

# ADVANCING TRANSPORTATION EQUITY



District 6  
September 2020



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# Executive summary

As part of its 20-year Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) sought to better understand how transportation systems and policies affect and are affected by equity. MnDOT developed a pilot project to conduct community conversations with various groups, agencies, and organizations (referred to hereafter as “organizations”) working with and representing traditionally underserved communities in Minnesota.

In 2017, MnDOT launched an effort in its districts to engage with communities to inform equitable transportation planning and practice. MnDOT organized in-person conversations between staff and representatives of community organizations, starting with District 2 in 2017, District 8 in 2018, and District 6 in 2019. These conversations in District 6—and other districts—have helped MnDOT develop a deeper understanding of the impact transportation systems and policies have on the communities that live in the districts. These efforts have also helped MnDOT identify organizations and provided pathways to build relationships and continue engagement. This initiative to advance transportation equity has continued with community conversations in 2019 and 2020 in District 4 and District 1.

In addition to its continued work internally and with districts to implement actions based on the findings, MnDOT intends to share its District 6 findings with partners to help inform their work.

## Methods of the study

MnDOT engaged with representatives from 27 organizations for the District 6 community conversations. These organizations hold strong ties to key communities, identified through a regional demographic analysis, to be:

- Currently underrepresented in transportation decision-making processes
- Experiencing known inequities in transportation access and outcome
- Facing unique transportation needs not well served by current approaches



Teams of two interviewers met with representatives of 27 organizations in person and asked questions using a semi-structured interview guide, in which interviewers followed a common conversational structure but could pursue other relevant topics as they arose.

## Themes and findings

Distinct themes that emerged from the conversations in District 6 include that transportation affects community life and is affected by the life situation of the communities in the district. While transportation provides access to employment, school, medical and human services, goods, and social life, inadequate transportation can

simultaneously restrict access and opportunity. These themes are summarized below and discussed further in later sections of this report.



## Community interconnections

The income, age, ability, and racial and ethnic makeup of District 6 communities, along with population density outside of the regional hubs, shape how these communities affect and are affected by transportation options available in District 6.

- Older adults and people with disabilities face difficulties in accessing medical services, purchasing goods, and engaging in social activities. They rely more heavily on volunteer drivers' programs, transit, and friends and family for these transportation needs. Participants said barriers to using transit include existing transit service hours and routes and accessibility challenges with snow and ice removal.
- Economic and employment opportunities in the district often require intercity travel. Community members in more remote parts of District 6 cannot easily get to available jobs and back to their homes. More regular and affordable transportation options are needed to connect communities to opportunities.
- Communities feel there is a one-way flow of information, including from MnDOT, to the public and want improved engagement outside of decision-making periods. Participants wish to see more engagement efforts with communities, and proactive efforts by MnDOT to include communities in decision-making processes.
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## Infrastructure limitations

Existing transit services cannot adequately meet the needs of the communities who rely on them the most, especially people with low incomes and communities of color. Participants noted that these communities often reside in areas of cities that are not served well by existing transit services, which may have less direct routes and add to travel time, or may not operate at hours needed most by the communities.

- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), including immigrant communities face distinct transportation challenges such as lack of familiarity with how to use transit, language barriers, and inability to afford transit. These challenges often hinder their ability to rely on transit to access needs and services.
- Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure is limited to mostly recreational use, with participants citing winter weather, safety, and lack of trails and paths as barriers.
- Existing transportation limits the reach of health care providers, businesses, and community organizations. As a result, transportation can affect the broader reach of the institutions and the regions' broader health system, economy, and civic life.

# Recommendations

Managers and staff from District 6 and MnDOT’s Central Office reviewed these findings from the conversations and developed potential strategies to address challenges and advance equity. Results from this review and observations from Management Analysis and Development (MAD) consultants resulted in the following recommendations for MnDOT to partner to with other stakeholders to improve transportation services and infrastructure, and build relationships and deepen engagement with communities in District 6:



## Transit planning

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MnDOT should work with transit providers to improve transit planning in District 6.



## Walking and bicycling

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MnDOT should collaborate with partners to improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.



## Public engagement

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MnDOT District 6 should create a district public engagement plan

These recommendations are discussed further in later sections of this report.

# Origins of MnDOT’s equity community conversations

MnDOT began its formal, district-level transportation equity community conversations based on suggestions received as part of the regular transportation planning process. When updating the most recent 20-year Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP), MnDOT sought input from stakeholders and the public about what to include.<sup>1</sup> Participants in those conversations said MnDOT needs to advance equity, citing a range of disparities related to race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and physical abilities. In response, MnDOT listed two activities in its SMTP 2017–2020 Work Plan to advance equity:

- Study how transportation affects equity and identify transportation strategies and approaches that will meaningfully reduce disparities
- Pilot tools and strategies to better incorporate equity into project-level decision-making

MnDOT chose to conduct community conversations in each of its districts to gather qualitative, experience-based perspectives on how transportation affects equity and to inform MnDOT strategies and approaches. These community conversations about transportation bring forward equity concerns from a variety of groups and organizations, build relationships for MnDOT, and provide a pathway for continued engagement and initiatives to address equity issues.

MnDOT contracted with MAD<sup>2</sup> for assistance with these community conversations, specifically to:

- Coordinate in-person interviews with organizations that serve communities in MnDOT’s District 6
- Analyze the data
- Report interview findings and recommendations
- Build MnDOT’s capacity to conduct interviews

## Methodology

The project consisted primarily of in-depth interviews with groups, agencies, organizations, and businesses—all collectively referred to in this report as “organizations”—that work with and represent key communities of interest for the District 6 community conversations.

The main purposes of the interviews were to:

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<sup>1</sup> “Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan,” Minnesota Department of Transportation, January 2017, <http://www.minnesotago.org/final-plans/smtf-final-plan>.

<sup>2</sup> MAD is the State of Minnesota’s in-house unit that provides neutral, third-party management consultant services to public sector agencies. For more information, please visit <http://www.mn.gov/mmb/mad>.

- Better understand the organizations’ perspectives about how the transportation system, services, and decision-making processes help or hinder the lives of people in Southeast Minnesota.
- Build relationships with organizations whose work aligns, directly or indirectly, with equity and transportation.
- Identify actions to address transportation inequities.

## Key communities selection method

MnDOT conducted an analysis of the 11 counties in District 6, examining the current demographics and trends in the district and focusing on populations with known inequities.<sup>3</sup> MnDOT used the analysis to further identify and prioritize key communities to include in the project.<sup>4</sup> Communities include those:

- Currently underrepresented in transportation decision-making processes
- Experiencing known inequities in transportation access or outcomes
- With unique transportation needs not well served by current and usual approaches

MnDOT District 6 staff, Central Office staff, and other partners identified potential organizations to serve as participants. The selected organizations work with and represent the project’s key communities. MnDOT identified additional organizations to interview by asking participants for suggestions.

MAD contacted the organizations by phone and email, asked them to participate in the project, and scheduled interviews. MAD and MnDOT conducted interviews from May 2019 through September 2019.

## Interview teams

All MnDOT interview teams included at least two people. The teams visited the organizations in person and asked questions using the semistructured interview guide described in the section below on data collection and analysis.<sup>5</sup> Interview teams included combinations of District 6 staff, Central Office staff from the Office of Transportation System Management, the Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT), and the Office of Communication and Public Engagement, and MAD consultants. Most involved two interviewers from District 6.

In April 2019, MAD conducted an interview training session for participating MnDOT staff. The majority of staff participated in person, with a Skype option available. The training goals included:

- Explaining the purpose and process for the interviews
- Providing qualitative research instructions, including note-taking guidelines
- Distributing project and interview materials
- Practicing interviewing
- Explaining the interview scheduling process

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to Appendix C: District 6 demographic profile on page 43.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Appendix D: Key communities for interview on page 54.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to Appendix B: Project team and interviewers on page 41.

## Data collection and analysis

MnDOT and MAD developed a semistructured interview guide,<sup>6</sup> meaning interviewers followed the guide but could pursue other relevant topics as they arose.

Interview topics included:

- Experiences in traveling for day-to-day activities, such as work, school, medical appointments, social and recreational activities, shopping for goods and services, and accessing social services
- Barriers and facilitators relevant to transportation that affect community members' ability to meet their needs
- Transportation safety concerns of the communities
- Opportunities and challenges communities face when engaging with the government
- Perspectives of the organizations on both what equity means and how transportation can advance equity

MAD collected interview notes and conducted preliminary analysis to identify potential themes for District 6. When categorizing the notes, MAD used a first stage of coding to test the themes from its preliminary analysis and then added new codes as additional themes arose organically from the full set of interview notes.<sup>7</sup> MAD confirmed the accuracy of both preliminary and organic themes by monitoring how many times a participant made comments that fit in a theme and in how many interviews the topic came up. MAD then reviewed and recoded the data as necessary to ensure consistency in coding for the main themes and additional subcodes, which also emerged organically. MAD used these themes and their subcodes to develop findings.

## Implementation meetings

District 6 managers, District 6 staff who served on the interview teams, and MnDOT Central Office staff met on December 6, 2019, to consider possible improvements to district procedure and related actions based on the conversations. Specifically, participants in these implementation meetings did the following:

- Reviewed findings from the D6 community conversations.
- Determined what level of influence MnDOT has over the issues behind those different findings.
- Rated the findings based on MnDOT's level of influence.
- Brainstormed actions that can be undertaken by District 6 and Central Office staff around findings that MnDOT can influence.

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<sup>6</sup> Refer to Appendix E: Transportation equity community conversations interview guide on page 58.

<sup>7</sup> MAD analysts coded data according to theme. If data could not reasonably fit a theme, it was coded as miscellaneous or analysts created a new code to fit the new theme.

At the end of the meeting, participants voted on which solutions they thought MnDOT should prioritize. Recommendations found in this report are informed by the solutions participants voted to be of high priority.<sup>8</sup>

Participants from the December 6 session met again in February 2020 to validate recommendations from this report, align the recommendations with ongoing MnDOT plans and initiatives, and further assess the opportunity for realistic action. In August 2020, the group reconvened to develop action items that advance the recommendations, identifying who at MnDOT should take what steps and when to advance the recommendations.

## Organizations interviewed

### Response rate

MnDOT invited 30 organizations to participate in an interview and completed interviews with 27 organizations, for a response rate of 90 percent. The three organizations that did not participate did not respond to interview requests during the data collection period. No organization that declined to participate reported doing so based on lack of interest or support for the project.

### Types of organization

Table 1 lists the types of organizations MnDOT interviewed for the community conversations. Most organizations that participated were nonprofit organizations and transit providers.

**Table 1. Types of organizations interviewed**

Organization type	Number interviewed
Nonprofit	16
Transit agency	4
Higher education	2
Public schools	2
Local government	2
Private entity	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

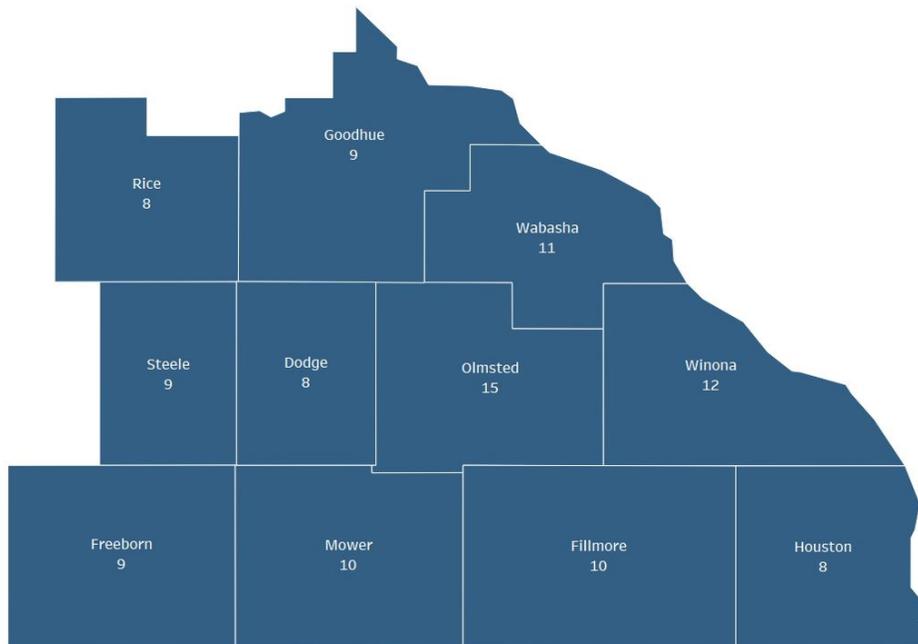
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<sup>8</sup> Refer to the full list of recommendations on page 36. For the full list of ideas suggested by participants from MnDOT’s District 6 and its Central Office, see Appendix F: Findings and potential solutions from Implementation Planning Meeting 1 on page 59.

## Counties represented

Figure 1 lists how many of the 27 organizations interviewed have a presence in the counties in District 6. Most of the organizations interviewed worked with or represented key communities in several counties, so the count by county in Table 2 exceeded the total of 27 organizations interviewed. The counties served by the most organizations were Olmsted (15), Winona (12), Wabasha (11), Fillmore (10), and Mower (10).

**Figure 1. Number of organizations based on the District 6 counties where they are active.**



## Key communities represented

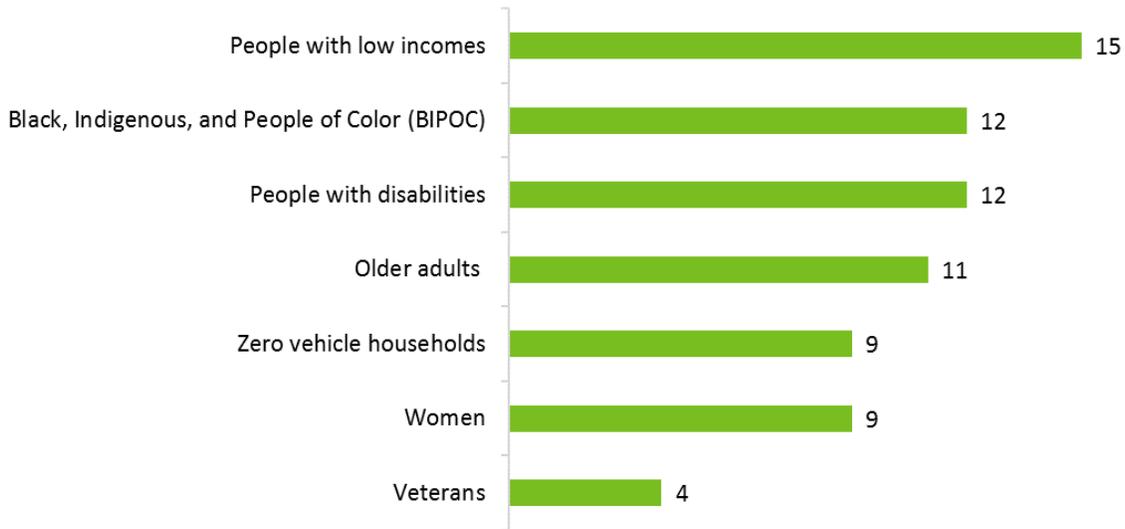
Figure 2 outlines the key communities and the number of organizations that represent or serve them that participated in community conversations. Key communities are groups that are:

- Currently underrepresented in transportation decision-making processes
- Experiencing known inequities in transportation access or outcomes
- Facing unique transportation needs not well served by current approaches

All of the key communities identified at the onset of the project were represented by at least one of the interviewed organizations. Many of the organizations worked with more than one key community, so the number of organizations in Figure 2 exceeds the number of organizations interviewed. The majority of the

organizations represented people with low incomes, followed by BIPOC, people with disabilities, and older adults.

