



TRANSPORTATION POLICY PLAN

Chapter 10: Equity and Environmental Justice

2040





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Equity and Environmental Justice

Introduction



An important consideration for the *2040 Transportation Policy Plan* is its impact on all populations in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul region, particularly those who have been historically underrepresented in regional planning efforts, including communities of color, low-income households, people with disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency. Past plans were required to adhere to federal requirements for environmental justice; this plan further responds to additional aspirations for equity set forth in *Thrive MSP 2040*. This section describes the plan's responses to both federal requirements and regional aspirations.

Federal guidance for evaluating impacts is derived from Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as well as Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-income Populations. Under the executive order, transportation plans and programs (1) must provide a fully inclusive public outreach program; (2) should not disproportionately impact minority and low-income communities, and (3) must assure the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations. The Transportation Policy Plan addresses these three principles and they were considered throughout the decision-making process. These principles must also be considered in the project design and implementation phases for future specific projects.

Regional guidance for pursuing equity is outlined in *Thrive MSP 2040*, the Metropolitan Development Guide required by Minn. Stat. 473.145. Thrive elevates equity to one of five fundamental outcomes of the regional vision. Equity connects all residents to opportunity and creates viable housing, transportation, and recreation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes, and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of growth and change. For our region to reach its full economic potential, all of our residents must be able to access opportunity. Our region is stronger when all people live in communities that provide them access to opportunities for success, prosperity, and quality of life.

In the following pages, the terms “people of color” and “low-income households” are used to address the federal environmental justice requirements for “minority and low-income.” Where regional approaches to pursuing equity are discussed, broader language is used, such as “all races, ethnicities, incomes and abilities.”

Identification of Populations

Thrive MSP 2040 identifies equity to extend across people of all races, ethnicities, incomes, and abilities. It identifies Areas of Concentrated Poverty, defined as contiguous census tracts where at least 40% of residents live in households with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty line. It further identifies, as particularly vulnerable, Areas of Concentrated Poverty where at least 50% of the residents are people of color.

Federal guidance on Environmental Justice identifies low-income households and people of color as protected populations, regardless of location. This guidance defines people of color as all persons who are not white/non-Latino. While Environmental Justice applies regardless of population size, identifying concentrations of potentially affected populations is useful for application to system-level planning.

For the purposes of regional analysis, regional averages were calculated at the Census tract level for low-income households and people of color using the five-year estimates from the American Community Survey for 2008-2012. This method is consistent with past practice in previous Transportation Policy Plans. Under this analysis, 23.4% of the region’s population are people of color, 10.5% of the region’s population live with incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level, and 21.9% of the region’s population live with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty level. These regional averages are used to identify Census tracts with populations above the regional averages.



Analysis of Plan Investments and Strategies

Qualitative

Specific strategies and investments identified in the Transportation Policy Plan serve to create benefits or mitigate impacts to historically underrepresented populations, including communities of color, low-income households, people with disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency.

Public Engagement

The *2040 Transportation Policy Plan* was prepared under the Council's Public Participation Plan for Transportation Planning, which meets requirements of 23CFR§450.316 and federal guidance on Environmental Justice. The plan has built upon the extensive outreach and engagement, including targeted community engagement with historical underrepresented communities that informed *Thrive MSP 2040*. Over the course of two years, the Council engaged with thousands of the region's residents, staff, and elected officials about their vision for the region. In the future, public engagement will be strengthened under Council commitments in *Thrive MSP 2040* to develop a Public Engagement Plan that will establish policy for all Council engagement activities. The plan will outline how the Council will work collaboratively with constituencies to assess and plan community engagement by setting shared outcomes and expectations. Council staff and funding will support these processes to assure access for all identified constituencies, but particularly those that are traditionally underrepresented in regional and local planning efforts. When possible and appropriate, the Council may support community organization work with financial resources to engage appropriate constituencies. Each engagement project will require a tailored process, but the Public Engagement Plan will establish principles that will be consistently applied across the Council. Transportation Policy Plan Healthy Environment strategy E6 commits the Council and its regional transportation partners to foster public engagement in systems planning and in project development.



