

Northwest Minnesota
Region One Public Transit Plan

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Northwest Minnesota Transit Plan

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The new federal transportation bill passed in 2005 requires local transportation officials to compose a public transit document focusing on three populations of transit users: people with disabilities, the elderly and low income individuals. Required elements of the approved transit plan are listed below

- Current Services/Providers: Assessment of available services that identifies current public, private and non-profit providers.
- Transit Deficiencies: Assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, older adults and low income people.
- Strategies: Strategies and/or activities to address the identified gaps and achieve efficiencies in service delivery.
- Prioritization/Implementation: Relative priorities for implementation based on resources, time and feasibility for implementing specific strategies/activities identified.

The Region One Public Transit Plan covers seven counties: Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake and Roseau. Please note that Grand Forks, ND and East Grand Forks, MN are involved in a separate municipal planning process. Please refer to their plan for more details. This plan is subdivided into four major sections: a profile of NW Minnesota, a comprehensive transit providers section, a transit needs analysis and implementation strategies.

Implementation strategies are based on needs collected by public input, meetings and surveys. Seven broad categories were listed, with action strategies following.

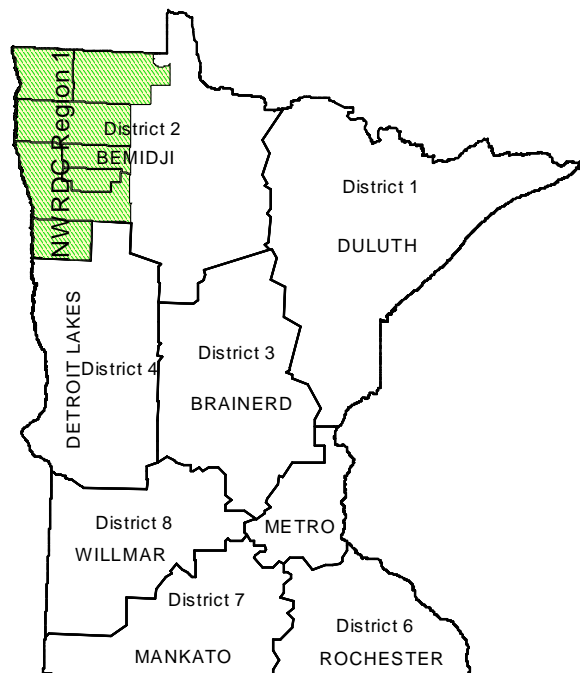
- Regional Coordination - The steering committee noted gaps in coordination between service providers. Efforts will need to continue to strengthen communication.
- Marketing - Regional marketing need to increase or become more effective in order to attract new passengers and to increase route stability.
- Transportation Gaps - Insufficiency in the existing transit structure inhibits citizens from utilizing transportation alternatives.
- Increase Weekend/Evening Transit - Larger municipalities have a need for after hour and weekend transit services. If a cost-effective strategy is established, it could be extended to smaller/rural cities when required.
- Rural Transit - The long distances required for transporting rural residents door-to-door is not currently cost efficient. Transportation alternatives, such as vans or other vehicles, are possible strategic avenues; however this would require increased coordination and participation.
- Transit Funding - Rising annual maintenance and operating expenses require additional funding to operate existing routes. Additional resources will be needed to expand the current services.
- Employee Transit - Transit services to large manufacturing industries could be utilized throughout Northwest Minnesota. Scheduling and coordination between industry and provider will be necessary.

I. Introduction

In August of 2005, The United States Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), reauthorizing the Surface Transportation Act. Certain requirements must be met in order to receive funding in 2007 and beyond in the New Freedom Initiative, Job Access & Commute (JARC) and the Elderly & Disabled Transportation Programs, including the requirement that projects from the aforementioned programs must be part of a "locally developed coordinated public transit-human service transportation plan."

Regional Development Commissions (RDC) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) were chosen to coordinate and conduct the planning process. Planners in these organizations are not stakeholders and can be viewed as independent and objective. Individuals have experience creating local comprehensive plans and it is important that planners in these organizations be aware of and knowledgeable of transit programs and funding streams for local counties.

The planning process is overseen by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT). Created in 1976, Mn/DOT develops and implements policies, plans and programs dealing with automobiles, trucking, transit, rail, aviation, shipping, biking and pedestrian traffic. The districts are outlined in the map below. For additional information, please visit www.dot.state.mn.us



The purpose of this plan is to aid local community leaders and those involved in human service transportation & public transit in order to create increased cooperation and coordinated programs. Citizens will benefit with improved services lower costs and easier access to transportation. Key elements in this plan include:

- Assessment of transportation needs for the elderly, low income and people with disabilities
- Available services inventory
- Gaps in current service and redundant programs
- Strategies to address service gaps and redundancy
- Prioritization of implementation strategies

When completed, the plan will be in effect for five years, 2007 - 2011, with an update being completed after this time period if MNDOT deems necessary. The project timeline began in May of 2006. A draft plan should be completed by October 1, 2006 and the final plan is due November 1, 2006. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings will be dispersed throughout this timeline, as well as MNDOT video conferences, planning workshops and other public meetings as deemed necessary.

Public input and involvement were crucial in the creation of this transit plan. SAFETEA-LU requirements state that the transit plan needs to be developed by a process that includes representatives of public, private and nonprofit transportation and human services providers as well as general public participation. Participation by any interested parties is encouraged and sought after. A Steering Committee was created and involves the following agencies:

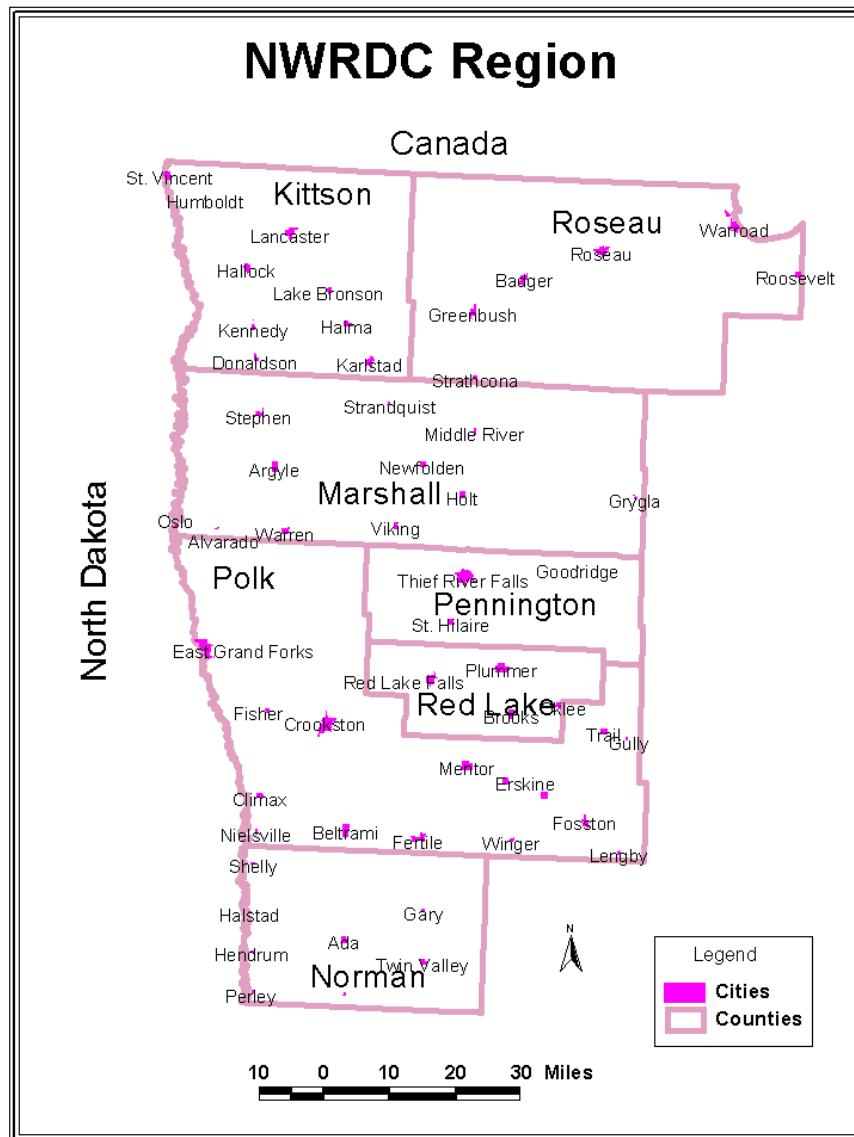
- Bonnie Buchanan - Jefferson Bus Lines
- Steve Butler - Far North Public Transit
- Kent Ehrenstrom - MNDOT Transit
- Sally Erickson - DAC
- Mike Frisch - Tri-Valley Opportunity Council
- Peter Lavalier - ODC
- Carrie Michalski - Hillcrest Nursing Home
- Jennifer Olson - NWRDC
- Shannon Olson - Heritage Center
- Danica Robson - NWRDC, Area Agency on Aging
- Troy Schroeder - NWRDC
- Jody Vigness - Prairie Comm. Services
- Mary Wickersham - FOCUS Corp.
- Ken Yutrzeuka - Pennington County Social Services

II. Northwest Minnesota Profile

Northwest Minnesota contains seven counties: Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau County. Characterized by Swedish, Norwegian, German, Asian, Polish and French-Canadians who settled in the area in the late 1800's, Northwest Minnesota has fifty-four incorporated cities, 228 townships and six unorganized territories. Features include a climate with wide seasonal fluctuation, a glacier-created topography and an economy based on agriculture and manufacturing.

County	Area (Sq. Miles)
Kittson	1,123
Marshall	1,675
Norman	885
Pennington	622
Polk	2,013
Red Lake	432
Roseau	1,676
NW Minnesota	8,426

Here are the cities in Northwest Minnesota. Each city has services, attractions, and providers that people need on a regular basis. Although transit needs vary from county to county, the basic human needs are similar.