**Figure 2. Number of organizations interviewed based on the key communities they represent**



## Findings

This section outlines the findings from the community conversations. Information has been organized into the following four categories:

- **People perspective** highlights how transportation interacts with many other factors of life, including where people live and work and their income, race, ethnicity, age, and abilities.
- **Modal perspective** looks at the modes available within the transportation system and how those modes create or limit opportunities.
- **Public engagement** focuses on how government can interact with Minnesotans who participated in community conversations to create a more equitable transportation system.
- **Equity** provides communities' perspectives on equity—how to define equity, how it relates to transportation, and strategies participants suggested to improve equity.

Because many topics of conversations are interrelated, they may appear in more than one area.

## How to interpret the findings

Some discussions were with one individual associated with one organization, while other discussions included people from multiple organizations or people from one organization but serving multiple roles. In order to be clear and accurate, analysts used the following terms:

- **Participant** refers to an individual.
- **Organization** refers to a specific organization.
- **Conversation** is a general term used to describe the interviews.

In addition to using proportions such as one-fourth or two-thirds, this report uses the terms below to describe how many participants, organizations, or conversations mentioned a topic:

- **A few** is generally two or three.
- **Several** is generally more than a few, but less than one-fourth.
- **Most** is more than half, but less than two-thirds.
- **Nearly all** is greater than 90 percent.

## People perspective

District 6, located in the southeast section of the state, comprises 11 counties: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona. About 9 percent of Minnesota’s total population resides in the district, with about half of the district’s population located across Olmsted (151,000 people), Rice (65,251 people), and Winona (50,992 people) Counties. Over 13 cities have more than 5,000 people residing in each, with Rochester being the largest city by population with over 115,000 people.

A common theme across the conversations was access to needs and services for people living outside of the regional and urban hubs such as Rochester, Owatonna, and Winona. Accessing employment, health care, affordable housing, childcare, and recreation, among others, is more difficult, time-consuming, and expensive for people living in rural communities, according to participants. Participants in the conversations often highlighted how this limited access affects communities they represent, such as people with low incomes, older adults, BIPOC, and people with disabilities. The following sections highlight the topics most often discussed in the community conversations.

### People with low incomes

***“Food security and access to healthy food is a challenge when multiple transportation modes do not work well. Recently in Rochester, there was a man telling us that people would regularly use Grubhub or other delivery services to order fast food into their homes. It was cheap food, but not healthy, and spurred by their lack of access to transportation to grocery stores. This story indicates that it is ‘expensive to be poor’ and ‘unhealthy to be poor’ in our community—lack of transportation adds costs to dinnertime.”***

About 10 percent of people in District 6 live below the federal poverty level, with the highest proportion of people in poverty living in Winona County (15 percent).<sup>9</sup> Two-thirds of the conversations discussed

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<sup>9</sup> For more information on key demographic factors in the district refer to Appendix C: District 6 demographic analysis on page 43.

transportation challenges for people with low incomes. Most commonly, participants discussed the ability to afford a private vehicle as a barrier for people with low incomes. Not having easy, affordable access to a car increases someone's reliance on family and friends for all transportation needs. Participants in these conversations discussed that for people with low incomes, critical transportation options such as transit are lacking, especially for those who reside outside of larger cities. Specific challenges discussed include:

- Limited transit hours and service area
- Restriction on the number of bags or items allowed on transit (e.g., number of grocery bags)
- Lack of availability and high cost of intercity and regional travel for necessary services
- Difficulty and cost traveling with children

## Older adults

The Minnesota State Demographic Center notes that statewide, older adults (adults 50 years or older by its definition) comprise 44 percent of rural Minnesotans, compared with 32 percent of urban Minnesotans.<sup>10 11</sup> Additionally, more than 1 in 20 people in rural and small-town areas are over the age of 80, a rate that is expected to rise. Similar to the statewide trend of older adults in Greater Minnesota noted above, over 18 percent of the district's population is over 65 years of age, which is higher than the statewide average of 14 percent.

About half of the conversations discussed mobility challenges for older adults in the region and how critical transportation infrastructure affects their ability to access basic needs and services. Most participants noted older adults require transportation service to access medical needs, purchase goods, and attend social activities.

Older adults who do not have their own vehicles often rely on service providers, volunteer driver programs,<sup>12</sup> and friends and family for their transportation needs. In conversations that discussed the needs of older adults, the majority of participants noted that volunteer driver programs and other transportation services are often able to meet the medical transportation needs of older adults. However, a few participants said existing transportation services are often curb to curb, and older adults with physical limitations often lack the ability to get from their home to a vehicle without assistance. As one participant noted,

***“There is a lack of health aides to help. This becomes a concern when there are health care needs involved and roads aren't properly clean during winter and maintenance is needed. A person in a wheelchair will be waiting in the rain. Transit needs to be accessible. Volunteer drivers don't have accessible vehicles and passengers need to be able to transport themselves in and out of the vehicle.”***

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<sup>10</sup> For more information, see “Greater Minnesota: Refined and Revisited,” Minnesota State Demographic Center, 2017, [https://mn.gov/admin/assets/greater-mn-refined-and-revisited-msdc-jan2017\\_tcm36-273216.pdf](https://mn.gov/admin/assets/greater-mn-refined-and-revisited-msdc-jan2017_tcm36-273216.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> To define rural and urban settings, the State Demographer's report used an assignment scheme known as Rural Urban Commuting Areas (RUCAs) to classify census tracts based on population size, density, and daily commuting. For more details, see pages 6–12 of the report.

<sup>12</sup> For more on the volunteer drivers' program, refer to page 29.

A few participants also highlighted that nonmedical transportation to get groceries and attend social events is often lacking for older adults. Where there is transit<sup>13</sup> available, older adults are often hesitant to use the services because of the cost, reliability, and accessibility, and their lack of knowledge on how to use them. Other transportation challenges detailed further in this report include:

- Fewer volunteer drivers for medical and nonmedical trips
- Inability to walk due to snow, lack of accessible infrastructure,<sup>14</sup> and inadequate time to cross busy intersections
- Limited knowledge of ride-hailing services such as Lyft and Uber or cost of these rides
- Increasing safety concerns for older adults using motorized wheelchairs and scooters on sidewalks and curbs cuts in the winter or when crossing busy streets

## Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

Nearly 10 percent of the District 6 population are BIPOC, with Black or African American residents comprising the largest BIPOC group. Olmsted County has the largest proportion of BIPOC at 15 percent, comparable to the statewide average of 14 percent. Additionally, five percent of District 6's population identifies as Hispanic or Latinx, with Mower County having the highest proportion at 11 percent.

Participants in half the conversations discussed challenges faced by BIPOC and immigrants in the region. Most often, participants said language barriers are a challenge in accessing services, including transportation for BIPOC and immigrants. Other challenges include lack of affordable housing and educational opportunities, difficulty accessing human services,<sup>15</sup> distrust and lack of engagement with government, and racial tension and discrimination.

***“For some community members, nothing is in a language they can read, the bus driver or most patrons don’t speak their language. So they are left to navigate and correct a mistake. That may be difficult and becomes a scary situation. So instead of taking the risk, some avoid it by not using the bus.”***

Specific transportation challenges discussed include:

- Transit challenges such as lack of familiarity with how to use transit, limited materials in languages other than English, and inability to afford transit
- Impact of citizenship and immigration status on obtaining a driver’s license
- Affordability of driver education for newcomers and immigrants
- Cost of driving and maintaining a private vehicle
- Consequences of driving without a license

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<sup>13</sup>Refer to public transit on page 25 for more information.

<sup>14</sup> The 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design outlines minimum standards to ensure that transportation facilities such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb ramps are accessible for people with disabilities. For more information, see <https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/2010ADASTandards/2010ADASTandards.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> For more details on access to human services, refer to page 20.

A few participants noted that BIPOC, including immigrants, most often rely on their friends, family, and social services for their transportation needs. A few organizations also discussed transportation they provide to BIPOC, including financial support to obtain driver's education and information to navigate the transit system.

## People with disabilities

***“In our service area, we have about 6 or 7 big towns, each of which has at least dial-a-ride transit service. This helps people get to scheduled appointments, but not all access to community services or the places people go are by rote appointment. This lack of flexible transportation service is an annoyance to some but a true barrier to people with disabilities where dignity and independence are stripped away.”***

Just over half of the conversations discussed transportation challenges for people with disabilities. People with disabilities make up about 11 percent of the district population. Participants discussed that people with disabilities routinely rely on disability service providers for their transportation needs. However, accessibility challenges and limitations hinder their ability to rely solely on these services. Other transportation challenges highlighted by participants include:

- Lack of curbside assistance to access transit vehicles
- Limited seating or carrying capacity for vehicles compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations
- Mobility limitations due to lack of snow removal and sidewalk accessibility concerns
- High cost for transit fares and in some cases bureaucratic burden to access reduced fares (e.g., reduced fare for those with certified disability, but it needs to be purchased at a government location on a monthly basis)
- Safety concerns for people with disabilities in public places, including for people with intellectual disabilities using public transportation
- Lack of intersections with a stoplight, pedestrian signals, or warning sounds

## Access to basic needs and services

### Employment and economic development

Nearly half of the participants discussed the relationship between transportation and access to employment and local businesses.

According to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Southeast Minnesota,<sup>16</sup> accounts for nearly 9 percent of the total employment in Minnesota. Olmsted County is the largest economic center with nearly 100,000 jobs and the highest average annual wages.<sup>17</sup> The district has seen a

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<sup>16</sup> Department of Employment and Economic Development's (DEED) definition of Southeast Minnesota consists of the same counties as MnDOT district 6.

<sup>17</sup> For more information about economic development in Southeast Minnesota, refer to [https://mn.gov/deed/assets/rp\\_southeast\\_2019\\_tcm1045-133258.pdf](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/rp_southeast_2019_tcm1045-133258.pdf).

steady increase in the labor force since the recession ended in 2010, with nearly 70 percent of the population over 16 years of age participating in the labor force in 2017. Although, many people in the labor force work outside the district, and more workers leave the district than come to the district for work.<sup>18</sup> More workers commute out of the counties of Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Rice, and Wabasha than those who commute to work in those counties. Most workers in the counties of Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Mower, Wabasha, and Winona are commuting to Olmsted County.

Participants commented that employers struggle to recruit and retain employees due to lack of transportation options. Most households (65 percent) in the district have two or more cars; however, around 6 percent of households (12,187 households) do not have a vehicle, and about 29 percent (56,415 households) have one vehicle.<sup>19</sup> One organization said that while large companies are located in rural communities, people without cars cannot get to these jobs.

Another organization said employers may choose to locate their business in a more accessible community if they anticipate transportation issues for employees. During one conversation, participants said some employers are willing to arrange travel for employees or to pay for transit, including time spent traveling to and from work. A few organizations shared examples of employer-based shuttle services. Participants also commented that retaining a workforce by providing transportation also helps companies win and retain large contracts. Participants noted that the lack of access to transportation also limits a business's ability to expand.

***“You might be surprised how willing employers are to pay for transportation. Companies are jeopardized with losing large contracts if they don’t have workers. Some employers pay for time on coach to [their] job and back to get employees.”***

As discussed later, a few participants highlighted the need for transit<sup>20</sup> options during the evening (particularly in smaller communities) when people may be working second or third shifts at companies that run 24-hour operations (e.g., group homes).<sup>21</sup>

A few participants noted that new or improved public transportation within communities would also help support economic development by better access to local businesses (compared with large companies that may be located outside of town), increased tourism, and greater ability for businesses and suppliers to move products around the state. One participant noted that communities with amenities in town that do not require a personal vehicle will prosper more compared with those that require transportation.

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<sup>18</sup> For more information about commuter trends in southeast Minnesota, see “Are they coming or going?,” Mark Schultz, Department of Employment and Economic Development, April 2019, <https://mn.gov/deed/data/locallook/southeast/southeast-blog.jsp?id=1045-378595#/detail/appId/1/id/378595>.

<sup>19</sup> For more on car ownership and means of travel, refer to Appendix C: District 6 demographic analysis on page 43.

<sup>20</sup> For more on public transit, refer to page 23.

<sup>21</sup> Second shift hours typically occur during the afternoon and evening; third shift hours typically occur overnight.

***“MnDOT needs to think outside of the box. Small communities are not well served by park and ride. They are outside town along the highway. A hometown grocery store could serve as a park and ride, and this would help keep main street open. Otherwise, these businesses go away.”***

## **Affordable housing**

***“The need for affordable housing is closely linked to streets and commutes. Housing costs and daily transportation to work, for groceries, et cetera are major components of everyone’s monthly budget. Improved, affordable transit makes housing more affordable because it eases pressure on household budgets. MnDOT’s decisions on transit funding and priority for buses on state roads matter to our community in this way.”***

The lack of affordable housing across the state is well documented, and District 6 is no exception.<sup>22</sup> According to the Housing and Transportation (H+T) Affordability Index, residents in six of the D6 counties spend at least half of their household incomes on housing and transportation combined. Houston County residents spend the highest proportion (57 percent of income) and Olmsted County residents spend the smallest (46 percent of income).<sup>23</sup> Additionally, Fillmore, Goodhue, Mower, Rice, and Waseca Counties in District 6 are among the 20 counties statewide with the widest gap between rent costs and income.<sup>24</sup> Rice and Winona Counties are among the 10 counties with the highest rate of severe cost-burdened households, defined as spending more than half their income on housing.

During one conversation, participants said people try to acquire housing in smaller communities because it is often more affordable than homes in larger communities or in downtowns. However, as discussed later, participants reported there are limited or no transportation options connecting communities, which makes accessing jobs and daily necessities a challenge. As one participant said, “Housing is a challenge as it relates to transportation in connection with their jobs, day care, and other items. For housing, there are problems with the condition, location, and affordability of what is available. There is no transportation between Rochester and Pine Island, for example.” Another organization highlighted the need for affordable transit options to alleviate pressure on household budgets for other items such as food and housing.

