Itasca County Area Transportation Study

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16. Abstract (Limit: 250 words)

A team of researchers from University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and Center for Transportation Studies conducted a study evaluating the cost and ease of implementing a variety of options for people to travel within and outside Itasca County, Minnesota.

The county presents a challenge to transportation planners, as it is the 3rd largest in the state by land area, but one of the smallest in terms of population. To gain an understanding of the key transportation needs, we held a series of focus groups, listening sessions, and one-on-one interviews, and also conducted background research that included demographic analysis, mapping of the "mis-match" between the location of jobs and where the workers lived, and a national scan of best practices in providing rural transportation.

This work resulted in a number of recommendations ranging from improving bike routes and awareness of public transportation, to improving bus service linking Itasca County to Duluth and launching an online carpool service. The recommendations fall into five functional categories:

- Policy and Administrative changes
- Communications, Education and Outreach changes
- Opportunities for Coordination and Cooperation
- Operations, Maintenance and/or Service Improvements
- Cost Sharing or Saving Opportunities

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Similarly, we would like to thank all of the stakeholders and other interested people that took the time to be part of our data gathering events. We were very pleased with the number great ideas that came from these events, and enjoyed the opportunity to facilitate the information sharing that resulted at these events. In particular, we would like to thank all of the participants from Arrowhead Transit, who not only gave us invaluable information about their services as we needed them, but also have committed to implement a number of our recommendations even before the ink had dried on this report.

We also are greatly indebted to the members of the advisory group we convened in Minneapolis: Mark Hoisser, President of DARTS; Catherine Sullivan, associate professor of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at Saint Catherine University; Holly Barcus, assistant professor of Geography at Macalester College; Ken Buckeye, AICP, Program Manager at the Minnesota Department of Transportation; and Becky Alper, Principal Planner at the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Their unique perspectives and access to additional sources of data and other information substantially improved the quality of our analysis and recommendations.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the efforts of Joe Barbeau, Linda Preisen, Jean Mullins, Laura Noble, Tammy Schwartz and all the other staff members of the Humphrey Institute and Center for Transportation Studies that assisted us in drafting the proposal, preparing this final report and every step in between.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Executive Summary

In 2008, the United Way of 1000 Lakes identified transportation as a key barrier to accessing health and human service needs in Itasca County, Minnesota. Significant portions of Itasca County's population are elderly and/or poor. In addition, children and students who are unable to drive face similar mobility challenges. This problem is compounded by Itasca County's large geographic size and relatively small population, making it difficult to provide conventional alternative transportation options. In 2008, these issues were highlighted in a local United Way Needs Assessment report, "What Matters."

In February 2009, the Blandin Foundation responded to the issues identified in the United Way report by convening a group of community stakeholders to address the issue. In April 2009, this group issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking work that would:

1. Focus on needs of low-income worker, student, and senior populations in Itasca County while identifying options to improve transportation options for all area residents;
2. Identify best practices and policies from other comparable rural areas that may be relevant to the Itasca area, with a focus on innovation and cost effectiveness; and
3. Address the challenge and opportunities involved in changing public perceptions and behaviors as central to the success of this initiative.

A team of researchers from the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and Center for Transportation Studies responded to the RFP with a project that had the following objectives:

1. Learning and understanding the specific transportation needs and challenges of the noted populations, as well as the county as a whole;
2. Identifying comparable rural areas in the United States, and learning lessons from their successes and failures in meeting similar challenges;
3. Recommending practices and options that best fit Itasca County; and
4. Identifying key stakeholders and funding sources that need to be assembled to successfully implement the recommendations.

This document chronicles the process and presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations that resulted from these efforts.

The county presents a challenge to transportation planners, as it is the third largest in the state by land area, but one of the smallest in terms of population. To gain an understanding of the key transportation needs, we held a series of focus groups, listening sessions, and one-on-one interviews, and also conducted background research that included demographic analysis, mapping of the "mis-match" between the location of jobs and where the workers lived, and a national scan of best practices in providing rural transportation.

These efforts provided a wealth of information and ideas for improvement. Generally, however, the research team found:

1. There exists a lack of awareness of transit service extent and characteristics, of ride-share programs and of information sources and availability. We were struck at the number of times participants in our focus groups learned new information about available transit services.

2. This lack of awareness has lead to an underutilization of available services. Arrowhead Transit stands out among transit providers in peer counties for the share of rides it does provide, but we believe this number could be even higher.

3. Last-mile transportation needs are an impediment to transit patronage. To truly make transit useable by those who need it, and those who would prefer to take it, users needs must be anticipated from the moment they leave the door to their destination. Consequently, our recommendations include ideas for signage and enhanced information about connecting services.

4. Last, but certainly not least, automobiles need to be recognized and included as an important element of a multi-modal transportation solution. Transit serves a critical role in meeting the needs of those who cannot drive, and Arrowhead Transit is a key collaborator and focal point in these efforts. However improving transit alone will not meet the transportation needs of Itasca County residents. The vast majority of county residents by necessity rely on cars or other means of personal transportation. Given the county's large size, small population density, and limited public transportation options, the solutions proposed here emphasize the importance of improving access to reliable, safe, and affordable personal vehicles for those that can drive them.

The study concludes with several recommendations, grouped in the following categories. Descriptions and rationales for each recommendation, suggested lead agencies and estimated costs and time to implement are included in the full report.

- **Policy and Administrative Changes:** In general, these changes are relatively easy and low-cost to implement. They often involve a policy or administrative decision and no capital investment.

1. *Coordinate housing policies and transportation investments*
2. *Create fare transfer policy for Arrowhead Transit*
3. *Implement "complete streets" for bicycles*

- **Communications, Outreach and Education Changes:** These actions are intended to increase awareness of available services, promote the use of transit/ride-share services, and maintain contact with current and potential stakeholders to listen to their concerns and educate them about the transportation topics and services.

1. *Print "bikes welcome," and/or "go to www.arrowheadtransit.com or call 211 for information" on Arrowhead Transit buses*
2. *Publish information about how to access Duluth airport, including DTA transfer information*
3. *Promote transit as safe, comfortable, economical and "green."*

4. *Consolidate Arrowhead Transit 1-800 numbers and place on buses*

- **Opportunities for Coordination and Cooperation**: In a large and low-density area such as Itasca County, it is very difficult for any one entity to satisfy the transportation needs of the community. Fortunately, many public and private entities exist that are engaged in providing or improving transportation services to specific segments of the population. This category encourages the formation of partnerships to share ideas, people, vehicles and funds to increase the effectiveness of the resources each brings to the table.

1. *Create Transit working group – possibly through existing Chamber of Commerce transportation committee.*
2. *Periodically disseminate transit information with water bills or similar broadcast methods*
3. *Create a Shared Rides program*
4. *Work with employers to create vanpools, publicize Rural Rides*
5. *Create safe, visible and accessible carpool park and ride locations*
6. *Include bicycle parking facilities in park and rides*

- **Operations, Maintenance and/or Service Improvements:** These recommendations attempt to fill some of the service and program gaps identified. However, compared to the preceding categories, they require greater capital resources to develop and implement.

1. *City-wide (county-wide?) ride-matching on-line.*
2. *Add "Arrowhead Transit Stop" signs, and even benches, at key locations*
3. *After school "circulator" service*
4. *Regular, scheduled bus routes*
5. *Create a commuter rail service connecting communities along the Range*

- **Cost Sharing or Saving Opportunities:** These recommendations require higher capital investments but have the potential for high effectiveness in satisfying segments of the population whose transportation needs are otherwise difficult to serve.