Transportation System Profile

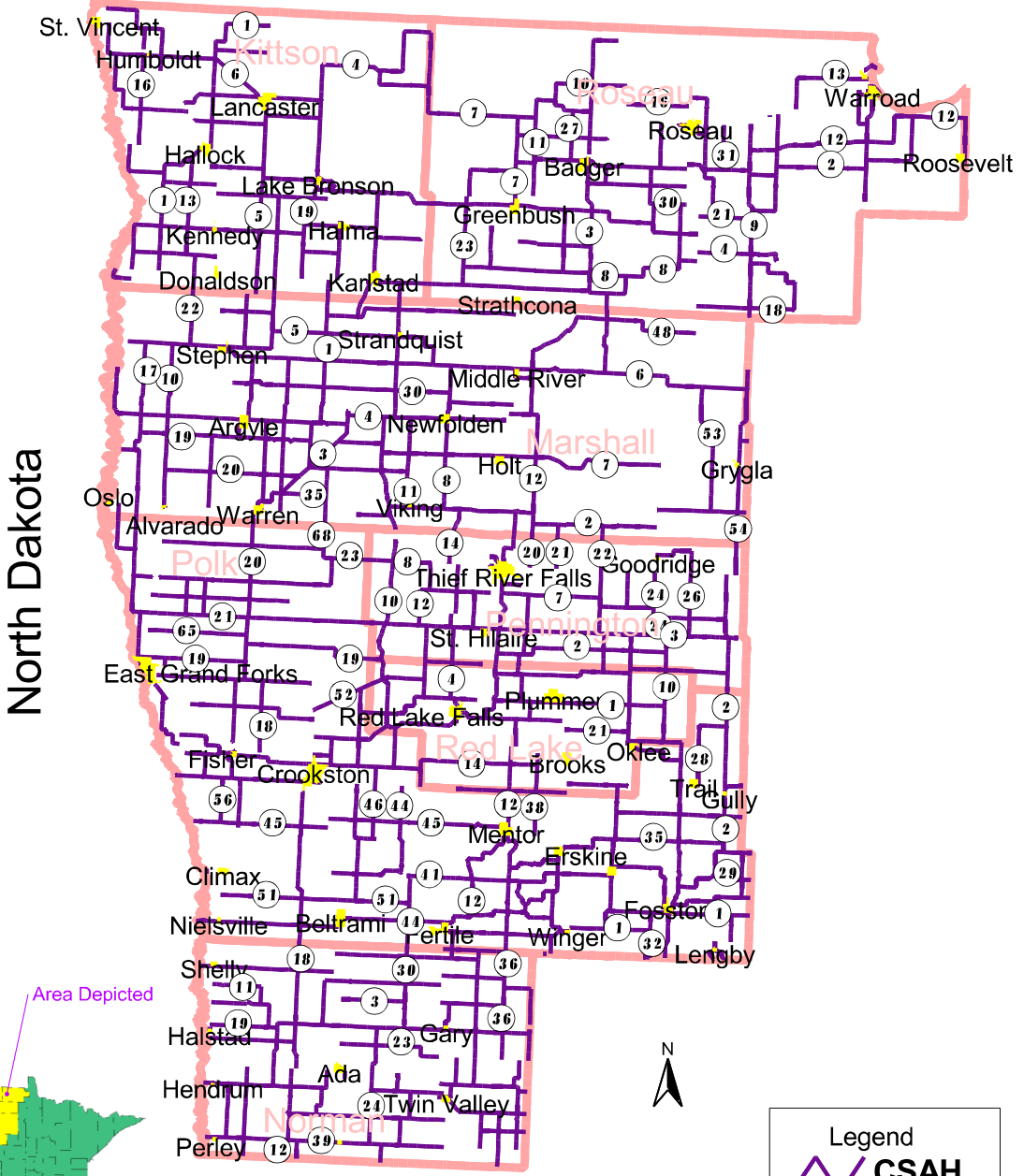
Region 1 consists of 13,904 miles of roadway. This mileage is broken down between U.S. Trunk Highways, MN Trunk Highways, County State Aid Highways (CSAH), County Roads, Township, Municipal Streets, and State Park roads. The breakdown for each county is shown below.

COUNTY	ROADWAY	MILES	COUNTY	ROADWAY	MILES
KITTSOON	USTH	73	RED LAKE	USTH	14
KITTSOON	MNTH	62	RED LAKE	MNTH	41
KITTSOON	CSAH	373	RED LAKE	CSAH	185
KITTSOON	COUNTY	84	RED LAKE	COUNTY	175
KITTSOON	TOWNSHIP	1000	RED LAKE	TOWNSHIP	340
KITTSOON	UNORG. TOWNSHIP	22	RED LAKE	CITY STREETS	26
KITTSOON	CITY STREETS	39	COUNTY TOTAL		781
KITTSOON	STATE PARKS	3	POLK	USTH	155
COUNTY TOTAL		1656	POLK	MNTH	109
MARSHALL	USTH	56	POLK	CSAH	805
MARSHALL	MNTH	120	POLK	MUNI. STATE AID	24
MARSHALL	CSAH	641	POLK	COUNTY	148
MARSHALL	COUNTY	170	POLK	TOWNSHIP	2347
MARSHALL	TOWNSHIP	1788	POLK	CITY STREETS	130
MARSHALL	CITY STREETS	53	COUNTY TOTAL		3718
MARSHALL	STATE PARKS	1	PENNINGTON	USTH	17
COUNTY TOTAL		2829	PENNINGTON	MNTH	60
ROSEAU	MNTH	132	PENNINGTON	CSAH	256
ROSEAU	CSAH	483	PENNINGTON	MUNI. STATE AID	14
ROSEAU	COUNTY	236	PENNINGTON	COUNTY	388
ROSEAU	TOWNSHIP	1158	PENNINGTON	TOWNSHIP	355
ROSEAU	UNORG. TOWNSHIP	84	PENNINGTON	CITY STREETS	48
ROSEAU	CITY STREETS	41	COUNTY TOTAL		1138
ROSEAU	STATE FOREST	83	NORMAN	USTH	24
COUNTY TOTAL		2217	NORMAN	MNTH	94
			NORMAN	CSAH	391
			NORMAN	COUNTY	300
			NORMAN	TOWNSHIP	720
			NORMAN	CITY STREETS	36
			COUNTY TOTAL		1565
			Region 1 total highway mileage =		13904

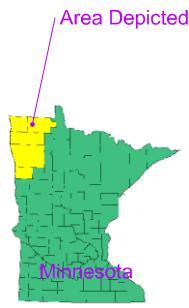
These highways represent the foundation on which the transit systems of the region run on. Which particular road a transit provider takes is dependent upon a number of factors including the type of route, scheduling, time frame and passenger destinations. A well-developed roadway framework allows the transit provider multiple route options and an increased number of potential destinations.

NW Minnesota County State Aid Highways

Canada



North Dakota

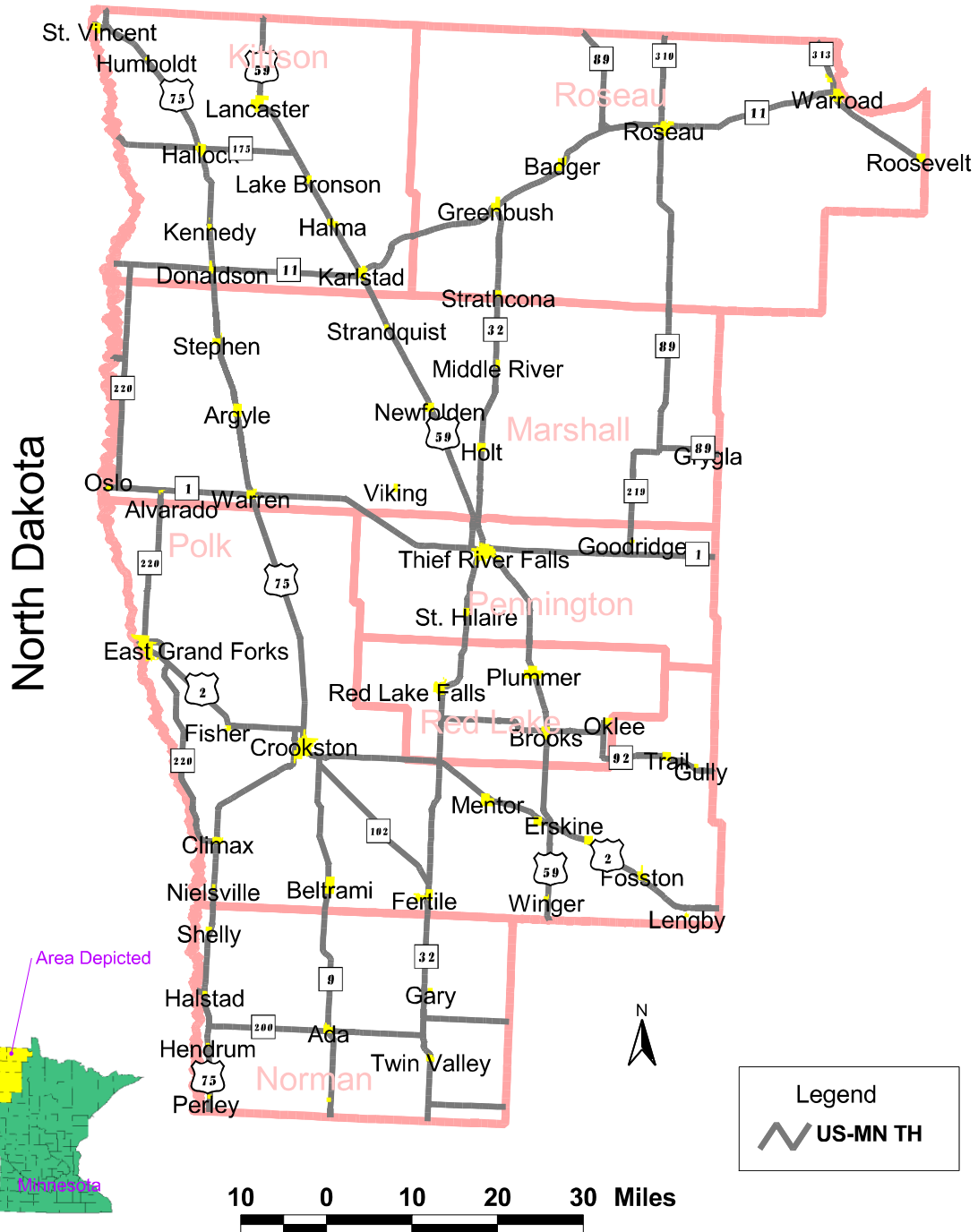


Legend
CSAH

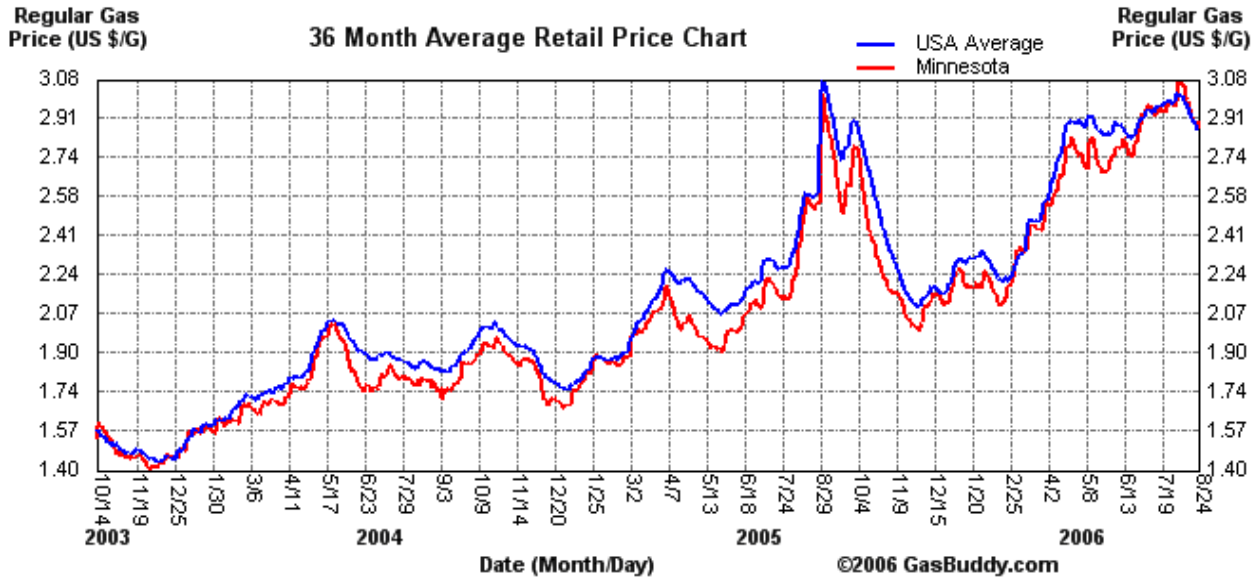


NW Minnesota Trunk Highway System

Canada



Due to the increasing gasoline and diesel fuel costs, more individuals have been scaling back trips, traveling only when necessary and finding cheaper modes of transportation. Many are looking to public transit as a more cost-effective alternative than running a personal vehicle. As you can see from the price chart below, Minnesota often stays below the USA average in gasoline costs, only rising above a few times throughout the three-year span.