***“Though there is low unemployment, it is expensive to build and buy houses. Some try to take advantage of smaller communities nearby that might have homes available, but we need transportation to connect people. We should be focusing on how to help grow the workforce and help people do the work that they want to.”***

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<sup>22</sup> For more information on housing needs across the state, refer to “State of the State’s Housing 2019,” Gabriela Norton, Minnesota Housing Partnership, 2019.

[http://www.mhponline.org/images/stories/images/research/SOTS-2019/2019FullSOTSPrint\\_Final.pdf](http://www.mhponline.org/images/stories/images/research/SOTS-2019/2019FullSOTSPrint_Final.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> For more information on the H+T Affordability Index, go to <https://htaindex.cnt.org/>.

<sup>24</sup> Refer to “State of the State’s Housing 2019” for more information.

## Medical and human services

***“Transit reliability, transit access, and safe walking and [bicycling] options prevent some in our community, especially the elderly, from regularly seeing a doctor. There are many older residents that haven’t seen a doctor in months or years, primarily because getting there is a challenge.”***

The ability to get to health care appointments and access other health-related services is a primary reason people seek reliable transportation. Just over two-thirds of participants mentioned difficulties accessing health care. Several participants noted the following challenges getting to health care appointments:

- Arranging travel into larger cities from smaller communities, which has become a more significant need as clinics around the region close
- Paying the costs necessary to travel long distances
- Providing only curb-to-curb assistance (i.e., services are unable to assist people with disabilities or older adults in getting from their home into the vehicle)
- Having inaccessible vehicles (e.g., inability to transport people in wheelchairs)
- Needing to schedule follow-up appointments while still at the clinic, as it may take one to two days to confirm transportation

Although a few participants said existing medical transportation (e.g., shuttles provided by health care providers) was sufficient, patients are responsible for setting up their transportation through insurance or other providers. Participants also noted health service organizations only assist with transportation to health care appointments, not to social service appointments or food, for example. Accordingly, other transportation options are needed to fill gaps. Half of the participants that discussed access to health-related needs also discussed the need to increase transportation to places where individuals can purchase or grow food, engage in physical activity, or attend social events. Participating in social activities helps ensure people can be healthy.<sup>25</sup>

Half of the participants discussed transportation in relation to human services<sup>26</sup> or childcare. Several organizations noted people have problems getting to government or legal services. People may have problems accessing services due to having a suspended license, expensive transit fares, lack of options to walk or bicycle, or services that are not centrally located. One organization commented that transportation options such as buses are not eligible for reimbursement, unlike Uber, Lyft, or taxis.

A few organizations noted people have problems accommodating childcare drop-off and pickup times (e.g., working second or third shifts, carpooling). Additionally, some people must travel farther out of town for childcare options with more flexible schedules. Participants noted this can be particularly challenging as fewer in-home childcare options are available. One participant said, “Childcare is also a challenge if you need to travel a greater distance. It impacts the choices that people are willing or able to make, including your choice of work.”

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<sup>25</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect their health risks and outcomes. For more information, see <https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/index.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> Human services are services and resources available for people in order to meet their needs, such as treatments, counseling, and social services.

A few participants said getting to childcare is hard when relying on public transit. This is due to the limited hours and schedules for public transit, cost of fares for children, and the need to navigate buses with strollers.

More than one-quarter of participants said individuals often have challenges finding rides or knowing who will be available to provide transportation. A few organizations said finding or coordinating rides is particularly challenging if the driver needs to wait for another individual (e.g., medical appointments), when an individual needs to plan their activities around the availability of the driver, or when activities occur in the evening.

## Modal perspective

### Private vehicles

***“The most critical mode is the reliable car that I own. I grew up on a farm. No transportation will be able to serve your needs besides a car. A bus will pick up the kids, but you still need a car for food and medical appointments. A number of towns aren’t full-service towns and you have to drive to go somewhere to get your groceries.”***

A majority of participants said a personal vehicle is a critical or preferred method of transportation. A few participants mentioned there are no transportation challenges when people have access to personal vehicles, and that they are a necessity for travel in rural communities. Participants in a few conversations mentioned that because their communities do not have enough available public transit, are not walkable, and lack access to bicycle infrastructure, a private vehicle is necessary to access their needs.

As discussed earlier, while the majority of households in District 6 have two or more cars, 29 percent of households do not have a vehicle.<sup>27</sup> About one-third of participants mentioned getting rides from friends or family, carpooling, and walking or bicycling as the most common transportation alternatives to owning a personal vehicle. Only a few participants mentioned taxis, rideshare services such as Uber and Lyft, and public transit as alternative options.

### Barriers to owning and driving a vehicle

Though private vehicles were most commonly cited as the critical or preferred method of transportation in District 6, nearly two-thirds of participants discussed challenges and inequities related to vehicle ownership and use. Common barriers included the cost of vehicle ownership and problems obtaining driver’s licenses.

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<sup>27</sup> For more information, refer to Appendix C: District 6 demographic analysis on page 43.

### *Cost of owning and maintaining a reliable vehicle*

Nearly one-quarter of organizations said owning a personal vehicle is too expensive, especially for people with low incomes. One participant noted that while a family may be able to afford one vehicle, there can be multiple drivers in the home with different schedules, and household members compete to use the vehicle. Another participant said it is too expensive to purchase a vehicle. Individuals may be left to rely on family and friends for rides, or to purchase vehicles that are inexpensive but in need of repair. Additionally, the condition of these vehicles can cause safety issues and hide the true costs of vehicle ownership when repairs are put off or deferred altogether. A few participants also cited cost of insurance as a barrier to vehicle ownership. Other barriers mentioned less often include the cost of gas, interest on car loans, and parking.

***“Transportation helps everyone to have the same opportunities. People want the same choice as everyone else...Communities want reliable cars.”***

### *Obtaining and keeping driver’s licenses*

In addition to the cost of vehicles, participants also discussed challenges with obtaining and maintaining driver’s licenses as a barrier to driving. A few participants said the cost of driver education, particularly for individuals with limited income, can be prohibitive. As one participant noted, “There is a cost issue with driver training. Private training is expensive, and the driver training program closed down. Community education does driver training, but many instructors don’t have time or don’t want to work with adults.”

A few organizations also discussed challenges related to citizenship and English language proficiency. Organizations said limited English language proficiency, not having instructors who speak the same language, and not having study guides in multiple languages make it challenging for some individuals to obtain a license.<sup>28</sup> One organization noted that citizenship status deters undocumented immigrants from driving regardless of their capability to do so. Another organization said people will drive without a license in order to maintain employment, buy groceries, and attend doctor appointments at the risk of ending up in the criminal justice system and losing their job.

A few organizations discussed other barriers to obtaining a driver’s license, including a prior history of substance abuse and an inability to reinstate a suspended driver’s license because they cannot get to court appointments. A few organizations that serve aging populations also mentioned older adults feeling pressured by family members to give up driving because of safety concerns,<sup>29</sup> though that would limit their ability to move freely about the community.

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<sup>28</sup> Current law does not allow undocumented immigrants to obtain a license, although the state legislature regularly considers bills aimed at changing that. A bill to allow granting driver’s licenses to undocumented immigrants failed to pass in 2019.

<sup>29</sup> According to the American Geriatric Association, motor vehicle injuries are the leading cause of injury-related death among adults 65 to 74 years old and the second leading cause (after falls) for adults over 75. The risk of crashes for older adults is related to physical, visual, or mental changes partly associated with aging. For more information, refer to

[https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/812228\\_cliniciansguidetoollderdrivers.pdf](https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/812228_cliniciansguidetoollderdrivers.pdf).

## Rides with friends and family and carpools

In addition to the importance of owning private vehicles, half of the participants cited carpools and rides from friends and family as important and useful transportation modes. Attending medical appointments was discussed as particularly critical, with one participant noting that unlicensed drivers may transport family members to necessary appointments when alternatives are not available. Another participant said, “There are no taxis. One of the elderly family members has to get to regular doctor appointments. The solution was to take her to the care facility at 7 a.m. Her family member would drop her off on the way to work. She would then stay there all day for a 30-minute appointment and wait until her family member could come back and get her after they were done with work around 3 p.m.”

In one conversation, participants discussed challenges around affordability of carpooling, stating, “Coworkers are charging a lot for [an informal] carpool—something like \$50 per week is charged. That’s \$200 a week for a full car. Gas doesn’t cost that much. This is considerably more expensive than if [our organization] was providing transportation.”

## Public transit

Nearly all participants discussed public transit, often as an important but limited transportation option in the region. Several government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private entities offer transit and bus transportation services throughout the 11 counties in the district. Most of the public transportation involves transit services that operate on flexible routes with flexible schedules. This approach known as “dial-a-ride” (or deviated route or demand response service), when pickup and drop-off services are scheduled in advance from a chosen location to the destination or between designated stops, is common in Minnesota and other regions that lack concentration of both riders and destinations. Regularly scheduled, fixed-route transit service is available in Rochester and La Crescent. Additionally, regularly scheduled intercity travel between Rochester and neighboring cities is also available.

The following organizations and entities provide public transit and intercity bus transportation in District 6.<sup>30</sup>

- **La Crescent Apple Express** is operated by the City of La Crescent with an intergovernmental agreement for services with the City of La Crosse, Wisconsin. It offers regularly scheduled services within the city of La Crescent and provides connections to La Crosse.
- **LeRoy City Lines** is owned and operated by the LeRoy Economic Development Authority. It provides weekday intercity bus transportation between LeRoy and Rochester. LeRoy City Lines has expanded services in recent years to include the cities of Chester, Iowa, and Grand Meadow, Minnesota.
- **Rolling Hills Transit** provides weekday dial-a-ride services (route deviation and demand response) within the counties of Dodge, Fillmore, Houston, Olmsted, and Winona, and is operated by Semcac.
- **Rochester City Lines** is a privately owned regional intercity transit line that provides weekday commuter and charter services between Rochester and 40 communities in Southeast Minnesota.

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<sup>30</sup> Refer to MnDOT’s interactive web tool for transit data in Minnesota:

<http://mndot.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Minimalist/index.html?appid=2e3d00cf13924ce290386f195c0892e1>

- **Rochester Public Transit** provides weekday fixed-route services and dial-a-ride services within the City of Rochester and Marion, and is operated by the city of Rochester.
- **Southeast Minnesota Area Rural Transit (SMART)** provides route deviation and demand response transportation services in Freeborn, Mower, Steele, and Waseca Counties, and is administered and operated by Cedar Valley Services.
- **Winona Transit Services** provides weekday route deviation and demand response services available within the City of Winona.
- **Three Rivers Hiawathaland** is owned and operated by Three Rivers Community Action Partnership. It provides route deviation and demand response services in Goodhue, Rice, and Wabasha Counties.

Participants in a few conversations noted the importance of public transit specifically for serving the needs of District 6 communities that face transportation challenges and inequities, including older adults, people with low incomes, immigrants, people with disabilities, and people without vehicles. While these participants cited public transit as important, most also said existing transit service falls short of what community members need.

## Transit service limitations and barriers

### *Operating hours and routes*

Many conversations addressed challenges with operating hours and route availability for public transit users in the district. Most transit services outside of Rochester operate weekday daytime hours, resulting in limited services for people who need to travel at night or on weekends (e.g., shift workers). Participants noted that some areas such as downtowns and shopping hubs are easier to access than other areas. However, existing routes miss important locations such as job sites, county offices, food shelves, and school.

In Rochester, several participants highlighted that transit to downtown is easily accessible. However, using transit to travel to locations outside of the downtown area is difficult. Routes regularly require transfers in downtown, adding more travel time for those traveling to other areas.

***“Two aspects of the Rochester transit system make it restrictive to use. It has a ‘hub and spoke’ layout, meaning almost all trips must go in and out of downtown, and many regular routes stop their most frequent service at about 5:30 p.m. This creates a significant lack of options for transit-dependent households.”***

They also discussed that travel during off-peak hours is limited. According to one participant,

***“Buses mainly run during prime commuting times. Service ends or is greatly diminished between 9 a.m. and mid-afternoon. Service stops at 6:45 p.m., and there are very limited bus routes on weekends. Those living and working downtown are limited in attending after-hour events if they rely on bus service to get them out of the downtown area. For example, to stay downtown after work for dinner or an event such as Thursdays Downtown [a block-party-style event], time is limited as the last bus leaves at 6:45 p.m.”***

A few of the participants who discussed transit in Rochester noted that there is a need for better connections to certain locations in Rochester. Participants added some communities that rely on transit for work and services need transit access to specific areas such as Northwest Rochester and affordable housing locations in Southeast Rochester. An organization whose staff included immigrants noted that limited or no transit service is available

at nights or on the weekends and was a hindrance for their staff. Another organization said students working outside downtown cannot rely on transit and require other transportation.

### *Intercity transit*

***“Intercity commuting on a daily basis is much bigger in this region than you expect and hasn’t been addressed. Rochester transportation is city focused—there is a need for intercity regularly scheduled transit.”***

A few transit providers noted that there are some intercity transit options available between larger communities, mainly for medical trips to Rochester, including the Mayo health care system. However, many participants raised concerns about the limited options and how it affects people’s ability to access jobs, education, and medical care. One participant discussed commute needs, noting that there is a lack of intercity options to get people to jobs located in another community. Another organization commented that workers lacked transit options to farms outside of communities they lived in and often had to walk long distances to the nearest bus stop.

***“Intercity transit would be very beneficial to have in our region, especially to the Twin Cities. Trips that some with disabilities want to take to the Mall of America, for example, take months of planning to line up a ride today (and sometimes get canceled).”***

### *Travel time, trip coordination, and cost*

Many participants discussed the long travel times sometimes required to take transit. As noted in the section about routes, lack of service to key destinations and the need to transfer to another route can lead to long transit trips. Traveling outside downtown can be especially long. Additionally, dial-a-ride transit users have to call ahead and arrange pickup and drop-off often 24 hours in advance. This does not provide a lot of options for last-minute travel.

Several participants discussed the cost of transit, especially for households with lower incomes and greater transit dependence. One organization advocated for free transit, explaining that the cost can be prohibitive for some communities. The organization explained that there are monthly passes that are less expensive for riders with a demonstrated need. However, the paperwork and bureaucratic requirements to obtain a pass every month can be a barrier. Another organization said using transit to travel with older children adds to the cost, as only children of a certain age can ride for free.

A few organizations also stated that some transit providers limit the number of bags that can be carried on a bus, which can be a barrier to use transit for shopping.

## **Bicycling**

Most often, participants discussed that people bicycle more for recreational purposes than for transportation, due in part to the lack of safe bicycling connections to key destinations as described below. In addition, several participants mentioned where bicycle lanes do exist, they are more likely to enable travel within a city rather

than travel between cities or between destinations across a region. A few participants noted that there is a perception of bicycling as a mode of last resort, used only by those with no other options.

