



Transportation Needs in Daily Life Study

Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee



September 11, 2023

Study Origin



Regional transportation planning is rooted in quantitative data and modeling

However...

- Quantitative data
 - Can not tell us about the types of trips people are unable to make
 - Can not tell us about the impact those missing trips have on their lives.
 - Does not give us a robust understanding of the underlying values, beliefs, preferences, and constraints that influence people's travel decisions.

And ...

- Black, Indigenous, people of color, and lower-income people are underrepresented in regional transportation planning decisions.

Study Purpose



Planning for a more inclusive and responsive system

- Better understand why and how residents in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region travel in their daily lives.
- Understand how our region's transportation system works for the people who live here.
- Collect qualitative data about how people travel using interviews and small group discussions.
- Supplement quantitative transportation data to help make better decisions about transportation policies in the region.
- Focus on people and groups who have the hardest time getting where they need to go.

Approach



Conversation-based research

- Small group discussions with residents.
- Community partners commissioned to identify and organize participants.
- Participants organized into groups based on common identities to increase openness and willingness to share.
- Discussions held in places and times that work best for residents.
- Discussion facilitators asked questions about feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of travel that encourage storytelling.
- Incentive cards for participants.

Tasks

COMPLETE

Equity workshop

Workshop with 21 Met Council, Metro Transit, and MnDOT staff to help guide the research plan

Review of relevant work

15 local plans, policies, and studies, 11 research papers, and 2 peer interviews

Research plan

Target audiences, participant recruitment, and focus group strategy

Focus groups

29 small groups; encourage storytelling and value-sharing; between 2-10 participants per group; 184 people total; mix of in-person and virtual

Draft analysis

Initial analysis following focus groups

UPCOMING

Follow-up Focus Groups

Circle back with select participants and ask if the research findings make sense

Final Analysis

Final findings and recommendations



Date (2023)	Community Partner	Venue	County	Num. Participants
January 27	Emma B Howe YMCA	Emma B Howe YMCA, Coon Rapids	Anoka	5
February 1	Emma B Howe YMCA	Emma B Howe YMCA, Coon Rapids	Anoka	2
February 16	Hastings Family Services	Virtual	Dakota	3
February 16	Hastings Family Services	Hastings Family Service	Dakota	7
March 1	Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center	Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, Minneapolis	Hennepin	5
March 16	Sabathani Community Center	Sabathani Senior Housing, Minneapolis	Hennepin	7
March 22	Apple Valley Senior Center	Apple Valley Senior Center	Dakota	8
March 23	White Bear School District	White Bear Lake South Campus School	Ramsey	8
March 23	White Bear School District	White Bear Lake South Campus School	Ramsey	7
March 30	Hopkins Activity Center	Hopkins Activity Center	Hennepin	7
April 5	Esperanza United	Virtual	Ramsey	4
April 5	Valley Friendship Club	First Presbyterian Church, Stillwater	Washington	8
April 11	Emma Norton Residence	Emma Norton Residence, St. Paul	Ramsey	6
April 19	Hamline Women's Resource Center	Hamline University, St. Paul	Ramsey	2
April 26	Urban Roots	Urban Roots, St. Paul	Ramsey	9
April 27	Minnesota Chinese Cultural Services Center	Rondo Community Library, St. Paul	Ramsey	4



Date (2023)	Community Partner	Venue	County	Num. Participants
May 3	Hallie Q. Brown Community Center	Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, St. Paul	Hennepin	6
May 3	Pillsbury United Communities	Brian Coyle Center, Minneapolis	Hennepin	8
May 3	Pillsbury United Communities	Brian Coyle Center, Minneapolis	Hennepin	9
May 3	Pillsbury United Communities	Brian Coyle Center, Minneapolis	Hennepin	8
May 10	Hope Harbor (Salvation Army)	Salvation Army, Minneapolis	Hennepin	8
May 11	The Urban Village	The Urban Village, St. Paul	Ramsey	7
May 11	The Urban Village	The Urban Village, St. Paul	Ramsey	6
May 26	Lao Assistance Center	Lao Assistance Center, Minneapolis	Hennepin	8
June 12	Waconia Food Shelf	Waconia Food Shelf	Carver	3
June 12	Waconia Food Shelf	Waconia Food Shelf	Carver	6
June 13	Korean Service Center	Korean Service Center, Minneapolis	Hennepin	10
June 29	Shakopee Community Assistance Staff Member	St John's Lutheran Church, Shakopee	Scott	5
June 27	Eastern Carver County Schools Intercultural Liaison	Chaska Community Center	Carver	9

184

Demographics		Transportation Needs in Daily Life Study Participants	2018-2019 Household Travel Survey	Twin Cities 7-County Region (ACS)
Population	Total	184	13,585	3,136,376
Race (n=177)	Asian	21%	4%	8%
	Black or African American	32%	3%	10%
	Native American or American Indian	5%	0%	1%
	White	33%	86%	74%
	Two or more races	3%	4%	5%
	Other	6%	1%	2%
Ethnicity (n=161)	Hispanic or Latino	16%	1%	7%
Ability (n=67)	Living with a disability	36%	4%	10%
Gender (n=182)	Female	65%	53%	50%
	Male	34%	46%	50%
	Other	2%	1%	Not collected
Location (n=157)	Anoka	4%	8%	12%
	Carver	8%	2%	3%
	Dakota	10%	10%	14%
	Hennepin	39%	31%	41%
	Ramsey	30%	13%	18%
	Scott	3%	3%	5%
	Washington	5%	6%	8%

