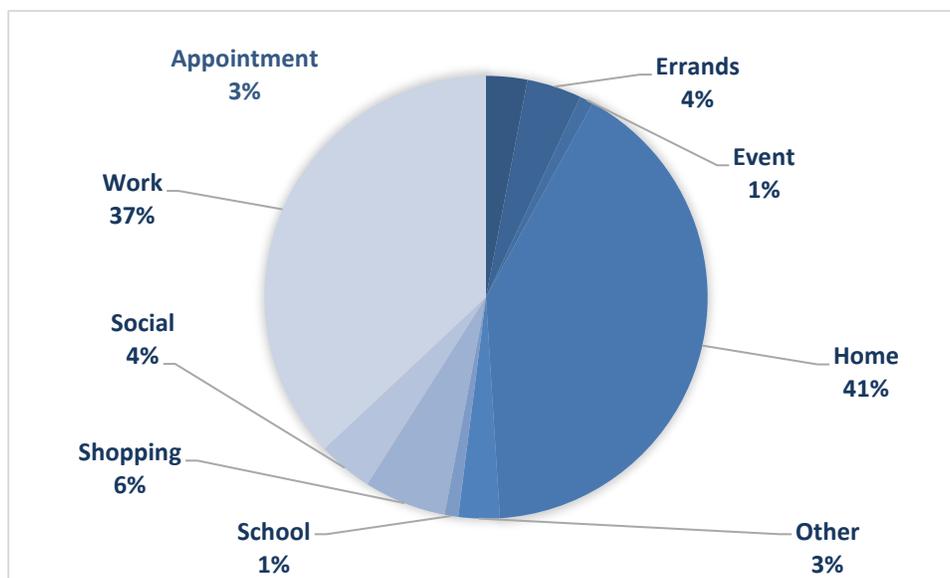
The MnDOT District 8 map includes detail on where the south and southwest outbound travelers from Appleton are headed. As shown in Map 6, the southwest travelers are largely headed to Montevideo, the largest city within Region 6W. One stream of southwest travelers appears to be headed the large regional city of Willmar. The other stream appears to be headed for the Twin Cities Metro Area. Like the District 2 and 4 map, all the existing or desired travel patterns on the MnDOT District 8 map are from non-transit users.

Map 6: MnDOT District 8 Existing and Desired Travel Patterns



The MnDOT interactive online mapping project and destination survey did not find a significant difference between trip purpose for transit users or non-transit users. They discovered that the two most common destinations are home (41%) and work (37%). Shopping, social, errands, appointments, other, events and school (in descending order) comprised the remaining 22%. The full results of the trip purpose analysis can be found in Chart 1.

Chart 1: Greater Minnesota Primary Trip Purpose



Key Destinations

Most basic transit destinations like retail shopping, groceries, schools, pharmacies, and healthcare facilities are located within the region’s larger communities. Montevideo is the largest community in the region and has a larger variety of shopping and services. Benson, Granite Falls, Madison, Appleton, Canby, Dawson, Ortonville, Graceville and Montevideo all have hospitals, pharmacies, school buildings, grocery stores, and a variety of local shopping destinations. Clara City is also a popular local destination but no longer operates an in-town pharmacy.

Prairie Five RIDES does accommodate school age children which creates some scheduling challenges during the after-school hours and throughout the summer. Many parents rely on the system to transport children to swimming lessons, summer recreation programs, to and from daycare facilities and to other destinations in the community.

Other key destinations located outside of the region are in St. Cloud, Willmar, Sioux Falls, Fargo and the Twin Cities. The availability of transit for these locations is limited. Prairie Five RIDES does provide a public demand responsive system of volunteer drivers and bus service.

While this exercise was helpful in picturing the demographic that would benefit in the discussion about regional priorities, it does not perhaps match the actual demographics of the ridership in the

Key Destinations Outside the Region

- St. Cloud
- Willmar
- Sioux Falls, SD
- Fargo, ND
- Twin Cities

region. Prairie Five RIDES shared their ridership demographic totals for their four city bus systems and their regional system and in the review, we found that youth and children made up most rides on a monthly average basis and adult, senior and disabled equally divided the remaining rides. Currently, the system does not specifically ask about income so it is difficult to say what percentage of the whole would fit in that category. Regional priorities suggested targeting parents as an important customer for future marketing and although children and youth are not a target audience specific to the requirements of this plan, they are an important regional segment that needs more review.

Although children and youth are not a target audience specific to the requirements of this plan, they are an important regional segment that needs more review

Public Transit Current Levels of Service

Much effort from the state, peers, and the federal government have been dedicated toward performance-based planning and evaluation systems. For MnDOT, which is seeking to expand services in a smart manner, the policy framework must include several components:

- Service Hours Guidelines
- Baseline service span – relating to Span of Service Guidelines and Olmstead requirements, the baseline service span provides recommendations for the number of service hours an agency is in operation during weekdays and weekends. The guidelines can be found in the table 5
- Guidelines for service span – for small communities that are not county seats and have less than 2,500 people, the guidelines are recommendations, but not requirements, for hours of service per day. The recommendations can be found in table 5
- Quality of Service
- Frequency informs the quality of service from the passenger perspective

Table 5: MnDOT Span of Service Goals

Goal Type	Service Population	Peer Group	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday
Baseline	Cities >50,000	Urban	20	12	9
Baseline	Cities 49,999-7,000	Small Urban	12	9	9
Baseline	Cities 6,999-2,500	Small Urban	9	9	0
Baseline	County Seat Towns <2,500	Rural	8 (3 days per week)	0	0
Guidelines	Communities <2,500	Rural	8 (3 days per week)	0	0

Source: Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan

Region 6W has two peer groups within the region, small urban and rural systems. The three county seats in the region with a population over 2,500 (Benson, Granite Falls and Montevideo) are classified as small urban systems. The rest of the region is considered rural. A full schedule of public transit availability hours for Region 6W is listed in Table 6.

Table 6: Region 6W Public Transit Availability

Service	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Prairie Five RIDES In-Town Service	No Service	7:00am-5:00pm	7:00am-5:00pm	7:00am-5:00pm	7:00am-5:00pm	7:00am-5:00pm	No Service
Prairie Five RIDES Regional Rides	No Service	6:00am-10:00pm	6:00am-10:00pm	6:00am-10:00pm	6:00am-10:00pm	6:00am-10:00pm	No Service
Granite Falls Transit	7:00am-12:00pm	6:30am-5:30pm	6:30am-5:30pm	6:30am-5:30pm	6:30am-5:30pm	6:30am-5:30pm	No Service

Source: Prairie Five RIDES and City of Granite Falls

Transportation Provider Inventory

The UMRDC utilized four data collection tools from January-March of 2017 to assess the gaps and needs of human service transportation in our region. 210 agencies, organizations and programs were contacted during our outreach process. In all, 65 responses were received. Table 7 shows a breakdown of the number of respondents by data collection tool type. 37% of our data came from rider surveys, our largest data source.

The organizational questionnaire was meant to capture service information for all public, private, school district, human service, and non-profit transportation providers in Region 6W. The inventory includes information such as fleet size, vehicle capacity, passenger eligibility requirements, and service cost; this information provides a source of comparison across agencies and a means to identify service gaps. 18 responses to this questionnaire were returned. The organizations represented include: clinics, hospitals, public transportation providers, private transportation providers, social services, churches and housing agencies. We did not receive any responses from any agencies on aging or schools. 5 of these respondents provide transportation, 4 of the respondents provide funding for transportation and 9 of them provide human services but do not provide transportation. A summary of the transportation resources is available in Appendix B. A full record of responses to the questionnaire is available at [the UMRDC website](#).