Healthy and Cohesive Communities

Historically, transportation investment decisions that encroached upon, divided, or displaced neighborhoods, and cut off access to the regional transportation system or blocked multimodal options have done great harm to communities of color and low-income households. Healthy Environment strategies [E3](#), [E4](#), [E6](#), and [E7](#), and Access to Destinations strategies [C4](#) and [C17](#) require regional transportation partners to consider the needs of all users, promote cohesive communities, protect and enhance the cultural and built environment, and avoid adverse impacts on communities of color and low-income households. Air pollution concentrations are disproportionately higher in many lower-income neighborhoods. Healthy Environment strategies [E1](#) and [E2](#) continue the region’s commitment to reduce air pollutant emissions and their impact on human health.

Transit and Pedestrian Safety

People of color, low-income residents, and people with disabilities currently use the regional transit and pedestrian systems at higher rates than the general population (according to 2010 TBI data) and are more likely to be vulnerable when they are traveling. Safety and Security strategies [B5](#) and [B6](#) focus on safety and security of the transit system and pedestrians, which will benefit these populations.

Provision of Options

Key to the philosophy of the Transportation Policy Plan is the provision of modal options. Since low-income residents are less likely to own or have reliable access to automobiles (according to 2008-12 American Community Survey data), expansion of travel options that provide access to employment and other opportunities is especially important to these residents. Access to Destinations strategies [C1](#), [C2](#), [C3](#), Competitive Economy strategies [D3](#), Healthy Environment strategy [E3](#), and Transportation and Land Use strategies [F3](#), [F4](#), [F5](#), [F6](#) all emphasize the multimodal nature of the system and the importance of connections.

The plan calls for significant expansion of the transitway system. Important prioritizing criteria for transitways involve providing access to regional jobs and activity centers from throughout the region, including historically underrepresented communities and promoting equity through increased access to opportunity.

A major focus of highway investments in the transportation plan is the expansion of the MnPASS system (Access to Destinations strategy [C5](#)). The priced managed lanes on the MnPASS system give all users, including low-income users, a potential option to avoid severe congestion. Survey data from existing MnPASS lanes shows that they are broadly supported and used by users of all income levels. Despite the price, MnPASS can provide high-value travel time insurance which can be especially valuable to more vulnerable populations. The provision of MnPASS lanes, as well as bus-only shoulders, provides transit users greater access to employment and other opportunities.

The plan calls for the implementation of more pedestrian access, particularly in job concentrations through Access to Destinations strategies [C2](#), [C4](#), [C16](#), [C17](#), Healthy Environment strategy [E3](#), and Transportation and Land Use strategies [F5](#) and [F6](#).

Focus on Preservation

The plan emphasizes preservation and maintenance of the existing system through Transportation System Stewardship strategies [A1 and A2](#). While an equity assessment of historical preservation and maintenance investments and system condition has not been performed, higher concentrations of low-income households and people of color can be found in older areas of the region which would benefit from an increased focus on preservation.

