

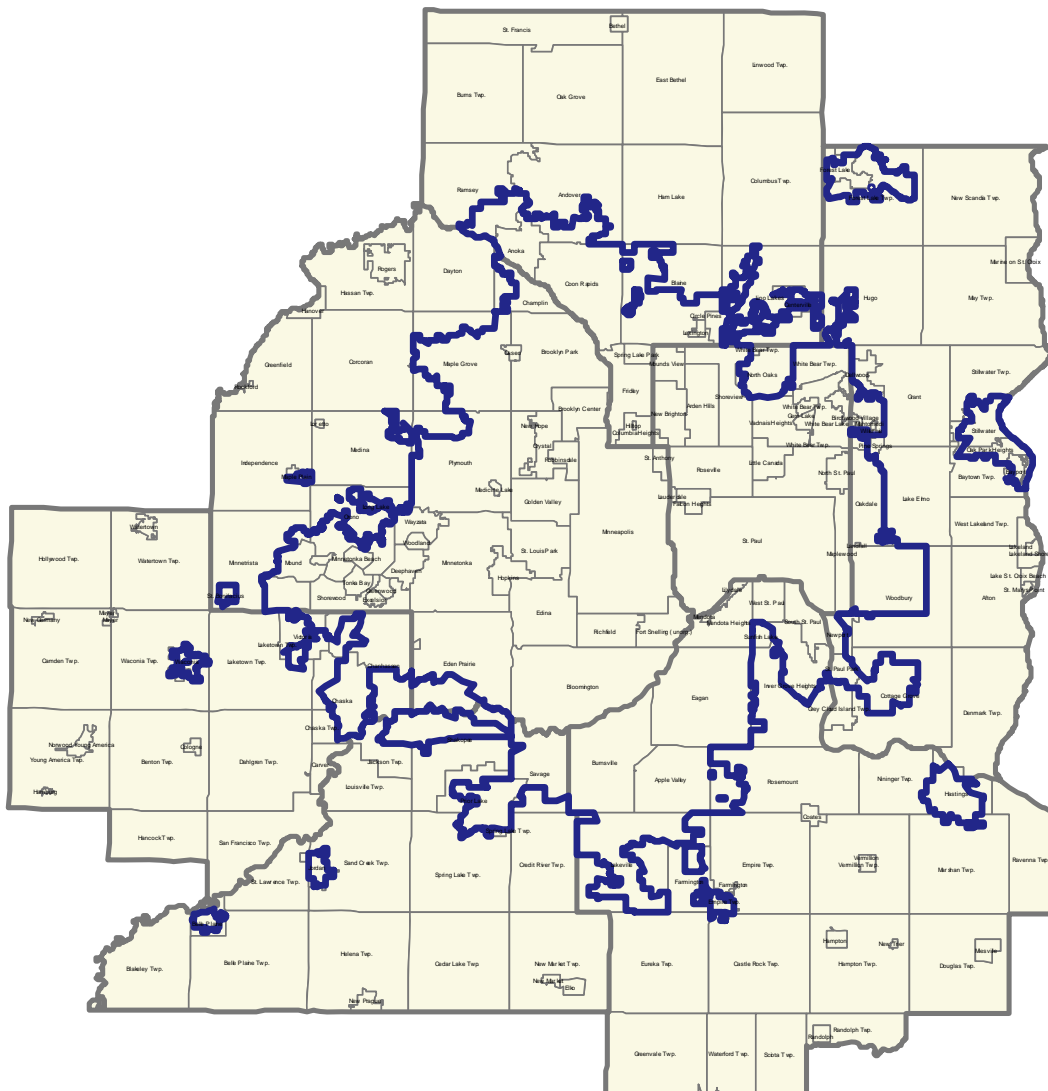
CHAPTER 3: TWIN CITIES COMMUTING REGION

Three levels of geography are relevant in examining the demands placed on the Twin Cities' regional transportation system. These levels are: the seven-county metropolitan area, the urbanized portion of the seven-county metro area and the 20-county area within which significant commuting occurs.

Twin Cities Metropolitan Area

The Metropolitan Council's official jurisdiction is the Twin Cities metropolitan area. It comprises seven counties: Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington. It contains the two core cities of Minneapolis and St Paul, located respectively in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties. This region is depicted in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and 2000 MUSA Boundary