Population

As of July 1, 2005, the estimated population of Northwest Minnesota (according to the U.S. Census Bureau) is 87,313. The graph below shows the population split between the individual counties.

County	Population Estimates						Census 2000
	July 1, 2005	July 1, 2004	July 1, 2003	July 1, 2002	July 1, 2001	July 1, 2000	April 1, 2000
	Kittson County	4,792	4,838	4,930	5,044	5,163	5,269
Marshall County	9,965	10,013	10,012	9,953	9,988	10,123	10,155
Norman County	7,003	7,125	7,156	7,307	7,333	7,436	7,442
Pennington County	13,608	13,566	13,588	13,613	13,381	13,549	13,584
Polk County	31,133	31,010	30,974	30,913	31,068	31,379	31,369

Red Lake County	4,317	4,341	4,304	4,272	4,293	4,282	4,299
Roseau County	16,495	16,333	16,311	16,159	16,192	16,308	16,338
Minnesota	5,132,799	5,096,546	5,061,662	5,023,526	4,984,621	4,933,756	4,919,479

Source: US Census Bureau

Although the population of Minnesota is increasing, not all the counties in Northwest Minnesota are following this trend. Reasons for population decline include natural disasters, rural migration, employment and housing. Long-term data for the region reveals a general population decline occurring since the 1950's. Most population growth in the area is centered on cities and the townships surrounding them.

County	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	(1950 - 2000)
Kittson	9,649	8,343	6,853	6,672	5,767	5,285	-4,364
Marshall	16,125	14,262	13,060	13,027	10,993	10,155	-5,970
Norman	12,909	11,253	10,008	9,379	7,975	7,442	-5,467
Penn	12,965	12,468	13,266	15,258	13,306	13,584	619
Polk	35,900	36,182	34,435	34,844	32,589	31,369	-4,531
Red Lake	6,806	5,830	5,388	5,471	4,525	4,299	-2,507
Roseau	14,505	12,154	11,569	12,574	15,026	16,338	1,833
Region	108,859	100,492	94,579	97,225	90,181	88,472	-20,387
Minnesota	2,982,483	3,413,864	3,804,971	4,075,970	4,375,099	4,919,479	1,936,996

Source: US Census Bureau

The median age of Northwest Minnesota is 39.4 years old. The highest percentages of people in all seven counties fall within the thirty-five to forty-four and the forty-five to fifty-four age brackets with the exception of Roseau County, who must also have the twenty-five to thirty-four age bracket added.

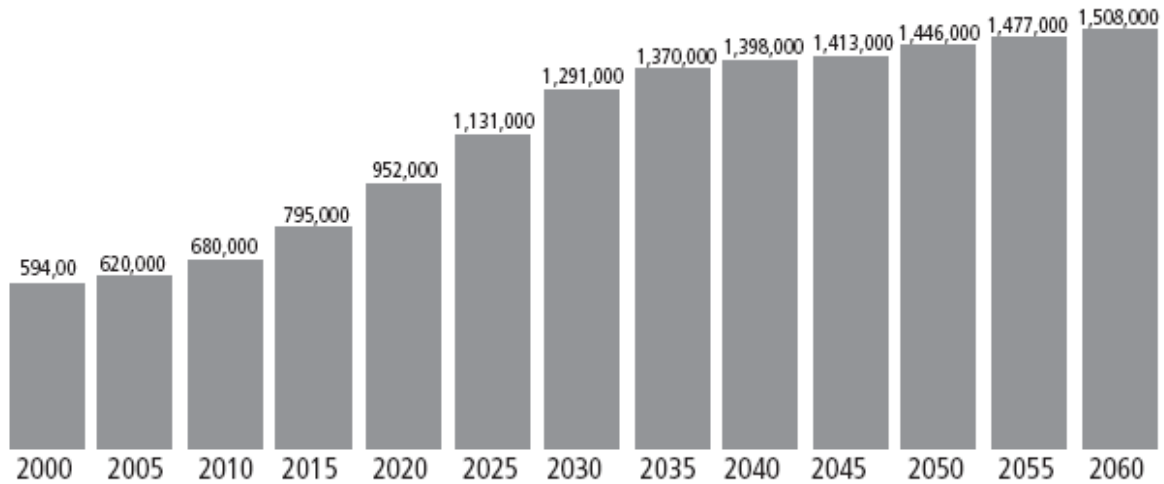
Age Group	Kittson (%)	Marshall (%)	Norman (%)	Pennington (%)	Polk (%)	Red Lake (%)	Roseau (%)
Under 5 years	6.4	5.7	6.1	6.1	6	5.6	7.3
5 to 9 years	6.5	6.4	6.7	6.2	6.8	6.2	7.9
10 to 14 years	8.1	7.8	7.9	7.2	7.8	8.1	9.3
15 to 19 years	6.2	8	7.3	8.7	9	8.8	7.7
20 to 24 years	3.5	4.2	4	6.6	6.1	4.4	4.5

25 to 34 years	9	9.7	9.3	11.5	10	9.7	12.8
35 to 44 years	14.6	15.1	14.8	15	14.8	15	17.1
45 to 54 years	14.4	14.3	12.8	13.6	13.2	13.4	12.4
55 to 59 years	4.9	5.4	5.5	5.1	4.7	5	4.8
60 to 64 years	4.9	5	4.6	4.2	4.2	4.8	3.7
65 to 74 years	9.8	9	9.8	7	7.7	9	5.6
75 to 84 years	7.6	7.3	7.8	6.1	6.6	7.2	4.8
85 years and over	4.2	2.3	3.3	2.7	3.1	2.9	2.2
Median age (years)	42.4	40.5	40.9	37.9	38.2	40.4	35.3

Source: US Census Bureau (Percentages based on 2000 census)

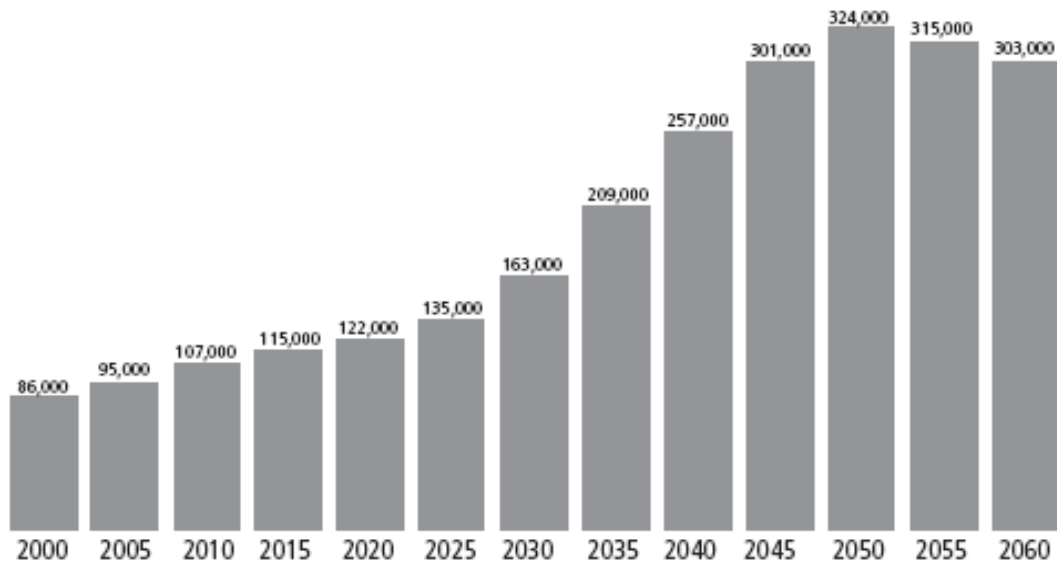
Although currently a middle-aged region, the area is predicted to have significant elderly population growth in the near future. The elderly are one of the main population groups targeted to use transit in Northwest Minnesota. An explosive population growth in older Americans will require changes to be made to current transit systems.

Number of Minnesotans age 65-plus expected to almost triple by 2060

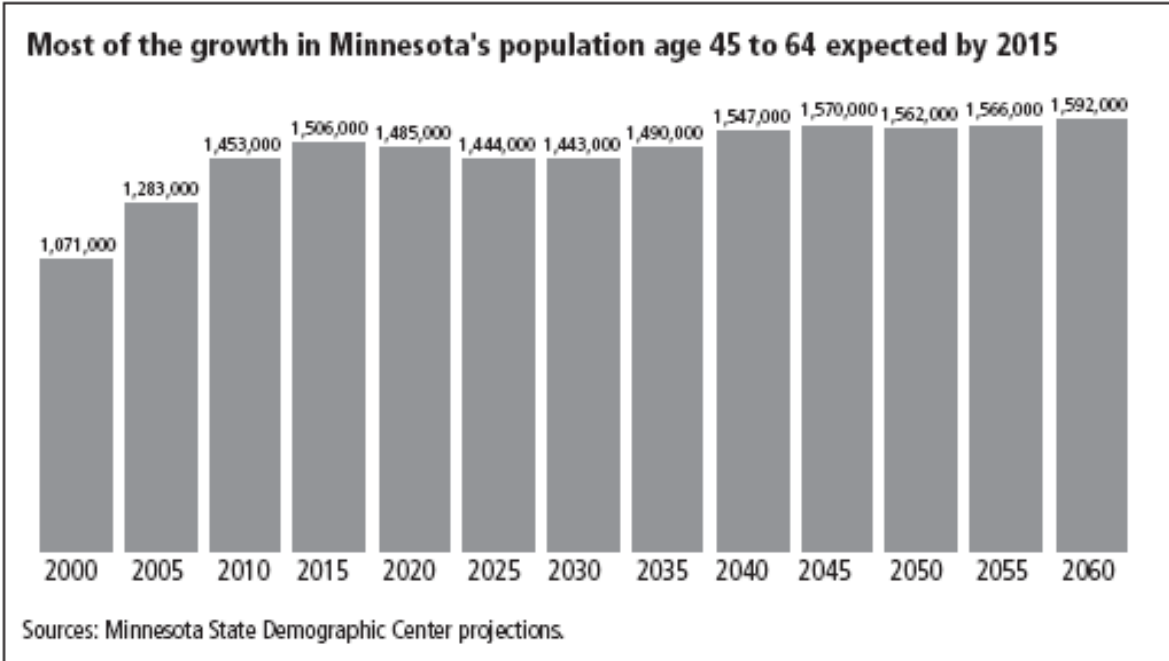


Sources: Minnesota State Demographic Center projections.

Number of Minnesotans age 85-plus expected to more than triple in next 50 years, then level off



Sources: Minnesota State Demographic Center projections.



Below are the population statistics for each individual county. Please take note at the projections detailing the aging of Northwest Minnesota, demonstrated by the high percentage change of the elderly versus the lower/negative percentage changes of the young.

