

## Policy 7: Greater Minnesota Metropolitan and Regional Mobility




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*A growing and aging population combined with shifts in the economy will put new demands on the transportation system in Greater Minnesota.*

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### Summary

**Provide for the changing transportation needs of people and freight traveling within Greater Minnesota regions and metropolitan areas by planning regionally for critical investments and improving coordination across modes and jurisdictions.** A growing and aging population combined with shifts in the economy will put new demands on the transportation system in Greater Minnesota. To address these changes, Mn/DOT will continue to work with the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), Regional Development Commissions (RDC) and other partners at the local and regional level to identify issues and opportunities for coordinated roadway, transit, bicycle-pedestrian, and freight system improvements. These improvements should focus on moving people and freight within Greater Minnesota regions and metropolitan areas and providing efficient connections to the larger statewide, national, and global transportation systems. Of particular importance will be the joint efforts to examine the changing needs for both transit and freight.

- 7A. Regional Planning:** Public and private entities, including tribal and local governments, MPOs, RDCs, transit providers, and Mn/DOT should collaboratively develop and advance regional approaches to multimodal transportation planning for Greater Minnesota.
- 7B. Planning the Roadway System:** Mn/DOT, MPOs, tribal and local governments will work together to plan for and maintain an interconnected network of roadways to serve mobility and access needs within each region.
- 7C. Planning the Transit System:** Mn/DOT, MPOs, RDCs, tribal and local governments, regional rail authorities and transit providers will work together to plan for and provide a coordinated transit system.
- 7D. Bicycle and Pedestrian Systems:** MPOs, RDCs, Mn/DOT, and tribal and local governments should continue working to provide appropriate regional bicycle and pedestrian systems in Greater Minnesota.
- 7E. Freight Systems:** MPOs, RDCs, tribal and local governments, regional rail authorities, port authorities, and Mn/DOT will work with state agencies, freight generators, shippers, and carriers to coordinate efforts to improve regional freight transportation in Greater Minnesota.

## Background and Context

Transportation needs of Greater Minnesota regions and metropolitan areas will be affected by many of the same overall demographic and economic changes Minnesota faces, including meeting the mobility needs of an aging population and providing for changes in freight types and movements. However, shifts in population and regional economics will not occur uniformly, requiring the use of varied strategies that ensure the mobility and access needs for travel within growing metropolitan and micropolitan areas will be met in the future. These strategies should also work toward providing efficient connections to the larger statewide, national, and global transportation systems. Multimodal transportation planning at the regional level requires the cooperation and coordination of regional development organizations such as the MPOs, RDCs, as well as tribal and local governments, regional rail authorities, transit providers, and Mn/DOT.

## Strategies

Planning, operating, and managing multimodal transportation systems at the metropolitan and regional level require significant coordination and cooperation between multiple public entities and private providers. This section presents strategies that Greater Minnesota transportation planning authorities and providers should use to develop coordinated and interconnected metropolitan and regional transportation systems. These systems should provide an appropriate level of access and mobility for all travelers and all types of freight. The specific mix of strategies employed will differ based on the demographic and economic shifts within each region or metropolitan area.

