

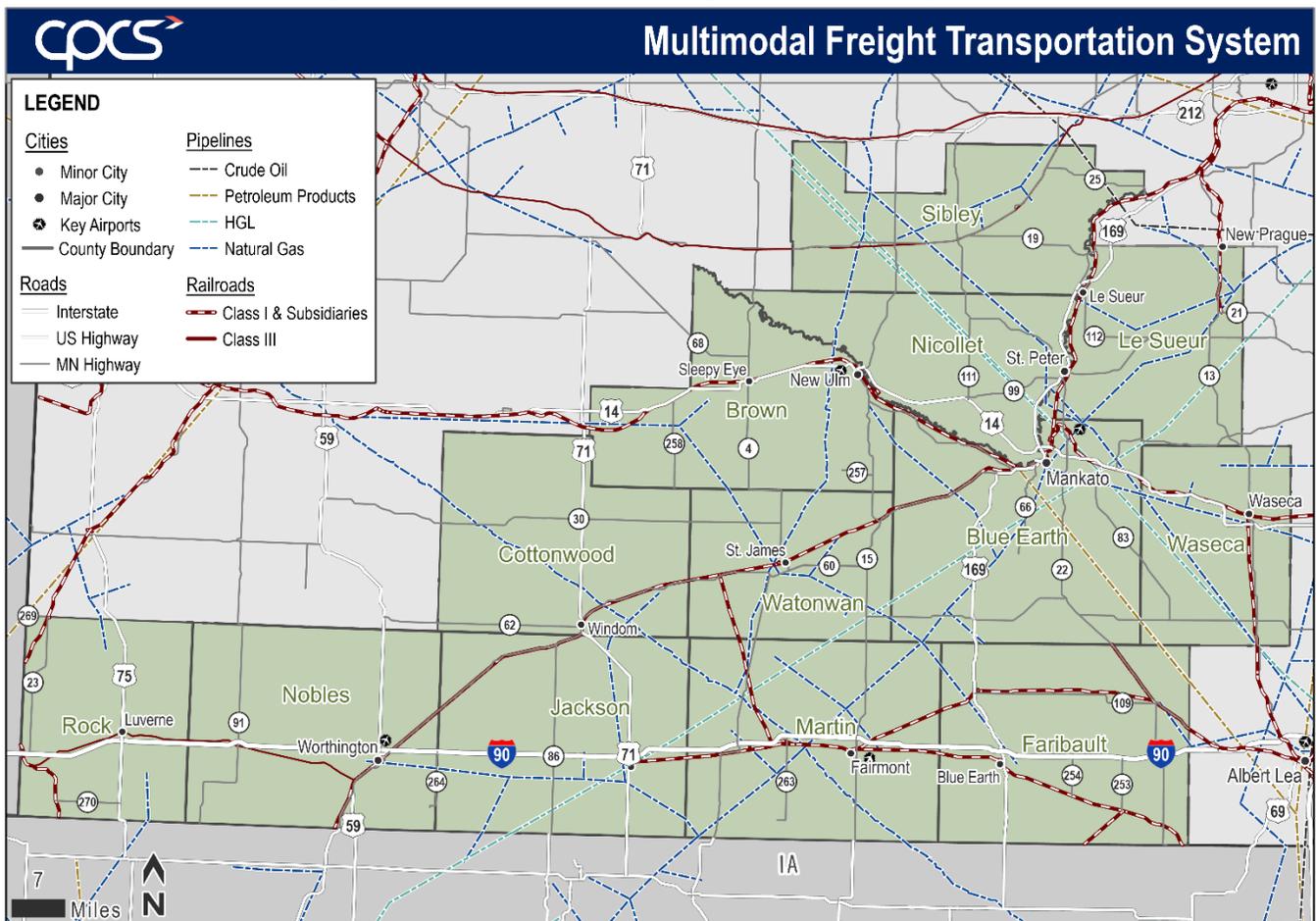
MnDOT District 7 Freight Plan

The District

The Minnesota Department of Transportation’s (MnDOT) District 7 covers South-Central Minnesota including 13 counties: Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, LeSueur, Martin, Nicollet, Nobles, Rock, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan. The District makes up 9.6% of Minnesota’s area, and is home to 5.1% of the state’s population, making it the third most densely populated District. Major cities include Mankato, New Ulm, Worthington, St. Peter, and Fairmont. Much of the region is flat plains and well-suited for agriculture.

District 7’s freight transportation system includes key highways such as I-90, US-69, US-14, and MN-60. Major railroads in the District include the Canadian Pacific, and Union Pacific, with the Minnesota Prairie Line serving some communities in Sibley County.

Figure 1: District 7’s Multimodal Freight Transportation System



Source: CPCS

The Economy

Figure 2 highlights District 7’s “strong” traded clusters, or industry groups with uniquely-high levels of employment, and which trade with regions outside of District 7. These clusters indicate some of District 7’s industrial specializations and competitive advantages. Other major industries in the District include lighting and electrical equipment, nonmetal mining, chemical products, and construction products and services. Analyses such as this will be further refined and expanded in the development of the District Freight Plan.

Figure 2: District 7's Top Freight-Related "Strong" Traded Clusters by Employment



Source: CPCS analysis of US Cluster Mapping data. Harvard Business School. 2020.

Key Issues

District 7 recently completed its Manufacturers' Perspectives study in 2019, which identified common freight-related needs and issues, such as concerns regarding navigating roundabouts and j-turn intersections, insufficient truck parking, and pavement quality's effect on vehicle maintenance. Additionally, some businesses noted that inconsistency and inflexibility in vehicle weight restrictions, especially in relation to Iowa or South Dakota, reduced the efficiency of interstate freight movements. Other potential improvements include the addition of more intersection warning signs, widening lanes, and adding bypass and passing lanes, particularly on truck routes.

Project Objective

MnDOT and its partners in District 7 have recognized the importance of freight transportation for local businesses, and the need to inventory and address key issues that limit their productivity. This District 7 Freight Plan aims to build on past efforts, including the *Minnesota Statewide Freight System and Investment Plan* and the *Manufacturers' Perspectives Study*, to quantify and close information gaps in order to:

Provide a clear understanding of the multimodal freight system, how local industries use the system and their needs and issues, so MnDOT's policy and programming decisions can be better informed in the District.

For More Information

The District 7 Freight Plan is scheduled for completion in December 2021. For more information on this effort visit <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/ofrw/freight/districtfreightplan/> or contact:

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