Kittson	Age 16+	Age 18+	Age 62+	Age 65+	Age 75+
2000	4,114	3,960	1,289	1,141	625
2020	4,092	3,986	1,512	1,280	600
2030	4,159	4,042	1,658	1,500	810
% Change (2020)	-0.53	0.66	17.30	12.18	-4.00
% Change (2030)	1.09	2.07	28.63	31.46	29.60

Source: MN State Demography Center, November 2002

Marshall	Age 16+	Age 18+	Age 62+	Age 65+	Age 75+
2000	7,930	7,572	2,180	1,881	966
2020	7,370	7,137	2,460	2,060	960
2030	7,288	7,050	2,708	2,390	1,210
% Change (2020)	-7.06	-5.74	12.84	9.52	-0.62
% Change (2030)	-8.10	-6.89	24.22	27.06	25.26

Source: MN State Demography Center, November 2002

Norman	Age 16+	Age 18+	Age 62+	Age 65+	Age 75+
2000	5,782	5,527	1,773	1,558	827
2020	5,750	5,580	2,127	1,820	890
2030	5,817	5,636	2,413	2,160	1,150
% Change (2020)	-0.55	0.96	19.97	16.82	7.62
% Change (2030)	0.61	1.97	36.10	38.64	39.06

Source: MN State Demography Center, November 2002

Pennington	Age 16+	Age 18+	Age 62+	Age 65+	Age 75+
2000	10,712	10,254	2,476	2,145	1,191
2020	11,543	11,109	3,522	2,920	1,290
2030	11,863	11,428	4,131	3,640	1,830
% Change (2020)	7.76	8.34	42.25	36.13	8.31
% Change (2030)	10.74	11.45	66.84	69.70	53.65

Source: MN State Demography Center, November 2002

Polk	Age 16+	Age 18+	Age 62+	Age 65+	Age 75+
2000	24,350	23,241	6,230	5,463	3,050
2020	25,011	24,175	8,011	6,630	2,930
2030	25,603	24,746	9,505	8,360	4,140
% Change (2020)	2.71	4.02	28.59	21.36	-3.93
% Change (2030)	5.15	6.48	52.57	53.03	35.74

Source: MN State Demography Center, November 2002

Red Lake	Age 16+	Age 18+	Age 62+	Age 65+	Age 75+
2000	3,367	3,201	935	819	431
2020	3,488	3,365	1,248	1,030	470
2030	3,588	3,465	1,414	1,280	620
% Change (2020)	3.59	5.12	33.48	25.76	9.05
% Change (2030)	6.56	8.25	51.23	56.29	43.85

Source: MN State Demography Center, November 2002

Roseau	Age 16+	Age 18+	Age 62+	Age 65+	Age 75+
2000	12,062	11,471	2,399	2,055	1,140
2020	14,560	14,124	3,588	2,890	1,210
2030	15,438	14,973	4,761	4,080	1,740
% Change (2020)	20.71	23.13	49.56	40.63	6.14
% Change (2030)	27.99	30.53	98.46	98.54	52.63

Source: MN State Demography Center, November 2002

The Minnesota Board On Aging did a statewide survey of older Americans in 1995. In the transportation section, six percent of the respondents stated, "they were unable to go somewhere because they lacked transportation." Grocery shopping and medical/dental appointments were the most missed activities. The graph below shows sub-populations that lack transportation. There is a definite transportation need among certain sub-populations.

Sub-Populations	% Lacking Transportation In The Last Month
Age	13.7
60-74	4
75 and over	9.7
Gender	10.1
Male	2.3
Female	7.8
Marital Status	15.3
Married	1.5
Not Married	13.8
Living Arrangement	15.1
Lives Alone	12.1
Lives With Others	3

In addition, transportation providers that attended our workshop noted an increasing isolation trend among widowed/single females. These people often have a need for transportation. The above information proves this statement.

As people age, their ability to drive becomes limited by reduced reaction times, and deteriorating night vision. Comfort using public transit may be affected by physical limitations such as individual abilities to stand, climb, reach or sit for long periods of time. Although the statements vary according to individuals, public transportation will always be necessary for aging populations in Northwest Minnesota.

Economics

Low-income individuals may practice various forms of transportation such as

bicycling or walking, but the seasonal nature of weather in Northwest Minnesota makes it nearly impossible to practice this year-round. Low-income individuals are not different because of their preferences, but because of limited resources. Vehicle ownership is not often a choice for a low-income family, and is based on affordability issues of the vehicle, insurance, gas and maintenance.

The economic status of county residents is listed below. Low-income individuals are targeted as one of the main populations to use public transit. With the exception of Roseau, poverty level percentages are very similar.

Income	Kittson	Marshall	Norman	Pennington	Polk	Red Lake	Roseau
Median Household Income	\$32,515	\$34,804	\$32,535	\$34,216	\$35,105	\$32,052	\$39,852
Median Family Income	\$40,072	\$41,908	\$41,280	\$43,936	\$44,310	\$40,275	\$46,185
Population below poverty level	521	979	749	1,467	3,284	448	1,054
Percent below poverty level	10.2	9.8	10.3	11.1	10.9	10.8	6.6

Source: State Demographic Center, 2000 Census

The Northwest Minnesota region is characterized by an increasing labor force, as well as an increasing amount of employed individuals. The unemployment rises and falls, however the rate for the region is higher than the unemployment rate for Minnesota and for the United States. The higher unemployment rate seen might be partially due to agriculture. Many individuals are employed in this field on a somewhat seasonal time frame.

Region	Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemp. Rate	MN Unemp. Rate	US Unemp. Rate
Northwest	2005	50,481	47,880	2,601	5.20%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	46,465	44,063	2,402	5.20%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	46,748	44,037	2,711	5.80%	3.70%	5.60%
Headwaters	2005	40,698	38,403	2,295	5.60%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	38,460	36,465	1,995	5.20%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	35,549	32,891	2,658	7.50%	3.70%	5.60%
Arrowhead	2005	169,194	160,470	8,724	5.20%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	164,243	156,647	7,596	4.60%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	157,959	147,646	10,313	6.50%	3.70%	5.60%
West Central	2005	119,233	114,330	4,903	4.10%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	111,471	107,332	4,139	3.70%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	105,073	99,986	5,087	4.80%	3.70%	5.60%
North Central	2005	84,822	80,382	4,440	5.20%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	78,146	74,710	3,436	4.40%	3.10%	4.00%

Region	Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemp. Rate	MN Unemp. Rate	US Unemp. Rate
	1995	68,804	64,049	4,755	6.90%	3.70%	5.60%
SW Central	2005	64,767	61,910	2,857	4.40%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	64,627	62,372	2,255	3.50%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	59,109	56,648	2,461	4.20%	3.70%	5.60%
Upper MN Valley	2005	25,288	24,219	1,069	4.20%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	25,389	24,348	1,041	4.10%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	24,402	23,245	1,157	4.70%	3.70%	5.60%
East Central	2005	82,973	78,558	4,415	5.30%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	74,305	71,270	3,035	4.10%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	61,820	58,039	3,781	6.10%	3.70%	5.60%
Central	2005	213,691	204,724	8,967	4.20%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	189,145	183,220	5,925	3.10%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	166,312	159,512	6,800	4.10%	3.70%	5.60%
Southwest	2005	67,261	64,877	2,384	3.50%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	66,316	64,200	2,116	3.20%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	64,115	61,490	2,625	4.10%	3.70%	5.60%
South Central	2005	129,997	124,866	5,131	3.90%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	128,020	123,969	4,051	3.20%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	122,252	117,562	4,690	3.80%	3.70%	5.60%
South East	2005	271,595	261,066	10,529	3.90%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	260,187	252,502	7,685	3.00%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	241,241	232,331	8,910	3.70%	3.70%	5.60%
7 County Twin Cities	2005	1,627,205	1,566,866	60,339	3.70%	4.00%	5.10%
	2000	1,560,894	1,519,396	41,498	2.70%	3.10%	4.00%
	1995	1,473,614	1,432,031	41,583	2.80%	3.70%	5.60%

Source: DEED, Annual Averages, Not Seasonally Adjusted

Statistics broken down for each county can be seen below. The employment and labor force trends noted above for the region is true for all counties. The variability of the unemployment rate is shown in greater detail. More low-income people in a particular area might require greater transit services.

County	Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemp. Rate	MN Unempl. Rate	US Unempl. Rate
Kittson	2005	2,653	2,515	138	5.20%	4.00%	5.10%
	2004	2,746	2,566	180	6.60%	4.60%	5.60%
	2003	2,581	2,389	192	7.40%	4.80%	6.00%
Marshall	2005	5,364	4,984	380	7.10%	4.00%	5.10%
	2004	5,509	5,097	412	7.50%	4.60%	5.60%
	2003	5,328	4,893	435	8.20%	4.80%	6.00%
Norman	2005	3,768	3,597	171	4.50%	4.00%	5.10%

County	Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemp. Rate	MN Unempl. Rate	US Unempl. Rate
	2004	3,824	3,637	187	4.90%	4.60%	5.60%
	2003	3,758	3,559	199	5.30%	4.80%	6.00%
Pennington	2005	8,433	7,974	459	5.40%	4.00%	5.10%
	2004	8,299	7,772	527	6.40%	4.60%	5.60%
	2003	8,136	7,646	490	6.00%	4.80%	6.00%
Polk	2005	17,569	16,796	773	4.40%	4.00%	5.10%
	2004	17,213	16,337	876	5.10%	4.60%	5.60%
	2003	16,871	16,013	858	5.10%	4.80%	6.00%
Red Lake	2005	2,297	2,144	153	6.70%	4.00%	5.10%
	2004	2,293	2,121	172	7.50%	4.60%	5.60%
	2003	2,227	2,053	174	7.80%	4.80%	6.00%
Roseau	2005	10,397	9,870	527	5.10%	4.00%	5.10%
	2004	10,346	9,883	463	4.50%	4.60%	5.60%
	2003	10,376	9,622	754	7.30%	4.80%	6.00%

Source: DEED, Annual Averages, Not Seasonally Adjusted

Although not officially one of the populations targeted in this plan, the presence of prominent businesses in the Northwest Minnesota region provides an additional sector of potential transit riders. These individuals could use this service as a stable routine, balancing out some of the other transit passengers who have varied needs for using transit. There is interest among some of the companies in providing this service, however scheduling and cost would have to be discussed in greater detail. The many shift beginning/ending times cause a scheduling dilemma as well as a significant block of time that would be necessary by transit providers.

The list below details the some of the largest employers of the region separated by county. It is important to remember that although agriculture is not listed, it is a predominate employer of many people in Northwest Minnesota. Trucking and construction firms also hire many individuals in the region, but it is more difficult to place in a specific county category due to the fact that the location of employment often changes.

Kittson County:

- City/County Government
- Hanson Manufacturing
- Johnson Oil Company
- Kittson Central School
- Kittson Memorial Hospital
- Lancaster ISD
- Mattracks
- PoDCo LLC
- Tri-County School District
- Wikstrom Telephone

Marshall County:

- City/County Government
- Davidson Construction
- D&D Commodities Ltd.

Grygla School District
H&S Manufacturing, Inc.
Marshall County Central School District
Nordic Fiberglass Inc.
North Valley Health Ctr.
Stephen/Argyle Central School
Warren Alvarado Oslo School

Norman County:

Ada-Borup School District
Ada Co-op Oil Assoc.
Bridges Medical Center
City/County Government
Norman County East School District
Norman County West Public Schools

Pennington County:

Arctic Cat, Inc.
Best Western Inn
City/County Government
CP Rail
Dakota Clinic
Dean Foods/Land O'Lakes
Digi-Key Corp.
Hugo's
Kmart
Northern Pride, Inc.
Northern Woodwork
Northland Community & Technical College
Northwest Medical Center
Seven Clans Casino Hotel & Indoor Waterpark
Thief River Falls School District #564
Walmart

Polk County:

Altru Clinic
American Crystal Sugar
Cabela's
City/County Government
Crookston Public Schools
Dahlgren & Co.
Dee Inc. Foundry & Mfg.
East Grand Forks Public Schools
Erskine Manufacturing
Fair Meadow Nursing Home
Fertile-Beltrami School
First Care Medical Services
Fisher Public School
Fosston School District
Hugo's
Ideal Aerosmith
MDV, Inc. (Minnesota Dehydrated Vegetables)
New Flyer of America Inc.
Northern Food & Dairy, Inc.