1. *Discounted car maintenance program*
2. *Subsidized car purchasing program*
3. *Small carsharing program (perhaps located at ICC?)*
4. *Community bike-sharing program*

Part I: Introduction

In 2008, the United Way of 1000 Lakes identified transportation as a key barrier to accessing health and human service needs in Itasca County, Minnesota. Significant portions of Itasca County's population are elderly and/or poor. In addition, children and students who are unable to drive face similar mobility challenges. This problem is compounded by Itasca County's large geographic size and relatively small population, making it difficult to provide conventional alternative transportation options. In 2008, these issues were highlighted in a local United Way Needs Assessment report, "What Matters."

In February 2009, the Blandin Foundation responded to the issues identified in the United Way report by convening a group of community stakeholders to address the issue. In April 2009, this group issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking work that would:

1. Focus on needs of low-income worker, student, and senior populations in Itasca County while identifying options to improve transportation options for all area residents;
2. Identify best practices and policies from other comparable rural areas that may be relevant to the Itasca area, with a focus on innovation and cost effectiveness; and
3. Address the challenge and opportunities involved in changing public perceptions and behaviors as central to the success of this initiative.

A copy of the RFP is included as Appendix A.

A team of researchers from the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and Center for Transportation Studies responded to the RFP with a project that had the following objectives:

1. Learning and understanding the specific transportation needs and challenges of the noted populations, as well as the county as a whole;
2. Identifying comparable rural areas in the United States, and learning lessons from their successes and failures in meeting similar challenges;
3. Recommending practices and options that best fit Itasca County; and
4. Identifying key stakeholders and funding sources that need to be assembled to successfully implement the recommendations.

A copy of the full proposal can be found in Appendix B.

This document chronicles the process and presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations that resulted from these efforts. It is the hope of the research team that several of these recommendations will eventually be implemented, but they recognize the choice and prioritization of these rests with the Itasca Transportation Solutions (ITS) group convened by the Blandin Foundation, which issued the initial RFP.

Regardless, the research team is grateful to the efforts and support it received from Blandin Foundation staff and members of the ITS group. Without their help, this report would not have been possible.

Part II: County Characteristics, Demographics, and Transportation System

Itasca County: Geography, Climate, and Population

Itasca County is the third largest county in Minnesota. Located in the north-central part of the state, the region faces colder and longer winters than many parts of Minnesota. As of 2006 the estimated county population was 44,792 people, an overall increase of 1.6% since 2000. Because of its large size and low population, the 2000 census shows a relatively low population density of 16 people per square mile. The county's large size, inhospitable climate, and low population density compound or exacerbate the already numerous challenges faced by low-income persons, the elderly, and students.

Below are brief discussions and maps that detail the locations and concentrations of seniors, low-income persons, and students, as well as the locations of facilities and services critical to these target populations.

Seniors

Itasca County is "aging" as a whole and population projections through 2025 predict continued growth in residents age 60 years and older. As of 2006, adults age 60 years and older made up 23% of Itasca County residents and over one-third of Itasca County homes include at least one person over age 60. Itasca residents age 60 years and older are one of the few population groups whose poverty rate is actually *decreasing,* with the percentage of residents 60 years and older in poverty nearly cut in half from 16% in 1990 to 9% in 2000. Also, more than 80% of householders age 65 years and older own their own home. Despite a decrease in poverty and high home ownership amongst the elderly, older adults in Itasca County have shown concerning trends related to health and healthcare, including increasing obesity rates and an increase in the percent of healthcare costs attributed to prescription drugs.

Though poverty within the county's elderly population is decreasing, the overall population of residents age 60 and older is rapidly increasing. This group is likely to be increasingly dependent on healthcare services, unable to drive, or need assisted transportation services. In a 2008 survey of Itasca County residents, when asked "What five issues do you feel need additional or improved services?" transportation was cited as the second most important issue (coming in just behind 'families living in poverty'). Overall, transportation was cited by 67% of respondents as one of the top five issues, the highest combined percentage of all the given options. ("What Matters," G3)

Figure 1 shows the concentration of Itasca County residents ages 65 and older.

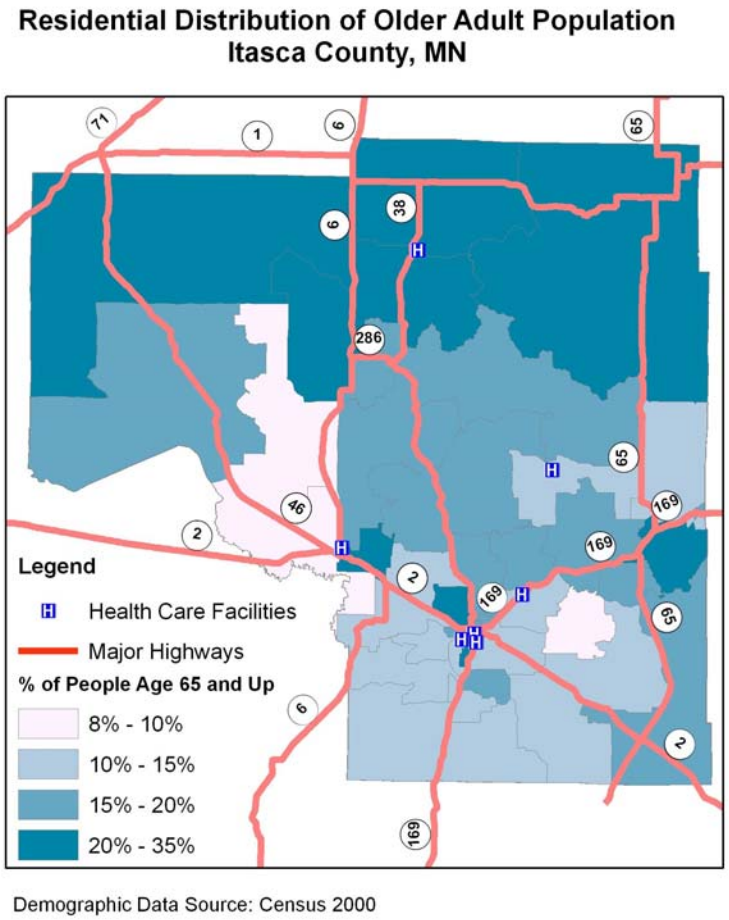


Figure 1: Residential Distribution of Older Adults, and Location of Health Care Facilities in Itasca County.

Most immediately evident in this map is that some of the most isolated areas of Itasca County, mainly in the north, have the highest percentage of people age 65 and up. Though total population and population density are both likely much lower in this region, it is still significant that the most isolated populations in the county often have some of the highest percentages of elderly residents. High concentrations of older adults also surround several of the larger towns in the County, including Grand Rapids, Deer River, and the Nashwauk/Kewatin area. The map also indicates there are less than 10 healthcare facilities in the county, most of which are centered in the Grand Rapids Area or located along one of the major county highways.

Low-Income Persons

As of 2005, an estimated 11.8% of people in Itasca County live in poverty, well above the state average of 9.2%. Increasing over the past five years and also above the state average is the child poverty rate, which as of 2005 was estimated at 17%.

Higher than average poverty rates are likely to indicate a greater presence of the most immediate economic challenge of being able to afford personal or public transportation. They are also often an indicator of other factors related to transportation including

physical and mental health, stability of housing, education, and more. Figure 2 and Figure 3, below, show the employment and residential patterns of low-wage workers. These maps allow us to visualize at a county level the transportation challenges faced by low-wage workers.