Survey Instrument	Total Responses
Organizational Questionnaires	18 responses
Rider Surveys	24 responses
Individual Focus Group	16 participants
Organizational Focus Group	7 participants
Total	65

65% of the respondents represented a public agency. 73% of the agencies that responded served the public, 67% of them serve the elderly population and 60% of them serve the disabled. The agencies that provide transportation ranged from 24-hour service 7 days per week to 2 hours of transportation Monday through Friday. The coverage ranged from statewide to service areas as small as 2 counties.

The cost of service to the passenger ranged anywhere from no-charge to \$1.50 plus an additional charge per mile. All services offered some fixed scheduling, whereas 50% of them have availability with anywhere from 1-hour to 24-hour notice. One service required more than 2 days' notice. One agency that responded indicated that they provide curb-to-curb service and one agency that responded indicated that they provide door through door service.

Half of the agencies that responded indicated that their passengers must be an agency customer. Some require a referral from social services. One agency that responded provided escort service, one offers discounted service and once can provide extra staff if needed. None of the agencies that responded provide car seats, interpreters or personal care attendants. The range of passengers that require assistance getting on and off the vehicles ranged from 15% to 100% (answers were: 15%, 20%, 95%, 100%). 80% of the transportation agencies that responded to our survey do not provide travel training.

Demand-response is the most frequent service and highest need

When looking at current provider options, demand-response is the most frequent service and highest need, and second is scheduled services. The gaps that were identified were limited service hours and weekend service. The current needs of Region 6W are simply more service, both demand-response and scheduled services.

Health care staff responded that they are unsure of what to do for people that have no friends or public transportation available. Often the current public transportation providers do not have sufficient regional volunteer drivers available to provide the transportation needed. A need also exists with emergency services, especially in home health care. Staff are not supposed to use their personal vehicles to transport patients, but not all patients can afford an ambulance ride. This puts staff in a difficult position where it is unclear how they should proceed.

The existing vehicle inventory for the agencies that responded can be found in Table 8. The existing fleet for Region 6W is largely medium light-duty buses. Approximately half of the vehicles are handicap lift equipped and STS certified.

Table 8: Region 6W Transit Inventory

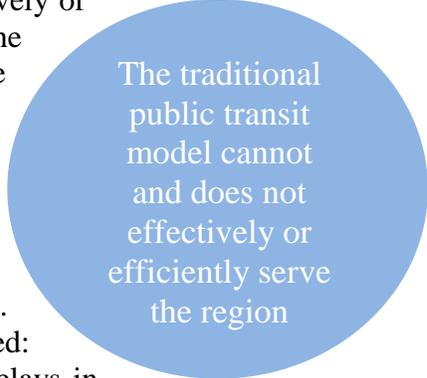
Inventory	Minivans	Medium Light-Duty Bus	Medium-Duty Bus	Large Heavy-Duty Bus	Sedans/ Station Wagons
Vehicles Owned	11	31+	0	3	0
Vehicles Lift Equipped	25+	20	1	0	0
Vehicles STS Certified	23+	0	0	0	1

Overlaps and Differences in Needs

The largest barrier to providing transportation in Region 6W is the 3,346 square miles of land area that the 45,190 people in the region are spread over. The average population density of the region is approximately 13.5 people per square mile (compared to the Minneapolis–Saint Paul metropolitan area density of 515.4 people per square mile). This makes public transit for the region challenging as it is broadly accepted that a dense urban population is essential to a successful

public transit system. For this reason, the transit options currently offered in Region 6W are demand-response services. There are no fixed routes currently operating in the region.

The traditional public transit model cannot and does not effectively or efficiently serve the region. To meet the needs of the population the transportation network includes a less traditional and more informal system, combining public nonprofit, private-for-profit and volunteer providers. The population base that needs or wants transportation services in the region is very diverse and requires a very diverse network to meet their needs.



The traditional public transit model cannot and does not effectively or efficiently serve the region

Common threads throughout all the data collected were the need for weekend and evening service and increased reliability. Reliability is a broad topic but some common themes included: service bottlenecks during peak times, scheduling errors and delays in getting transportation in a timely enough fashion to meet the need.

MnDOT identified a need for riders to get across county and city lines. The rider survey saw this as well, with riders needing to get to locations that were outside of Region 6W. Since Prairie Five RIDES offers regional rides throughout the state of Minnesota and into the Dakotas, this may be best addressed through educating riders on the available service. The findings from the questionnaire suggest there may be an opportunity to improve coordination between Prairie Five RIDES, Granite Falls Transit, Stevens County Rainbow Rider and United Community Action Partnership (UCAP) covering Lyon County. The largest challenge in this regard is service to outlying areas. This is largely because these regional rides are dependent upon volunteer drivers, who are increasingly hard to recruit.



Many transit users are elderly, disabled or without a driver's license

The region currently offers service beyond MnDOT's baseline on weekdays, but below the service baseline on weekends in the three cities in the region that qualify as small urban areas based on population. There are challenges associated with this that stem from a performance metric, which is rides per hour that must be sustained for the entire service. The rides per hour metric supersedes the recommended service guidelines, so neither Prairie Five RIDES or Granite Falls Transit offer Saturday service in Region 6W. Multiple previous efforts to offer service on weekends have failed to reach the minimum ridership requirements to continue the service. Granite Falls Transit does, however,

provide service weekend service from 7:00am-12:00pm on Sundays. No baselines have been established for the frequency of Dial a Ride services, so there is no standard to measure our service against.

The MnDOT rider survey illustrates the importance for transit in the region by noting that many transit users are elderly, disabled or without a driver's license. The UMRVDC rider survey identified similar trends. The rider survey seems to suggest that the region is even more transit-dependent than the rest of Greater Minnesota.

The high percentage of riders in the region that require demand-response type service suggests that current service offering is closely aligned with the needs of our region. The large number of lift equipped vehicles suggest handicapped accessible vehicle demand is also closely aligned with the

large need some agencies have. The small percentage of transportation agencies that provide travel training combined with the small percentage of human service agencies that provide travel training seems to suggest that travel training is not a large need in the region.



The high volume of clients needing door-through-door service could be a challenge

The high volume of clients needing door-through-door service could be a challenge as the public transit systems currently serving the region do not officially provide door-through-door service but have historically provided it with their regional ride service. The data found that 17% of clients need escort service and only one transportation provider responded to the organizational questionnaire indicating they offer escort service.

Many needs and gaps for public transit in the region were identified through the data collection process undertaken by MnDOT and the UMVRDC, ranging from broad themes to very specific and detailed challenges and issues. It will be important to organize these needs and gaps into categories so strategies to address them can be identified.

