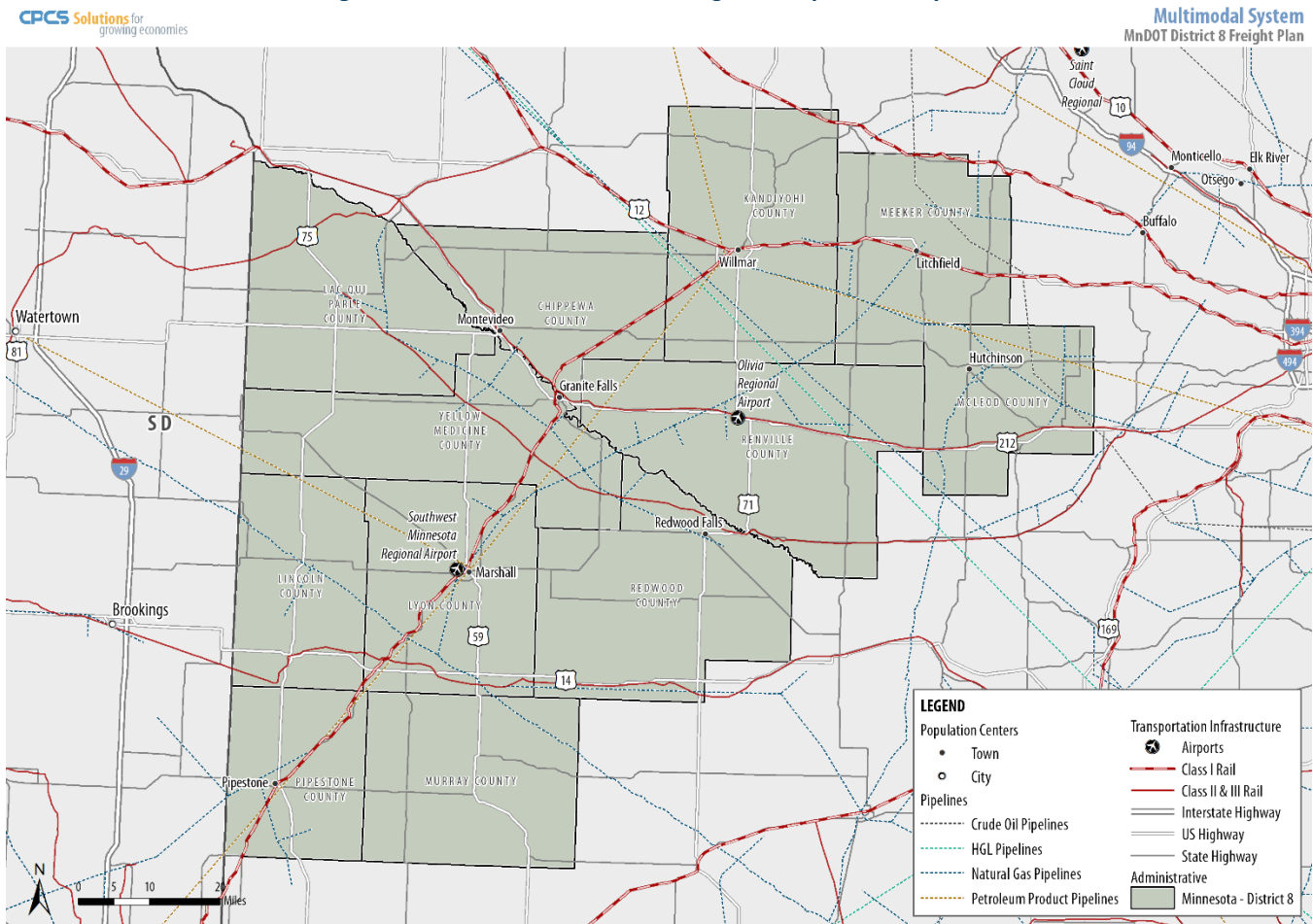


# MnDOT District 8 Freight Plan

## The District

The Minnesota Department of Transportation's (MnDOT) District 8 is located in Southwestern Minnesota and is made up of 12 counties: Chippewa, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, and Yellow Medicine. Together, these counties represent about 14 percent of Minnesota's land area and 4 percent of the state's population. The District's major cities include Willmar, Hutchinson, and Marshall. No interstate highways directly serve District 8, nor do any airports with significant air cargo activity. Rail service in the district is provided by the BNSF, Canadian Pacific, Twin Cities & Western, and Rapid City, Pierre & Eastern railroads.

Figure 1: District 8's Multimodal Freight Transportation System



## The Economy

District 8's landscape is primarily plains, which are well-suited for agricultural production. As a result, the District initially developed around agriculture-related industries, including crop production and processing, and livestock production and processing. Today, the District's economy is more diversified and freight-related industries (i.e., industries that rely heavily on the transportation network for shipping and receiving goods that support their operations) have grown to include a variety of manufacturing types.

Nearly 40 percent of the District's workers are employed at freight-related industries, and 9 percent of the District's employment is directly related to farming.

Among the freight-related industries in the District, agriculture has the highest degree of specialization compared to the nation. The District is highly specialized in corn, sugar beet, soybean, and oilseed farming. Other key industries include heavy construction, food and livestock processing, and machinery manufacturing.

**Figure 2: District 8's Top 5 Freight-Related "Strong" Traded Clusters by Employment**



Source: US Cluster Mapping Tool. Harvard College. 2018.

## Key Issues

District 8's freight system performance does not suffer from traffic congestion problems like larger metropolitan areas. However, road safety and truck collisions are a concern. In particular, 21 percent of Minnesota's severe high-crash locations between 2009 and 2013 were in District 8. During the same period, District 8 was ranked as the fourth-highest region in terms of severe crashes and third in terms of the highest number of severe crashes at intersections. Truck-involved crashes in the District are primarily concentrated in areas with high traffic volumes. District 8's active grade crossing crash rate compares favorably to other Districts, but it has a relatively high number of crashes at passively-protected crossings.

The condition of the network is also mixed: District 8 bridges have an average sufficiency rating lower than the state's average. However, the majority of deficient bridges in the District are on county and township routes while the freight-critical trunk highways have relatively well-maintained bridge structures. The deficiency of the bridge structures on local roads directly affects last-mile connections to specific locations around District 8. There are also vertical clearance restrictions on key routes due to the presence of low rail bridges.

In 2014, the District's manufacturers and other freight stakeholders were consulted as part of MnDOT's pilot *Manufacturers' Perspectives Study*. In addition to key issues noted above, the study identifies the need for wider shoulders or four-lane roads, and concerns about weight limits and roundabouts.

## Project Objective

MnDOT and its partners in District 8 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 8 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 8 Freight Plan is scheduled for completion in March 2020. For more information on this effort visit <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/ofrw/freight/districtfreightplan/d8.html> or contact:

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