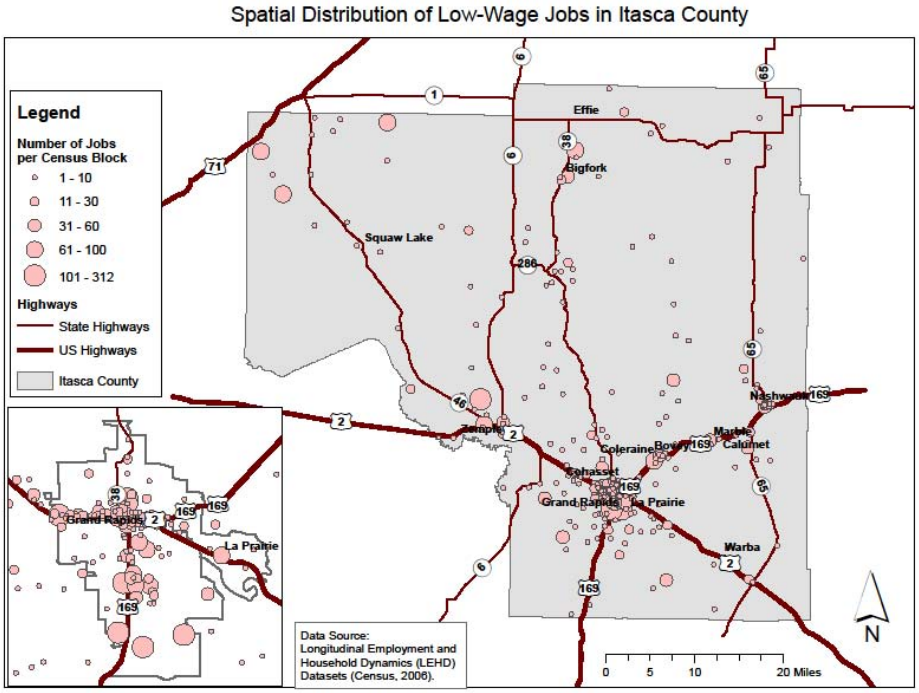


Figure 2: Distribution of Low-Wage Jobs in Itasca County.

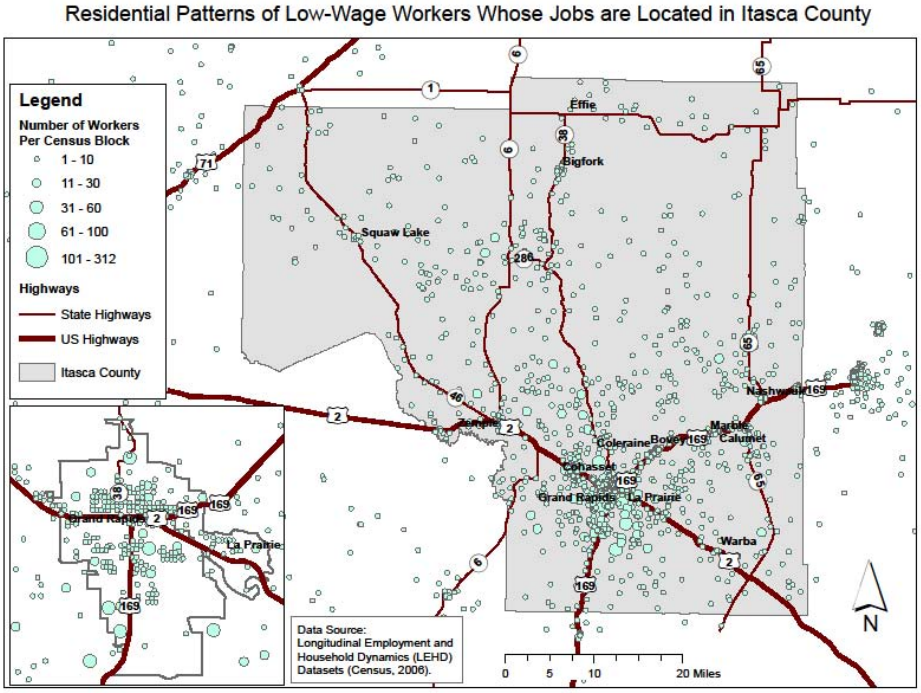


Figure 3: Residential location of Low-Wage Workers Whose Jobs are in Itasca County.

These maps indicate several important trends. As would be expected, there are high concentrations of low-wage jobs near population centers such as Grand Rapids, the Deer River/Zemple Area, Colraine, and Big Fork. The concentration of low-wage jobs fan out from Grand Rapids, particularly northeast along Highway 169 as it passes through Coleraine, Bovey, Taconite, and Nashwauk. Within Grand Rapids, smaller low-wage employers line the highways leading into town and are highly concentrated where Highways 2 and 169 intersect. A major set of larger low-wage employers are south and southwest of this intersection.

By contrast, the map of low-wage worker residential patterns indicates a greater dispersion of low wage workers across the county. Though somewhat concentrated in the Grand Rapids Area, and highly concentrated populations southeast of Grand Rapids, there is a general "spatial mismatch" of low-wage jobs highly concentrated in urban centers and non-coinciding, more dispersed residential patterns of where these workers live. Another example of this "spatial mismatch" is the prevalence of several larger concentrations of low-wage jobs in the Deer River/Zemple Area and the low concentrations of low wage workers that live in the surrounding area. These maps allow us to visualize this spatial mismatch, as well as the challenges dispersed low-wage workers face in accessing more concentrated low-wage jobs. These maps can also help policy-makers, employers, transportation providers, and other decision-makers visualize the spatial disconnect between housing and employment, as well as where transportation needs likely exist.

Students

Children ages 17 years and younger comprise 21% of Itasca County's population. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, as of the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year, 6,689 students were enrolled in primary and secondary public schools in Itasca County. Figure 4, below, shows the concentration of families throughout the county as well as the location of public schools in Itasca County.

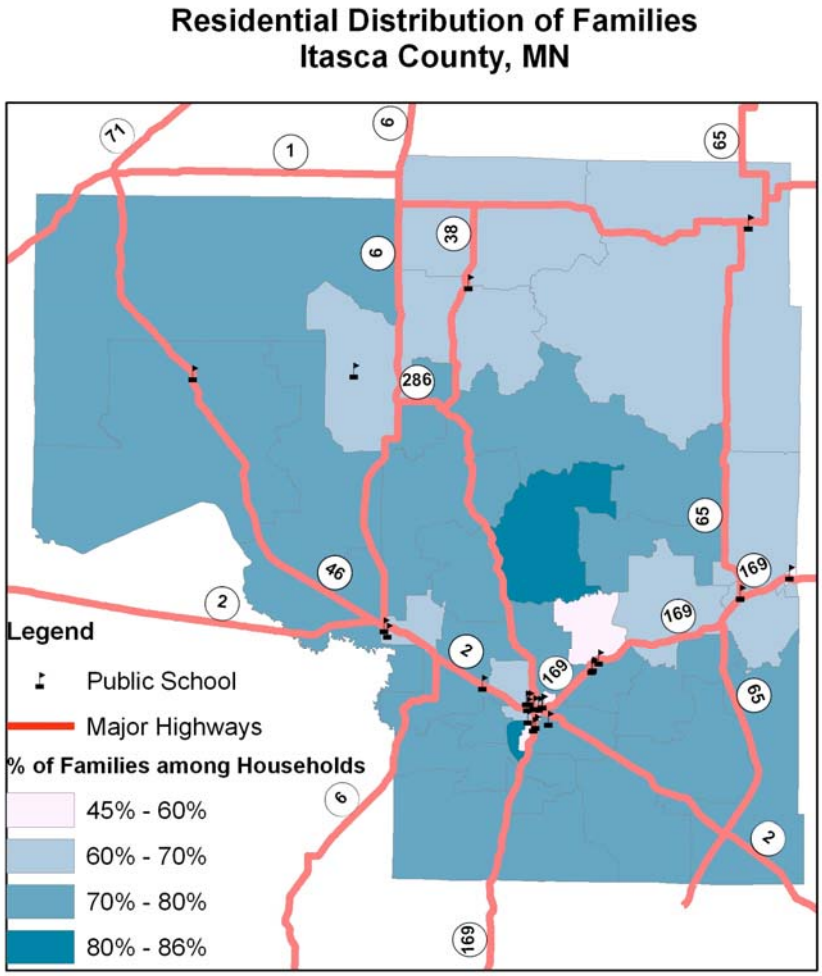


Figure 4: Residential Distribution of Families and School Locations in Itasca County.