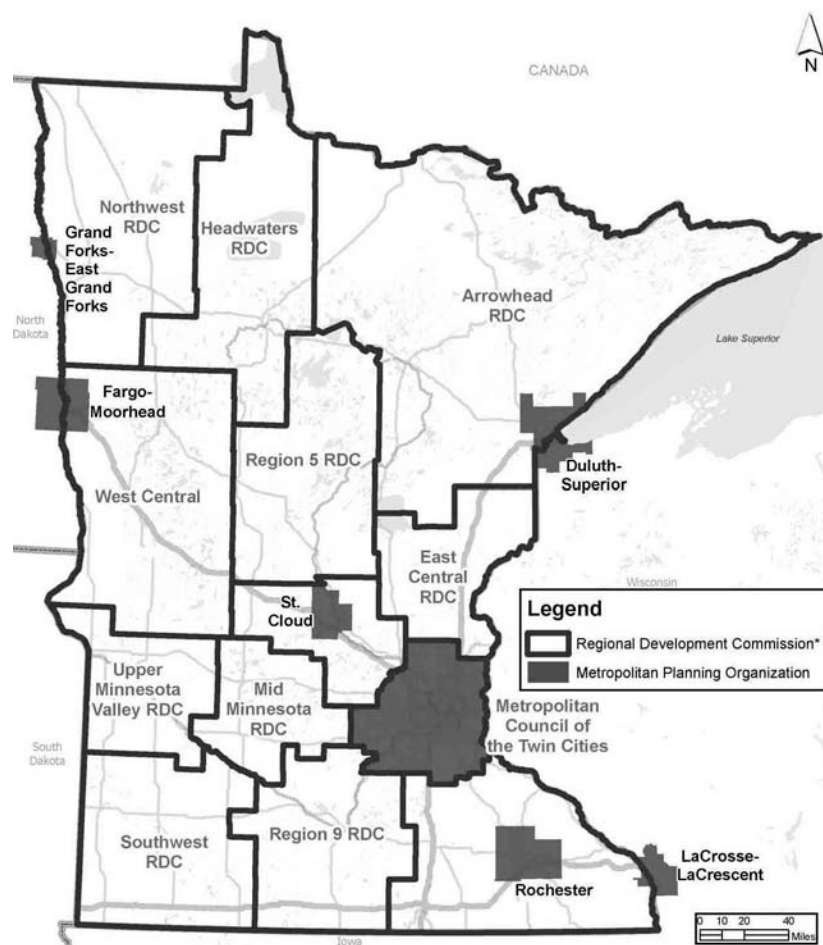
### 7A. Regional Planning

*Public and private entities, including tribal and local governments, MPOs, RDCs, transit providers, and Mn/DOT should collaboratively develop and advance regional approaches to multimodal transportation planning for Greater Minnesota.*

Much of the travel within regions and metropolitan areas involves facilities or services provided by multiple jurisdictions, including tribal governments, states, counties, cities, and townships. For example, Figure 7.7.1 shows four Greater Minnesota metropolitan areas (i.e., Duluth-Superior, Fargo-Moorhead, Grand Forks-East Grand Forks, and La Crosse-La Crescent) that straddle state, county, and municipal boundaries. Multiple jurisdictions increase the complexity of transportation system planning and operations at the regional or metropolitan level. Coordination among these jurisdictions, however, is necessary to ensure the development of a fully interconnected, multimodal transportation system.

*In metropolitan areas, the MPO has primary responsibility for multimodal transportation planning.*

Leadership in transportation planning comes from a variety of sources in Greater Minnesota. In metropolitan areas, the MPO has primary responsibility for multimodal transportation planning. Under federal law, MPOs are required to coordinate with affected jurisdictions to develop a multimodal transportation plan. This planning helps to ensure an integrated multimodal transportation system is developed within the metropolitan area and that federal, state, regional, and local resources are used effectively. Beyond the boundaries of the MPOs, Mn/DOT, RDCs, tribal governments, and local jurisdictions work together on the development of transportation plans. These planning efforts should work to reach beyond jurisdictional boundaries to be regional in nature and ensure coordination with and participation from all affected jurisdictions. Where needed, Mn/DOT will provide technical expertise to regions and metropolitan areas in support of their planning efforts.



\*Note: in RDC areas without a label, no RDC exists and Mn/DOT fills the role for transportation planning.

**Figure 7.7.1 Minnesota Transportation Planning Areas**

Source: Mn/DOT Office of Investment Management

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*In growth areas, transportation agencies should cooperatively plan to expand roadway systems to meet growth and economic needs.*

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## **7B. Planning the Roadway System**

*Mn/DOT, MPOs, tribal and local governments will work together to plan for and maintain an interconnected network of roadways to serve mobility and access needs within each region.*

Since the system of major highways serving Greater Minnesota is largely complete, Mn/DOT and local transportation authorities should focus primarily on maintenance and safety on the existing system and options for managing performance, with expansion planned only in growing areas where management alone cannot address transportation needs. These objectives can be accomplished through the following:

- a. All jurisdictions should focus significant emphasis on transportation investments toward safety and maintenance.
- b. All jurisdictions should continue to coordinate improvements within the context of adopted policy and long-range investment plans, including efforts to advance Mn/DOT district long-range highway investment plans.
- c. All jurisdictions should apply management strategies to preserve mobility on critical arterials within Level 1, 2, and 3 trade centers. Such strategies include signal retiming, intersection modifications, lane extensions, and access management techniques.
- d. Within metropolitan areas, the MPO should work with Mn/DOT and local jurisdictions to identify both appropriate corridor and system-wide strategies to improve roadway performance. Corridor strategies may include use of intelligent transportation systems, ramp meters, and transit prioritization. System wide strategies may include provisions for real-time traveler information, encouraging ride sharing through employer incentives, and construction of park-and-pool lots.

## **7C. Planning the Transit System**

*Mn/DOT, MPOs, RDCs, tribal and local governments, regional rail authorities, and transit providers will work together to plan for and provide a coordinated transit system.*

Consistent with direction being developed for the Greater Minnesota Transit Plan, the first priority for transit in Greater Minnesota will continue to be meeting the needs of the elderly, disabled, and low-income populations by coordinating services with other agencies as much as possible. However, there is a growing role for transit in addressing the needs of commuters through support for rideshare programs, establishing new services, and providing for park-and-pool and/or park-and-ride lots. Greater Minnesota transit systems can be enhanced in the following ways:

- a. In metropolitan areas, MPOs, transit agencies, and human service agencies should work together to evaluate transit needs and develop strategies to increase transit service and options. Beyond the core transit services, these organizations should consider the needs of emerging markets, such as commuters, and identify reasonable service, program, and facility options. Options could include new routes, expanded carpool and vanpool assistance, and park-and-pool and park-and-ride lots.