Northwest Technical College
Occupational Development Ctr.
Phoenix Industries of Crookston Ltd.
PRACS Institute, Ltd.
Riverview Healthcare Assoc.
Stenberg Welding & Fabricating, Inc.
Tri-Valley Opportunity Council Inc.
University of Minnesota-Crookston
Vigen Construction, Inc.
Villa Saint Vincent
Win-E-Mac School District

Red Lake County:

City/County Government
Hillcrest Nursing Home
Homark Co.
Northwest Manufacturing
Oklee Public School
Red Lake Falls Public Schools

Roseau County:

Central Boiler
City/County Government
Greenbush Middle River School
Greenbush Nursing Home
Heatmor
Independent School District #690
Marvin Windows & Doors
Polaris Industries
REM Roseau
Roseau Area Hospital and Homes
Roseau Public Schools
Seven Clans Casino
Warroad Care Center
Warroad School District
Woodland Container Corp.

Disability

Individuals with a disability represent the third population group that is targeted by this plan as a transit user. Depending on the disability, some individuals may not be able to operate a vehicle, so public transit becomes increasingly important. Personal limitations that may cause one to utilize transit include but are not limited to:

- Cognitive impairments including Alzheimer's or developmental disabilities
- Dexterity impairments that cause limited use of hands. Some individuals may have a difficult time operating switches/knobs and handling fares. May include forms of Arthritis.
- Endurance issues that cause people not to be able to either wait for long periods of time or travel long distances. Some individuals may be frail, weather sensitive or require personal assistance when entering/exiting.
- Hearing impairments including deafness and hardness of hearing

- Physical impairments, especially those related to motion
- Vision impairments including blindness and low vision
- Educational impairments including the inability to read, or limited/no English proficiency

County	Disabled Population	% Employed
Kittson	432	59.7
Marshall	822	59.5
Norman	636	55.8
Pennington	1,215	66.5
Polk	2,582	57.4
Red Lake	333	58
Roseau	1,404	78.4

Source: US Census, 2000, Ages 21-64, Noninstitutionalized

III. Transit Providers Profile

Transit in Northwest Minnesota is often divided into two categories: public and private. While public transit can be utilized by anyone, private transit requires a prerequisite of the individual utilizing transit, be it a member of a certain agency/organization, to have a certain impairment or to live in a certain location. Private transportation can sometimes appear to fill a need not met by public transportation and although this statement is not always true, it is important in assessing whether current transit needs are met for specific populations.

Public Transit Providers

Public transit is provided by the companies listed below. The only county not covered by public transportation is Kittson County.

Service	Area Served	Elderly	Wheelchair Access	Low Income	Regular Routes	Demand Responsive
Cities Area Transit (CAT)	East Grand Forks / Grand Forks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Grand Forks Taxi / Dial-A-Ride	East Grand Forks / Grand Forks	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Fosston City Bus	Fosston	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Nodak Radio Cab Company	East Grand Forks / Grand Forks	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Northland Taxi	Thief River Falls	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Far North Public Transit	Roseau & Lake of the Woods Counties	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tri-Valley Heartland Express	Polk, Pennington, Norman, Red Lake & Marshall Counties	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Daily City Service

The following cities have daily service during the weekdays. Interest in weekend or evening service may be higher in these areas because of the already existing daily service, however interest does not equal anticipated riders.

- Badger: FAR North Public Transit
- Crookston: Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc.
- East Grand Forks: Cities Area Transit (Has evening and Saturday hours)
- Fosston: Fosston City Bus
- Roseau: FAR North Public Transit
- Thief River Falls: Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc.
- Warroad: FAR North Public Transit

In addition, Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. provides city-wide services

to the following areas. These cities do not receive daily weekday service.
Ada: 3 hours, one day a week
Fertile: 2.5 hours, one day every other week.
Twin Valley: 2.5 hours, one day a week

FAR North Public Transit also provides service three days a week to Greenbush.

Multi-County Service

FAR North Public Transit and Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. provides multi-county services to Northwest Minnesota.

Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. schedules routes through every city in the five county region with the exception of Borup. If needs arose, however, the agency would be willing to work the schedule to the best of their ability to accommodate the interested individuals.

Tri-Valley Heartland Express Bus (T.H.E. Bus)

Types of Vehicles: 75 sedans, 10 medium busses, 2 large busses
-Lift Ramp: Available on all busses
-Total Capacity = 161/medium busses, 25/large busses
-Wheelchair/Scooter Capacity = 2 each on medium/large busses
Passenger Trips/Month: 4,500 - 5,000
Vehicle Miles/Month: N/A
Hours/Month Transporting Passengers: 1,200
Hours/Month Arranging Rides: 320

FAR North Public Transit covers Greenbush, Badger, Roseau, Warroad and occasionally Roosevelt in Roseau County. Strathcona is not currently routed through, but the demand is non-existent. Routes can always change though, if transit needs occur.

FAR North Public Transit

Types of Vehicles: 5 medium busses
-Lift Ramp: All busses have a lift ramp
-Total Capacity = 72
-Wheelchair/Scooter Capacity = 10
Passenger Trips/Month: 2,285
Vehicle Miles/Month: 9,772
Hours/Month Transporting Passengers: 620
Hours/Month Arranging Rides: 100

Private Transit Providers

Private transit is provided by many individuals and agencies throughout the area. Transit providers can either provide transportation two ways, either by owning a bus and providing the service, or scheduling transit through an existing service. The following list consists of agencies that own a vehicle and provide transportation.

Occupational Development Centers, Inc. (ODC) provides individuals with employment challenges quality, accredited programs in which to gain local,

community jobs. Employment/placement programs include job selection, preparation, obtainment and retainment. In addition, in-facility, custom quality product manufacturing and subcontracting are done. Many people with disabilities utilize ODCs to get both short and long-term jobs.

Transportation for individuals affiliated with the ODC is taken care of either by private vehicles or scheduling with available public transportation. The following ODCs are located in Northwest Minnesota:

- ODC, Crookston Division
- ODC, Roseau Division
- ODC, Thief River Falls Division / Custom Products
- ODC, Warren Division

The Day Activity Center Program (DAC) serves people with disabilities in local communities. It is defined by the Minnesota Association For Retarded Children as a community setting for the care, training and stimulation of mentally retarded persons for whom there are no public school classes or other facilities available due to their age, mental ability or behavioral traits.

- East Polk County DAC
- Falls DAC
- Kittson County DAC
- Norman County DAC
- Polk County DAC

Nursing homes often have individuals that require some form of public transportation. Nursing homes either have private transportation for residents or will coordinate rides through public transportation. The services provided for these residents are imperative; however it is important to mention that the general public is not often able to take advantage of this service.

Nursing Home	City	Bus/Van
Bridges Medical Center	Ada	Yes
Edgewood Vista	East Grand Forks	No
Fair Meadow Nursing Home	Fertile	Yes - Activities
First Care Medical Services	Fosston	Yes - Activities
Greenbush Community Nursing Home	Greenbush	Yes
Good Samaritan Center	Warren	Yes - In Town
Halstad Living Center	Halstad	Yes
Hillcrest Nursing Home	Red Lake Falls	No
Karlstad Healthcare Center Inc.	Karlstad	Yes
Kittson Memorial Hospital	Hallock	Yes
McIntosh Manor	McIntosh	Yes - Seasonal
Midway Care Center	Fosston	No
Minnesota Green Leaf	Thief River Falls	No

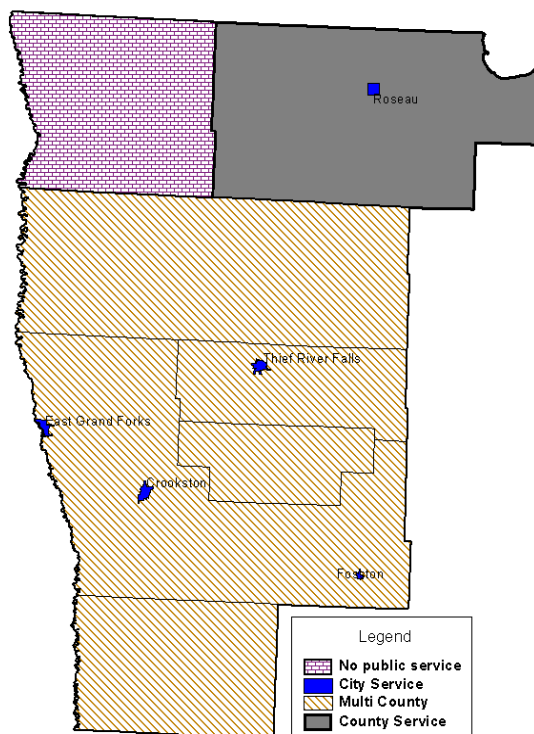
Nursing Home	City	Bus/Van
NW Medical Center	Thief River Falls	Yes
Oakland Park Nursing Home	Thief River Falls	No
Pioneer Memorial Care Center	Erskine	No
Riverview Nursing Home	Crookston	Yes
Roseau Area Hospital & Homes Inc.	Roseau	Yes
Sheltering Oaks Manor Nursing Home	Roseau	Yes - Activities
Twin Valley Living Center	Twin Valley	Yes
Valley Home	Thief River Falls	No
Villa Saint Vincent	Crookston	No
Warroad Care Center	Warroad	No

The following agencies are also transportation providers, although they do not own a vehicle set aside for transportation. Scheduling needs with existing transit, utilizing volunteers or using a personal vehicle are all methods that can be used.

The Living At Home/Block Nurse Program (LAH/BNP) connects volunteers and health professionals with elderly individuals over age 65. This partnership provides needy individuals with an array of support services, health care and information, enhances the quality of life and maintains independence for as long as possible. Transportation is one of many support services performed. Identified by multiple methods, individuals need to be the right age, live in a LAH/BNP service area and have an assessment completed by the Program Director or the Service Coordinator in order to qualify for services. The following LAH/BNPs provide transportation services:

- Argyle's H.O.P.E. Program - Services the former Argyle School District area.
- Middle River-Thief Lake LAH/BNP - Services Middle River, Thief Lake and Gatzke areas.
- Stephen LAH/BNP - Services the former Stephen School District #443
- Tri-Community LAH/BNP - Services School District #441
- Warren LAH/BNP - Services the Warren original School District #446

Some area hospitals and churches either have their own bus, have volunteer drivers or have a system worked out with existing local transit.



REGION 1 TRANSIT SERVICES

Schools

Although school districts have multiple busses, transit is not often a service that is provided to those not attending school in Northwest Minnesota. The following Minnesota Statue applies to public transportation. In all cases, situations would have to be approved or denied by the school district.

123B.88 Independent School Districts; Transportation

Subd. 10. Transportation of any person. Districts may use district owned or contractor operated school busses to provide transportation along regular school bus routes on a space available basis for any person. Such use of a bus must not interfere with the transportation of pupils to and from school or other authorized transportation of pupils. In all cases, the total additional cost of providing these services, as determined by sound accounting procedures, must be paid by

charges made against those using these services or some third-party payor. In no case shall the additional cost of this transportation be paid by the district.