In addition to bicycle infrastructure, participants often discussed winter weather, physical distance, and terrain as barriers to bicycling. Additionally, organizations also mentioned that for specific community members such as people with disabilities, young children, and older adults, there are physical limitations to bicycling. Another participant also mentioned that for families with children, there is a perception that bicycling is not feasible.

## Regional variation in bicycle infrastructure

Many conversations discussed how bicycle infrastructure can help promote bicycling and improve safety. However, conversations highlighted how bicycle infrastructure varies across District 6. Several conversations noted that infrastructure tended to be concentrated in specific places, including larger cities such as Rochester and Albert Lea as well as in college towns such as Winona and Northfield.

***“Rochester is changing the whole streetscape to encourage walking and [bicycling]. But that’s Rochester. It is not the reality for other communities.”***

Several participants discussed recent and planned investment in bicycle infrastructure in the district. Even where bicycle infrastructure does exist, several participants noted that it is not always comprehensive or complete enough to enable commuting. Participants noted that bicycle trails are often designed for recreational use or to connect green spaces such as parks, and do not always go to downtowns or other activity centers. A few other participants noted that critical gaps in bicycle infrastructure can limit its effectiveness. One example mentioned was bicycle lanes for travel in only one direction. Several participants also mentioned connections to transit park-and-ride lots, lack of curb cuts on sidewalks, and intersections with highways, both as barriers and safety concerns for bicyclists.

***“Albert Lea has a lot of [bicycle] and pedestrian options with the Blue Zones<sup>31</sup> initiative. There are trails that are accessible and safe. There are two [bicycle] shops in town and organized rides on Monday night. There are some options in town for free bicycles.”***

## Bicycle programs

Several conversations noted access to bicycles as a barrier. Participants often recommended free or low-cost bicycle rental programs as a potential solution. There were several discussions about existing bicycle programs operated by cities and library systems in District 6. Specific programs mentioned include Wheels to Go in LeRoy

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<sup>31</sup> Blue Zones project is a nationwide initiative that partners with cities to implement projects to improve the well-being of residents. The City of Albert Lea piloted the Blue Zone initiative in 2009, implementing several activities ranging from tobacco use reduction to school nutrition improvement projects. In 2012, a five-mile pedestrian and bicycle route around Fountain Lake in the city was dedicated to the Blue Zone project. For more information about the Blue Zone initiative in Albert Lea, visit <https://www.bluezones.com/2012/07/albert-lea-mn-where-are-they-now/>.

and programs operated by the City of Rochester and the Rushford Public Library. One organization mentioned that there is a bicycle program targeted at specific groups such as women in Winona. However, the bicycles are specifically for commuting to work, making it less useful for women who need to travel with children in tow. Another participant noted challenges faced by previous bicycle programs, such as Red Bike in Austin, including bicycle theft and abandonment. A few other conversations highlighted the need for additional bicycle programs and funding. A few conversations drew a link between the lack of affordable bicycles, general transportation access challenges, and broader barriers to access critical services such as health care and social services.

## Bicycle safety

Bicycle safety comments focused on interactions between bicycles and other modes of transportation. Many of these conversations called out highway intersections as particularly problematic, especially where there was inadequate pedestrian and bicycle crossings. In cities with more vehicle traffic, including Rochester and Winona, a few participants noted that the volume and speed of traffic was a safety concern. Participants also commented that drivers parking in bicycle lanes are a challenge to bicycling safely. A few participants recommended additional safety education for both bicyclers and drivers on topics such as hand signals, where to safely ride, and how drivers should interact with bicyclists. Several participants also highlighted as a concern the lack of secure places to lock or store bicycles when not in use. One conversation raised a safety concern around the vulnerability of walkers and bicyclers to abuse, and another conversation raised a concern around the lack of safety and visibility in unlit underpasses.

## Walking

Participants noted that walking may be a feasible option for most people and for shorter distances. However, older adults and people living with disabilities face more barriers to walking than other groups.

***“For pedestrians and those with limited mobility (using wheelchairs, scooters, crutches, et cetera), the lack of snow removal is a challenge. Downtown is impassible for pedestrians and those with limited mobility in the winter because the plows push snow up on the sidewalk and then they are not cleared.”***

## Perceptions of walking

Participants discussed that walking is a more viable option in towns and cities than in rural areas. Even in downtown Rochester, for example, walking is considered potentially unsafe. A few organizations noted a lack of lighting on streets, which makes pedestrians feel less safe. The pedestrian system—sidewalks to businesses, sidewalk to sidewalk, business or sidewalk to transit—is not connected. Additionally, walking in areas without sidewalks or with noncontinuous sidewalks, large surface parking lots, and no development is more difficult and time-consuming.

***“[There is] no bicycle path, and sidewalks aren’t connected. You can’t walk from businesses to the bus stops.”***

Participants noted that it is fairly easy to get around some places, such as downtowns and campuses. However, if someone needs to get to the outskirts of town or across town, walking may not be a viable option.

## Barriers to walking

***“For walking, the challenge is finding the timing to cross busy streets—it feels like playing Frogger, and it feels dangerous.”***

A few organizations discussed general barriers to walking, and many mentioned problems with sidewalks and crosswalks specifically. Several participants noted that a lack of sidewalks as well as gaps in sidewalks limit the ability to walk and roll in a community. Also, sidewalk conditions were also highlighted as a barrier to walking. Participants specifically highlighted steep slopes, poor maintenance, and rough surfaces among their complaints.

Many participants noted that weather, especially in winter, as another barrier. One conversation commented that in Faribault when the district changed which areas would be served by buses, school attendance dropped in winter for students who otherwise walk to school. Sidewalks that are not shoveled or not cleared of snow and ice can lead to a number of safety issues such as people falling, using the street instead, and getting stuck in snow (particularly when using a wheelchair or motorized scooter).

Several organizations cited dangerous crossings, especially major highways and multilane roads, as safety concerns for pedestrians.

For those with physical limitations, including older adults and people with disabilities, many of these issues are exacerbated. Participants noted a lack of places to rest on walking routes, noncompliance with ADA standards for sidewalks and other pedestrian access, and inadequate time to safely cross streets at signalized intersections.

Finally, some organizations said there is a need for better safety education for drivers regarding pedestrians and cyclists.

***“There is a strong memory of a child who was hit outside of the school while properly using a crosswalk. How do we increase safety and awareness of drivers? We need to promote education.”***

## Other transportation options

Participants in more than two-thirds of the conversations discussed other modes of transportation available. Modes discussed include ride-hailing services such as Lyft and Uber, taxis, and volunteer driver programs. Many discussed the limited availability of these options in the district.

### Taxis and ride-hailing services

More than half of the conversations mentioned taxis and ride-hailing services such as Lyft and Uber. In about half of these conversations, participants said taxis, Uber, and Lyft were available to communities in a few of District 6’s larger cities such as Owatonna, Rochester, and Winona. The most common reasons listed for why people use ride-hailing services included attending medical appointments, participating in day-to-day activities such as social groups, grocery shopping, childcare drop-off or pickup, and traveling to jobs in larger cities.

However, participants in a few conversations said these services may not be affordable for people with low incomes due to the need for greater distances, as longer trips tend to be more expensive. For communities outside of larger cities, many participants said there was limited or no availability for ride-hailing services. Participants said taxis or Lyft and Uber are not accessible for riders with disabilities or those who may require support to get into and out of vehicles. Additionally, taxis and ride-hailing services pose safety and confidentiality challenges for victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, who often need immediate transportation options that are private and not visible when fleeing a crisis.

Having to use an app to request rides was mentioned as another barrier, as not everyone has access to a smartphone or a credit card for payment. One participant said, “Using technology like Uber or Lyft may be confusing, overwhelming, and not well understood, even with education for seniors. Uber and Lyft services are not accessible for people with disabilities as drivers cannot provide assistance getting in and out of the car. Willingness, trust, and cost are prohibitive for these services as well.”

### **Volunteer driver programs**

Participants in several conversations discussed volunteer driver programs. Volunteer driver programs are a lower-cost transportation service provided by local governments, human service providers, transit providers, and community organizations, typically for nonemergency medical appointments and other purposes such as running errands. Volunteer driver programs are used by people who need services in areas where other forms of transportation are more expensive or not available. Most often, volunteer driver programs are in small communities in Greater Minnesota where dedicated transit services may not exist. However, some programs are also available in urban settings.<sup>32</sup>

Organizations match volunteer drivers with those in need of rides for a wide range of purposes, including shopping, errands, education, recreation, and nonemergency medical appointments. Volunteer drivers usually receive limited reimbursement from the organizations for their mileage. In Minnesota, the drivers must report as taxable income any reimbursement amounts greater than the standard charity rate of 14 cents per mile, a rate that falls short of what is needed to cover total vehicle costs.<sup>33</sup> Regarding insurance, Minnesota law requires that drivers who provide transportation (such as Lyft and Uber drivers) carry insurance that recognizes they use their vehicle to transport passengers for compensation.<sup>34</sup> The law is currently unclear as to whether volunteer drivers are expected to have the same insurance coverage as ride-hailing drivers.

A few participants specifically highlighted that volunteer driver programs are heavily relied on for getting people to medical appointments. In a few conversations, participants said it has been difficult to find more volunteer drivers even though demand for the service is increasing. Reasons cited for the decline in drivers include aging volunteer drivers, drivers’ worries about insurance requirements, and low reimbursement rates.

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<sup>32</sup> For more information about volunteer driver programs, refer to “Volunteer Drivers’ Program in Minnesota: Benefits and Barriers,” Frank Douma, 2017, <https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/189303>.

<sup>33</sup> For information from the Minnesota Department of Revenue about volunteer drivers and taxes, refer to [https://www.revenue.state.mn.us/individuals/individ\\_income/Pages/VolunteerMileageReimbursement.aspx](https://www.revenue.state.mn.us/individuals/individ_income/Pages/VolunteerMileageReimbursement.aspx).

<sup>34</sup> Minnesota Statutes 2018, 65B.472, subdivision 2.

***“Many drivers are older. Some programs have gone away from volunteer drivers because of accidents with significant injuries and some liability problems.”***

## **Other modes**

A few participants said they have seen people use all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), golf carts, and lawn mowers to travel locally. Participants in a few conversations also commented on seeing farm equipment and horse-driven buggies being used on shoulders of roads. One participant said they occasionally help Amish groups in the area charter buses for longer trips.

## **Safety**

### **General safety**

Participants often discussed general traffic safety, especially at intersections, as a safety concern in District 6. In particular, several conversations mentioned highway crossings as unsafe for both bicyclists and pedestrians (see list later in this section for specific locations mentioned by participants).

### **Safety of vulnerable populations**

***“Safety is always a major concern for our community, and they worry that if they walk they’ll be more visible and vulnerable to their abusers. Racism is another challenge for walkers and bicyclers. {BIPOC} who are walking and [bicycling] are more vulnerable on streets.”***

A few participants mentioned safety concerns that specifically affected minority communities and vulnerable populations. One conversation described the challenges of older adults with limited vision, including roads not repainted frequently enough for markings to be visible, trees not trimmed well enough to see oncoming traffic, and crosswalks without audio signals (also known as Accessible Pedestrian Signals). A few participants discussed how being a member of a racial and ethnic minority or being a victim of abuse may affect your experiences as a pedestrian, bicyclist, or transit rider.<sup>35</sup> One participant described working with individuals who had been harassed by a bus driver, and another described working with a person of color who drove short distances instead of walking because of safety concerns. Another participant described a tragic fatal incident involving communities of color, saying:

***“There was an incident a few years ago where people drove pickup trucks around minority neighborhoods, waving Confederate flags. The neighbors asked the city to install speed bumps to***

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<sup>35</sup> Participants shared anecdotes of community member experiences they had knowledge of; however, there is not enough information in the conversation notes to gain a deeper understanding of why these incidents occur. These anecdotes mirror available national research that shows communities of color experience a higher level of harassment than their white counterparts. For more information, refer to “Unsafe and Harassed in Public Spaces: A National Street Harassment Report,” Stop Street Harassment, 2014, <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2014-National-SSH-Street-Harassment-Report.pdf>.

***deter the trolling, but they never did, and a driver hit a four-year-old with his truck. It was a contentious issue. They did install flashing lights around Broadway, though. It's like you have to lose a life for them to get serious."***

## **Other concerns**

Several conversations mentioned other safety concerns. A few conversations discussed the need for adult driver education and outreach with recommended training on how to drive safely with roundabouts, one-ways, and bicycle lanes. A few participants also mentioned scooters as a safety concern, including scooters' visibility to drivers and interactions between scooters and pedestrians on sidewalks. A few participants also expressed general concerns for pedestrian safety, especially at night and in winter. Lastly, a few conversations raised general concerns around traffic volume and vehicle speed.

## **Specific safety concerns and locations**

- Second Street by Shorewood in Rochester lacks a good place to cross the street.
- Crossing US 14 or Broadway Avenue (old US 63) in Rochester is a concern because the roads are busy and traffic is moving quickly.
- Crossing US 14 in Southeast Rochester and on 37th Street and 41st Street NW next to Gage School.
- Roundabout by Hy-Vee in Winona where everyone drives over the curb.
- Broadway in Winona—drivers go too fast. It would be better if they narrowed the lanes and added bicycle lanes.
- In Winona, trains delay people trying to cross the tracks and there is only one overpass (on Pelzer) on the far west end of the town. The overpass benefits industry more than residents because it was created for port access.
- Lake Village Mobile Home Park in Winona is cut off from the rest of the city. It has no sidewalks to it and no signs.
- In Northfield, Crossing Highway 3 poses a safety risk due to road width, traffic volume, and vehicle speed.
- Crossing Highway 19 in Northfield (due to high traffic volume, vehicle speed, and road width).
- In Rochester, the area between major residential development and intersection near Transportation and Commerce (near Target South) has no bicycle path. Sidewalks aren't connected, and you can't walk from businesses to the bus stops.
- A lot of trucks drive through to and from Hormel, making it hard to cross Main. This is most concerning near the school where kids have to cross in this area.
- At I-35 and County Road 46 in Freeborn County, there are a lot of semi-trucks trying to turn. A light or stop sign would probably help.

## Public engagement

***“Communication is the key. You need to know key leaders within different groups, especially with immigrant populations.”***

All participants provided input on public engagement challenges and opportunities for the communities they represented. Participants most often cited several successful public engagement processes or events involving construction projects.<sup>36</sup> A few organizations also mentioned as successes transit improvements that came out of public engagement efforts.

Participants also discussed improvements that can be made in existing public engagement efforts. Several participants noted a lack of representation both on city councils and as participants in engagement efforts. While some organizations said it was easy to be informed, others said they had to specifically seek out information on construction projects or transit.

## Engagement strategies

Around two-thirds of the conversations offered suggestions on ways to engage the public. Organizations noted that there has been improvement in engagement efforts by public officials and in the ease of being involved with these efforts, such as improved opportunities to provide input. One organization noted that engagement output from agencies or government varies based on the resources available to them. Some participants did not see a lack of engagement overall but could see differences in efforts with organizations trying to improve engagement with the public.