Transit Service Planning

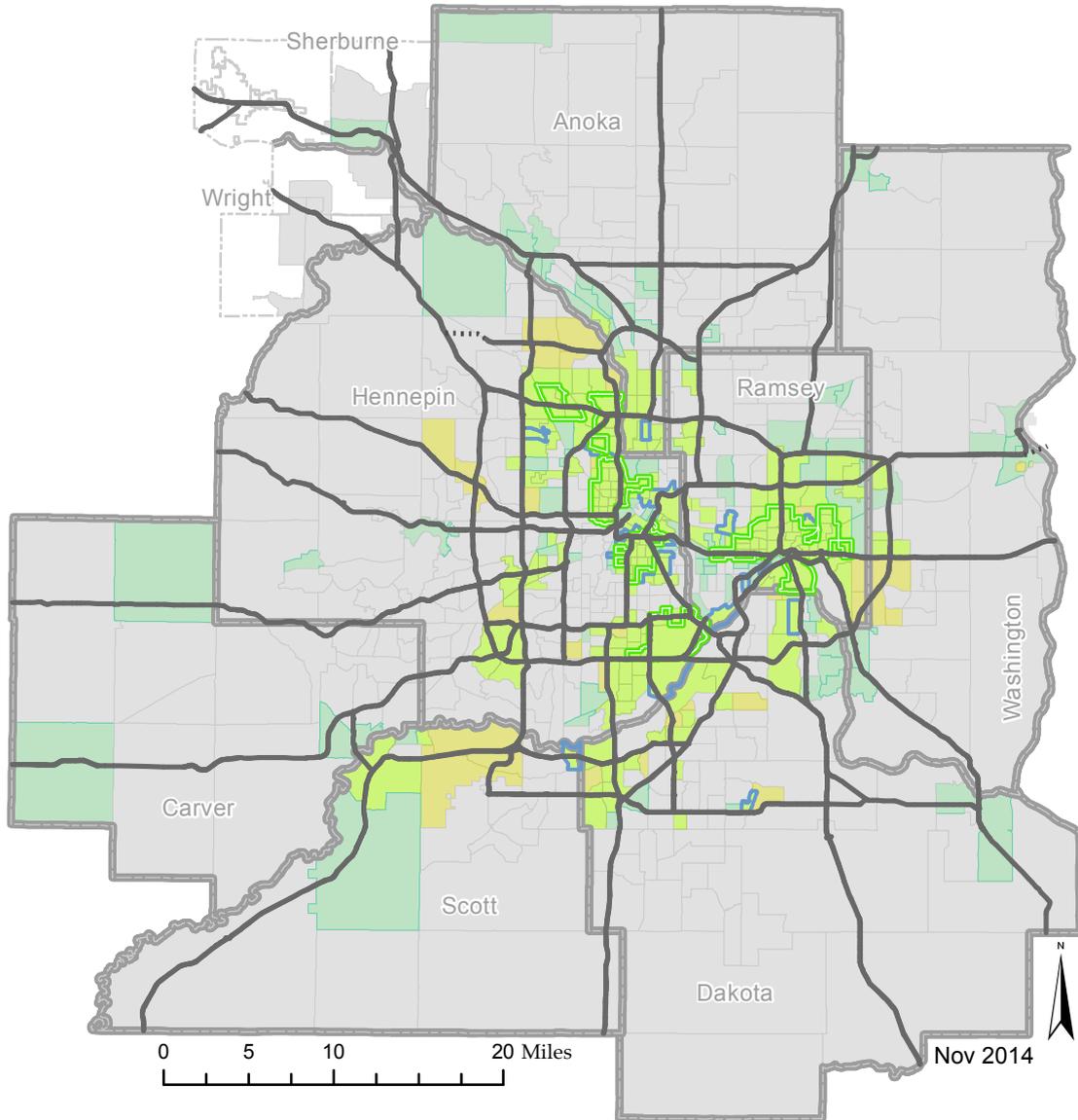
Many of the TPP's strategies are aimed at preserving and improving the transit system in the core of the region, where the highest concentrations of low-income households and communities of color can be found. Transportation System Stewardship strategy [A3](#) calls for transit service to be aligned with Transit Market Areas; vehicle availability is a component of the definition of Transit Market Areas. Access to Destinations strategies [C13 and C14](#) call for continued provision of paratransit and dial-a-ride service to benefit people with disabilities and those without access to vehicles throughout the region. Equity is a factor in bus expansion prioritization in the Regional Service Improvement Plan. In compliance with federal Title VI and Environmental Justice guidance, transit providers perform equity analysis of any major service or fare changes on people of color, low-income residents, and people with limited English proficiency.

Spatial Analysis of Investments

The following series of figures (Figure 10-1 to Figure 10-5) identifies the populations of color and low-income residents in the Twin Cities region, as well as the highway, bicycle system and transit investments within those areas. Analysis of the location of projects relative to historically underrepresented communities, as well as the location of their positive benefits and negative impacts is also recommended at the local and project level.



Figure 10-1: Population and Existing Highway System



Principal Arterial Highways

Populations of Color / Households in Poverty

- Area of Concentrated Poverty (40% or more in poverty)
- Area of Concentrated Poverty where 50% or more of residents are people of color

Regional Average by Tract

- Both Poverty and Pop. of Color below regional average
- Pop. of Color above regional average
- Individual Poverty above regional average
- Both Ind. Poverty and Pop. of Color above regional average

People in Poverty

The census defines individual poverty at two levels, 100% of poverty and 185% of poverty. This map highlights census tracts with higher than regional averages at either level.