Major Employers in Grand Rapids

Given the high concentrations of both population and jobs in Grand Rapids, also included below is a map (Figure 5) of major employers in the Grand Rapids Area. This allows us to see some of the major sites of employment other than low-wage jobs. This map also shows that several of the major employers such as Itasca Community College and Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital are somewhat isolated and outside the center of the Grand Rapids Area. This likely presents a challenge for employees of the sites as well as highly transportation dependent groups such as students, the elderly, etc. The distance of these major sites of employment from the center of town could indicate potential transportation gaps as well as sites in need of additional transportation services.

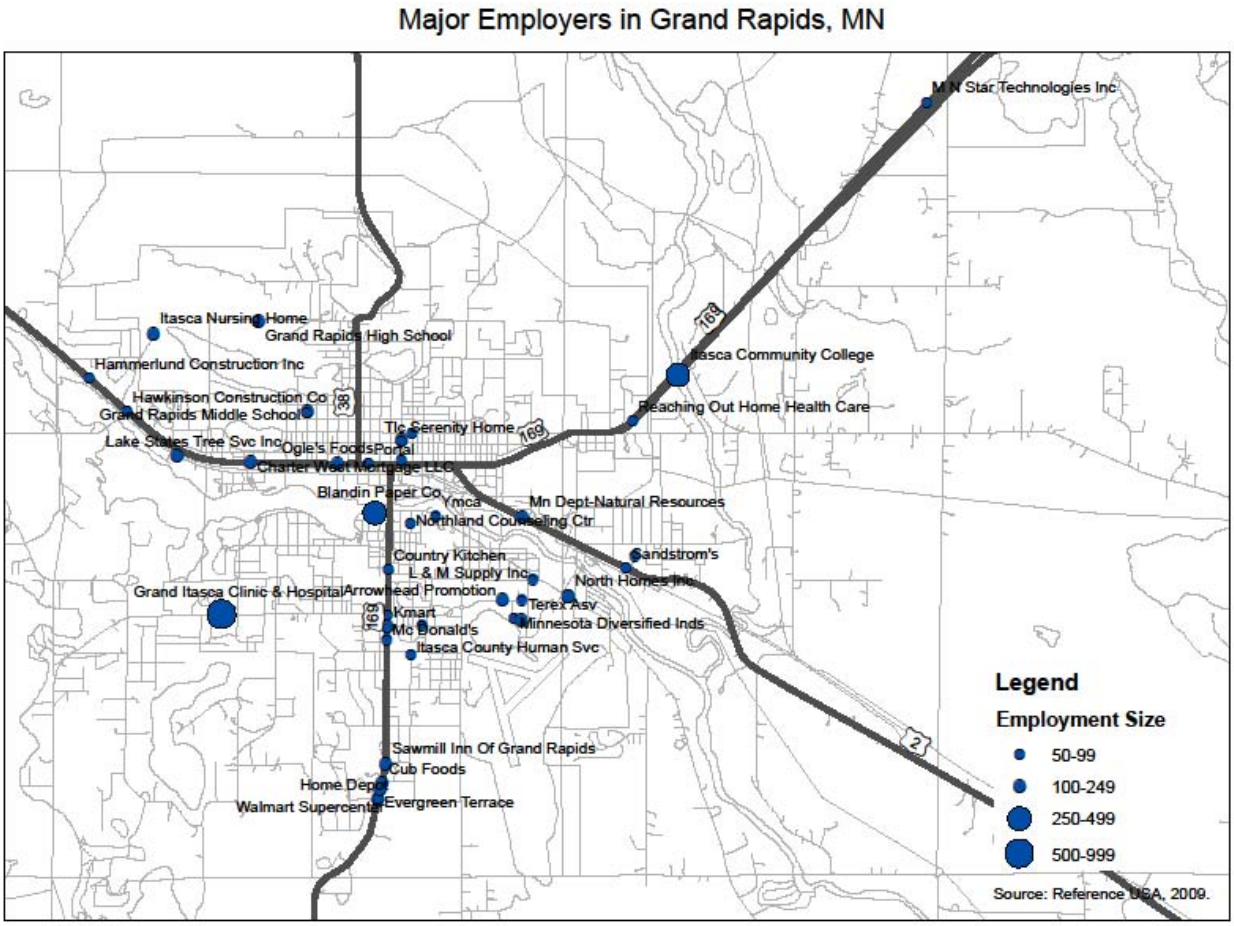


Figure 5: Location and Employment Size of Employers in Grand Rapids, MN.

Current State of Transportation

ADT Main Roads

Transportation in Itasca County is concentrated in the Grand Rapids Area and along Highways 2 and 169, which link Grand Rapids to nearby smaller towns. Figure 6 shows the busiest road segments in the county are in and around Grand Rapids, with the highest concentration where Highways 2 and 169 intersect in Grand Rapids with an average of 16,800 vehicles per day in 2005. In addition to numerous individual commuters, this likely includes a number of trucks and other commercial vehicles.