A few organizations highlighted councils recently organized to better coordinate transit service. Participants noted that the councils have sought input on transit, which was the first opportunity some had heard of for the public to comment on these services. One participant noted,

***“For the regional transit coordinating council, the first phase was to set up meetings around the region to get direct input from people. It was driven by regional folks without assistance from MnDOT. There was no hatched plan and we were simply there to listen. Meetings happened in Albert Lea, Winona, Rochester, and around the region. We found generally ‘Holy buckets, no one has asked us before. We appreciate you letting us share our concerns.’”***

Participants noted some important parties for engagement:

- City officials
- Community groups
- County officials
- Economic development authority
- MnDOT

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<sup>36</sup> These include the construction around the stretch of Highway 14 running through the district, I-35 around Owatonna, the I-90 redo, and Highway 52.

- State legislators
- Transit providers
- Schools

Participants noted that going to where the residents or other stakeholders are is important rather than having them come to events organized by government. Examples offered included visiting the communities they serve and attending festivals and other events where constituents will be present. However, some organizations mentioned this as an area that needs improvement.

***“Get information to public libraries. In rural [areas] without good internet at home and low-income populations, this is where many go for access to information.”***

A few organizations talked about wanting a deeper understanding of what entities such as MnDOT and their local governments are doing in their area, such as information on long-range planning and funding and policy strategy. One participant noted,

***“Not everyone understands all of the pieces of decision-making that go into a funding decision. There could be more time spent on community education on how a decision is made. It’s not as easy as most people think, and then they get frustrated with the local government, but the government is only abiding by a restriction from a funder. Having an understanding of what the guidelines are for funding decisions is helpful to people.”***

## Effective ways to communicate

A majority of organizations described ways their community members receive information and provided suggestions for improving communications. According to participants, communication methods can vary based on the audience. For example, immigrants might face language barriers, and older adults might tend toward print materials. It is helpful to engage with people via partner organizations that work with key communities to be more successful. Most conversations mentioned a variety of effective channels for communications, including social media and other online methods, in-person meetings, word-of-mouth, newspapers and television news, radio, and MnDOT’s 511 service. Some organizations suggested keeping communications short and simple, and engaging via smartphone apps. While most organizations mentioned multiple platforms, one organization specifically stated that using multiple platforms “is the best method.”

***“In Albert Lea they had some focus groups to invite people in and have further conversations. I’ve seen that happen in Austin and Owatonna as well. I think there is a sense of community gathering. There is an openness to that.”***

## Challenges with outreach and engagement efforts

***“Having a strong communication platform that doesn’t happen just when a decision needs to be made, but on an ongoing basis. I see the circle of trust between government and communities as a struggle right now. Community members don’t always feel like they are being heard.”***

More than two-thirds of organizations spoke about challenges they see with existing outreach and public engagement efforts. Many said they do not feel well-informed about transportation projects that are relevant to the communities they serve.

Some organizations acknowledge they or the public are consulted when a government entity needs to make a decision, but they would prefer to see communication happening outside of these decision-making periods, as well.

A few organizations pointed to a lack of representation of both women and BIPOC on city councils and other governing groups. Several organizations pointed to language barriers for immigrants that may keep them from participating and from being well-informed. BIPOC often are not invited to the table or represented. A few organizations also noted that the same small group of people tend to show up to community meetings, which excludes the needs and perspectives of the larger community in engagement efforts.

***“People often have no relationship with government at any level. It takes government to reach out and connect through members of that community. Community members have come from countries where they have been victimized by government.”***

Other concerns raised include one-way flow of information, including from MnDOT, to the public, and limited opportunities to provide input.

Participants provided mixed reviews about community members’ ability to provide input. While several organizations said community members were not afraid to provide input in public engagement efforts, others noted there may be reluctance from some community members out of fear of reprisal. According to one participant,

***“We see some fear and apprehension in our community members in providing their full input. Small town politics and gossip play into some of it, but a major factor is also fear in criticizing someone or something you have to rely on, like your transportation service. Providing full and true input can be risky when you depend that much on people you’re evaluating.”***

## Equity

When asked what equity means to their organizations, most participants described equality of access and equality of opportunity. For many of these participants, access to employment, education, and other pathways to economic opportunity were particularly important. Several participants discussed equity through the lens of providing respect, dignity, and inclusion. Others discussed equity through the lens of providing options and choices and described “being in control of your own narrative.” A few other participants defined equity specifically as the equal provision of public services.

## Equity and transportation

***“Transportation is one of the main obstacles holding people back in many ways. Better transportation would allow more people to have access to our services. They’d also have an easier time getting to work, to doctor’s appointments, to get food, and to access county social services.”***

In most conversations, participants discussed transportation as enabling access and connection. For many participants, access to education and employment were particularly important, as is housing, grocery and retail stores, medical appointments, and social services.

Several participants discussed the tradeoffs presented by geography, population density, and cost. A few participants noted that transportation infrastructure such as bicycle lanes and frequent transit service can make urban areas more attractive than rural areas to some residents. A few other participants noted that other types of transportation infrastructure, such as effective regional bus service, gives people greater freedom to live in areas beyond cities. A few transportation providers and social service agencies explicitly mentioned the tradeoffs of providing equal levels of service in geographically dispersed areas and the impact of the cost of providing service in less dense areas on their ability to provide service to others.

***“The scale of the geography makes it so you try to stay within the boundary of a community to service more people. You can drive 20 miles to pick up one additional person, but that limits providing service to three others.”***

Affordability and cost of transportation were an important aspect of transportation equity for people and communities. Choice of transportation modes and routes was mentioned by a few participants as a critical component in providing independence and empowerment. One participant discussed transportation as an important element of civic equity, of enabling individuals to contribute to the public process. A few participants highlighted the link between transportation infrastructure and broader regional economic development and vitality.

## Strategies for advancing equity

Participants offered a variety of suggestions for ways to advance equity in transportation. Several recommended working directly with employers to coordinate bus service to jobs, expanding the available workforce for employers while also increasing economic opportunity for residents. More broadly, a few participants recommended intentionally connecting transportation services with desired activities beyond work, for instance, in providing transportation to dining facilities for older adults. One participant also recommended coordinating the dispatch of special transportation services,<sup>37</sup> which are currently run independently.

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<sup>37</sup> According to MnDOT, Special Transportation Service (STS) is a transportation service provided to specific populations such as older adults and people with disabilities by an organization who receives financial assistance or grants from the state or federal government, or both. For more information, refer to <https://mn.gov/elicense/a-z/?id=1083-231370#/list/appId//filterType//filterValue//page/1/sort//order/>.

Several participants discussed language access with a few people specifically recommending providing information in other languages for people with limited English proficiency or who speak other languages. One participant recommended providing large-print options for older adults or those with vision impairments.

Equity at the state and regional level was discussed by a few participants, both in terms of financial resources between the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota as well as in transportation investments across District 6. One participant recommended greater equality of investment in core transportation infrastructure such as sidewalks throughout cities and in neighborhoods.

## Key recommendations

MnDOT District 6 management team and staff, along with staff from the Central Office, attended a facilitated implementation planning meeting in Rochester on December 6, 2019, to review the findings from the community conversations. Meeting attendees identified findings that the agency has a relatively high level of influence in, and generated potential solutions in small groups. The group as a whole then voted on which of these solutions should be the highest priority for the agency.<sup>38</sup> Results from the meetings and observations from MAD consultants yielded the following recommendations:

### 1. MnDOT should work with transit providers to improve transit planning in District 6.

Participants in the community conversations noted that transit routes often miss important locations. Staff at the implementation planning meeting discussed the following strategies for strengthening transit planning in District 6:

#### a. Strengthen transit coordination during MnDOT projects and investments.

Staff suggested better incorporating transit planning in MnDOT highway projects and investments to strengthen transit infrastructure. Better coordination with transit providers in project scoping would help identify important locations for transit users that can be incorporated into MnDOT projects. This could improve transit infrastructure for the future (such as park and rides on the trunk highway system). Staff also noted MnDOT could consider giving more importance to transit corridors in the Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP) as a strategy to improve investment in transit.

Implementation of this recommendation is a shared responsibility of MnDOT Central Office and District 6. The Central Office will take the lead with MnSHIP, and the district would take the lead in the scoping process with support from the Central Office in identifying funding and any additional resources.

#### b. Partner with transit providers to improve transit planning.

Staff discussed that MnDOT should consider providing technical expertise to transit providers to strengthen their capacity for transit planning. MnDOT can support transit agencies with system and

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<sup>38</sup> For a full report of the results from the implementation meeting, refer to Appendix F: Findings and potential solutions from the implementation planning meeting 1 on page 59.

route planning to improve existing services and potentially expand or add new services. Staff also recommended that MnDOT play a role in improving options for intercity and regional travel. Staff recommended improving coordination between the Central Office, the district, and transit providers to explore and identify solutions.

## **2. MnDOT should collaborate with partners to improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.**

Participants in several conversations noted that bicycling and walking remain a transportation option of last resort for community members due to lack of critical infrastructure such as shared use paths, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes. Participants often highlighted that critical destinations such as job sites, schools, and government services are not accessible for people bicycling or walking. Participants noted that the lack of pedestrian infrastructure particularly affects older adults and people with disabilities. Similar to the Safe Routes to School program, MnDOT<sup>39</sup> could fund pedestrian plans that address connecting destinations that meet the needs of communities. Staff also highlighted that MnDOT could prioritize alternative funding sources to fund pedestrian plans.

Implementation of this recommendation should be a shared responsibility of the Central Office and District 6. Implementation of the pedestrian plans should be led by the district, with input from other MnDOT resources and offices as needed.

## **3. District 6 should create a district public engagement plan.**

Though most participants felt engaged in key projects or noted having received information from MnDOT, they would like to see improved engagement outside of decision-making periods. Staff attending the implementation planning meetings discussed that the district is currently preparing a comprehensive public engagement plan. A districtwide public engagement plan can help build trust and relationships with key communities identified in this study and advance the district's engagement with these communities. Such a plan can address issues such as the one-way flow of information and a lack of regular opportunities for communities to provide input. MnDOT staff discussed several strategies that should be included in a comprehensive public engagement plan, such as:

- MnDOT should leverage internal resources for staff education, including bringing in representatives from key communities to help MnDOT learn more about their needs. This can help establish new relationships and strengthen existing ones.
- Consider a variety of public engagement strategies and techniques, going beyond public meetings and open houses. Staff suggested several tactics for additional engagement, including:
  - Attending community events to establish a relationship and build trust with a key community. Relevant staff should consider attending community events to learn about community interests and perspectives before asking to speak to or with the group about MnDOT projects (e.g.,

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<sup>39</sup> There are no active regional development commissions (RDCs) in District 6, as is common in other regions in Greater Minnesota. RDCs are key partners in statewide transportation planning and programming and work with MnDOT through an annual work program framework. In District 6, MnDOT planning staff are funded to serve this role. For more information about MnDOT planning and programming partnerships, refer to <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/mpordcatp.html>.

- attending community events at least twice before asking). This is especially true for groups who may not trust the government.
- Meeting community members where they are, in settings chosen by them. These can include events community members frequent, such as festivals and community gatherings, and locations community members use.
  - Encourage all district staff to engage in activities to build relationships with key communities. While this would be a part of public engagement efforts, staff suggested that this can go beyond public engagement staff and could include planning and project management staff as well as other district staff. MnDOT staff routinely participate in parades and community events when engagement is not the focus. These examples and activities such as volunteering help staff connect with members of the community and build relationships over time.
  - Consider working in partnership with community liaisons for projects. These liaisons could have formalized roles or be volunteers. Community liaisons who have knowledge of the culture and language can be a critical connection between MnDOT and the key communities that would help MnDOT engage in a more effective and culturally sensitive way. MnDOT should look for financial resources to compensate liaisons for their time and expertise when possible.
  - Create a robust communication toolkit. MnDOT staff can gather information about effective communication channels for target communities. Staff also noted that communication should prioritize accessibility, such as using large print and plain language when communicating in English. When possible, communication materials should be provided in other languages spoken in the region and include consideration of individuals who may not read or write or have a cultural preference for oral communication. The communication toolkit should include approaches for use of social media to improve outreach as well.

Implementation of this recommendation is primarily a District 6 responsibility. The public engagement staff will lead, but a districtwide, cross-functional team should collaborate to design the plan. MnDOT’s Central Office—particularly the Public Engagement and Constituent Services (PECS) Office—may be able to offer District 6 guidance on developing the plan, as needed.

**4. MnDOT should consider funding a transit education and outreach campaign aimed at improving understanding of transit options among target populations.**

Participants in community conversations noted that lack of accessible information and language barriers prevent some community members, such as older adults, people with low incomes, and those for whom English is not their first language, from accessing transit. Staff discussed that MnDOT should fund a highly customized education and outreach effort in District 6 to both raise awareness of transit and support existing and future transit users through more-accessible materials. This effort should incorporate tactics that take into consideration individuals who may not read or write, speak languages other than English, or have other language and cultural differences, such as a preference for oral (versus written) communication. For instance, materials could include visuals or symbols to more effectively communicate transit-related messages or destinations.

Implementation of this recommendation is primarily the responsibility of MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT), in partnership with District 6. OTAT could also help District 6 identify funding sources.

# Appendix A: List of organizations interviewed

Individuals from the following 27 organizations and groups participated in 26 different conversations. Two of the District 6 interviews included representatives from two organizations each.