100% poverty regional average is 10.5%
185% poverty regional average is 21.9%

Population of Color

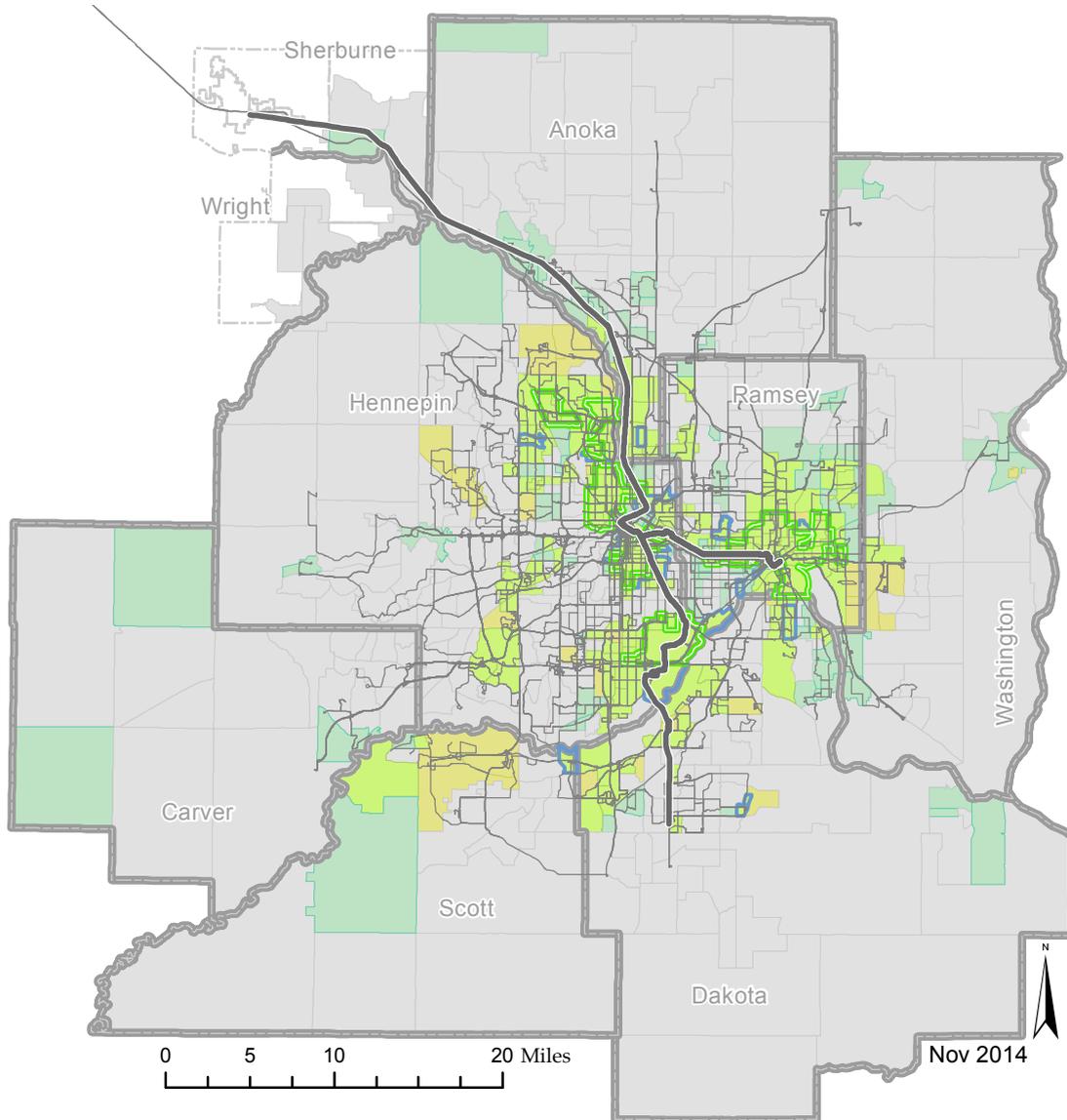
Population of Color is defined as all persons not classified as White, Non-Latino

Regional Average is 23.4% People of Color

Tracts are marked above (higher than 23.4%) or below (less than 23.4%) the regional average

Data source: 2008-2012 ACS by Tract

Figure 10-2: Population and Existing Transit System



Existing Transitways

Transit Routes

Populations of Color / Households in Poverty

Area of Concentrated Poverty (40% or more in poverty)