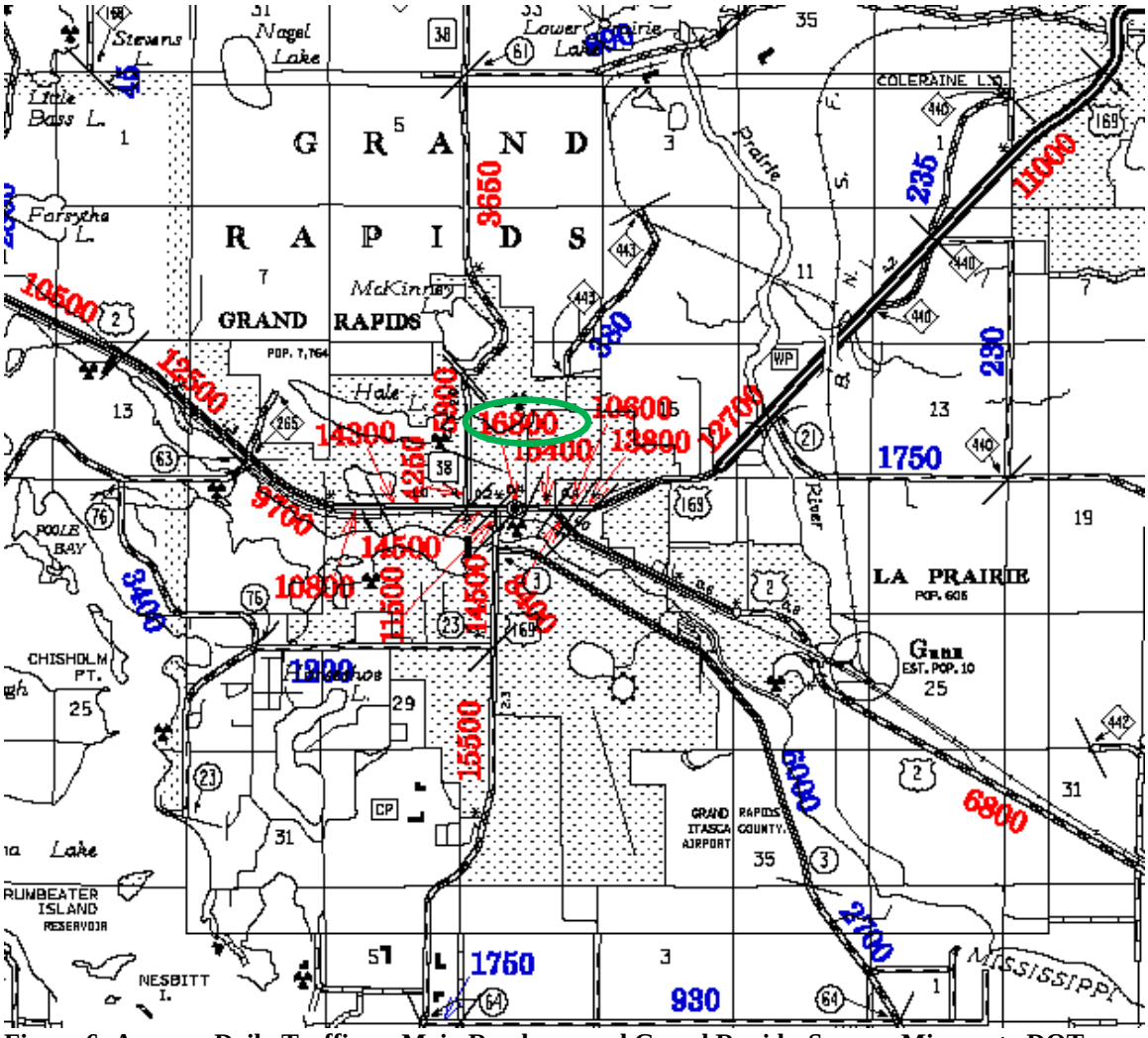


Figure 6: Average Daily Traffic on Main Roads around Grand Rapids. Source: Minnesota DOT: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/traffic/data/maps/trafficvolume/2005/counties/itasca1.pdf

Highway segments between Deer River to Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids to Nashwauk carry between 5,000-10,000 vehicles per day. North of Deer River and Nashwauk, few road segments carry more than 1,500 vehicles per day.

Arrowhead Transit

The primary provider of scheduled and demand-response public transportation in Itasca County is Arrowhead Transit (AT). Serving Itasca County since 1974, the mission of AT is to provide affordable, safe, accessible public transportation in support of independent living and an increased quality of life for the people of northeastern Minnesota. As a part of the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA), AT serves seven counties in northeastern Minnesota.

AT runs regularly scheduled routes throughout the county. The frequency of these routes varies from four-times daily to twice a month. Within the Grand Rapids area, AT also runs dial-a-ride services seven days per week. The map below shows these routes.

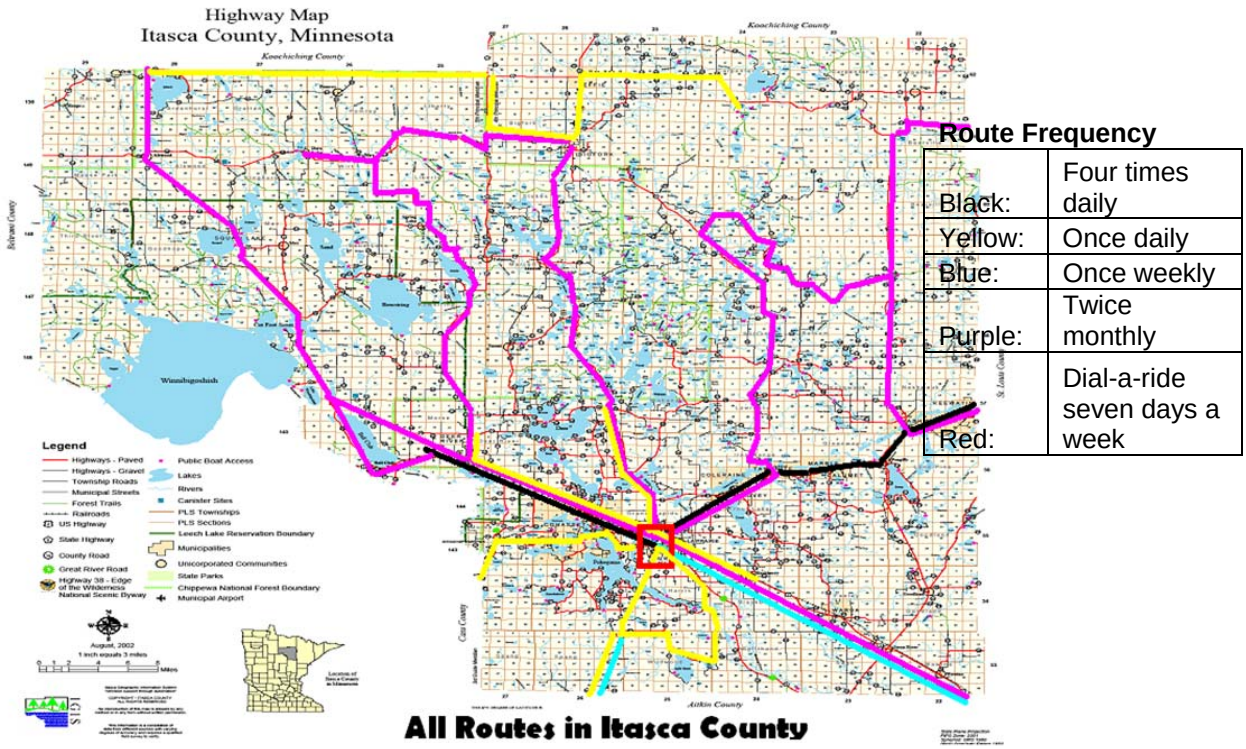


Figure 7: Arrowhead Transit Routes in Itasca County. Reprinted with permission.

AT's fleet consists of 79 busses, 22 of which are 20-passenger busses and the rest are 28-passenger busses. AT currently operates no vans or other vehicles for public transportation. According to AT's Transportation Director, all AT busses have lifts and are handicapped-accessible.

Arrowhead Transit also operates Rural Rides, which is sponsored by AEOA and is funded by the Minnesota Department of Transportation through a Job Access Reverse Commute Grant. Run through the Minnesota Workforce Center, Rural Rides provides transportation and transportation-related services for any work or work-related activities (rides to work, job searching, professional development, etc.). In 2008, AT used taxis, public transit busses, and volunteer drivers to give 7,000 rides through Rural Rides. The assistance they provide to program participants is typically short-term, though they given rides for up to two months and sometimes more in extreme cases. In order to qualify for the Rural Rides program, applicants must be at least 150% of the poverty threshold.

Comparable Counties

The commute (journey to work) modeshare for transit in Itasca County is just 1%, meaning that 99% of County residents' commute either by driving alone, carpooling, or (to a lesser extent) walking, biking, or working from home. Though only 1%, Table 1 (below) shows the transit modeshare in Itasca County exceeds that of nearly all counties

of comparable size and population across the country. Consequently, AT should be recognized for providing good services in a challenging situation.