- Adult Learning Center—Albert Lea school district Brookside location
- Community Economic Development Associates
- Destination Medical Center
- Diversity Council
- Elder Network
- Faribault Diversity Coalition
- Fillmore County Statewide Health Improvement Partnership
- Freeborn County Veterans Services
- Hiawatha Homes
- Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association
- Journey to Growth (J2G)
- LeRoy City Lines
- Owatonna Community Education
- Project FINE
- Rochester City Lines
- Rolling Hills Transit
- Semcac
- Southeast Minnesota Area Agency on Aging
- Southeast Minnesota Area Rural Transit (SMART)
- Southeast Minnesota Center for Independent Living
- Southeast Minnesota Together
- Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
- St. Olaf College
- Three Rivers Community Action
- Three Rivers Hiawathaland Transit
- University of Minnesota—Rochester
- Women’s Resource Center

# Appendix B: Project team and interviewers

The following people were involved in planning, design, data collection, analysis, and/or implementation of the District 6 advancing transportation equity community conversations:

MnDOT District 6 staff:

- Richard Augustin
- Thomas Austin
- Aaron Breyfogle
- Fausto Cabrel Neto
- Mike Dougherty
- Patricia Eckdahl
- Judy Evers
- Chad Hanson
- Mark Harle
- Ethan Ihlenfeld
- Jai Kalsy
- Michael Kempinger
- Steven Kirsch
- Kyle Lake
- Craig Lenz
- Heather Lukes
- Cindy Morgan
- Mark Panek
- Greg Paulson
- Tracy Schnell
- Mark Schoenfelder
- Anthony Wagner
- Kurt Wayne
- Paul Zager

MnDOT Central Office staff:

- Kelly Corbin, Principal Planner
- Olivia Dorow Hovland, Senior Planner
- Amber Dallman, Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Planning Supervisor
- Philip Schaffner, Statewide Planning Director
- Hally Turner, Policy Planning Director
- Jim Skoog, Ombudsman
- Scott Shaffer, Intermediate Planner
- Jake Reuter, Principal Planner
- Elizabeth Pohl, Market Research Assistant

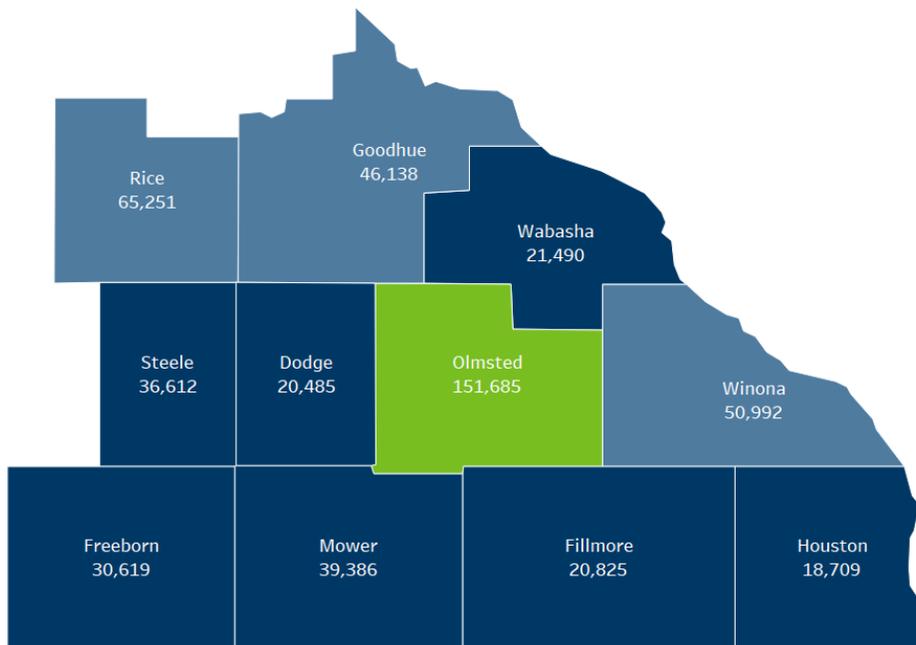
MAD Senior Management Consultants:

- Lisa Anderson
- Jessica Burke
- Jake Granholm
- Matt Kane
- Mariyam Naadha
- Abra Pollock
- Charlie Sellew

# Appendix C: District 6 demographic profile

Located in the southeast section of the state, MnDOT District 6 consists of 11 counties: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona. This report summarizes key demographic characteristics of District 6. Unless otherwise noted, the figures in this document are derived from the 2017 US Census five-year estimates.

**Figure 1. Map of District 6 counties and populations**



- **Total district population:** 502,192 people (about 9 percent of Minnesota’s population).
- **Total households:** 201,359, with average persons per household ranging from a low of 2.3 in Freeborn County and Houston County to a high of almost 2.9 in Rice County, compared with 2.4 statewide.
- **Largest county by population:** Olmsted (151,685 people); Olmsted, Rice, and Winona Counties comprise over half (53 percent) of the total district population.
- **Largest city by population:** Rochester (in Olmsted County) with 115,821 people.

Since 2000, District 6’s population increased by 9 percent. Seven of the 11 counties gained in population, with Olmsted gaining the most (22 percent increase). The populations in four of the counties (Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston, and Wabasha) decreased. By comparison, the State of Minnesota grew by 12 percent overall during that 17-year period.

The district is also home to the Prairie Island Indian Community located on the Mississippi River about 14 miles north of Red Wing, Minnesota (Goodhue County). The community’s members are mainly from the Mdewankanton Band.

**Table 1. Population by county**

Geography	2000 census	2010 census	2017 estimates	Percent change since 2000
<b>District 6</b>	<b>460,102</b>	<b>494,684</b>	<b>502,192</b>	9%
Dodge	17,731	20,087	20,485	16%
Fillmore	21,122	20,866	20,825	-1%
Freeborn	32,584	31,255	30,619	-6%
Goodhue	44,127	46,183	46,138	5%
Houston	19,718	19,027	18,709	-5%
Mower	38,603	39,163	39,386	2%
Olmsted	124,277	144,248	151,685	22%
Rice	56,665	64,142	65,251	15%
Steele	33,680	36,576	36,612	9%
Wabasha	21,610	21,676	21,490	-1%
Winona	49,985	51,461	50,992	2%
<b>State of Minnesota</b>	<b>4,919,479</b>	<b>5,303,925</b>	<b>5,490,726</b>	12%

Nearly one-quarter of the district's population (23 percent) lives in Rochester (Olmsted County). With a population of 115,821, Rochester is the biggest in District 6 by a wide margin. For comparison, the next largest city outside of the Rochester metropolitan area, Winona (Winona County), has a population of 27,271 people. The table below lists the cities in District 6 with 5,000 or more people (based on 2017 estimates).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Minnesota State Demographic Center.

Figure 2. Map of the largest cities in District 6

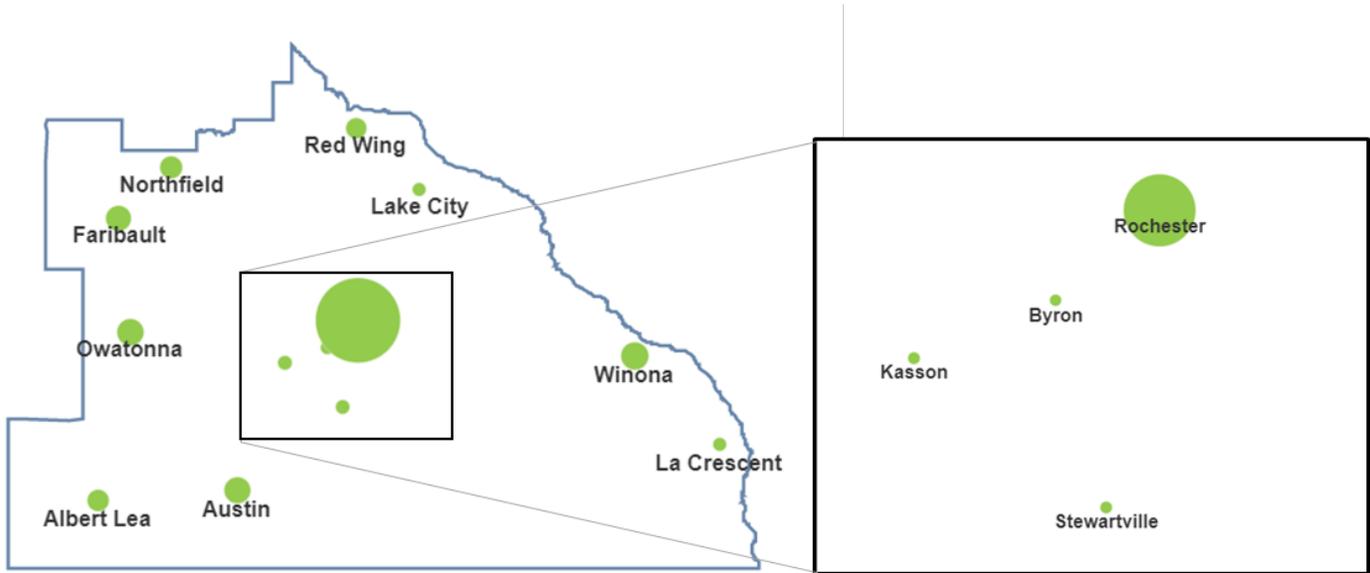


Table 2. Cities in District 6 with a population over 5,000

City (County)	Population	Households
Rochester (Olmsted County)	115,821	47,182
Winona (Winona County)	27,271	10,694
Owatonna (Steele County)	25,922	10,233
Austin (Mower County)	25,374	10,304
Faribault (Rice County)	23,769	8,544
Northfield (Rice County)	19,231	6,063
Albert Lea (Freeborn County)	18,032	7,932
Red Wing (Goodhue County)	16,572	7,152
Kasson (Dodge County)	6,414	2,414
Stewartville (Olmsted County)	6,277	2,468
Byron (Olmsted County)	5,644	2,095
Lake City (Wabasha County)	5,129	2,333
La Crescent (Houston County)	5,121	2,170

## Population characteristics

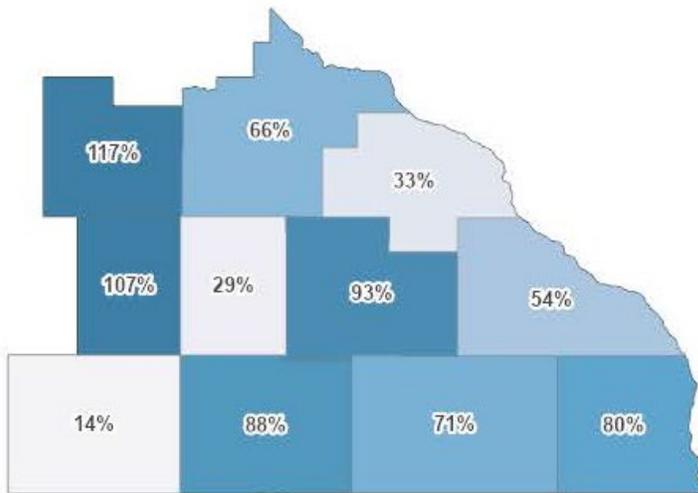
### Race and ethnicity

- BIPOC residents:** Nearly 10 percent of District 6 residents are BIPOC. Black or African American residents are the largest BIPOC racial group (3 percent), while Asian residents are the next largest BIPOC racial

group, comprising slightly less than 3 percent. Olmsted County has the largest proportion of BIPOC residents (15 percent), while Fillmore County has the smallest proportion (2 percent). Statewide, BIPOC residents are 14 percent of the population.

- Five percent of all District 6 residents identify as Hispanic or Latinx. Mower County has the highest proportion (11 percent), and Houston County has the smallest (1 percent).

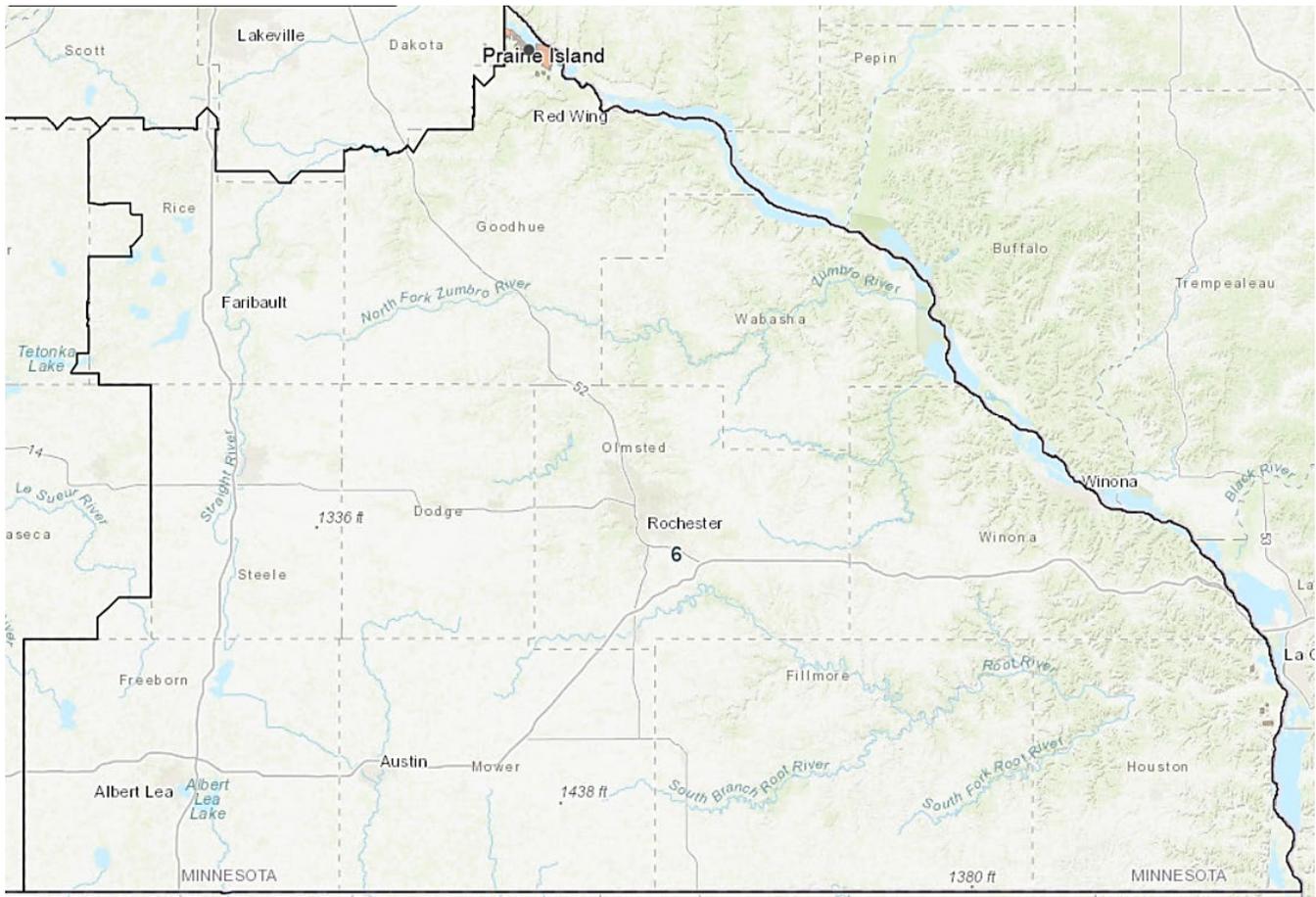
**Figure 3. Changes in racial groups, 2000 to 2017**



- **Trends for BIPOC residents:** Since 2000, the BIPOC district population increased by 85 percent (statewide, the BIPOC population increased by 69 percent). The racial groups that increased the most were Black or African American residents (191 percent change) and Asian residents (66 percent change).
- **Birthplace:** Of district residents, 94 percent were born in the US, and 71 percent were born in Minnesota. Across the entire state, 92 percent of residents were born in the US, and 68 percent were born in Minnesota. For foreign-born, naturalized US citizens in District 6, Asia and Africa, respectively, were the most common places of origin. Latin America was the most common place of origin for foreign-born non-US citizens. These trends are the same for foreign-born residents statewide as well.
- **English proficiency:** Three percent of people in District 6 speak English less than very well. Statewide, the estimate is 5 percent. After English, Spanish is the most common language spoken in homes, followed by Somali. Less common languages include Arabic, Cambodian, Mandarin Chinese, and Vietnamese.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Minnesota Department of Education, Primary Home Language Counts by County 2013–2014.