Area of Concentrated Poverty where 50% or more of residents are people of color

Regional Average by Tract

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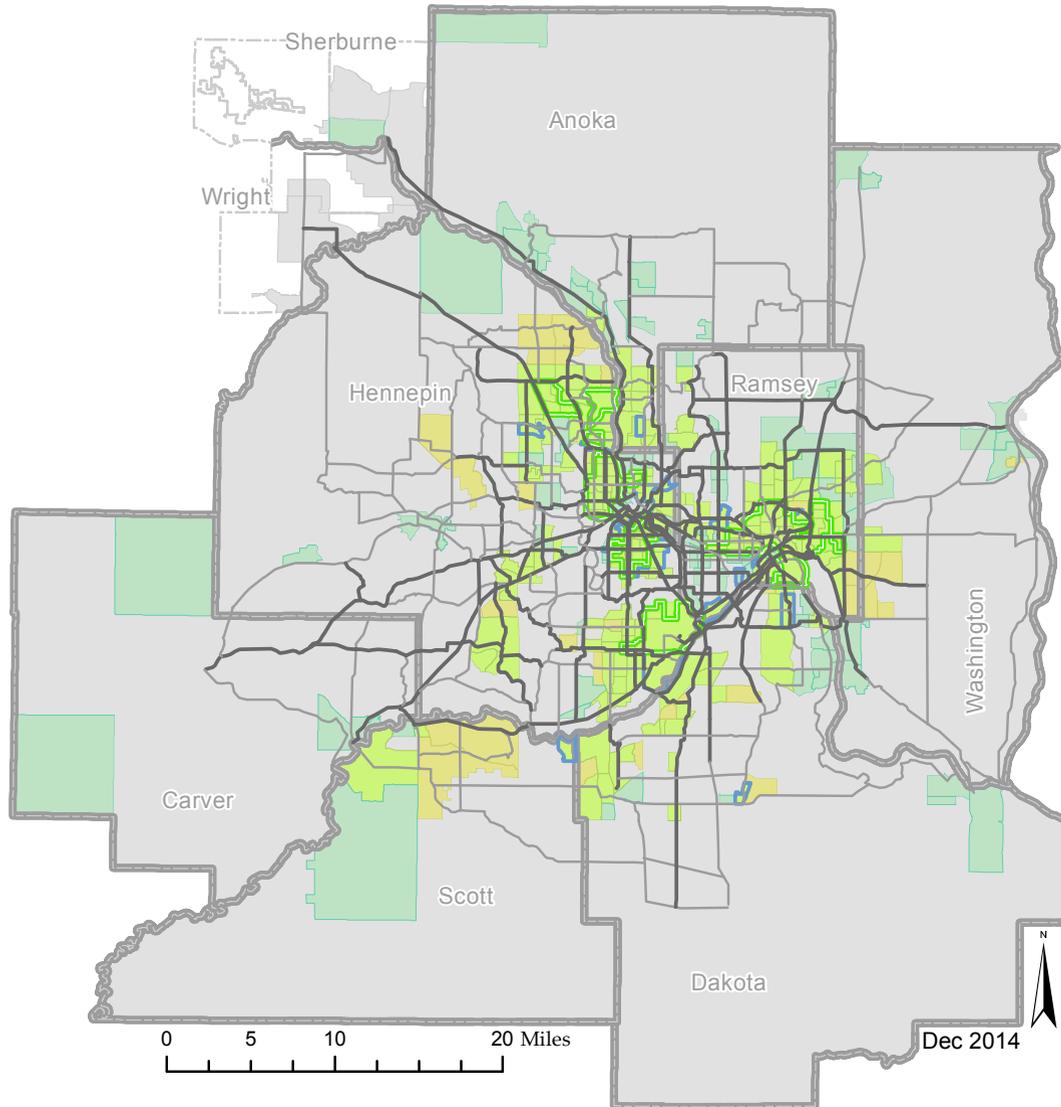
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Data source: 2008-2012 ACS by Tract

Figure 10-3: Population and Regional Priority Corridors for Bicycle Infrastructure



~ Tier 1: Priority Regional Bicycle Transportation Corridors*

~ Tier 2: Regional Bicycle Transportation Corridors*

Populations of Color / Households in Poverty

□ Area of Concentrated Poverty (40% or more in poverty)

□ Area of Concentrated Poverty where 50% or more of residents are people of color