Please note that student safety is a priority for schools in Northwest Minnesota. Because not everyone can be screened, some schools may not provide transportation outside of students to make sure a predator does not cause safety concerns.

Transit Fluxuation

It is important to remember that public transit in Northwest Minnesota has factors that cause fluxuation in usage patterns. Certain periods of time may require additional transit due to the factors listed below.

1. Gas/Insurance Prices. As gas and insurance costs increase, many individuals will be looking for ways to cut costs. For some people, owning or operating a car may prove to be cost deficient. Transit usage may increase, as riding a bus may be cheaper than driving.

2. Seasonal Weather. Winters in Northwest Minnesota often prove to be extremely hazardous. Blizzards, winter storms and ice storms cause road conditions to be dangerous to even the most extreme driver. Non-confident drivers may choose to utilize public transportation during storm-prone months, which can occur anytime from October until April.

3. School Sessions. Thief River Falls, Crookston, and East Grand Forks have higher education resulting in students that need rides throughout the community. The public transportation system should be looked at as a means to satisfy this need.

IV. Transit Needs Analysis

Information Retrieval

Information for this plan was collected through numerous phone/email conversations, a steering committee meeting, a workshop and two transportation questionnaires.

The survey attached to Appendix 1 was derived from one created by MnDOT. It was created especially for the transit providers and provides a forum to list transit deficits and concerns. A copy of this was sent to all major transit providers in Northwest Minnesota.

TRANSPORTATION STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY

The following four statements were ranked by priority by transportation providers:

- 1 - Existing transportation services don't go where services are located
- 2 - Existing transportation services don't operate the same hours as when people need transportation
- 3 - No transportation services available
- 4 - Existing transportation providers are too costly.

What issues, if any, have you encountered in coordinating or attempting to coordinate transportation? (* indicates most frequent answers)

- * Driver qualifications
- High cost
- * Insurance
- Rural locations
- Payment
- * Scheduling
- Turf issues
- Willingness to "serve" more physically disabled

In your opinion, what do you see as the greatest obstacle(s) to transit and human service transportation coordination in your area are? (* indicates most frequent answers)

- Availability of qualified drivers
- Distance between providers
- * Funding
- Geographic area
- Lack of agency collaboration
- Lack of coordination with businesses
- Limited in outlying commutes
- Miles between cities
- Policies
- Rural locations
- * Scheduling

In your opinion, what enhancements are most needed to improve the coordination of transportation in your service area? (* indicates most frequent answers)

- * Agency collaboration
- Business partnerships
- * Funding
- Increasing fuel costs
- Inter-agency agreements
- Policies
- Scheduling/Availability

Thinking of the clients or individuals your agency/organization represents/provides transportation services to, what transportation needs are not being met adequately? (* indicates most frequent answers)

- Covering multiple counties adequately
- Increasing fuel costs/costs
- * Limited evening/weekend transportation availability
- Service to larger cities for medical appointments
- Utilizing personal vehicles due to scheduling conflicts/unavailability

What are the barriers/obstacles to meeting those needs? Why are these transportation services not being met?

- Affordable transportation
- Employee work schedules
- Increasing costs
- Limited evening/weekend transportation availability

Do you have any other information to share?

- Need to collaborate similar services to save federal/state dollars.

The survey attached to Appendix 2 was created on the advice of the steering committee. It was decided that although useful, the stakeholder questionnaire was mainly effective for transit providers. Many questions were not applicable for transit users and the group felt that a special connection with this population needed to be made. The qualifications for this survey were as follows: one page, simple, easy to read, and no income questions. The survey results provided a unique look into public transit as experienced by the user. This survey was passed out in a group of ten to individual public transportation providers, county social services, living at home block nursing programs, senior/community centers, nursing homes, ODCs, DACs and mental health facilities. The facilities handed them out to transportation users and returned them in a postage-paid envelope. The results are as follows:

TRANSPORTATION USER QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY

What Do You Like Best

1. The provided service
 - On time/very helpful/reliable
 - Cost
 - Wheelchair accessibility
 - Easy to use
 - Goes anywhere

- Accommodating hospitality
- Drop offs by the door
- It is a help to others

2. Not driving/owning a car

- Don't own a car
- Back-up plan if no ride is available
- Availability to those that do not drive
- Provides transportation when I need it
- Getting to destination safely
- I couldn't drive
- Not having to worry about parking/city driving
- Provides rides for seniors

3. Convenience

4. Good way to get around

- See the landscape/enjoyment
- Independence/no need to bother relatives
- Nice way to get to work
- Visit family
- Get my business done

5. Bus Driver

- Helpful drivers carrying things on the bus
- Visiting with the drivers

6. Socializing/Conversations on the bus

What Do You Like Least

1. Availability

- No Service on weekends, holidays & evenings
- Need extended hours
- Not always available

2. The provided service

- Rough riding on the bus
- Cost
- Passengers and their habits
- Loud/Noise
- Limited time for trips/outings between scheduling other pickups
- Rude on the telephone
- Bad shock absorbers
- Coat got caught in the door

3. Waiting

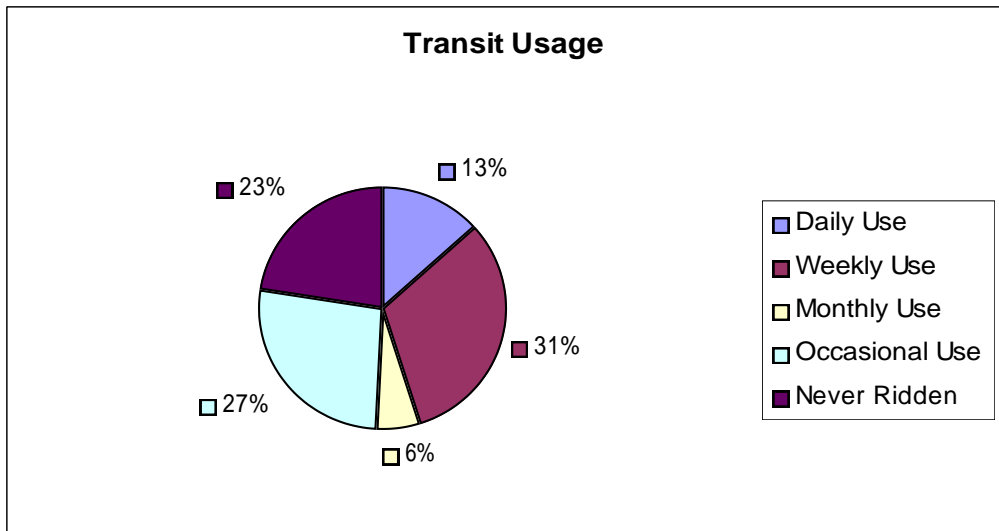
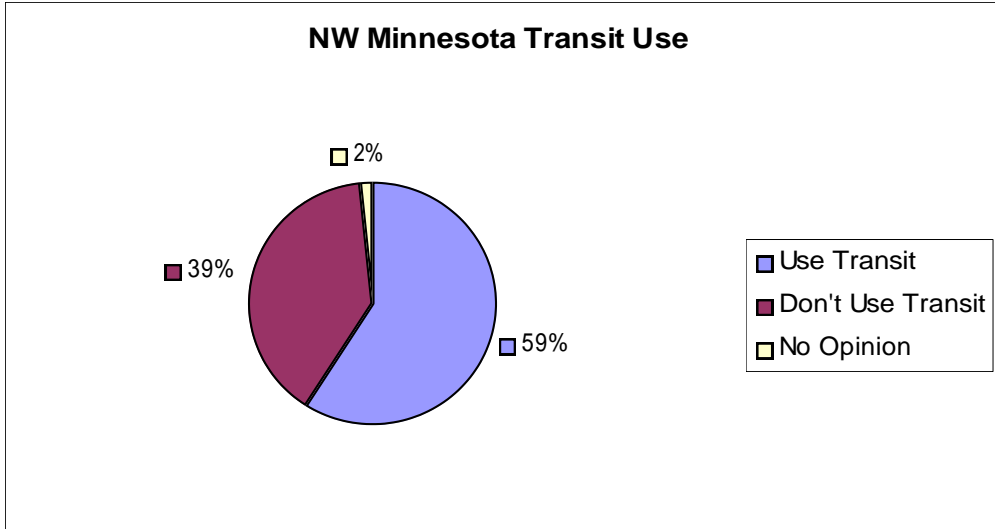
- Long ride before my stop
- Long ride until my stop
- Long waits

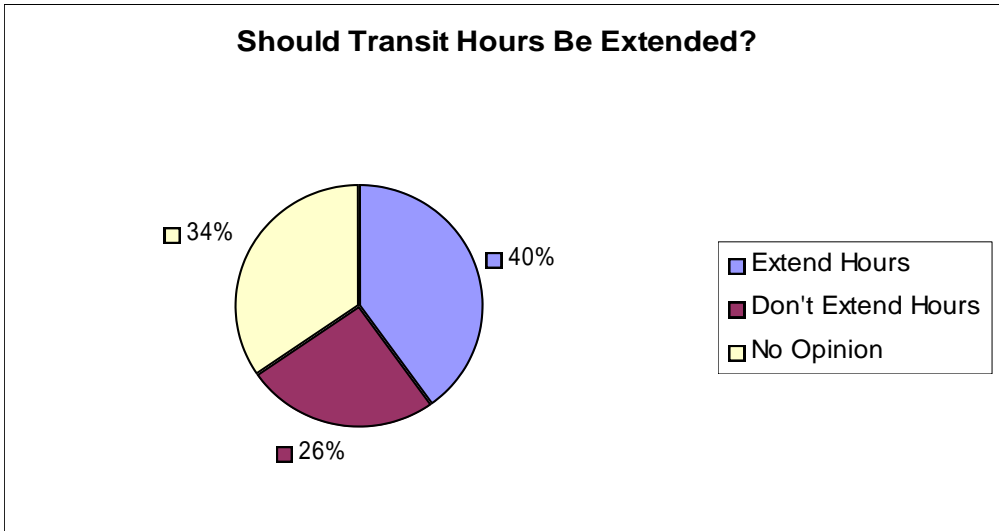
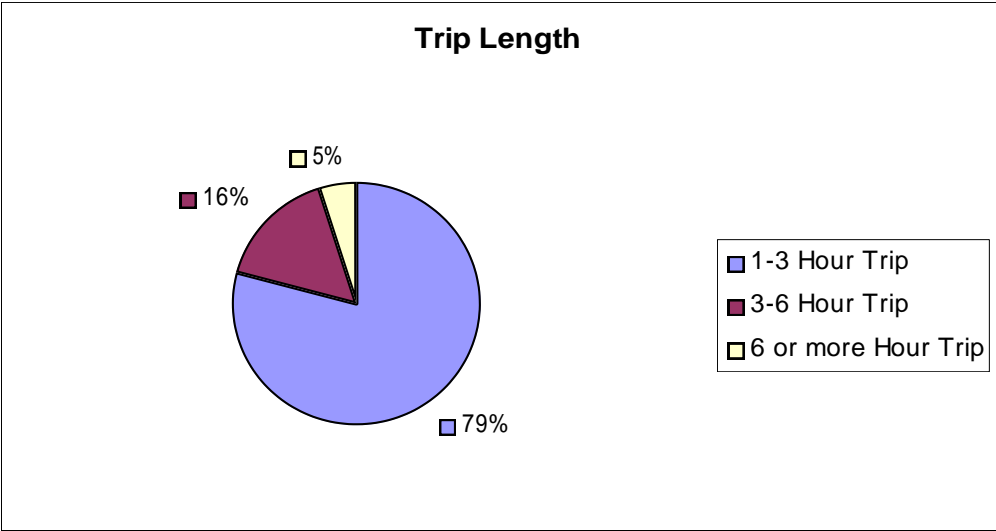
4. Accessibility

- I would like to be picked up at the door
- I can't get to the bus stop
- Trouble climbing steps

- Need more wheelchair accessibility
- Don't use the chair lift for walkers

5. No public transportation service in Kittson County





Levels of Service

The following levels of service classifications apply only to public transit that has a non-fixed route. Levels of service are based on three factors.