Barriers

Top barriers identified by human service agencies were:

1. Limited service hours- evenings and weekends in particular
2. Limited service area- regional rides continues to be a challenge as volunteer drivers become increasingly difficult to retain and recruit
3. Billing and payment- there is a lengthy process for both providers and non-providers with insurance reimbursement for transportation
4. Scheduling conflicts- peak times during school hours and medical appointments that do not align well with transportation availability continue to be a challenge
5. Cost of- rides utilizing Special Transportation Service (or STS) providers are often cost-prohibitive for trips not covered under medical insurance

Gaps and Needs

The gaps and needs identified from the questionnaire were:

- When asked what accommodations would need to be provided to transport the clients they serve, human service agencies indicated:
 - 73 percent of their clients would require escorts
 - 55 percent of their clients would need personal care attendants
 - 55 percent of their clients would need discounted service
 - 46 percent indicated car seats or booster seats would be required
- The issues that agencies have encountered most when attempting to coordinate transportation services have been:
 - Limited service hours (8/20 agencies ranked as top concern)
 - Limited service area

- Billing & payment
- The categories with least concern were passenger security and driver qualifications
- The other issues not listed above were:
 - Affordability concerns
 - Difficulty finding rides for children
 - Lack of drivers available
 - Providers not able to meet requests
 - A decline in volunteer drivers
 - Trending harder to find people to work as a hired driver
 - A client is ambulated to an out of area medical facility & gets discharged back to his home (transportation is not paid back to the client's home because it is not a medical facility)
 - Other agencies are not DOT certified
- The changes that agencies stated were most needed to improve coordination in our area are listed below:
 - Escorts for elderly community members
 - Expanded hours of services
 - On-demand services
 - Expanded weekday hours and weekend service
 - More cost-effective service
 - Ability to respond to last-minute requests
 - Having a service provider
 - More availability of service
 - Availability and flexibility of providers
 - Being able to get everyone to share data
 - More state funding needed from DOT to expand public transportation hours
 - The ability for some providers to contract some of their routes at an affordable cost
 - Additional options

Coordination

Some coordination is occurring between the Section 5311 providers in the region and the county human/family service departments, especially to individuals on public assistance programs. Where things fall short is mostly in the unplanned or emergency trips and the near poverty clientele. The informal network becomes the backbone to the network to meet these rides. Formal systems prefer 24-hour notice and most are not 24/7 systems, making these trips difficult to meet. More coordination may help alleviate some of the problems but will not be a total fix to this issue.

Opportunities still exist to educate human service and health care providers on the options available to them through the city and regional providers.

Although there isn't a formal mechanism in place for coordination and cooperation, a comprehensive approach to meet mobility needs is happening in the region, and quite frankly done well, especially for people on public assistance programs. There are some formal interagency agreements in place, but for the most part coordination and cooperation is done on an informal basis. The physical inventory is there. Tapping those vehicles and drivers to coordinate services is the challenge. Barriers do make this difficult to accomplish, but not impossible to attain if regulations and rules were loosened providing some flexibility to the systems. However, facilitation of the process through some type of "mobility manager" or staff position would increase the probability of formalizing coordination and cooperation.

The action plan specifically outlines the need for a central informational and marketing hub for transit in the region

The action plan specifically outlines the need for a central informational and marketing hub for transit in the region. All transit systems market themselves individually and may realize a greater return on investment by advertising transit options in the region cooperatively. Those who are faced with a costly Specialized Transportation System (or STS) ride may not be aware of the fact they could be

served with public transit that may be able to provide the ride at a much more affordable cost. If there was a centralized call center (like a 511) that could route the call to the appropriate regional transportation agency, it would improve efficiency for all transit systems in the region, public and private. A less expensive solution could be to develop a formal flowchart that dispatchers from all human service agencies in the region (including the public transit operators) could follow to ensure the passenger is routed to the most appropriate service.

Public Participation

Steering Committee

The plan Steering Committee closely guided plan decision-making. Steering Committee duties included:

- Evaluating strategies and assessing outcomes of projects identified in the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan
- Developing project ideas and identifying priority strategies as part of the public workshop
- Prioritizing project ideas identified at the public workshop for inclusion in the final plan

The Steering Committee was made up of representatives from county human service agencies, area agency on aging representatives, centers for independent living representatives, passengers and others. A complete list of the members can be found in Table 9.

Table 9: Region 6W Steering Committee Member List

Steering Committee Membership	Organization	Representing
Jana Berends-Sletten	Granite Falls Hospital	Healthcare Facilities
Patrick Bruflat	Chippewa County Family Services	Human Service Partners
Julie Dammann	Southwest MN Private Industry Council	Job Training and Placement Agencies
Donna Hermanson	Lac qui Parle Family Services	Human Service Partners
Sherry Jipson	Essentia Health Graceville	Healthcare Facilities
Rae Ann Keeler-Aus	Yellow Medicine County Family Services	Human Service Partners
Tim Kolhei	Chippewa County Veteran's Services Office	Human Service Partners
Jamie Lanners	Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging	Agency on Aging
Catie Lee	Swift County Human Services	Human Service Partners
Stacey Lee	Johnson Memorial Health Services Dawson	Healthcare Facilities
Ted Nelson	Prairie Five RIDES	Public Transportation Providers
Robin Olson	Main Street Industries	Representatives from Independent Living Centers
Audrey Rahrlien	Essentia Health Graceville	Healthcare Facilities
Emily Ring	Prairie Five RIDES	Public Transportation Providers
Jim Schmaedeka	UMVRDC	Existing and Potential Riders
Peggy Sik	Sanford Canby Medical Center	Healthcare Facilities
Seth Streblov	Granite Falls Hospital	Human Service Agencies
Dawn Hegland	UMVRDC	Area Transportation Planning Agencies
Jason Brisson	UMVRDC	Area Transportation Planning Agencies

2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan Outcomes

Another component of the existing conditions is an analysis of the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan's list of strategies and projects for improving transit coordination. The 2016 Steering Committee reviewed these strategies and projects to assess regional progress on transit coordination since 2011. The group also identified causes for success and barriers to action regarding project implementation. The complete list of 2011 strategies and projects and an assessment of their outcome is presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Region 6W Strategies and Projects

Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
Marketing to Human Service Professionals	Not Started	We are not aware of any work that has been done specifically targeted at this group	This has not yet been formally completed but resurfaced as a current need in the 2016 plan update
Marketing to Public	Ongoing	Prairie Five RIDES markets their volunteer driver opportunities on social media (Facebook), in print (newspapers), and as recently as 11/16 they implemented a large marketing program that included advertising volunteer driver opportunities in places of worship (churches in the 5-county region)	Prairie Five RIDES has achieved great success with their annual marketing campaigns. Despite their best efforts, ongoing opportunities to market their services exist
Annual Regional Transportation Seminar	Anticipated	There currently exists a state committee, but we are not aware of a regional transportation seminar. What currently exists is a spring workshop through MnDOT, a MN Public Transit Expo in the fall, and regional ATP meetings by MnDOT district	The region has not had the resources available for this strategy but believes MnDOT may eventually fund a regional council to implement this strategy
Market Rides for Kids	Ongoing	Shortly before summer, Prairie Five RIDES advertises their summer passes in print and on the radio. They also advertise for school passes shortly before school registration	Prairie Five RIDES has achieved great success with this strategy and continues to advertise their rides for children, particularly during the summer months
Outreach to underserved communities	Ongoing	Prairie Five RIDES received a grant to implement a large marketing campaign for 2016 where they advertised their services on radio stations and every newspaper in the entire five county region. They've received a similar grant for 2017, but intend to implement a little differently than they did in 2016	Prairie Five RIDES has achieved great success with their annual marketing campaigns. Despite their best efforts, ongoing opportunities to market their services exist
Special Event Service	Ongoing	The special event services offered by Prairie Five RIDES are not advertised directly. They	The Joyride program was a large success in Swift County in 2016.

Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
		are largely case-by-case since there is no blanket cost structure for special event services. Prairie Five RIDES currently sponsors several events for fairs/festivals, back to school days, and other fundraising events where rides are offered at no charge. Joyride also had their first safe ride home event last year and it was a large success	Through coordination between Prairie Five RIDES and the Southwest Minnesota Towards Zero Deaths Coalition additional events are scheduled for 2017
Organize medical rides to South Dakota	Ongoing	This is currently offered by Prairie Five RIDES volunteers on a demand-response basis	This is an ongoing challenge due to difficulties recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers
Enhance Volunteer Driver Program	Ongoing	Prairie Five RIDES is currently offering after-hours service for dialysis but does not directly market this service due to liability concerns	This is an ongoing challenge due to difficulties recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers despite the best efforts of Prairie Five RIDES and the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access
Coordination of Dispatch and Authorization of Rides	Started	Prairie Five RIDES has continued to push for a creation of a coordination council for the past 2 years, but the funding has not yet been made available by MnDOT	The region has not had the resources available for this strategy and it has resurfaced as a current need in the 2016 plan update
Coordination of Rides for Children	Ongoing	This is difficult to track as Prairie Five RIDES does not track specific destinations. They do classify their rides under: work, medical, general, or social- so there may be an opportunity to do some analysis	This objective is challenging because Prairie Five RIDES is currently unable to offer regional rides for any passenger under the age of 17 without a guardian due to liability concerns
Worksite Rides for Disabled	Ongoing	Prairie Five RIDES and the county developmental achievement centers are currently providing this service	This system has been a success for this region and the Swift County Developmental Achievement Center

Strategy	Status	Discussion/Analysis	Successes/Barriers
			has just received funding for a new bus in 2017
Agency Ride Coordination	Ongoing	There is currently some coordination with Granite Falls public transit system. Prairie Five RIDES also has a contract with Granite Falls for some services. There exists some opportunity for improved coordination and communication between Prairie Five RIDES and Granite Falls Transit	The region has not had the resources available for this strategy and it has resurfaced as a current need in the 2016 plan update
Regionalize volunteer Driver Training	Not started	The only regional provider of volunteer rides in Region 6W does this training for their volunteer driver staff in-house for liability reasons	Due to liability concerns, it is not currently possible to combine volunteer driver training with any other regions outside of Region 6W
Dispatch Coordination	Not started	An opportunity exists to create a regional call center that could route calls for all transportation providers for the region, which would improve coordination for rides throughout the whole region	The region has not had the resources available for this strategy and it has resurfaced as a current need in the 2016 plan update
Joint Purchase Agreement	Ongoing	There are some transit providers that are currently taking advantage of the CPV program	Further opportunities for joint powers programs face challenges due to the varying funding structures of the transit providers in the region

Rider Survey

A transit survey was administered to Region 6W through: Swift County Developmental Achievement Center, Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council’s (SWMNPIC) Montevideo Workforce Center, Sanford Canby Medical Center, Main Street Industries Inc. Developmental Achievement Center and Yellow Medicine County Family Services.

The gaps and needs identified from the survey were:

- 74% of riders surveyed indicated that longer service hours would allow them to ride the transportation services more frequently. On-time service and reliability were the next most

popular desired improvements. No respondents selected better information or shorter travel time

- The locations that respondents indicated they would like additional service to go are:
- Willmar, Montevideo, Marshall, Clinton, and non-medical trips
- 54% of the respondents indicated they would utilize the additional service almost every day
- 30% of our respondents indicated that they have conditions that require assistance to use transportation services
- 87% of the respondents surveyed indicated that they do not have any means of transportation other than their public transit service, indicating that they are transit-dependent

Focus Group

A focus group was conducted at Graceville Senior Center on 3/9 at 11:00am. There were 16 participants. There was one city official, one social worker and the rest were residents of the town of Graceville. Graceville does not currently have an in-town public transit system. The main gaps and needs identified from the focus group were:

- Many participants have no car and seldom have a driver
- Additional participants anticipate a future need for public transit as they get older
- Transit during the evening hours is especially a challenge in our region
- Many participants were unaware of the services offered
- Pricing for cities and towns without in-town service is a challenge- especially for rides to other cities or counties
- Cities and towns without in-town service are underserved by public transit and volunteer drivers
- Weekend service would be beneficial for those who attend religious services on the weekend

An organizational focus group was conducted via webinar on 3/2 at 1:00pm. There were 7 participants: Yellow Medicine County Family Services, Brookside Senior Living Montevideo, Swift County Human Services, UMRDC, Chippewa County Family Services and 2 representatives from Lac qui Parle Family Services. The main gaps and needs identified from the focus group were:

- Access afterhours and on the weekends
- Reliability (inaccurate wait times, lengthy wait times, scheduling errors)
- Difficulty in getting rides for children
- Magnified in areas without in-town service and in the summer
- Last-minute ride availability for appointments in outlying areas
- Challenges with peak times

- Door-through-door service
- Lack of volunteer drivers
- Connection to other hubs

Planning Workshop

The planning workshop on 6W incorporated input from all interested stakeholders. A total of 10 people attended, listed in Appendix C. At the workshop, stakeholders identified strengths and weaknesses of transit coordination in the region. Building from these, stakeholders then identified priority strategies for transit coordination and brainstormed project ideas that could address these strategies. Using input gathered at this workshop, the Steering Committee prioritized the strategies and projects included in the final plan. A complete list of project ideas considered during the planning process is presented in Appendix D.

Strengths and Weaknesses

At the public workshop, participants identified strengths and weaknesses of existing coordination efforts in Region 6W. Combined with the plan’s technical findings, these strengths and weaknesses form the basis for identifying strategies to address transportation coordination in this region. The strengths and weaknesses identified are listed in Table 11.

Table 11: Existing Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Door-to-door service is provided throughout the region	One agency that responded to the transportation resource questionnaire only provides two hours of service Monday through Friday
Door-through-door service is provided throughout the region informally	One agency that responded to the transportation resource questionnaire requires more than 2 days’ notice to schedule a ride
Escort service is provided throughout the region informally	The door-to-door service in the region is limited
The response time of the current public transit providers meets or exceeds expectations	50% of the agencies that responded to the transportation resource questionnaire requires their passengers to be an agency customer
The UMVRDC rider survey found the current public transit system successfully services a large percentage of disabled passengers	Some agencies that responded to the transportation resource questionnaire require a social services referral
Rider feedback overwhelming illustrated good driver/passenger rapport	No agencies that responded to the transportation resource questionnaire provide car seats, interpreters or PCAs
Rider feedback overwhelming illustrated high levels of satisfaction with the current public transit options	Many passengers in the region need assistance that is a barrier that prevents them from utilizing the current public transit options

Strengths	Weaknesses
Over half of passengers reported very high levels of satisfaction with the current public transit systems	75% of agencies that responded to the transportation resource questionnaire don't provide travel training
70% of passengers reported that at least 75% of their transportation needs are being met by current the public transit systems	Schedules for riders and human service agencies vary greatly, making it difficult to identify high-demand times
The current public transit systems have made substantial investments to improve their service	92% of riders surveyed reported needing door-to-door service
The current demand-response system serves three small urban cities	<p>The top 4 accommodations needed to provide service were identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escorts 73% • Personal care attendants 55% • Discounted services 55% • Car/booster seats needed 46%
The current transportation fleet for Region 6W offers a large, varied fleet to meet a variety of needs	Limited service hours were a top concern of 44% human services agencies that responded to the transportation resource questionnaire
Some current public transit agencies utilize personal vehicles for rides to reduce costs	The limited service area and billing/payment were also identified as top concerns for human services agencies that responded to the transportation resource questionnaire
The current transportation providers offer ride discounts and reimbursements where available to assist with the costs of transportation	Affordability continues to be a challenge for passengers and potential passengers
There is currently significant coordination within transit providers	It is difficult to find regional rides for children due to liability concerns
The demand-response system serves the needs of the region efficiently and effectively	The increasingly difficult task of recruiting and retaining drivers continues to create challenges for the region
The rural nature of the region affords transit providers an ability to develop more meaningful relationships with passengers	Not all public transit agencies in Region 6W are Department of Transportation (DOT) certified
The current transit operators provide many transportation alternatives for the region	Dispatch departments in public transit agencies are understaffed due to the challenge providing competitive wages
	The current public transit options do not offer the PCA service needed by riders or potential riders
	Riders and potential riders in Region 6W have a disability that prevents them from using the current public transit system
	Marketing is an ongoing need as many residents of communities in the region are