Regional Average by Tract

□ Both Poverty and Pop. of Color below regional average

□ Pop. of Color above regional average

□ Individual Poverty above regional average

□ Both Ind. Poverty and Pop. of Color above regional average

People in Poverty

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Population of Color

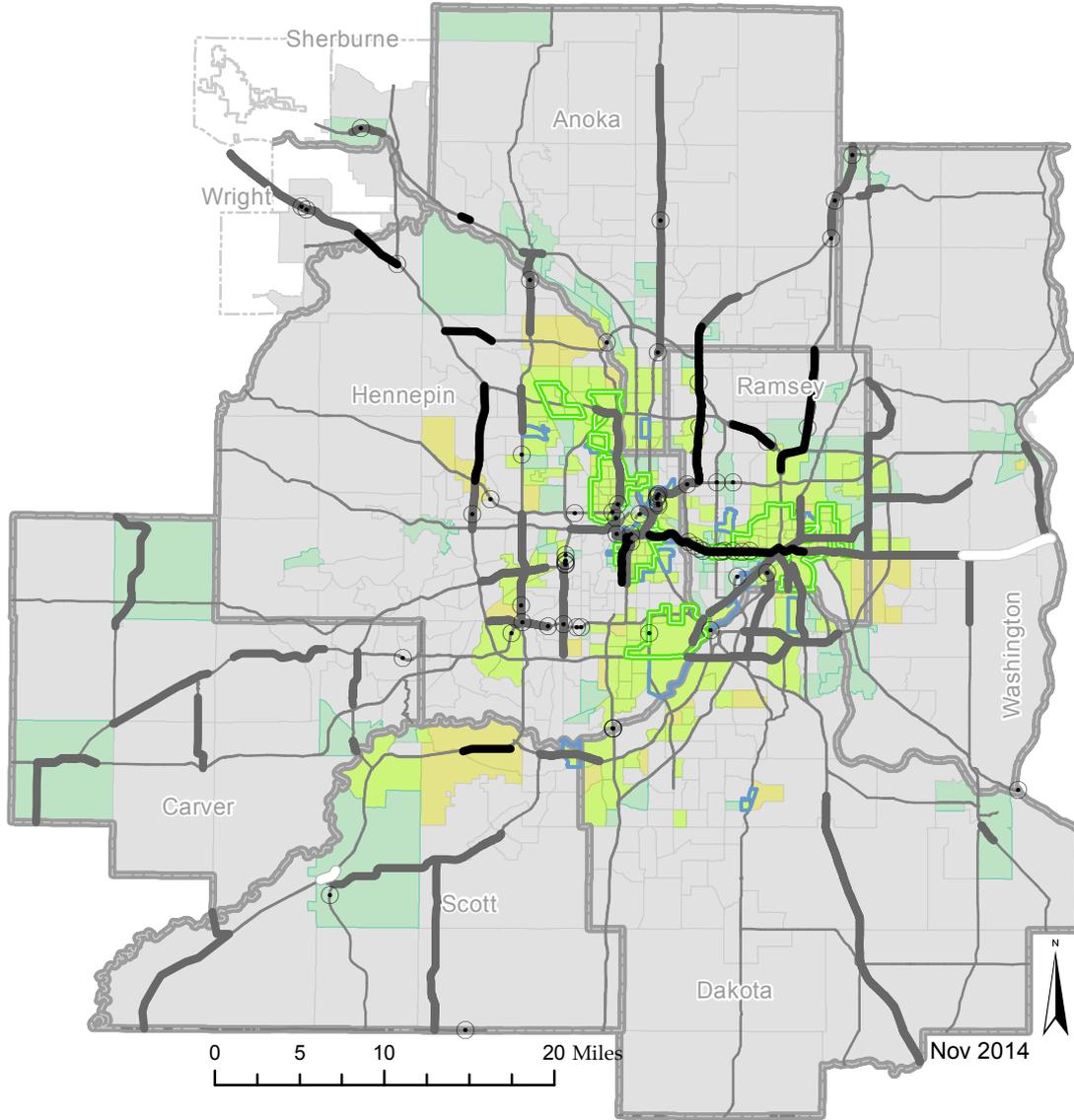
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Data source: 2008-2012 ACS by Tract

Figure 10-4: Population and 2040 Highway Investments (Current Revenue Scenario)



Highway Current Revenue Scenario

- Bridge Projects
- ⋈ Roadside Infrastructure
- ▬ Pavement
- ▬ Strategic Capacity / MnPASS Tier 1 Expansion

Populations of Color / Households in Poverty

- ▭ Area of Concentrated Poverty (40% or more in poverty)
- ▭ Area of Concentrated Poverty where 50% or more of residents are people of color

Regional Average by Tract

- ▭ Both Poverty and Pop. of Color below regional average
- ▭ Pop. of Color above regional average
- ▭ Individual Poverty above regional average
- ▭ Both Ind. Poverty and Pop. of Color above regional average