The first factor is transit availability:

Hours Per Day	6 to 7 Days	5 Days	3 to 4 Days	2 Days	1 Day	Half A Day	Under Half A Day
Over 16	LOS 1	LOS 2	LOS 4	LOS 5	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8
12 to 15.9	LOS 2	LOS 3	LOS 4	LOS 5	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8
9 to 11.9	LOS 3	LOS 4	LOS 4	LOS 6	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8
4 to 8.9	LOS 5	LOS 5	LOS 5	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 7	LOS 8
Under 4	LOS 6	LOS 6	LOS 6	LOS 7	LOS 8	LOS 8	LOS 8

- Tri-Valley: LOC 4 (Monday-Friday, 10 hours)
- Far-North: LOC 4 (Monday-Friday, 10 hours)
- Fosston City Bus: LOC 3 (Monday-Friday, 10 hours, Sunday, 4 hours)

The second factor is response time:

LOS	Response Time
1	Up to a half hour
2	Half hour to 2 hours
3	More than 2 hours, same day
4	24 hours in advance, next day
5	48 hours in advance
6	More than 2 days, up to a week
7	More than 2 days, up to 2 weeks
8	More than 2 weeks, or cannot accommodate trip

- Tri-Valley: LOC 3 (24-hour notice is requested when possible)
- Far-North: LOC 3 (Advance notice is requested when available, LOC depends on daily schedule)
- Fosston City Bus: LOC 1 (Advance notice is appreciated, response depends on previously scheduled rides)

The third factor is assistance:

LOS	Assistance
1	Door Through Door
2	Door To Door
3	Curb To Curb
4	Transit Stop

- Tri-Valley: LOC 3
- FAR-North: LOC 3
- Fosston City Bus: LOC 3

Identified Needs

Transportation is a common need among the three population groups surveyed in this plan. Our culture is becoming more dependent upon personal transportation, and stress results when a person loses the ability to provide their own mode of motility. Although all groups are in need of more transportation, the issues vary between the three populations.

- Elderly individuals have high expectations of public transit due to the fact that they may have been previously accustomed to the perks associated with car ownership. The elderly have a need for door-to-door transit, and may require aid in accessing public transit.
- Individuals with a disability require transportation to fulfill their desire to be independent while at the same time accommodating specific disabilities. Transportation is important, as it provides a way for individuals to leave their home or be employed. Aid might be required, as accessing transportation can be difficult for individuals with a disability (dependent upon the disability).
- Low income individuals often work multiple jobs/hours and require extended transit service. Flexibility is key. Transportation to and from a job is a necessity, but the expenses of transportation ownership cannot be incurred and sometimes must be traded off for personal and family needs.

Comparisons of the two surveys and meetings/workshops were done, and the following problems have come up with enough frequency to be labeled as identified needs for public transportation. They are described in detail in the following paragraphs:

- Sporadic use / Scheduling (Main concern of providers)
- Funding - (Main concern of providers)
- Education - (Main concern of providers)
- Mobility - (Main concern of providers and riders)
- Evening/weekend usage (Main concern of providers and riders)
- Coordination / Collaboration (Main concern of providers)
- Rising costs - (Main concern of providers)
- Public transit (Main concern of riders and providers)

Sporadic use was labeled as a problem for transit providers. Transit needs are not absolute. A certain population may require transit for a finite period of time for appointments, etc... Transit providers have set up routes and services to address needs, and after a period of time, the route is not utilized due to the temporary need of the transit user. Rider responsibility needs to be promoted, because one or two dropped individuals matters if a route is running on the bare minimum amount of riders.

Funding is an issue that all transit providers face. Addressing all needs within a fixed budget can often be difficult. Some of the solutions raised in this plan will require additional funding sources in order for completion to occur. Providers want transit opportunities to exist for all of Northwest Minnesota, but funding places limits on what can be provided. Increased funding will be required if increased services are to be provided.

Education is imperative, as some residents may not be aware that transit services exist in their area. As transit funding is also an issue raised in this section, getting the maximum amount of transit users is important if a

provider wants to be successful. Some individuals may not either know the service exists or may think that certain conditions must occur (Ex. = I didn't know that all ages could ride, I didn't know that this was a public service). Often times, residents do not recognize the service unless they require it. A connection between transit users and providers needs to take place. How do you market to the individuals that are not using public transit?

Mobility challenges are especially frustrating for both transit providers and users. How can a transit provider stay on schedule and accommodate people who may not be able to make it to a bus stop? Coordination with individuals requiring home pick-ups currently occurs if possible, but is often dependent upon scheduling, location and budgets. Rural transit is a large issue, as many people in Northwest Minnesota do not live in an urban setting. Creativity will be needed in order to find a viable solution.

Evening and weekend usage was listed by both questionnaires as one of the major transit needs. Reasons given were varied in nature, but included social needs, isolation prevention, errands and shopping. Transit riders would like the opportunity to use public transportation outside of the "typical" working week and transit providers often listed evening and weekend transit as a need that is not being met adequately on the stakeholder questionnaire.

Coordination between transit providers will need to occur in order to address some of the solutions listed in this plan. Please note that this is not a large problem, as most transit providers thought that they were more cooperative than competitive. It was discussed at the steering committee meeting that the transit riders in the region will increase proportionally to the amount of cooperation. Additional coordination was suggested between service and transit providers, as both had unique collections of knowledge that would benefit the other.

Rising costs are a reoccurring concern for transit providers. Increasing fuel costs are listed as a problem because it currently costs more money than in previous years to run the same scheduled route. Gasoline and diesel fuel sales have been selling at record prices, impacting the routines of many individuals, businesses and agencies. Rising insurance costs are also listed as a problem. Because funding is limited or set, maintaining current services becomes increasingly difficult and too many rising expenses will lead to the cessation of routes and/or services.

Public transit is not available in all areas in Northwest Minnesota. Kittson County does not have public transportation. Private transportation often surfaces to fill a need, but these services are not available to the general public, and certain conditions must be met.

Employee Transit

Employees of large regional companies were targeted as a potential fourth population to utilize public transportation in Northwest Minnesota, due to the presence of several large manufacturing companies (listed previously). Regular employee transit would be a solution to problems listed above and several companies, such as Arctic Cat and Digi-Key in Thief River Falls, are

interested in exploring possibilities. Although technically not one of the three transit user populations (low income, elderly and disabled), additional planning needs to be done with these companies because of company, employee and transit provider interest.

Cooperation between transit providers and regional companies would be necessary, as there are noted hurdles to the process:

1. Varying shift starting/ending times would pose a problem. Although a significant population may drive from Warren to Thief River Falls to work, not all of them start at the same time. Scheduling is an important factor.
2. A certain amount of people would need to be interested in order to make transit a viable option. The process would need to be based on which surrounding cities have the most interested potential transit users.
3. Employees might lose interest in utilizing transit. Communication is important on a bus, as many people like talking to each other to pass the time. A group of people may decide to car pool, and the scheduled route may not become economically feasible due to passenger loss. Personal schedules and appointments will also cause rider fluxuation.

College Transit

The cities of Crookston and Thief River Falls may have some additional transit opportunities due to the presence of higher education facilities. The Northland Community and Technical College (Thief River Falls) and the University of Minnesota, Crookston both have students that might take advantage of transit opportunities. The East Grand Forks Technical College currently has a contract that provides transit service to its students.

Again, cooperation and coordination would need to occur due to some noted difficulties:

1. Varying classes and schedules from day to day as well as month-to-month. Rider stability would be a question. Scheduling would be important, but would depend on local college and university needs in order to figure out feasibility.
2. Students would need to use transit, or the whole operation would not be economically achievable. Interest levels would need to be investigated.

V. Implementation Strategies

The strategies are prioritized in order of the largest concern from the stakeholders questionnaire. The strategy prioritizations are intermittently interchangeable depending on political, social, and economic changes in society. Prior to implementation of any strategy a benefit-cost analysis should be done to make sure that the service provided is cost-efficient.

1. Regional Coordination: The current stakeholder group for this plan should be expanded and meet on a regular basis (quarterly?) in order to provide an increased sense of coordination between providers. Forum topics include gaps in service as well as noted deficiencies, scheduling and doubling up of services to a particular area. This group is also necessary due to the rural transit issue, as well as numerous requests to provide door-to-door service.

-Affected Needs: Sporadic Use, Evening and Weekend Usage, Mobility, Coordination, Public Transit

Strategies:

A. Transit Providers Group: Put together a group composed of private and public transit providers in Northwest Minnesota. Meet on a semi-annual basis in order to provide increased coordination and information on current transit issues, deficiencies and concerns, including those listed in this transportation plan. Meet in smaller, more local groups if necessary.

B. Boundary Transit Coordination: Coordinate pick-up and drop off locations between service providers and/or county boundaries. Financial feasibility and scheduling for participating providers would need to be discussed. Specific attention should be paid to Roseau County, whose transit system is not currently able to extend beyond its defined borders to locations such as Thief River Falls, Crookston or East Grand Forks.

C. Technology: Monitor the increasing technology for transit systems and implement in Northwest Minnesota when it becomes cost-efficient to do so. Upcoming technology could make it easier to coordinate between service providers as well as provide a multitude of other benefits.

2. Marketing: Existing transit services need to be marketed in order to provide education to residents. Certain stereotypes need to be dispelled (I need to be older or have a disability to use that service) and education needs to be provided for those that are unaware of current services.

-Affected Needs: Sporadic Use, Funding, Education, Coordination, Rising Costs, Public Transit

Strategies:

A. Service Inventory: Compile an inventory manual of all transit services available and pass out to transit providers. Gaps and doubled services can be avoided, and routes can be coordinated between different agencies, if necessary.

B. Education: Provide more education to residents in order to increase knowledge about public transit and dispel stereotypes. Create increased patronage of existing services. Methods mentioned include: utilizing local television channels, radio ads, flyer/handout in an electric bill or other widely-received mailing, newspaper ad and an addition in employee pay packets (for employee transit).

C. Connection: Create a connection with local service/transit providers in order to inform those who may not be reached with current methods. Coordination with other services may also save costs and provide greater assistance to a greater population of residents.

D. Baby Boomers: Find ways to educate the baby boomer population of Northwest Minnesota about public transit. This large group of people might be more apt to utilize public transportation if they are aware/comfortable before a certain age is reached. Although long-term, this strategy could lead to a large potential group of riders for area transportation providers.

3. Transportation Gaps: Certain regions in Northwest Minnesota lack the opportunity to utilize public transportation.

-Affected Needs: Public Transit

Strategies:

A. Kittson County: Increasing investigation about public transit needs to be done in Kittson County. Inquiries with the County Board should be done to find out why transportation has been absent, and research needs to be completed to ascertain if there is a stable riding population. Promote and educate about private transportation opportunities if public transportation is not wanted. Only through cooperation and partnership will transit services be provided to Kittson County.