Strengths	Weaknesses
	unaware of the current public transit options available to them
	The public transit agencies in the region have reported turning down rides due to lack of available driver staff
	Accountability and transparency is an ongoing need for all transportation providers in the region
	It is currently challenging to ensure riders can identify the most effective or appropriate transit option
	Some passengers are required to use cost-prohibitive STS options and can't utilize the public transit system
	The State of Minnesota regulations are burdensome for transit agencies, human service agencies, health care providers and passengers
	There is a limited number of providers in the region

Needs Assessment

The public workshop identified the current transit coordination needs of Region 6W. They were grouped into 7 categories: service limitations, gaps & unmet needs, centralized information, geographic limitations, time limitations, program eligibility and trip purpose limitations and service quality/miscellaneous issues. Below are the needs identified at this workshop.

Spatial Limitations

- The population density of the region is relatively low
- Providing trips outside of the region continues to be an increasingly difficult challenge
- Coordination among the numerous regional transportation providers within and outside of Region 6W

Timing Limitations

- Peak times continue to create barriers for riders and transportation providers
- The current process to get set up for rides reimbursable through insurance is cumbersome
- The current transit model does not offer service on evenings and weekends
- Same-day needs are challenging to meet for regional rides

Program Eligibility/ Trip Purpose

- Trips for emergency services continue to be burdensome and coordination between STS and public transit needs to be increased
- There exists a gap between eligibility for needs and eligibility for service
- The current transportation model makes it difficult to provide medical trips aimed at preventing advanced disease

Gaps and Unmet Needs

- Marketing to human service agencies and consumers is an ongoing need for the region
- Education of public transit services for human service agencies and consumers is an ongoing need for the region
- The current transit model does not offer service on evenings and weekends
- Door-through-door service is a current need for clients in Region 6W

Centralized Info

- A need currently exists for a central informational and marketing hub, call center or official regional procedure for all transit options in the region
- Marketing to human service agencies and consumers is an ongoing need for the region

Service Quality/Misc.

- There are several travel requirements outlined by the rider survey that are not offered by current public transit options

- Affordability continues to be a barrier for regional passengers or potential passengers
- There currently exists no confirmation for rides booked more than 24-hours in advance to address scheduling errors proactively
- The region continues to have trouble recruiting drivers, dispatch operators and volunteer drivers
- Regional rides for children are currently unserved due to liability concerns with the current public transit agencies in Region 6W

Service Limitations

- Grants for transportation are currently not rural sensitive in economies of scale
- Public transit agencies are current unable to provide private rides for STS
- Ridership metrics for the region prevent ridership needs from being fulfilled if they do not coincide with a large demand period
- The process to receive rides that are reimbursable through medical insurance is cumbersome for riders, transit providers, human service agencies and health care providers

The largest challenges that manifested themselves across multiple categories are: the rural nature of Region 6W, the difficulties associated with rides reimbursable through health insurance, the increasingly difficult task of recruiting drivers and the limitations of the days and times public transit is currently provided. The challenges that stem from these root causes are numerous and are spread across the many categories above. The strategies outlined in Appendix D are aimed at creating solutions to address these transit challenges.

Strategies and Projects

Strategies

The public workshop identified strategies to address the current transit coordination needs of Region 6W. They were grouped into 3 categories: coordinate & consolidate services and resources; mobility; communication, training and organizational support. Below are the needs identified at this workshop.

Coordinate & Consolidate Services and Resources

- Make information accessible through a regional marketing and call center
- Specifically target marketing resources at places and events attended by those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes
- Create a website to host information regarding all the available transportation options in the region

Mobility

- Increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible
- Utilize different types of vehicles for different needs
- Offer incentives to drivers aimed at increasing service where it is needed most
- Increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region
- Recruit and retain volunteer drivers
- Reassess the age limit imposed on drivers by public transit agencies
- Remove as many barriers as possible for rides reimbursable through health insurance

Communication, Training and Organizational Support

- Create a website to host information regarding all the available transportation options in the region
- Develop a sustainable marketing campaign to ensure marketing efforts are efficient, effective and ongoing
- Create an incentives program for new public transit riders
- Increase communication between transit providers and transit riders
- Enhance the technology infrastructure of current transit providers

Projects

To categorize project ideas, Steering Committee members created an “Effort vs. Impact” chart to compare these project ideas. This created a relative sense of how much effort (low to high) each project idea would take as well as how much impact (minor to major) each project could have in its region. This chart can be found in Appendix E. The projects listed below represent those ideas the steering committee prioritized as having the most potential to improve transit coordination in Region 6W. A complete list of these strategies can be found in Table 12.

Table 12: Region 6W Project Ideas

Project Overview	Explore supplemental transportation options (such as ride-sharing services like Liberty Mobility, Uber)
Population Served	Able-bodied regional population
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)
Strategies Addressed	Increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; utilize different types of vehicles for different needs; offer incentives to drivers aimed at increasing service where it is needed most; increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region

Project Overview	Increase the driving staff of the current transportation organizations
Population Served	All riders of current and potential riders of public transit services
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Transportation providers
Strategies Addressed	Increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region; recruit and retain volunteer drivers; reassess the age limit imposed on drivers by public transit agencies

Project Overview	Increase driver pay at our current transportation organizations
Population Served	Region-wide
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), local counties and local transit providers
Strategies Addressed	Offer incentives to drivers aimed at increasing service where it is needed most; increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region; recruit and retain volunteer drivers

Project Overview	Increase the van fleet of the region (providers and city-owned)
Population Served	The entire region with significant impact to cities who lack in-town transit service
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Transit providers and local cities
Strategies Addressed	Increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; utilize different types of vehicles for different needs; increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region

Project Overview	Expand the hours and days that public transit is offered
Population Served	Region-wide
Communities Served	Region-wide

Responsible Entities	The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and local transit providers
Strategies Addressed	Increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region

Project Overview	Implement a discount for first-time riders
Population Served	First-time transit riders
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Transit providers
Strategies Addressed	Make information accessible through a regional marketing and call center; specifically target marketing resources at places and events attended by those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes; develop a sustainable marketing campaign to ensure marketing efforts are efficient, effective and ongoing; create an incentives program for new public transit riders

Project Overview	Partner with churches to explore additional options for weekend service outside of public transit and create a volunteer ride directory
Population Served	The entire region with significant impact to the older adult population
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Local churches and the Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)
Strategies Addressed	Increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; recruit and retain volunteer drivers

Project Overview	Incentivize volunteer drivers to increase the number and availability of volunteer drivers
Population Served	Region-wide
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	The State of Minnesota, the local counties, Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
Strategies Addressed	Offer incentives to drivers aimed at increasing service where it is needed most; increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region; recruit and retain volunteer drivers

Project Overview	Create an informational and marketing hub for the region
Population Served	Region-wide
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Region 6W and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)

Strategies Addressed	Make information accessible through a regional marketing and call center; specifically target marketing resources at places and events attended by those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes; create a website to host information regarding all the available transportation options in the region; create a website to host information regarding all the available transportation options in the region; develop a sustainable marketing campaign to ensure marketing efforts are efficient, effective and ongoing
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Project Overview	Increase coordination between providers to ensure the appropriate ride service is being utilized
Population Served	Region-wide
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Transportation providers and the Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)
Strategies Addressed	Increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; utilize different types of vehicles for different needs; create a website to host information regarding all the available transportation options in the region