People in Poverty

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Population of Color

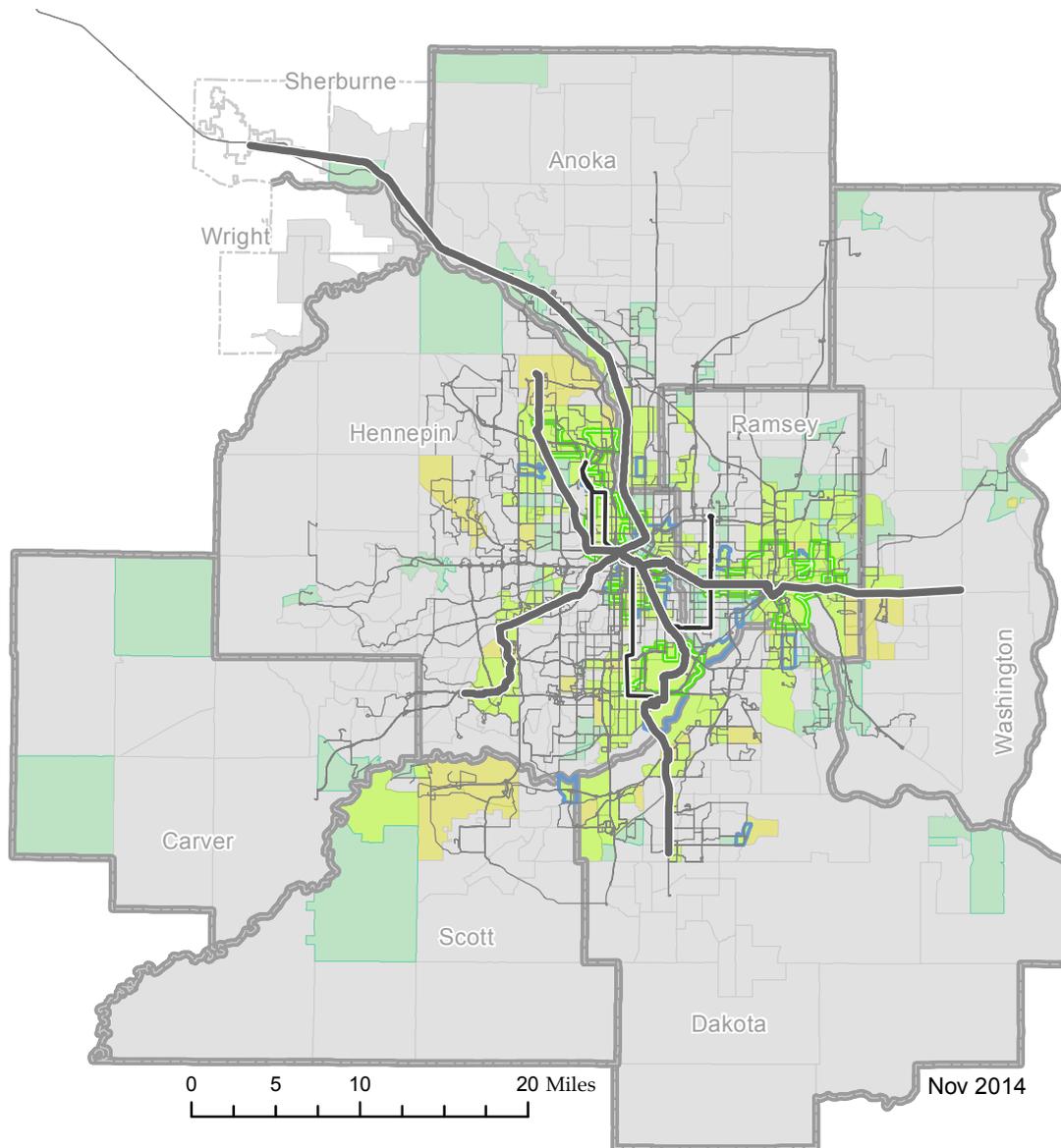
Population of Color is defined as all persons not classified as White, Non-Latino

Regional Average is 23.4% People of Color

Tracts are marked above (higher than 23.4%) or below (less than 23.4%) the regional average

Data source: 2008-2012 ACS by Tract

Figure 10-5: Population and 2040 Transit Investments (Current Revenue Scenario)



Current Revenue Scenario Transitways

Arterial BRT

Existing Bus Routes

Populations of Color / Households in Poverty

Area of Concentrated Poverty (40% or more in poverty)