County Name	State	Population	Pop. Density (persons per sqml)	Area Size (sqml)	Percentage of Population Commuting to Work by Public Transportation (workers 16 and older)
Itasca	Minnesota	43,992	15	2928.4	1.00%
Counties with +/- 10% Population and +/- 10% Area Size of Itasca					
Beltrami	Minnesota	39,650	13	3055.4	1.90%
Garfield	Colorado	43,791	14.8	2955.8	3%
Counties with +/- 20% Population and +/- 20% Area Size of Itasca					
Ravalli	Montana	36,070	15	2400.3	0%
Val Verde	Texas	44,856	13.9	3232.4	0.40%
Stevens	Washington	40,066	15.8	2540.7	0%
Counties with +/- 25% Population and +/- 25% Area Size of Itasca					
Tuolumne	California	54,501	24	2275.2	0.70%
Montrose	Colorado	33,432	14.9	2242.8	0.80%
Washington	Maine	33,941	12.4	2744.1	0.30%
Lincoln	Nebraska	34,632	13.4	2575.1	0.20%
Osage	Oklahoma	44,437	19.3	2303.8	0.20%
Iron	Utah	33,779	10.2	3301.9	0%
Kittitas	Washington	33,362	14.3	2333.6	0.10%

Table 1: Transit Commute Mode Share for Itasca and Comparable Counties Density. Source: 2005 – 2007 American Community Survey: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPGeoSearchByListServlet?_lang=en&_ts=276439099067

Given this challenging environment for transit, it is important to recognize the role of transit in Itasca County. Transit serves a critical role in meeting the needs of those who cannot drive, and AT is a key collaborator and focal point in these efforts. However improving AT alone will not meet the transportation needs of Itasca County residents, so we also examine other options for providing reliable, safe and affordable transportation.

Other Transportation Options in Itasca County

Transportation options other than Arrowhead Transit are limited and serve specific population groups. Several programs are run through clinics and other healthcare services, while others specifically serve the elderly or veterans. Table 2 (below) details the organizations in Itasca County that provide transportation as well as the names of their programs/services. The list was compiled by 211 First Call for Help information services in Itasca County. A notable point is that all but one of these providers are based in Grand Rapids, thus making Greater Itasca County residents' access to transportation services highly limited, if not impossible.

Organization/Business/Entity	Department/Service
Arrowhead Transit	Rural Rides, Minnesota Workforce Center
Itasca County Health and Human Services Department	Accounting Unit
Salvation Army	Emergency Financial Assistance
Rapid Transit	Volunteer Drivers
Deer River Health Care Center	Silverline (Deer River Mini Bus)
Reaching Out Home Health Care	In Home Services
Arrowhead Transit	Transportation
Arrowhead Transit	Ride Share Program (car pooling)
ElderCircle	Senior Wheels
Northwoods Cab	Taxi Service
Veterans (VFW) Bus	Transportation for Veterans

Table 2: Transportation Providers in Itasca County. Source: Itasca County 211 First Call for Help

Grants for Car Loans, Repairs, and Maintenance: ICSF

Other transportation "providers" include several foundations and social service agencies in Itasca County that make loans and grants available for organizations or individuals to purchase, repair, or maintain cars. One such program is the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation's Itasca County Sharing Fund (ICSF), whose goal is to eliminate the future crisis needs of applicants. ICSF makes transportation grants available for auto repair, tires, insurance, gas cards, and license fees. These grants have a $500 maximum, though the average grant over the past several years has fallen between $150 and $200. As of September 2009, ICSF has given 183 transportation grants.

ICSF's transportation grants have steadily increased since 2007. In the past two years, ICSF transportation grants have nearly doubled, going from 39 grants made in 2007 to 77 grants made in 2009. The average grant size has also increased. The figure below illustrates these trends.

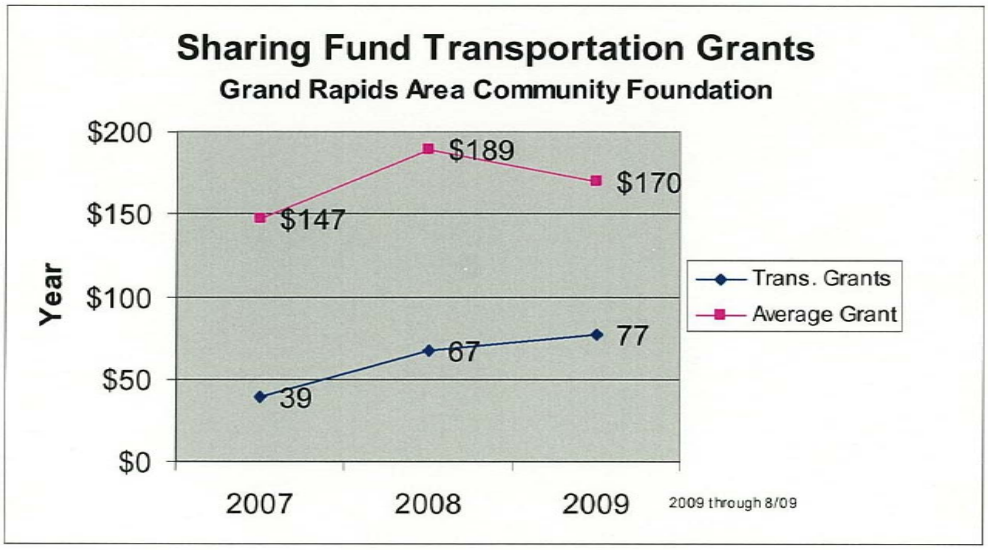


Figure 8: Sharing Fund Transportation Grants 2007-2009.

Bicycles and Walking

The modeshare for biking and "other means" in Itasca County is 1.5%, which is actually higher than the transit modeshare of 1%. The county also has a network of roads with wide shoulders that could make seasonal biking and walking in towns and even some rural areas a viable option. The maps below show biking possibilities and impediments across the county and more specifically in the major towns of southern Itasca County.

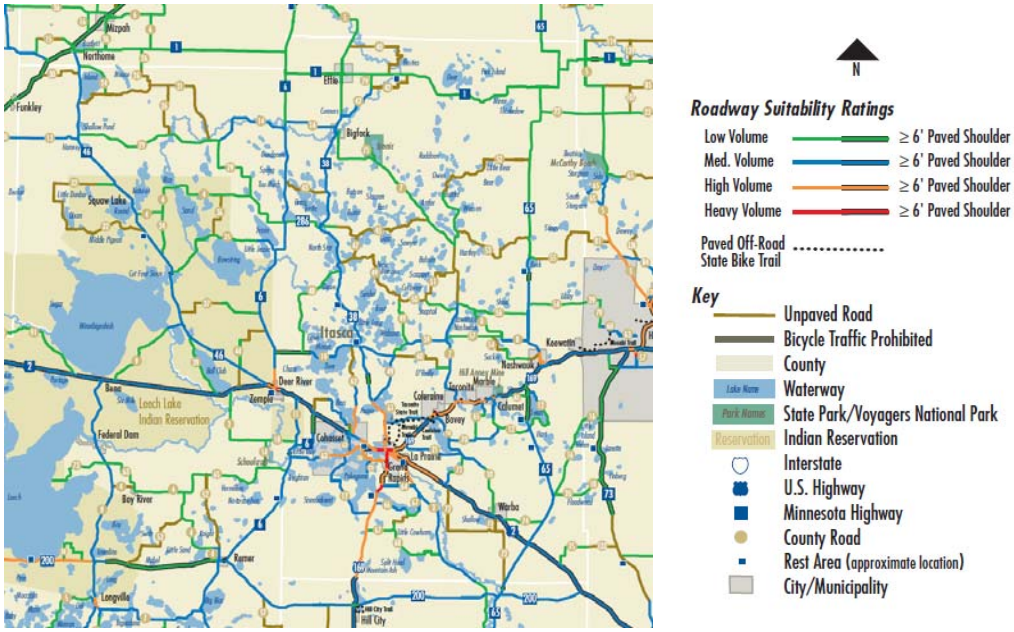


Figure 9: Bike Map of Itasca County. Source: Minnesota DOT: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/pdfs/ne.pdf

Figure 10: Closer View of Bike Routes in Itasca County. Source: Minnesota DOT: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/pdfs/ne.pdf

Numerous stakeholders and focus group participants expressed interest in expanding biking options as a means of recreation and commuting. On the other hand, many said

they do not see biking as a viable option, particularly given the long distances and cold climate. These options were seen as particularly difficult amongst some of the most transportation-dependent population groups (the elderly, low-income workers, etc.). Like all alternative transportation options, these challenges are likely a mix of reality and social stigma.