Project Overview	Continue ongoing marketing strategies for the region
Population Served	The entire region with significant impact to cities who lack in-town transit service
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Transportation providers and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
Strategies Addressed	Make information accessible through a regional marketing and call center; specifically target marketing resources at places and events attended by those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes; create a website to host information regarding all the available transportation options in the region; develop a sustainable marketing campaign to ensure marketing efforts are efficient, effective and ongoing

Project Overview	Create and implement prepay cards that offer discounted rates to riders
Population Served	Region-wide
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Transportation providers
Strategies Addressed	Create an incentives program for new public transit riders

Project Overview	Continue to refine systems used for scheduling rides far in advance
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Population Served	The entire region with significant impact to those utilizing transit for medical reasons (including the older population)
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Transportation providers
Strategies Addressed	Increase communication between transit providers and transit riders; enhance the technology infrastructure of current transit providers

Project Overview	Improve notification times of confirmed rides
Population Served	The entire region with significant impact to the older adult population and those utilizing transit for medical reasons
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Transportation providers and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
Strategies Addressed	Increase communication between transit providers and transit riders; enhance the technology infrastructure of current transit providers

Project Overview	Improve proactive communication between transit providers and riders
Population Served	Region-wide
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Transportation providers and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
Strategies Addressed	Increase communication between transit providers and transit riders; enhance the technology infrastructure of current transit providers

Project Overview	Increased communication between hospitals, human service agencies and public transit providers
Population Served	The entire region with significant impact to those utilizing transit for medical reasons
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Local hospitals, local human service agencies, transportation providers, and the Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)
Strategies Addressed	Make information accessible through a regional marketing and call center; specifically target marketing resources at places and events attended by those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes; increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; remove as many barriers as possible for rides reimbursable through health insurance

Project Overview	Increased cooperation and coordination between hospital staff leadership and public transit leadership
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Population Served	The entire region with significant impact to those utilizing transit for medical reasons
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Local hospital leadership, local human service agency leadership, transportation provider leadership, and the Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)
Strategies Addressed	Make information accessible through a regional marketing and call center; specifically target marketing resources at places and events attended by those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes; increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; remove as many barriers as possible for rides reimbursable through health insurance

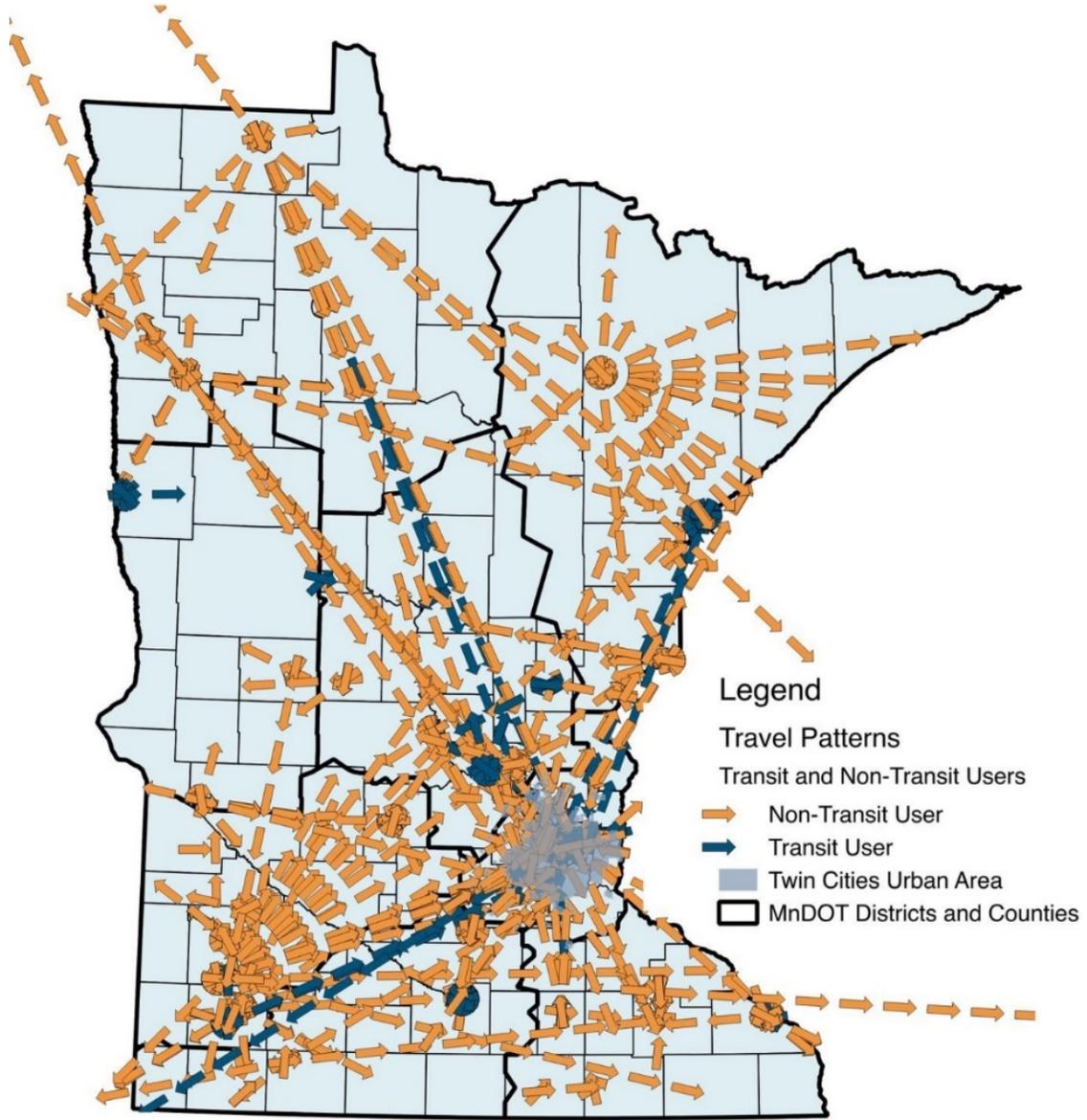
Project Overview	Utilize local 5310 vehicles during evenings and on the weekend when they are not being utilized by their agency
Population Served	Region-wide
Communities Served	Region-wide
Responsible Entities	Local developmental achievement centers, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and the Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)
Strategies Addressed	Increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; utilize different types of vehicles for different needs; increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region

Appendix A – Transit Services, Transit-Dependent Populations, and Key Destinations