- b. Across Greater Minnesota, RDCs and planning commissions, tribal governments, rural transit providers, human service agencies, and local jurisdictions should continue to work toward strengthening and expanding core transit services. Improvements should focus on increasing service frequency and area of coverage, connecting to nearby services to facilitate longer distance travel, and establishing rideshare programs to address emerging commuter needs.

## 7D. Bicycle and Pedestrian Systems

*MPOs, RDCs, tribal and local governments, and Mn/DOT should continue working to provide appropriate regional bicycle and pedestrian systems in Greater Minnesota.*

While bicycle and pedestrian travel is generally local in nature, there is growing interest in linking systems together to allow uninterrupted travel across a region or metropolitan area. Coordination at the regional level is necessary to successfully develop these systems. For example, the system of scenic bikeways supports non-motorized travel in Greater Minnesota through a combination of low-volume highways and paved trails. This type of system makes efficient use of existing infrastructure and, with strategic additions, can meet the growing demand for safe, interconnected bicycle-pedestrian systems and serve as a model for development and implementation of regional systems throughout Greater Minnesota. To enhance regional bicycle and pedestrian systems the following strategies should be pursued:

- a. RDCs, tribal governments, local jurisdictions, Mn/DOT, and other agencies should coordinate their own efforts and work with advocacy and recreation groups to increase coordination between all partners.
- b. In metropolitan areas, MPOs and local jurisdictions should continue working to provide a system of interconnected bicycle and pedestrian facilities that support commuter and recreational travel.



*There is a growing interest in linking bicycle and pedestrian systems to support uninterrupted travel through larger areas.*

## 7E. Freight Systems

*MPOs, RDCs, tribal and local governments, regional rail authorities, port authorities, and Mn/DOT will work with state agencies, freight generators, shippers, and carriers to coordinate efforts to improve regional freight transportation in Greater Minnesota.*

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*Freight patterns have changed in Greater Minnesota and will continue to change in the future.*

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Freight patterns have changed in Greater Minnesota and will continue to change in the future. A shift toward larger grain elevators and to value-added processing facilities, such as ethanol plants in southwest Minnesota or new steel plants on the Iron Range, has brought about changes in vehicle weight and size, as well as routing. Large terminals and processing plants affect traffic patterns related to both delivery of raw materials and shipping of finished products or by-products. To ensure that freight continues to move smoothly within Greater Minnesota regions and metropolitan areas, several efforts will be undertaken, including:

- a. Consistent with Policy 5: Statewide Connections, Mn/DOT will work with its transportation partners to identify candidate highways for truck routes that supplement the IRC system.
- b. Mn/DOT will work to better understand regional freight issues, movements, and trends through the completion and periodic update of regional freight studies. These studies will be multimodal, identify freight issues in each region and in metropolitan areas, and also identify appropriate, cost effective solutions.
- c. Mn/DOT will work with its transportation partners to improve the level of freight information available to managers, decision-makers, and the public, including improving truck volume data and classification information on roadways.
- d. Conclusions and recommendations from regional freight studies should be considered in updates to local, regional, and statewide plans and they should be incorporated into future investment plans.

## **Performance Measures and Indicators**

Performance measures and/or indicators provide quantitative information to managers and decision-makers. This information is tracked over time to monitor performance and investment levels as well as the changes in performance given changes in levels of investment. Numerous performance measures and indicators have been either developed or identified for this policy area. One of these measures and/or indicators has been selected for representation and discussion within this policy and is **bolded** below. A full description of all performance measures and indicators associated with this plan is provided in Appendix D.

- **Congestion in Regional Trade Centers**
- Greater Minnesota Public Transit Bus Service Hours
- Greater Minnesota Transit Coverage
- Non-Auto Commuter Trips

### **Congestion in Regional Trade Centers**

This policy establishes a performance indicator for mobility based on the concept of Level of Service (LOS) as defined in the Transportation Research Board's Highway Capacity Manual. The performance indicator identifies a roadway corridor as warranting consideration for improvements when the forecasted average annual daily traffic (AADT) no longer provides satisfactory mobility (Level of Service falls below D). The AADT thresholds presented in Table 7.7.1 have been established to indicate when an urban corridor warrants further analysis and when drivers are likely to experience LOS F.

**Table 7.7.1 Regional Trade Center Urban Roadway Mobility Volume Threshold**

<b>Roadway Type</b>	<b>AADT Congestion Threshold (vehicles per day)</b>
2-lane Arterial	15,000
4-lane Arterial/Expressway	30,000
4-lane Freeway	75,000
6-lane Freeway	115,000
8-lane Freeway	155,000

*Source: Mn/DOT Office of Investment Management*