While many solutions must be focused on improving public transportation options, the 1% transit modeshare discussed above reminds us that the vast majority of county residents must by necessity rely on cars or other means of personal transportation. Given the county's large size, small population density, and limited public transportation options, the proposed solutions have a heavy emphasis on the importance of improving access to reliable, safe, and affordable personal transportation.

Part III: Transportation Challenges and Gaps in Itasca County

Summary

The low-income, elderly, and student populations in Itasca County face a confluence of transportation challenges. Some of these challenges reflect the commonly identified transportation difficulties specific to these population groups while others reflect common difficulties of providing transportation in rural areas. Low-income persons' challenges include affording and having reliable access to transportation, the elderly are often less mobile and more dependent on assisted transportation (to reach healthcare services, for example), and students are often incapable of transporting themselves and are required to be transported to and from school. Common transportation challenges in rural areas include limited financial resources, low population density, longer commutes, and infrequent transit service. Because regular transit is less frequently available in rural areas, transit is more likely to be structured around demand-response systems.

Several studies done on transportation and the community needs of Itasca County residents reflect these common themes and challenges. The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission and United Way of 1000 Lakes' 2008 report, "What Matters: An Assessment of Health and Human Service Needs in Itasca County," provided a wealth of information on the transportation needs of county residents. In addition to physical and spatial transportation gaps, these studies also indicate gaps in access to transportation in Itasca County that are more social in origin, such as lack of education, awareness, and a social stigma of public transit. "What Matters" also shows a prevalent disconnect amongst county residents (donors and community members) between understanding the significance of transportation as a major barrier to access, and the willingness to fund or otherwise contribute to addressing the issue.

Commonly Identified Transportation Challenges Faced by...

- *Rural residents*: First and foremost, providing public transportation in rural areas usually faces the challenges of limited financial resources and low population density. This makes it nearly impossible to provide any sort of comprehensive public transportation system. Nearly 40% of rural residents live in communities with no public transit and another 28% live in communities with limited services. (Pamela Friedman, "Transportation Needs in Rural Communities," 1) Rural workers also commonly face longer commutes, which further strain rural families' lower-than-average budgets, and the high cost or lack of transportation may often be a disincentive to employment. Working nontraditional hours can exacerbate these challenges. As a result of non-existent, insufficient, or limited transportation services, many low-income rural workers and residents rely on family and friends to meet their transportation needs.

  Rather than comprehensive transportation systems, demand-response services (when individuals request transportation to and from specific locations at specific times) are the most common transportation services available for rural welfare recipients, low-wage workers, and others who lack access to personal transportation. (Friedman, "Transportation Needs," 1) A recent report for the Carver County Office of Aging summed up the problem and its most realistic solution, "Meeting transportation needs

is a challenge that involves meeting these needs through good design and good planning... Mass transit is most likely not going to be the answer." (Guthrie and Dahl, "Community Assessment Development Process Draft," 31)

- *Low-income residents*: Low incomes and high poverty rates present the most immediate economic challenge of being able to afford transportation, particularly a personal vehicle. This often forces low-income persons to be more dependent on public transportation. For example, Minnesotans with incomes below the poverty line are three times more likely to ride transit to work than those with higher incomes. (Kane, "Smart Investments in Transportation for Minnesota," July 2009, i) Numerous studies have noted both the cost and lack of reliable transportation to be significant barriers to employment for low-income persons.

- *Seniors*: Older adults are increasing in number and, as they age, increasingly dependent on assisted transportation services, especially to and from healthcare services and providers.

- *Students*: Students are often incapable of transporting themselves to and from home, school, extracurricular activities, etc. Rural students in particular face significant transportation challenges due to low-population density, lower family incomes, etc.

Transportation Gaps and Needs in Itasca County

Numerous focus groups and surveys in previous studies indicate that a majority of Itasca County residents identify transportation as being a major barrier to accessing programs/services and needing improvement. While identified as a major issue by both community members and donors, transportation was more likely to be cited as a major issue or barrier to access by community members than it was by donors. For example, "What Matters" found that 77% of focus group participants identified transportation as one of the greatest barriers to accessing services/programs whereas 51% of donor survey respondents cited transportation as a major barrier. ("What Matters," G4, H5)

Both "What Matters" and "Lack of Transportation in Itasca County," a 2009 report for Arrowhead Transit, noted that transportation as a barrier to accessing programs/services in Itasca County may be real (i.e. limited service, a family's inability to own a car), social in origin (lack of education and awareness), or perceived (stigma of riding the bus). As such, in addition to creative transportation planning, these studies suggest that education and outreach about existing options will be critical components of improving transportation in Itasca County.

Reluctance to Commit Funding

There is also a disconnect amongst community members and donors between understanding the importance of transportation as an issue of concern and the amount of money, time, and resources people are willing to direct toward this issue. "What Matters" found that while 67% of focus group participants chose transportation as a top five needing improved services, only 14% consider a top five issue worth devoting their money or volunteer time. ("What Matters," G3) Donor survey respondents had lower

response rates for each question and also a large gap between the two, with 32% citing transportation as a top-five issue of concern and only 2% considering it an top-five issue worth donating money or time. (“What Matters,” H4) This indicates that among both donors and the focus group participants, there is a disconnect between the need for improved transportation services and the willingness to fund or otherwise contribute to the issue.

Conclusion

Recent studies indicate that the transportation challenges Itasca County residents are facing are consistent with commonly identified challenges within population groups relevant to this study including rural residents, low-income persons, the elderly, and students. The existing studies on Itasca County also highlighted social origins of transportation barriers including lack of awareness, education, and a social stigma of public transit. Finally, these studies highlighted a divide between residents' understanding of transit as an issue of concern and residents' willingness to contribute to its solution (via time, money, resources, etc.).

Part IV: Methodology

In consultation with its Blandin Foundation sponsors, the research team sought to further explore the issues identified above, and identify possible solutions through three primary methods:

1. A series of focus groups held in Itasca County in late August 2009;
2. A "listening session" with key stakeholders and providers in September 2009; and
3. A review of best practices from transportation providers in similarly situated counties across the nation.

Each of these efforts is discussed in detail below.

Focus Groups

With the assistance of the Blandin Foundation and interested members of the ITS group, the research team convened four focus groups on August 27 and 28, 2009. Three groups were held in Grand Rapids: Seniors at the Senior Center meeting at the YMCA, low-income workers at a Circle of Support meeting at a local church, and college and high school students at Itasca Community College. In addition, the team traveled to Squaw Lake (S-Lake), a small town about 40 miles northwest of Grand Rapids, to meet with a cross-section of seniors, families and low-income workers. Each group consisted of 10-20 participants. Participants were asked to fill out a short survey, and then discussed answers to a series of questions. The results of these discussions are presented in the next section. The script of questions and survey are presented in Appendix C.

Listening Session

The research team returned on September 25, 2009 to present findings from the focus groups, offer insight from national case studies, and receive additional input on potential solutions. Approximately 20 stakeholders attended, including local elected officials and representatives from major employers, transit providers and local schools.

The meeting had two parts. First, members of the research team presented their findings from the focus groups and national research, and collected comments from the participants that were then used to refine and improve these findings. Participants were then split into two smaller groups. Each then went through an exercise that allowed them to suggest and rank additional solutions, or to further enhance those that were discussed in the earlier section. The results from these small group efforts are summarized in Appendix D.