Figure 4. District 6 Tribal Nations map



## Age

- **Youth:** The proportion of people under age 18 is 23 percent, which is the same as the statewide average. Dodge County has the highest proportion with 27 percent.
- **Seniors:** The proportion of people age 65 and older is 18 percent, with Freeborn County having the highest percentage (22 percent). Statewide, 14 percent of the population is age 65 or older.

## Disability

- **People with a disability:** About 11 percent of people in District 6 have a disability.<sup>42</sup> The largest proportion of people with a disability is in Freeborn County (14 percent), while the smallest proportion is in Dodge County (9 percent).

<sup>42</sup> The American Community Survey asks respondents to answer questions covering six disability types: hearing difficulty, vision difficulty, cognitive difficulty, ambulatory difficulty, self-care difficulty, and independent living difficulty. Respondents who report any one of the six disability types are considered to have a disability.  
<https://www.census.gov/topics/health/disability/guidance/data-collection-acs.html>

## Veterans

- **Veteran population:** About 7 percent of Districts 6’s residents over age 18 are military veterans. Freeborn and Goodhue Counties have the largest proportions of veterans (10 percent each), and Winona County has the smallest (7 percent). Over one-quarter (28 percent) of the district’s veteran population has a disability. Freeborn County has the largest proportion of disabled veterans (5 percent).

## Educational attainment

Table 3 below compares the highest educational attainment for the population age 25 and older in District 6 with Minnesota as a whole.

**Table 3. Highest educational attainment for population age 25 and older**

Highest educational attainment	District 6	Minnesota
Less than high school diploma	8%	7%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	33%	25%
Some college, no degree	23%	21%
Associate’s degree	12%	11%
Bachelor’s degree	16%	23%
Graduate or professional degree	8%	12%

- **Highest level of education:** Among district residents over age 25, 92 percent have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, which is nearly equal to the statewide proportion (93 percent). However, the share of residents with an associate’s degree or higher is lower than the statewide figure (36 percent in District 6 and 46 percent for the state).
  - In Olmsted County, 55 percent of residents have an associate’s degree or higher, the only county in District 6 with greater than 50 percent.
- **Students:** Currently, 24 percent of residents are students, with 17 percent enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade and 7 percent enrolled in college or graduate school. The largest concentration of college and graduate students are in Rice and Winona Counties.<sup>43</sup>

## Income and labor force

- **Median household income:** The average median household income is \$60,254 (in 2017 inflation-adjusted dollars), which is lower than the statewide median household income (\$65,699). There is a noticeable gap between the county with largest median income (Olmsted County, \$72,337) and the smallest (Freeborn, \$51,174).

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<sup>43</sup> Rice County is home to Carleton College, St. Olaf College, and South Central College. Winona County is home to Minnesota State College—Southeast Technical, St. Mary’s University of Minnesota, and Winona State University.

- **People in poverty:** About 10 percent of people in District 6 live below the federal poverty level.<sup>44</sup> This is the same as the statewide percentage. Winona has the largest proportion of people in poverty (15 percent), and Dodge County has the smallest (6 percent).
- **Labor force participation rate:** Olmsted County has the highest participation rate (72 percent) and Freeborn County has the lowest (67 percent). By comparison, 70 percent of the state’s working-age population (16 years and older) is in the labor force.
- **Working age projections:** The working-age population (16 years and older) in the district is projected to decline by 2 percent over the next ten years.<sup>45</sup> The 55-to-64 age group will decline the most (-27 percent). The age groups that will increase the most are 25 to 34 (13 percent) and 75 and older (41 percent).

**Table 4. District 6 labor force projections**

Age group	2020	2025	2030	Percent change (2020 to 2030)
<b>District 6</b>	<b>274,292</b>	<b>272,470</b>	<b>268,270</b>	<b>-2%</b>
16 to 24	23,028	22,907	22,451	-3%
25 to 34	24,167	26,319	27,335	13%
35 to 44	24,104	24,027	23,809	-1%
45 to 54	21,767	21,652	22,904	5%
55 to 64	23,459	19,883	17,216	-27%
65 to 74	8,229	9,126	8,951	9%
75+	1,532	1,825	2,165	41%

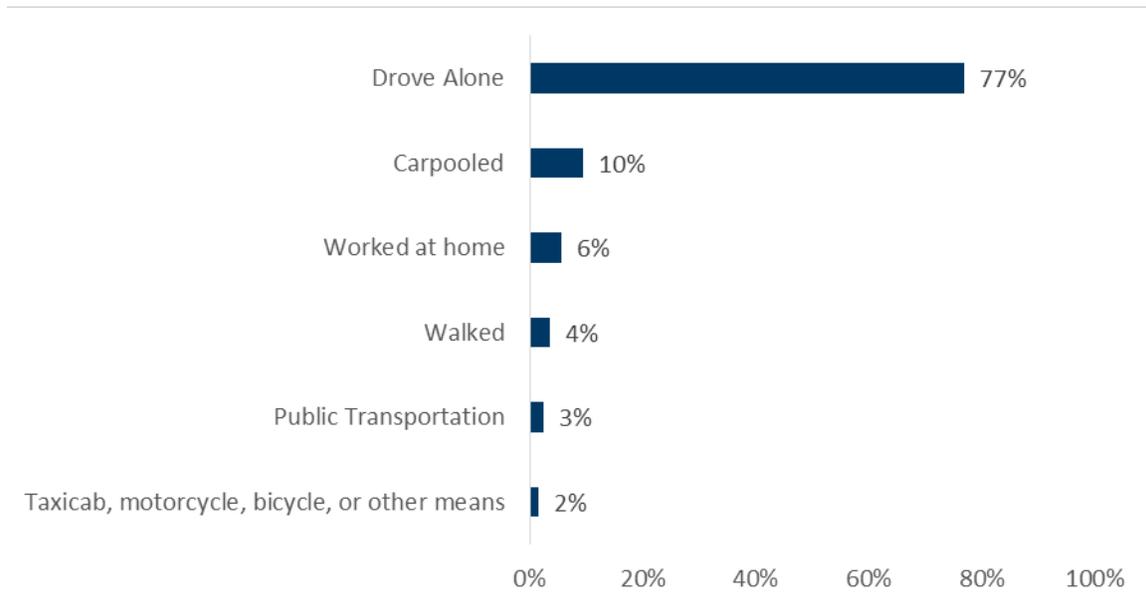
## Means of travel

- **Households and vehicles:** Approximately 6 percent of households (12,187 households) have no vehicle, which is close to the statewide average of 7 percent. For District 6 households with vehicles, 29 percent (56,415 households) have one vehicle and 65 percent (128,891 households) have two or more.

<sup>44</sup> According to the Census Bureau: A family and every individual in it are considered to be in poverty if the family’s total income is less than the dollar value of the appropriate dollar value threshold. The set of dollar value thresholds vary by family size and composition.

<sup>45</sup> Minnesota State Demographic Center.

Figure 5. Means of travel to work



- **Traveling to work:** Over three-quarters (77 percent) of workers age 16 and older drive alone to work, which is close to the level for the state as a whole (78 percent). Fillmore County had the largest proportion of workers who carpooled (12 percent), and Olmsted had the highest proportion of public transit riders (5 percent).
- **Commute times:** About 45 percent of workers age 16 and older who did not work from home had a commute time of less than 15 minutes, while nearly one-quarter (23 percent) had commutes of 30 minutes or more. Mower County had the largest proportion of workers commuting less than 15 minutes (59 percent), and Fillmore County had the largest proportion commuting 30 minutes or more (43 percent).

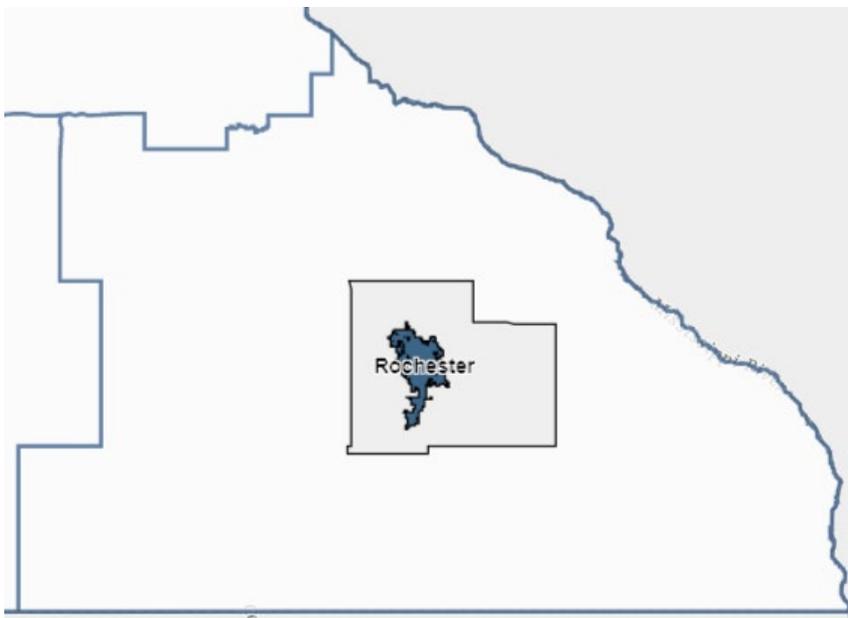
**Table 4. County by county comparison**

County	Total population	BIPOC population (%)	Percent under 18	Percent 65 and older	Percent disabled	Median household income	Persons in poverty (%)	Zero-vehicle households (%)
Dodge	20,485	4%	27%	14%	9%	\$71,078	6%	3%
Fillmore	20,825	2%	24%	20%	12%	\$57,093	11%	6%
Freeborn	30,619	6%	22%	22%	14%	\$51,174	12%	6%
Goodhue	46,138	5%	23%	18%	10%	\$62,431	11%	5%
Houston	18,709	3%	22%	20%	11%	\$56,837	9%	4%
Mower	39,386	10%	25%	18%	12%	\$53,700	13%	7%
Olmsted	151,685	15%	25%	14%	10%	\$72,337	9%	6%
Rice	65,251	12%	22%	14%	10%	\$63,311	11%	7%
Steele	36,612	9%	25%	16%	11%	\$58,882	10%	6%
Wabasha	21,490	3%	22%	20%	12%	\$61,973	6%	4%
Winona	50,992	6%	18%	15%	12%	\$53,975	15%	8%

## City of Rochester demographic characteristics

Nearly one-quarter of the district’s population (23 percent) lives in Rochester (Olmsted County), making that city of 115,821 the biggest in District 6 by a wide margin. Between 2000 and 2017, Rochester’s population grew 35 percent. During that same time, District 6’s population grew by 9 percent and the state as a whole grew by 12 percent.

**Figure 6. Map of the City of Rochester**



## Race and ethnicity

- **BIPOC residents:** About 20 percent of Rochester’s residents are BIPOC. The two largest BIPOC groups are Black or African American (8 percent) and Asian (7 percent). Among the Asian residents, 19 percent are of Chinese descent and 17 percent are of Indian descent (another 37 percent identify as “Other Asian”).
  - Six percent of all residents identify as Hispanic or Latinx.
- **Trends for BIPOC residents:** Since 2000, the number of BIPOC residents increased by 115 percent. By comparison, District 6 BIPOC residents increased by 85 percent, and statewide, BIPOC residents increased by 69 percent. The racial group that increased the most was Black or African American residents (209 percent change), which is similar to the districtwide trend.
- **Birthplace:** Eighty-four percent of Rochester’s residents were born in the US, and 67 percent were born in Minnesota. About 15 percent of residents were born in a foreign country, and of the foreign-born residents, 44 percent are naturalized US citizens.
- **Home language:** Most Rochester homes (81 percent) speak only English. Homes speaking an Asian and Pacific Islander language make up 6 percent of the total, and Spanish-speaking account for 3 percent.

## Age

- **Age groups:** About one-quarter (24 percent) of the city’s population is under 18 years old, and about 15 percent is 65 or older. These figures are similar to the districtwide proportions.

## Disability

- **Disabled:** About 13 percent of Rochester’s residents have a disability.

## Income and labor force

- **Median household income:** The average median household income in Rochester is \$68,574 (2017 inflation-adjusted dollars), which is higher than the districtwide figure (\$60,254).
- **People in poverty:** About 10 percent of people in Rochester live below the federal poverty level.<sup>46</sup>
- **Educational attainment:** Ninety-five percent of Rochester’s residents have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, and 48 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Across District 6, nearly 30 percent of residents have only a high school diploma or equivalent.
- **Labor force participation rate:** Sixty-eight percent of the Rochester working age population (16 years and older) are in the labor force, which is slightly below the District 6 rate (69 percent) and the state’s rate (70 percent).

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<sup>46</sup> According to the Census Bureau: A family and every individual in it are considered to be in poverty if the family’s total income is less than the dollar value of the appropriate dollar value threshold. The set of dollar value thresholds vary by family size and composition.

## Means of travel

- **Traveling to work:** Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of Rochester's workers age 16 and older drive alone to work, which is slightly lower than the district as a whole (77 percent). About 5 percent of commuters in Rochester use public transportation. The average travel time to work is 16 minutes.

# Appendix D: Key communities for conversations in District 6

*Management Analysis and Development (MAD) developed the following in early 2019 to help guide the District 6 community conversation for the transportation equity study.*

This document summarizes key communities within District 6 for potential inclusion in the Advancing Transportation Equity Community Conversations project. The goal of this document is to provide a starting point for interviewee identification. Key populations were identified based on the current demographics and trends in the district and include populations with known inequities, including those relevant to the US Environmental Protection Agency's efforts to achieve Environmental Justice in accordance with Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act.

It is important to recognize that these groups are not discrete. The transportation concerns often overlap, and a potential interviewee may represent multiple groups. Additionally, an individual may belong to more than one of the communities identified and may experience overlapping inequities.

## Overview of District 6

Located in the southeast section of the state, the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (MnDOT) District 6 consists of 11 counties: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona. Olmsted County has the largest population with 151,685 people. Nearly one-quarter of the district's population live in Rochester (Olmsted County), the largest city with a population of 115,821 people. Combined, Olmsted, Rice, and Winona Counties comprise over half of the total district population.

The district is also home to the Prairie Island Indian Community located on the Mississippi River about 14 miles north of Red Wing (Goodhue County). The community's members are mainly from the Mdewankanton Band.

## Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

Biased policies and practices of the past have contributed to employment, wealth, and education inequities for BIPOC living in Minnesota. Specific to transportation, inequities include issues of access, safety, and participation in decision-making.