Map of Region 6W



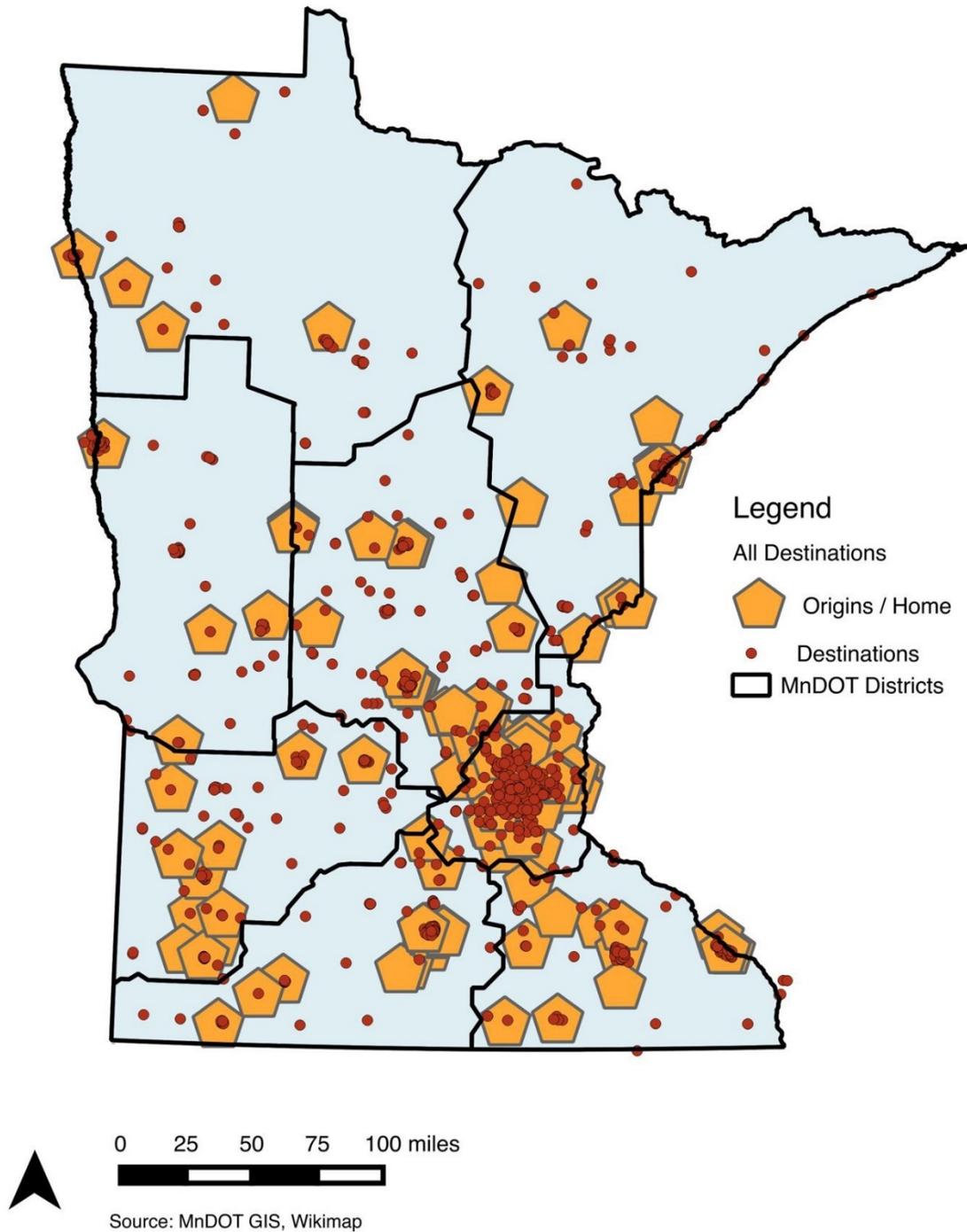
MnDOT Statewide Existing and Desired Travel Patterns



0 25 50 75 100 miles

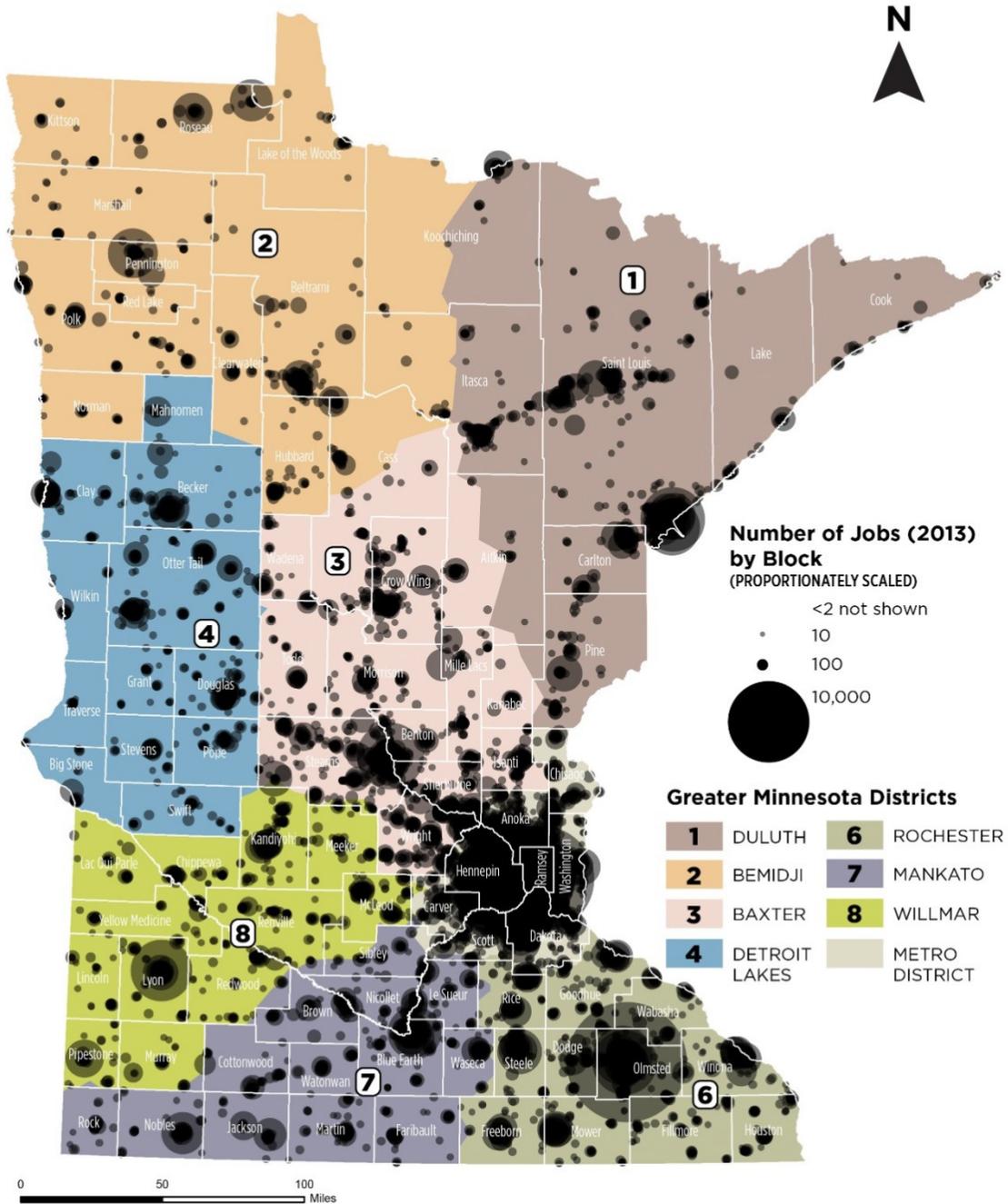
Source: MnDOT GIS, Wikimap

MnDOT Minnesota Destinations (Wiki-mapping and Destination survey)



MnDOT Statewide Employment Density by Census Block

Jobs (2013)



Data Sources: MnDOT GIS; LEHD On the Map, All Jobs 2013.

Appendix B – Transportation Resources

The following includes contact information of all regional transportation providers for whom information was received. This is not a complete list of providers in the region.