B. Small Cities/Unincorporated Cities: There have been individuals interested in transit for smaller/unincorporated cities such as Angus and Tabor. Although resident usage and cost-efficiency would play large parts in any transit route to these locations, resident interest should be studied to deduce whether a stable/needy riding population exists.

C. Airlines/Busses: Currently there is no service connecting Crookston, Thief River and the surrounding communities to Jefferson Lines and the Grand Forks Airport. The Grand Forks Airport is an important connection for the University of Minnesota at Crookston and the Northland Community College at Thief River Falls.

4. Increase Weekend/Evening Transit: The lack of evening and weekend transit service was a major deficiency pointed out by providers and riders alike in all seven counties. Although partially dependent on funding, regular operating transit hours need to be extended in order to provide this service. Further study on this would be needed in order to obtain specific local interest, usage and feasibility. Sporadic usage of this service would not be

cost-effective and lead to the removal of service. This option would cause a LOS increase if enacted.

-Affected Needs: Evening and Weekend Usage

Strategies:

A. Crookston Extended Service: Work with Tri-Valley Opportunity Council to provide weekend/evening transit service to Crookston, MN. The lack of a taxi service in the city affects the potential expansion of the economic base. Services need to be incorporated into multi-modal transportation services that cater to the visiting public.

-The DAC and some retirement homes do not have available transit on weekends or evenings. Two chemical dependency organizations also hold meetings in the evenings and have clientele that need the use of public transportation because of the lack of any other transportation mode.

-Several businesses and the proposed Super Wal-Mart are located on the fringe of city limits making themselves less accessible to the inner community and more difficult for the public transportation dependant individuals. Public transportation is required by this community to provide access to these facilities.

B. Thief River Falls Service: Work with Tri-Valley Opportunity Council to provide weekend/evening transit service to Thief River Falls, MN. The taxi service does not run on Sundays and is limited in the evenings, so people needing to travel to/from church services and the airport are left needing transit. Certain organizations that provide transit during the week, such as the DAC and some retirement homes do not run transit on the weekends.

C. Regional Extended Service: There is a regional need for extended transit hours for the weekends and evenings. Extended service solutions will vary based on the city and the transit provider. Problems and solutions must be examined according to cost, cost-benefit, existing services and need.

5. Rural Transit: Because Northwest Minnesota has a high number of residents living in a rural setting, a transit system for our area needs rural transportation to be a more prevalent factor than other, more urban regions. The transportation rider's survey lists getting to the actual bus-stop to be a large concern, specifically among the elderly and portions of the disabled populations.

-Affected Needs: Mobility

Strategies:

A. Volunteer Agencies: Partner with available volunteers and local groups to see if there is an interest in help transportation-dependent citizens. Some churches have rides set up for those who need help coming to services.

6. Transit Funding: Additional funding is necessary in order to incorporate the proposed changes in this document. Every problem noted above from past

surveys and meetings hinges on the acquisition of additional funding. Price increases in maintenance and service combined with regional deficiencies such as rural transit and working hours extensions show the need for a funding increase for public transit in Northwest Minnesota.

-Affected Needs: Funding, Education, Mobility, Evening & Weekend Usage, Coordination, Rising Costs & Public Transit

Strategies:

A. MnDOT: Develop a plan with Mn/DOT planning to address deficiencies and concerns. Seek increased funding for local transit programs to incorporate the plans into effective use for the public.

B. Advertising: Look into advertising on the side of working buses as a way to help defray costs and provide extra funding. This has been implemented by other transportation agencies, however the final decision is up to individual transportation providers.

C. Additional Funding: Search and apply for any additional funding opportunities that can directly apply to local transportation. Federal and state grant dollars can be utilized as match with planning money or grants from the Northwest Foundation.

D. Mobility Manager: Look into available state/federal dollars for the creation of a mobility manager position for Northwest Minnesota.

7. Employee Transit: There is interest by some larger manufacturing companies in Northwest Minnesota to explore the possibility of providing transit opportunities to employees. Not only would this be an additional funding source, it creates a whole new population of eligible bus riders and would aid the sporadic usage patterns currently seen in some areas.

-Affected Needs: Sporadic Use, Funding, Education, Rising Costs

Strategies:

A. Company Employees: Connect interested companies with available transit providers to see if a viable transportation schedule can be created. Employee interest would have to be gauged, and a schedule would need to be created around employee shift changes. The service could cater to groups of workers coming from the same community.

B. Grand Forks Shuttles: Provide more regular shuttles from Crookston and surrounding communities to Grand Forks. More opportunities exist for the low-income and disabled to find jobs, and the route would also help the transit-dependent to find employment. In addition, Crookston is the county seat, and a route would help some transit-dependent citizens in East Grand Forks travel to Crookston.

Implementation of the above strategies relies upon coordination, interest, funding and cost-efficiency. Transit provider meetings (annually or bi-annually) are a vehicle in which to enact the proposed solutions. Future revisions of performance measures manuals for individual service providers will encompass the above strategies, as well as identify potential upcoming concerns. The timeline for completion is extended, as some solutions require multi-agency support and organization on a large scale.

Appendix 1

TRANSPORTATION STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONNAIRE

The first page of the questionnaire asks general information regarding your agency/organization. The last two pages are specific to transportation and access to services. If additional space is needed, please use additional pages.

Agency/Organization/Business Information

- 1 Agency / Organization / Business Name: _____
- 2 Street Address: _____
- 3 Mailing Address: _____
- 4 City, State, Zip Code: _____
- 5 Contact Person (Name & Title): _____
- 6 Contact Telephone #: _____
- 7 FAX Number: _____
- 8 E-Mail Address: _____
- 9 Is your agency: Public Private non-profit
- Private for-profit Other: _____
- 10 List each county your agency serves: _____
- 11 If agency operates multiple sites, please give locations: _____
- 12 What types of services does your agency/org/bus provide? _____
- 13 Is it possible people cannot access your services due to lack of available transportation? YES NO
- If yes, please estimate number of people per year*** _____
- 14 Does your agency serve people who are transportation disadvantaged? (Persons classified as "transportation disadvantaged" have personal limitations that may limit one's ability or cause difficulty in getting to places they need or want to go.)
- YES NO

15 Please check all that apply:

Personal Limitations		Description
Cognitive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who has a cognitive impairment including, for example, Alzheimer's, developmental disabilities, or other cognitive impairments
Dexterity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who has limited use of the hands, making it difficult to handle fares or operate switches, knobs, etc.
Endurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is frail or requires personal assistance including persons with weather sensitivities (heat or cold); may not be able to wait for long periods or travel long distances
Experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is not familiar with public transportation and/or the system
Hearing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is hearing impaired including deaf and hard of hearing
Low income	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is low income
Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	Limited or no English proficiency; may include inability to read
Physical	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who has physical disabilities especially related to ambulation
Vision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who is vision impaired including blind and low vision

Vehicles

16

Does your agency/org/business staff use their own vehicles to transport people? NO
 YES

17

Does your agency operate its own or leased vehicles to transport passengers? YES NO

If answer is NO skip to question 19

18

Please describe the vehicles used to provide transportation. Example 4 vans, three are 4/1 (4 passengers/1 wheelchair) and one is 6/0. See example below.

Vehicle Type	Total Number of Vehicles	Total Ambulatory Capacity	Total Wheelchair/Scooter Capacity	Number of Vehicles Lift/Ramp Equipped
Example (Vans)	4	18	3	3
Sedans/Station Wagons				
Vans/Minivans				
Small Bus < 10 pass.				
Medium Bus 11-20 pass				
Large Bus > 20 pass				

Coordination. (A process through which representatives of different agencies and client groups work together to achieve any one or all of the following goals: more cost-effective service delivery; increased capacity to serve unmet needs; improved quality of service; and, services which are more easily understood and accessed by riders.) Coordination can occur on many levels, examples include: informal information sharing; formal (written) coordination arrangements; the management of transportation services by one agency; or the consolidation of transportation services under one provider agency.

19 What issues, if any, have you encountered in coordinating or attempting to coordinate transportation (e.g., billing and payment, insurance, driver qualifications, etc.)?

20 In your opinion, what do you see as the greatest obstacle(s) to transit and human service transportation coordination in your service area?

21 In your opinion, what enhancements are most needed to improve the coordination of transportation in your service area? (e.g. agency collaboration, agency policies, funding, inter-agency agreements)

22 Is transportation a barrier or obstacle in accessing services for your clients/consumers?
Please check all that apply and rank in priority, with 1 being highest priority.

		Priority
No transportation services available	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Existing transportation providers are too costly	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Existing transportation services don't operate the same hours as when people need transportation		_____

Existing transportation services don't go to locations where needed services are located

Please identify locations: _____

Other

Describe other: _____

Transportation Services

23 What type(s) of transportation services does your agency offer or purchase? (List)

24 What hours and days of the week does your agency:

	Provide or Purchase Transportation Services	Specify Hours	Need Transportation Services?
Monday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

25 What are the special needs of your passengers? Check all that apply:

- Infants (car seat)
- Physical Disability
- Mental Impairments
- Interpreters
- Escorts/Personal Care Attendants
- Other (please identify)

26 Does your agency have paid or volunteer drivers?

- Paid Drivers
-

Number of paid drivers

Volunteer Drivers (mileage reimbursement)*

Number of volunteer drivers _____

Where do you get your Volunteer Drivers? _____

27 Approximately how many hours per month do your employees spend arranging rides for your clients / consumers / passengers?

If you answered "NO" to question 16 under "Vehicles", skip to question 36 now.

28 Do you assist passengers to and from your vehicle(s)?

YES

NO

Sometimes (please specify)

29 How far in advance must a passenger schedule their trip? _____

30 What are the eligibility requirements for using your agency's transportation services and what is the process to be "qualified"?

31 How many passenger trips do you provide per month? _____

Passenger Trip – One person making a one-way trip from origin to destination. One round trip equals two passenger trips.

32 How many individual clients do you transport per month? _____

33 Approximately how many hours per month do your employees spend transporting passengers?

34 About how many vehicle miles per month do you operate transporting passengers?

35 What is your agency's transportation service strength?

Unmet Needs

36

Thinking of the clients or individuals your agency/organization represents, what transportation needs are not being met adequately? (Please be specific and include any special needs ,requirements, destinations or social activities.)

37

Thinking of the clients or individuals your agency/organization provides transportation services to, what transportation needs are you aware that are not met adequately? Please be specific and include any special needs, requirements, destinations or social activities.)

38

What are the barriers / obstacles to meeting those needs? Why are these transportation services not being met?

39

Do you have any other information to share?

Appendix 2



Northwestern Minnesota Public Transportation User Survey

Please fill out this survey to provide needed information on local transportation services.

1. Do you use public transportation? Yes No
If no would you be interested in learning more about public transportation Yes No
2. Frequency of use: Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally
Never Ridden
3. Length of trip: 1-3 hours 3-6 hours 6 or more hours
4. Destination: Hospital Store Work Other
Where if other: _____
5. Would you prefer extending the hours/days of public transit services?
Yes No
6. Do you need a ride to work? Yes No
7. What do you like best about public transportation?

8. What do you like least about public transportation?

9. What county do you live in? Roseau Kittson Marshall Pennington
Red Lake Norman Polk

Thank you for completing this survey