About 10 percent of the residents in District 6 belong to racial groups other than white. The largest group is the Hispanic or Latinx population (6 percent of the people), followed by Black or African American (3 percent). In Rochester, one in five people (20 percent) belongs to a racial or ethnic group other than white, which is higher than the statewide average of 18.7 percent. About 3 percent of people in District 6 speak English less than very well. After English, Spanish and Somali are the most common languages spoken. Other commonly spoken languages include Arabic, Cambodian, Mandarin Chinese, and Vietnamese.

American Indians account for 0.33 percent of the people in the region. Transportation inequities, such as pedestrian safety and access to multimodal transportation options on reservations, should be an important consideration of this project.

## **Women and girls**

Women of all ages make up 50 percent of District 6's population. This is similar to the figure for the state. A common transportation concern for women is safety, such as walking to and waiting for public transit, especially at night. Other transportation issues include consideration of travel needs and patterns due to the importance of women's role in child rearing and household management, women's share in the aging population, and cultural differences that may affect women immigrants. These aspects should be considered as part of this project.

## **Older adults and those aging in place**

About 18 percent of the population in District 6 is over age 65—three percentage points higher than the state as a whole. Freeborn County has the highest percentage of people ages 65 and older, estimated at 22 percent. Particular concerns for these groups include transportation needed to access services and care providers, which should be taken into consideration as part of this project.

## **People with a low income (living in poverty)**

Top transportation equity concerns for low-income households include the ability to access jobs, services, and other opportunities. About 10 percent of people in District 6 have incomes lower than the federal poverty level. The average median household income in District 6 is \$60,254, which is lower than the statewide average median household income of \$65,699. The median household income in Freeborn County is \$51,174, while the median household income in Olmsted County is \$72,337.

## **Zero-vehicle households**

About 6 percent of households in District 6 do not have a vehicle. The availability and frequency of transit service, in addition to bicycling and walking options, are important when considering the transportation needs of zero-vehicle households. For the Advancing Transportation Equity Community Conversations project, it will be important to investigate if race, income, and gender overlap with zero-vehicle households.

## **People living with disabilities**

About 11 percent of district's population are people with disabilities. Special focus on the transportation experience of people with disabilities should consider issues related to hearing, vision, cognitive abilities, ambulatory limitations, and self-care or independent living difficulties. Better understanding of these varied

experiences will provide useful information for ensuring that individuals with disabilities are able to travel with ease and access comparable to those who do not have disabilities.

## Veterans

Military veterans make up 7 percent of the population in District 6. About 28 percent of the district's veterans have a disability. In addition to mobility concerns, access to veteran's services in District 6 should also be considered as part of this project.

## Other communities and organizations for consideration

Baseline demographic information is not readily available for all demographic groups. In some cases, data is not regularly collected and reported, or individuals may not feel comfortable providing information. However, this lack of data does not imply that other communities experience no transportation inequities. The list below identifies other potential communities for consideration in the District 6 Advancing Transportation Equity Community Conversation project:

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual
- People released from incarceration
- People experiencing homelessness
- People experiencing chemical dependency and other addictions

Consequently, other types of organizations to consider for the District 6 include:

- Colleges and universities
- Providers of support services for victims of domestic violence
- Public and nonprofit housing assistance organizations such as public housing agencies and community action partnerships that focus on housing
- Disadvantaged business enterprises
- Resources for seasonal and farm workers
- Regional health care providers including the Mayo Clinic

## Urban areas

Rochester is the largest city in District 6, the third largest city (in the fifth fastest growing county) in Minnesota,<sup>47</sup> and the first major Minnesota city to be included in the Advancing Transportation Equity Community Conversations project.

Relevant demographics:

- About 20 percent of Rochester residents are BIPOC. The number of BIPOC residents has increased 115 percent since 2000.

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<sup>47</sup> Minnesota Demographic Center Key Findings: <https://mn.gov/admin/demography/data-by-topic/population-data/our-estimates/>.

- Fifteen percent of Rochester residents were born outside the US.
- Fifteen percent of Rochester residents are over age 65.
- About 13 percent of Rochester residents are people with disabilities.
- Ten percent of people in Rochester live below the federal poverty level.
- Five percent of Rochester commuters use public transportation.

## **Approach to identifying key communities in urban areas**

The demographic analysis conducted as background for this transportation equity project includes profiles of urban areas in the district. Project staff used those profiles to determine which key communities to seek out in cities within District 6 (primarily Rochester). In addition, project staff sought out groups serving key communities in cities when those populations that might have different experiences in an urban setting than they would in other parts of the district.

# Appendix E: Transportation Equity

## Community Conversation Interview Guide

Interviewers used the following questions to guide their conversations and were instructed to use probes to further explore topic areas.

1. Broadly speaking, what are some challenges facing the community or communities you serve/represent?
2. Which transportation modes are most often used by the community to carry out day-to-day activities? (Including attending work, school, health care appointments, social, and cultural activities?)
3. Which modes are most critical and what challenges do they encounter in accessing these modes? (Including private vehicles, transit, bicycling, walking, et cetera) What, if any, locations are particularly difficult to get to?
4. How well are nonmotorized modes and public transportation in this area meeting (or not meeting) the needs of the community?
5. What, if any, safety concern does the community have with regard to transportation?
6. What does equity mean to your organization?
7. Can you describe a transportation project or program that impacted the community your organization serves/represent and how the community was involved in the decision-making?
8. What, if any, examples do you have of when the community has been successful in advocating on issues important to them?

# Appendix F: Findings and potential solutions from Implementation Planning Meeting 1

During a December 6, 2019, workshop, MAD consultants presented staff from MnDOT Central Office and District 6 with community conversations findings, which participants voted on to identify those findings they believe MnDOT could have the greatest influence on. Participants then chose findings to work on in small groups and developed the following potential solutions. Finally, participants voted on which solutions they believe MnDOT should prioritize. **Proposed solutions that received participant votes appear in bold**, with the number of votes listed afterward in parentheses.

## Findings: Access to basic needs and services

Many workers leave D6 for work, most to Olmsted County. Transportation is a critical barrier to access employment—and for employers to recruit and retain workers—yet transit is limited. Other findings include:

- Steady increase in labor force participation.
- Some companies arrange transportation for employees, including employer-based shuttles, or pay for transit and time spent on travel.
- Evening and second/third shift workers need more transit options.

Potential solutions:

- **Include transit providers in project scoping so they can share who their customers are and where they work, e.g., Rochester City Lines. (9 votes)**
  - **We don't necessarily think of them as a transit provider.**
  - **The challenge is more in identifying the providers. They will come if we invite them.**
- **Build infrastructure on or within projects (4 votes)**
- Provide information to travelers/community regarding transit opportunities—people don't know what is available. Some know, but can't get to the transit locations (hence, the idea of a park and ride on the trunk highway system, similar to LRT in Metro).
- Find the [transit] providers going in and out of the corridor—do we know all of them?
- Regional Transit Coordinating Council (RTCC): Getting staff in D6 better plugged in to these groups (DMC, Journey to Growth, SE MN Grow Together). Connecting communities, brainstorming on a regional level.

## Findings: BIPOC

BIPOC face transportation challenges such as lack of familiarity with how to use transit, limited materials in their language, and inability to afford transit. Some distrust the government and lack opportunities to engage with the government.

Potential solutions:

- **Fund OTAT marketing/education effort highly customized to communities, taking into consideration literacy, language, cultural, visual/symbols. (3 votes)**
  - **“How does it resonate for this particular community?”**
- **Leverage internal resources for education, bring the communities in to help MnDOT learn about them—establish and strengthen relationships. (2 votes)**
- **Attend community events at least twice before asking to speak with them—establish a relationship, then make the ask to engage—especially with groups who distrust government. (1 vote)**
- Fund additional routes or redesign routes to meet communities’ needs.
- Fund transit trainers/coaches within communities—someone who goes with you to show you how to use transit (could use this for older adults, too).
  - This way, passengers have someone to ask directly when they have questions and they won’t feel like they have to talk to other passengers or ask the bus driver questions.

## Findings: Public engagement

People want engagement outside of decision-making periods and feel there is a one-way flow of information (D6 to public). Some people are not well-informed about transportation projects. Language barriers prevent people from participating or being well-informed.

Findings on effective engagement strategies:

- Go to communities instead of having them come to events (e.g., attend festivals and events organized by communities).
- Share information with libraries in smaller communities.
- Connect with community leaders.
- Provide information to communities on long-range planning, funding, and policy strategy.
- Work with community organizations to get information to communities.
- Use multiple platforms and channels (e.g., social media and other online methods, in-person meetings, print).
- Provide information in multiple languages.

Potential solutions:

- **Create districtwide public engagement plan. (5 votes)**
  - **Liaisons are key—make connections in the community.**
- **Encourage volunteering. (2 votes)**
  - **More than the public engagement group. Could staff volunteer on public time? How would it work?**

- How benevolent would people feel about their time? It would help create community connections.
- **Build a robust communications toolkit. (2 votes)**
  - Social and nonsocial media
  - Who is the target audience?
- **Nontraditional public engagement (1 vote)**
  - What is the best way to communicate? Does MnDOT show up at community events?
  - Do MnDOT and the community/community liaison work together?
  - Does MnDOT give information to the community liaison and let them communicate it out?
- **Use Project Community Liaison. (paid/unpaid) (1 vote)**
  - Language, cultural
- **More than just the 4–7 p.m. open house—talk to community members after [a project] to learn what will work better next time, connect communities with partners.**
- **Use online engagement tools. (MetroQuest) (1 vote)**
  - Need a repository of community engagement processes: How do we represent? How do we know who to send people to?
  - Part of the public engagement plan—not sure how it’s going to look yet.
- **Create community profiles. (1 vote)**
- Strategic communication—more complexity in dealing with communities that MnDOT does not have connections with currently.

## Findings: Equity

Equity means respect, dignity, and inclusion; providing options and choices; and equality of access and opportunity in areas such as employment, education, and the economy.

Transportation can advance equity by enabling access and connection to needs and services (e.g., education, employment, housing, medical appointments, and purchasing goods). Affordability and choice of transportation modes and routes are important.

Potential solutions:

- **Plain language (English) (1 vote)**
  - Nonliterate older adults in some of the key communities: how to deal with that? Visuals.
- **ADA document training program (1 vote)**
  - Example of state highway maps: who can read the fine print?
  - Make larger-print materials available, along with multiple languages.
  - Multiple formats—ADA-compliant, but also visual or other methods
  - ADA compliance training: mandated, but no one is designated to help
- **Identified MnSHIP investment level (arrow up) (1 vote)**
- Policy must provide X type of materials in X languages.
  - Will this be based on census figures?
  - Are there policies on the number of languages in which materials should be provided? Especially looking at different geographic areas?
- Similar performance outcome statewide
  - Asset-condition allocation

- What is equity?
- Trunk highway purpose?
- Transit corridors weighted more

## Findings: Walking

Walking is feasible for most, but there are barriers for older adults and people with disabilities. It is also a more viable option in towns and cities than in rural areas, and for shorter distances. Walking in areas without sidewalks or with noncontinuous sidewalks, large surface parking lots, and no development is more difficult and time-consuming. Travelers have safety concerns such as dangerous crossings and short times to cross busy roads. Other barriers include:

- Poor lighting, which makes pedestrians feel less safe
- Lack of connection in the pedestrian system (sidewalks to businesses, sidewalk to sidewalk, business or sidewalk to transit)
- Lack of sidewalks and gaps in sidewalks
- Sidewalk maintenance (winter snow maintenance, rough pavement)
- Noncompliance with ADA standards for sidewalks

Potential solutions:

- **Prioritize routes to where people want to go, especially to transit stops. (4 votes)**
  - **“Safe routes to transit” program**
  - **Could this be a measure for technical assistance funds?**
- **Similar to safe routes to school—fund pedestrian plans that incorporate needs? (3 votes)**
  - **Map pedestrian corridors for right-of-way preservation.**
  - **Pedestrian corridor plan? Corridors would be mapped for highways; can we do that in other official, mapping plans?**
- **Partner with League of Minnesota Cities as partner for pedestrian money/plans. (1 vote)**
- **Promote demonstration project guidance, encourage use, and consider funding temporary projects. (1 vote)**
- **School siting—creates a destination that may not have facilities or may not be a walkable distance (1 vote)**
  - **MnDOT highway access permit**
  - **Land use and planning—how does that tie in? Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has guidance that schools treat as a mandate/requirement, for example.**
  - **Maybe there is a better partnership/collaboration opportunity with MDE to get schools to understand the guidance better.**
- Evaluate snow removal times, ensuring it isn’t a barrier.
- ADA improvement plans—how to help localities prioritize
- More funding for pedestrian improvements (beyond technical assistance and ADA funding)
- Develop an approach similar to highway safety plans to streamline federal process. Combine counties together to create a critical mass with data, et cetera. Pull out small parts of broader plan.

- MnDOT’s approach for facilities is good and need to build support [for] local facilities.
- Improve pedestrian data collection and pedestrian performance measures.
- Encourage the use of pedestrian/bicycle data counters.
- Review of scoring and prioritization of projects for priority destinations (healthcare, transit, food, et cetera)
- Evaluate barriers of local cost share for lighting.

## Findings: People with disabilities

People with disabilities rely on disability service providers for transportation needs and face many barriers to transportation, including:

- Lack of curbside assistance to access transit vehicles
- Limited seating or carrying capacity for ADA-compliant vehicles
- Snow removal and sidewalk accessibility concerns
- Cost of transit fares and bureaucratic burden to access reduced fares
- Safety concerns in public places (e.g., people with intellectual disabilities using public transportation)
- Lack of intersections with stoplights, pedestrian signals, warning sounds

Potential solutions:

- Limited ADA-compliant vehicles/capacity—better marketing and communications about funding for new vehicles
  - Already some grant funding or other funds for better vehicles for smaller transit agencies
  - MnDOT [can] connect the agencies better to funding.
- Support and encourage two-way communications between MnDOT, nonprofit organizations, transit providers, et cetera.
- Winter maintenance: review/quantify any barriers to executing best practice.
  - Extra burden on people with disabilities—getting around snow and ice to get to transit stops
  - Review the processes, see where we are.
- Lack of stoplights, signals, et cetera: improve data collection about users, develop (agencywide) guidance considering land use, modes, et cetera and build on existing information available.
  - Where are we prioritizing?
- Build capacity to consider disabilities beyond mobility limitations.

## Findings: People with low incomes

People with low incomes face various challenges in relying on transit, such as:

- Limited transit hours and service area
- Limits on number of bags/items allowed on transit
- Lack of availability and high cost of intercity and regional travel
- Difficulty and cost of traveling with children

Potential solutions:

- **Share MnDOT's expertise in transit planning with Greater MN service providers. They might not have the capacity to do planning to make it more efficient. (8 votes)**
- **Inter-city-regional travel (3 votes)**
- **Help communicate availability. (1 vote)**
- Explore MnDOT role on RTCC.