J's Story

"I live here in Hastings, but I've also lived in St. Paul ... **It is myself and my 9-year-old son. We actually have been technically homeless this last year.** I am used to having my own place and a vehicle. I used public transportation in the past which had both good and bad experiences, both single and with my child. But I'm used to driving myself. **This year I have not had a car, and being down the river there's no transportation options.** It makes it extremely difficult to get him to appointments or to get grocery shopping even, just simple paths. **We walk everywhere and with it being winter it's definitely difficult.** So, I lived in St. Paul for that reason because at least we could jump on the bus or a train and get where we need to go, but **down here you're in trouble because you do not have any options unless you want to pay for Smart Ride.**"

"Right now, as far as transportation goes, nothing is going well me or my child... We have important things lined up to get housing. **There are intake appointments for that that I can't get to. I can't get to probation meetings at the courthouse. There's important meetings that need to be met that I can't get to with the cold.** Other times when it's nice, I can bike or walk. My son is right along with me, he loves it. But when it's cold like this, I have health issues and it makes it **almost impossible to make it to appointments that aren't necessity appointments...** [Hastings Family Service] has a lot of events. There is a lot that me and my son miss because of Transportation... So aside from just the medical thing, **socially there's a lot that gets missed from lack of transportation. And there's also a lot of essential, non-medical, that get missed because of lack of transportation.**"

Preliminary Findings (1)



‘Transit dependent’ and ‘transit reliant’ are imprecise labels for many people who do not have reliable transportation in the region.

“We have lived here 22 years. **It is also difficult for us to transport ourselves because there is no bus.** Right now, I work in Hugo and my son is the one bringing me and picking me up. Sometimes he says, 'Why me again?' I say, 'Well, you're the driver.'”

– Focus group for Latino caregivers, Ramsey County

Preliminary Findings (2)

People's fears about interpersonal violence while traveling includes police officers, especially when using transit

“We talk about this. **When we come out of school cops are always by the train station**, they know we lose our ID or bus pass and they take that seriously, to a point where even people end up getting tickets/in court and have to do community service or in juvenile detention. If we ride for free, it doesn't affect the city budget, so for them to use that as a prison pipeline, especially when students are coming out of school – that has been our focus for years now.”

– Focus group for African youth, Hennepin County

Preliminary Findings (3)



People's experiences with interpersonal violence shape how and when they choose to travel, especially for Black and brown participants and people experiencing housing insecurity.

"Sometimes I'm very isolated [i.e., vulnerable] because I'm Hispanic. We get scared because we get attacked for being Hispanic. We are hit for being Hispanic. I feel like it isn't safe. Just because someone looks Hispanic, people want to rob them, hit them, humiliate them, mistreat them. So, a lot of people are afraid to use public transportation for the fear of being attacked. Because of so many things that have happened these days, these years, everything that happened with a certain person. I feel like it would scare them.

– Focus group for Latino caregivers, Ramsey County

Preliminary Findings (4)



Fears of traffic safety and environmental risks shape people's experiences while in transport.

“I'm content with just being at home. I would like to catch a bus to go downtown to Target and see the new Dayton. **But I would go visit my daughter and go to bingo if I had a car. But I would not want to drive to bingo because I'm fearful of road rage, freeways are crowded.**

– Focus group for Lao adults, Hennepin County

Preliminary Findings (5)

Fear for one's safety and security while traveling is a defining feature of how people make travel choices.

"I feel like **as women, we live with that every day, despite any transportation method we use. You're just situationally aware**, like this [expletive] is coming up right behind me or, you know, he's following me, or are they following me? I don't want nobody knowing where I live. I'll even go different way, I'll go around the block, like is he still following me?"

– Focus group for women experiencing housing insecurity, Ramsey County



Preliminary Findings (6)



People's relationships with their professional drivers/operators (including transit and ride-hailing) are important factors in transportation satisfaction and feelings of safety while traveling.

“We definitely need to retain people to have compassion and patience. Definitely have something in town that is personal and affordable for everybody. I wanted to cuss for a second but had to stop myself. **Be patient with vulnerable adults, children, people, just be kind. You don't know what kind of day people are having.** Dispatchers give [my child who has a disability] attitude.”

– Focus group for people without reliable transportation, Dakota County

Preliminary Findings (7)



Traffic safety is a looming concern for all, and driving triggers anxiety for many people – especially faster driving conditions like freeways.

“Previously, I didn't drive. I had panic attacks, okay. I would [get stressed] in my shoulders and my head. **After three years, I started driving but I wouldn't drive far because I crashed on the freeway...** I would think to myself ‘How am I going to get to work? How am I going to get to work’ This was an enormous stress for me. Truly. The truth is that I was losing sleep [over it].”

– Focus group for Latino caregivers, Ramsey County

Preliminary Findings (8)



Health shapes transportation needs.

“I have some medical problems and I cannot walk for that long, so I have to have a car for transportation to the doctor, groceries, church, I have to have a car. I have two growing children, thank God they're not little but my son isn't easy when you have to keep asking for rides. **I don't want to be a burden on friends or family.** It's expensive to not have a car, I don't know what I would do to get far away. I'm on social security, my money would disappear in transportation.”

– Person who is transit dependent, Scott County

Engagement Findings



Meeting people where they are at

- People like discussion formats and convening in places that are familiar to them
- Many of our key identity groups are hard to reach
- Many community organizations are stretched thin and, as a result, difficult to reach
- Coordinating focus groups is time-intensive

Call to action



“ Can I ask you a question? Why are you asking about our identity? How are you going to use this question? So, once they find out all that information, are they going to make changes? I appreciate you telling me that, but I'm going to be honest. **I feel like even telling my story and sharing my reality, nothing's going to come of it. I hope we are actually being heard, not being overlooked.**”

– Native American woman, Hennepin County



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