Big Stone County	
Name:	Main Street Industries
Address:	93 Main Street, Clinton, MN 56225
Phone:	320-325-5251
Web:	
Service Type:	Non-profit- DT&H
Yellow Medicine County	
Name:	Canby DAC
Address:	PO Box 154, Canby, MN 56220
Phone:	507-223-7900
Web:	
Service Type:	Private Transportation, DT&H
Name:	Granite Falls Hospital
Address:	345 10 th Avenue, Granite Falls, MN 56241
Phone:	320-564-3111
Web:	Granite Falls Healthcare Website
Service Type:	Private Transportation - Health Care
Region-wide	
Name:	Prairie Five RIDES
Address:	719 7 th Street North, Montevideo, MN 56265
Phone:	320-269-8727
Web:	Prairie Five RIDES Website
Service Type:	Non-Profit
Name:	Lakes Medi-Van
Address:	16777 Longview Drive, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501
Phone:	218-847-1729
Web:	Lakes Medi-Van Website
Service Type:	Private Transportation, Medical Transport

Appendix C – Public Workshop Participants

UMVRDC Workshop Participants	
Patrick Bruflat	Chippewa County Family Services
Julie Dammann	Southwest MN Private Industry Council
Donna Hermanson	Lac qui Parle Family Services
Tim Kolhei	Chippewa County Veteran's Services Office
Catie Lee	Swift County Human Services
Emily Ring	Prairie Five RIDES
Jim Schmaedeka	UMVRDC
Peggy Sik	Sanford Canby Medical Center
Seth Streblov	Granite Falls Hospital
Jason Brisson	UMVRDC

Appendix D – Project Idea Summary

Project Overview	Population Served	Communities Served	Responsible Entities	Strategies Addressed
Explore supplemental transportation options (such as ride-sharing services like Liberty Mobility, Uber)	Able-bodied regional population	Region-wide	Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)	Increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; utilize different types of vehicles for different needs; offer incentives to drivers aimed at increasing service where it is needed most; increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region
Increase the driving staff of the current transportation organizations	All riders of current and potential riders of public transit services	Region-wide	Transportation providers	Increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region; recruit and retain volunteer drivers; reassess the age limit imposed on drivers by public transit agencies
Increase driver pay at our current transportation organizations	Region-wide	Region-wide	The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), local counties and local transit providers	Offer incentives to drivers aimed at increasing service where it is needed most; increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region; recruit and retain volunteer drivers
Increase the van fleet of the region (providers and city-owned)	The entire region with significant impact to cities who lack in-town transit service	Region-wide	Transit providers and local cities	Increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; utilize different types of vehicles for different needs; increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region

Project Overview	Population Served	Communities Served	Responsible Entities	Strategies Addressed
Expand the hours and days that public transit is offered	Region-wide	Region-wide	The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and local transit providers	Increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region
Implement a discount for first-time riders	First-time transit riders	Region-wide	Transit providers	Make information accessible through a regional marketing and call center; specifically target marketing resources at places and events attended by those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes; develop a sustainable marketing campaign to ensure marketing efforts are efficient, effective and ongoing; create an incentives program for new public transit riders
Partner with churches to explore additional options for weekend service outside of public transit and create a volunteer ride directory	The entire region with significant impact to the older adult population	Region-wide	Local churches and the Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)	Increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; recruit and retain volunteer drivers
Incentivize volunteer drivers to increase the number and availability of volunteer drivers	Region-wide	Region-wide	The State of Minnesota, the local counties, Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)	Offer incentives to drivers aimed at increasing service where it is needed most; increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region; recruit and retain volunteer drivers

Project Overview	Population Served	Communities Served	Responsible Entities	Strategies Addressed
Create an informational and marketing hub for the region	Region-wide	Region-wide	Region 6W and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)	Make information accessible through a regional marketing and call center; specifically target marketing resources at places and events attended by those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes; create a website to host information regarding all the available transportation options in the region; create a website to host information regarding all the available transportation options in the region; develop a sustainable marketing campaign to ensure marketing efforts are efficient, effective and ongoing
Increase coordination between providers to ensure the appropriate ride service is being utilized	Region-wide	Region-wide	Transportation providers and the Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)	Increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; utilize different types of vehicles for different needs; create a website to host information regarding all the available transportation options in the region
Continue ongoing marketing strategies for the region	The entire region with significant impact to cities who lack in-town transit service	Region-wide	Transportation providers and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)	Make information accessible through a regional marketing and call center; specifically target marketing resources at places and events attended by those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes; create a website to host

Project Overview	Population Served	Communities Served	Responsible Entities	Strategies Addressed
				information regarding all the available transportation options in the region; develop a sustainable marketing campaign to ensure marketing efforts are efficient, effective and ongoing
Continue prepay cards that offer discounted rates to riders	Region-wide	Region-wide	Transportation providers	Create an incentives program for new public transit riders
Continue to refine systems used for scheduling rides far in advance	The entire region with significant impact to those utilizing transit for medical reasons (including the older population)	Region-wide	Transportation providers	Increase communication between transit providers and transit riders; enhance the technology infrastructure of current transit providers
Improve notification times of confirmed rides	The entire region with significant impact to the older adult population and those utilizing transit for medical reasons	Region-wide	Transportation providers and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)	Increase communication between transit providers and transit riders; enhance the technology infrastructure of current transit providers
Improve proactive communication between transit providers and riders	Region-wide	Region-wide	Transportation providers and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)	Increase communication between transit providers and transit riders; enhance the technology infrastructure of current transit providers
Increased communication between hospitals, human	The entire region with significant impact to those utilizing transit for medical reasons	Region-wide	Local hospitals, local human service agencies, transportation providers, and the Region 6W	Make information accessible through a regional marketing and call center; specifically target marketing resources at places and events

Project Overview	Population Served	Communities Served	Responsible Entities	Strategies Addressed
service agencies and public transit providers			Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)	attended by those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes; increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; remove as many barriers as possible for rides reimbursable through health insurance
Increased cooperation and coordination between hospital staff leadership and public transit leadership	The entire region with significant impact to those utilizing transit for medical reasons	Region-wide	Local hospital leadership, local human service agency leadership, transportation provider leadership, and the Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)	Make information accessible through a regional marketing and call center; specifically target marketing resources at places and events attended by those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with low incomes; increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; remove as many barriers as possible for rides reimbursable through health insurance
Utilize local 5310 vehicles during evenings and on the weekend when they are not being utilized by their agency	Region-wide	Region-wide	Local developmental achievement centers, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and the Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC)	Increase the number of transportation options to provide as many alternatives as possible; utilize different types of vehicles for different needs; increase the days and times public transit service is offered in the region

Appendix E – Project Analysis: Effort vs. Impact Assessment

<p><u>Difficult to do/Minor Impact</u></p> <p>Increase driver pay</p>	<p><u>Difficult to do/ Major Impact</u></p> <p>Explore supplemental transit options</p> <p>Increase driving staff of current transportation agencies</p> <p>Increase van fleet of the region (providers and city-owned)</p> <p>Incentivize volunteer drivers</p> <p>Create informational and marketing hub for the region</p> <p>Increase coordination between providers</p> <p>Refine advance ride reservation process</p> <p>Improve ride notification times</p> <p>Improve proactive communication between transit providers and riders</p> <p>Increased communication between hospitals, human service agencies and public transit providers</p> <p>Increased cooperation and coordination between hospital staff leadership and public transit leadership</p> <p>Utilize local 5310 vehicles during off-hours</p>
<p><u>Easy to do/Minor Impact</u></p>	<p><u>Easy to do/Major Impact</u></p> <p>Implement discount for first-time riders</p> <p>Partner with churches to provide weekend rides and volunteer ride directory</p> <p>Ongoing marketing for transit in the region</p> <p>Continue to implement discounted prepay cards</p>