

## Benefits of Work Trips

**Full Report:** [Measuring the Economic Benefits of Rural and Small Urban Transit Services in Greater Minnesota](#)

Transit plays a vital role in connecting workers to jobs in communities across Greater Minnesota. Without transit, many transportation-disadvantaged individuals would not be able to go to work and maintain employment. Transit stakeholders across Greater Minnesota were surveyed regarding the benefits of transit in their communities, and most agreed that improved access to jobs is a major benefit. Improving access to jobs benefits individuals, the community, and society at large.

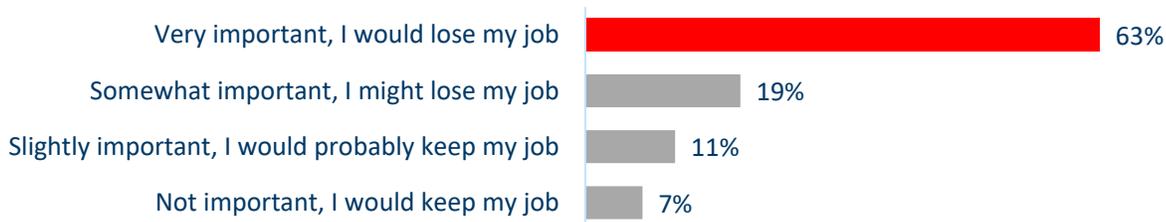
Transit riders from six Greater Minnesota transit agencies were surveyed to collect information regarding the benefits of these services. Those surveyed included riders from one urban system, St. Cloud Metro Bus, and five rural providers – Paul Bunyan Transit, Southern Minnesota Area Rural Transit (SMART), St. Peter Transit, Timber Trails, and Trailblazer Transit. Responses demonstrated the importance of transit for accessing work.

### Importance of Transit for Work Trips

Work trips are the most common type of transit trip in Greater Minnesota. For most agencies surveyed, at least half or more of respondents use transit for getting to work. Among those who use transit for work, nearly all ride multiple days per week, and many ride every work day, indicating a reliance on transit as the primary means of transportation to work. Based on survey responses, about 38% of rural transit trips in Greater Minnesota are for work.

Without transit, some riders would not be able to maintain employment. To illustrate this point, respondents who use transit for work were asked how important the transit service is to them for getting to work. For most transit systems surveyed, a majority of respondents noted that the service is very important and that they would lose their jobs without it (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Importance of Transit for Getting to Work for Rural Passengers**



Most riders in Greater Minnesota use transit because they cannot drive or do not have access to a vehicle, and because it can be difficult to get a ride from others. Among the rural riders surveyed, 75% had household incomes below \$25,000, two-thirds did not have access to a vehicle, only 26% had a driver’s license, and 63% reported having a disability. Overall, about one-third of riders surveyed said they would not have made their

current trip if transit was not available. Most others would have relied on family or friends for a ride, taken a more expensive taxi or ride hailing service if available, or walked.

## **Transit Reduces the Need for Public Assistance Spending**

Spending on transit provides the opportunity to reduce spending in other areas. If transit riders cannot get to work and maintain employment, it would result in a need for increased public assistance spending to support those without a job. The Minnesota Department of Human Services provides economic support to qualifying individuals through various programs. This study focused on two programs, the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Total cost savings for these two programs were estimated based on the total number of transit riders that would not be able to maintain employment without transit and the amount of payments they would collect. Total cost savings for Greater Minnesota were estimated to be \$19.1 million in 2017, or \$1.62 per trip. While this study focuses on these two important programs, transit could also reduce spending for other programs in the state.

## **Transit Benefits Employers and Improves Productivity**

While improved access to jobs benefits individuals who ride the bus to get to work and the state through reduced need for spending on other programs, it also benefits local employers and the community. By providing transportation to work, transit increases the potential labor pool for local businesses, which can lead to positive impacts on their productivity. Increasing access to education and job training also increases the skill level of the local labor pool, further impacting productivity. Transit allows many, including immigrant populations, who struggle with mobility and inclusion to have an impact on the economic viability of rural communities.

Stakeholders across Greater Minnesota gave examples of how transit supports local businesses by providing workers a means of transportation to work. In one example, the transit provider expanded hours so that the bus started running earlier, allowing more people to take higher paying jobs that start at 6 a.m. This change was a huge help to both employees and employers. Others gave examples of large employers that hire many new workers each year who would not be able to access their facilities without public transit. One example is Digi-Key in northwest Minnesota. Another example is a large pork processing plant that employs a large number of very diverse employees from their community and surrounding communities who rely on the bus to get to work. Other respondents in small communities commented on how finding and retaining workers is an issue for businesses in their region, and being able to provide a reliable means of transportation is critical.

If people can get to jobs, many other benefits to the individual, the community, and the state will follow. Supporting local jobs provides further economic benefit to the local community as these workers then spend money in the community, supporting other local businesses.