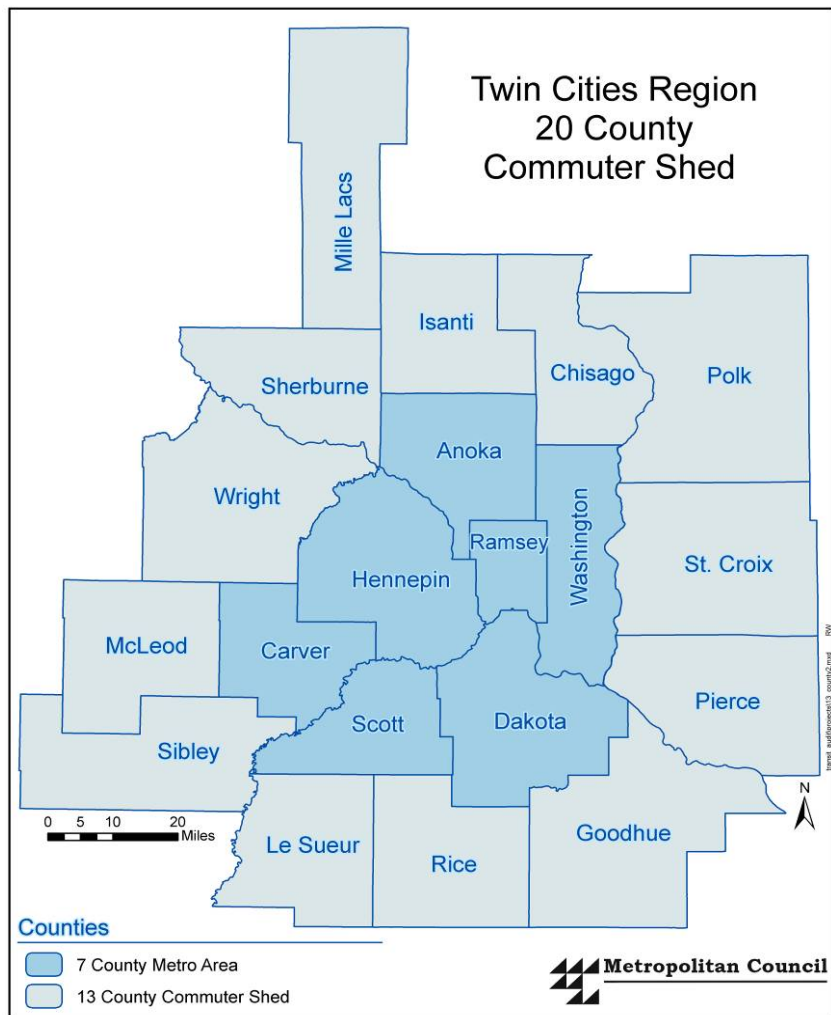
Urbanized Area (MUSA)

Within the seven-county metro region, a portion of the land has been developed into a mostly contiguous urban development. This area is served by Metropolitan Council sewer service, an area defined as the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA). The area outside the contiguous urban area is primarily either rural or freestanding cities. As seen in Figure 3.1, the urbanized area within the MUSA occupies a significant portion of the seven-county metro area.

Twin Cities Commuter Shed

Surrounding the seven-county metropolitan area are 10 Minnesota counties and 3 Wisconsin counties whose economies, populations and travel patterns are linked to the Twin Cities metro area. These surrounding counties are primarily rural in nature but have a significant portion of their populations who commute to the Twin Cities or who have businesses that draw employees from the Twin Cities. The 2000 census defined these counties as being part of the Twin Cities “commuter shed.” This meant that 5% or more of the residents of these outer counties commuted to employment in the metropolitan area. The most recent addition in 2000 was Goodhue County.

Figure 3.2: 20-County Commuter Shed



- Twin Cities Metropolitan Area Counties: Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington
- Non-Metro Commuting Area Counties:
 - Minnesota: Chisago, Goodhue, Isanti, Le Sueur, Mille Lacs, McLeod, Rice, Sherburne, Sibley and Wright
 - Wisconsin: Pierce, Polk and St Croix

The travel impacts of these surrounding counties are still small in relation to the metro area's population and employment. The 2000 Travel Behavior Inventory showed that 95% of the trips in the metropolitan area both start and end within the region while 5% start or end outside the metropolitan area. However, these surrounding areas are growing at higher rates than the core urban area. Because of this, they will exert an increasing demand on transportation services.

This audit assesses the growth trends in this expanded region defined as the "commuter shed." The emphasis of the audit is on comprehensively evaluating the condition and performance of the metro region's transportation system and the specific needs of its businesses and residents for efficient and reliable transportation. The audit is concerned with the sufficiency of the transportation systems in the outlying counties to support their growth, but is not concerned with identifying the future transportation needs in these areas.

While the additional commuter-shed counties undoubtedly affect the transportation system in the seven-county metro area, they are not under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Council. Policies, plans and coordination efforts do not apply to areas outside of the seven-county area. Because of this, it is important for agencies with jurisdiction over these counties, such as the counties themselves, Mn/DOT and cities within these counties, to cooperate and work as part of a coordinated effort with the Metropolitan Council, especially as more growth occurs in these developing areas.

Twin Cities Peer Metro Areas

Three sets of peer cities are used in this audit to compare conditions in the Twin Cities with conditions in other United States regions. Different peer groups are used for highways and transit.

For highways, the best source for comparisons of travel and congestion trends over time between urban areas is the Urban Mobility Report. It is produced by the Texas Transportation Institute for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Data for the Twin Cities area is compared to data for the 10 peer cities from the year 2003. These cities are Baltimore, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Portland, Seattle and St. Louis. This peer group was used in prior transportation audits.

The Twin Cities falls into the TTI's report classification of a Large Urban Area. These areas are defined as urban areas with populations between one million and three million people. This definition is also used for some comparisons with other regions.

Peer cities for transit are the same as for highways, with the addition of Houston. Peer cities have been selected primarily based on their population, urban-area size and economic comparability.