Area of Concentrated Poverty where 50% or more of residents are people of color

Regional Average by Tract

Both Poverty and Pop. of Color below regional average

Pop. of Color above regional average

Individual Poverty above regional average

Both Ind. Poverty and Pop. of Color above regional average

People in Poverty

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Data source: 2008-2012 ACS by Tract

Quantitative Analysis of Plan Investments and Strategies

A spatial analysis reveals where projects are located. Highway and transit investments provide benefits to people living well beyond the immediate area of the project, and in some cases provide little benefit to people living immediately alongside. One way of capturing the benefits is through accessibility, in this case measuring cumulative access to employment within a reasonable time period for the general population, for people of color, and for low-income households. Employment can be used to represent access to a wide variety of other opportunities, and future analyses may calculate access to those opportunities explicitly.

Highway and Transit Accessibility

The number of jobs reachable within 30 minutes from home by each household in the region was calculated by the regional model, and this was aggregated across the region for the general population and for people of color. While the overall population of color will increase from 23% to 40% by 2040 and the distribution will also change, data limitations required that this analysis be performed assuming existing distributions of population by race/ethnicity and income. The analysis shows that cumulative aggregate accessibility by automobile increases under the current revenue (fiscally constrained) scenario by 34% over 2010, by 33% for people of color. By transit, cumulative aggregate accessibility increases under the current revenue scenario by 84% over 2010 for the general population, by 63% for people of color.

Statement of Environmental Justice Compliance

After analyzing the distribution of programs, strategies, and projects identified in the *2040 Transportation Policy Plan*, and the location of historically underrepresented populations in the region, it can be concluded that any benefits or adverse effects associated with implementing the plan are not distributed to these populations in a manner significantly different than to the region's population as a whole.

During the project selection and project development processes, individual programs and projects will be further evaluated for potential disproportionate and adverse effects on these population groups.

Inclusion in Regional Solicitation

In the past year, the Transportation Advisory Board and the Council have conducted an evaluation of how the region distributes federal transportation funding through its competitive process. The recommendations from this evaluation have resulted in the design of a new solicitation. Based on *Thrive MSP 2040* and goals of the Transportation Policy Plan, equity, including affordable housing, has been included in the new solicitation as prioritization criteria.

Title VI Compliance

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Federal guidance on Title VI implementation requires that metropolitan planning organizations submit a Title VI report that includes:

- A demographic profile of the metropolitan area that includes identification of the locations of minority populations in the aggregate;
- A description of the procedures by which the mobility needs of minority populations are identified and considered within the planning process;
- Demographic maps that overlay the percent minority and non-minority populations as identified by Census or ACS data, at Census tract or block group level, and charts that analyze the impacts of the distribution of state and federal funds in the aggregate for public transportation purposes, including federal funds managed by the MPO as a designated recipient;
- An analysis of impacts that identifies any disparate impacts on the basis of race, color, or national origin, and, if so, determines whether there is a substantial legitimate justification for the policy that resulted in the disparate impacts, and if there are alternatives that could be employed that would have a less discriminatory impact.

These items are included in the Council's [*Title VI Compliance and Implementation Plan*](#), adopted on April 30, 2014.



Work Program Items

While Environmental Justice analysis has been required in regional transportation planning for decades, new federal guidance, as well as the adoption of *Thrive MSP 2040*, has elevated equity and the role of transportation planning in advancing equity.

Some work in this arena has already begun. *Choice, Place and Opportunity: An Equity Assessment of the Twin Cities Region* (2014) analyzed the region and its investments to understand patterns of need and possibilities. Continuing work by regional partners such as the Partnership for Regional Opportunity are moving ahead to address equity problems in a broad collaboration. The Council will continue to participate in such activities to inform strategic use of its investments.

More work will be required to fully integrate equity analysis into the center of the planning process. Toward this end, the Council will engage in the following activities:

- Implement the new Public Engagement Plan
- Study potential disparities in preservation and maintenance spending and transportation facility condition by race/ethnicity and income
- Study potential disparities in safety outcomes by race/ethnicity and income
- Develop more robust methods of analyzing the benefits and impacts of transportation investments by race/ethnicity and income to aid in using equity as a prioritization factor
- Study alignment of community-level housing performance with transportation investments leading to aid in using housing affordability as an incentive, prioritization factor, and potential evaluation measure for transportation investments
- Continue to advance the understanding and role of transportation in achieving equity in the region by collaboration with public, private and non-profit partners