Review of Best Practices

This effort largely included a review of literature and consultation with the scholars and other experts included in a local advisory group that included scholars in rural geography and gerontology, a community-based transit provider and representatives from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The results of this effort are discussed in Part V.

Additional Data Gathering
In addition to the efforts discussed above, the research team obtained additional information through two other efforts:

1. An open house at the Blandin Offices on September 25, 2009; and
2. Targeted interviews with stakeholders that were unable to attend the listening session.

Part V: Present Issues in Itasca County

The following section outlining present issues in Itasca County consists of common themes that emerged during the four focus groups held with target populations (seniors, low-income workers, rural residents, and students) in late August 2009.

Seniors

While most of the participants in the senior focus group still had the access and ability to drive their own car, several had given up driving and now rely on family, friends, and limited transit services to get around. Though many still drive, nearly all expressed concern that they would eventually have to give up their car. The loss of ability to drive is a common concern amongst the elderly, and is particularly relevant given that Itasca County is aging as a whole.

Focus group participants also lamented the lack of inter-city service. Participants wished that flights to St. Cloud and Twin Cities still existed, as well as Greyhound / Jefferson Lines service to Duluth and the metro area, though they acknowledged that service was probably lost due to lack of ridership. While the weekly bus trips to Duluth still exist, participants said drop off sites in Duluth make little sense. Focus group participants said it would make more sense to include a stop at the Duluth Greyhound station, as well as the Duluth airport. There was general consensus that any long distance traveling (past Hibbing) requires relying on a friend or family. One participant wished she could express to bus and other transportation companies that, "There's life after Hibbing."

With respect to transit in Grand Rapids, the primary desire expressed in the seniors' focus group was for more frequent regularly scheduled transit service. Complaints about existing service included unpredictable wait times and having to pay a fare each time they boarded a bus with no exceptions (i.e. no transfers available). Finally, readily accessing accurate information about transit is often challenging since most seniors in the focus group obtain information by word-of-mouth. While some are likely to call Arrowhead Transit or other service providers, very few prefer to or are able to use computers.

Low-Income Workers

Nearly all participants in the low-income focus group were drivers, but several had stories of cars not being reliable, available when needed, or too expensive given their long trips. Many of the low-income workers cited the "Catch 22" of having to choose between unreliable transit services and the high expenses of car ownership and maintenance. As such, in addition to suggesting expanding transit services and improving quality, more creative suggestions from the low-income workers focus group included creating an auto service station that provides discounted repair and maintenance services or, similarly, to start a "community garage" open to the public that supplies tools and trains people on basic auto maintenance and repairs.

Some participants had used the bus before and were quick to mention unpredictable wait times, difficulty chaining trips, the need to supply car seats for children, the lack of variety of busses, and inconsistent bus stops. One particularly moving story was of a mother who had great difficulty trying to use what she described as sporadic and

unreliable public transportation to juggle work, child care, and basic family needs. Many participants acknowledged that seeking assistance in transportation from family and friends was more realistic than relying on public transportation.

Access to information was also a major issue cited by this population group. Participants were quick to concur that using a computer to get info about transportation is hard, especially for low-income people. First, a person needs a computer. Also, information on transportation websites needs to be up to date. One story was shared of a transportation provider's location and contact information on the Internet being several years outdated.

During the focus group, a low-income worker in the Circles of Support program shared valuable information with the group that the Workforce Center and First Call for Help (211) will give rides to anyone for any job searching or professional development activities. Several low-income workers and allies also shared the process and requirements for both volunteer drivers and riders to participate in the "Rural Rides" program provided by Arrowhead Transit. That focus group participants were unaware of a number of existing transportation resources is likely indicative of the lack of education and outreach.

Rural Residents of Greater Itasca County

Itasca County has numerous towns of several hundred people or less. In these areas any type of formal public of community transportation is virtually nonexistent. In the focus group in the town of S-Lake, which is located about 40 miles northwest of Grand Rapids and has a population of less than 100, the car was seen as the only practical mode of transportation. For these rural residents, their only reasonable options were to drive, get a ride, or hire a driver as a last resort. They knew of transit services, but were unsure if it was still available outside of Grand Rapids, or how to access it. The greatest transportation needs were for medical appointments (seniors), work, child care, school, after school events, and summer activities for kids. Transportation for teen and single parents is particularly difficult in such isolated areas. The school bus does not allow kids on the bus (infants or otherwise) unless they are enrolled in a school program. The bus also doesn't have seat belts, safety seats, etc. Also, given the longer trips, harsher conditions, and lower than average incomes, regardless of age or status, most participants described their cars as old and not reliable.

The experiences of S-Lake residents remind us that many, if not most, of Itasca County residents live in smaller, more isolated communities, only 1% of whom rely on any type of public transportation. Many of the suggested solutions involved making access to a car more affordable, such a car-purchasing assistance program for first-time buyers. Other suggestions, such as expanded ride share programs, also emphasized cars and vans. These suggestions reflect the importance of focusing transportation solutions on improving access to safe, reliable, and affordable cars.

Students

High school and non-residential college students in rural areas are a highly car-dependent group. If a car is not available to them, they often must rely on getting rides from family and friends. In addition, in rural Minnesota biking and walking are seen as recreational

and are not viewed as a safe option during the winter months. Though they are highly car-dependent, focus group participants were clear that the cost of owning and maintaining a car was a major, if not prohibitive, cost for them and their peers. Those without cars had tried transit, but found it unacceptable due to unreliability, schedule conflicts, and long walking distance to bus stops. On multiple occasions, they were unable to get to work or class on time.

Aside from getting to and from school, transportation is a major factor in students' ability to participate in after-school activities. Participants in the student focus group cited a number of administrative barriers to accessing school busses and vans as well as frustrations over various school districts' different interpretations and enforcement of rules regarding school bus use.

Given these challenges, rides are coordinated informally through social and school groups. Since non-school groups have no access to school-owned transportation, program directors and youth leaders are pressured to give rides to students, even when they are not supposed to. Several focus group participants shared that they either felt burdened by their task of transporting students or felt like they were missing out on opportunities due to their lack of access to transportation.

In the case of Itasca Community College (ICC), these challenges are exacerbated by the location of the college. The school is located outside of town and there are limited public transportation lines connecting ICC to Grand Rapids, much less the rest of Itasca County. Like many schools and colleges, ICC also has limited resources and can not assist students in getting to and from campus. The confluence of these geographic, economic, and administrative barriers makes transportation for students a complex and pressing concern in Itasca County.

Part VI: Survey of Case Studies and Best Practices

Context and Trends

Before examining case studies and best practices from innovative rural transportation solutions around the country, it is helpful first to survey prevailing trends throughout rural America in order to compare realities in Itasca County with those elsewhere. For instance, rural America continues to witness a declining role of agriculture and other land-based industries, particularly in the case of the family-owned farm. At the same time, rural areas in general are experiencing an expanding manufacturing base as tax incentives and similar efforts at rural economic development draw factories and other business away from regional and metropolitan centers. Likewise, rural communities have enjoyed relative growth in the amenities-based service sector, as well as in other service sector industries such as prisons and Indian gaming. Continued out-migration of younger populations and aging among the remaining population has resulted in an older, less-mobile rural population, which in turn has led to real growth in the retirement-based service sector. (Rural Primer)

At a time when increasing numbers of seniors and low-income individuals are depending upon community transportation services, these services face many operational and financial challenges tied to rising fuel costs and slashed state and local budgets. In response, transportation services generally have addressed mounting everyday challenges such as scheduling with everyday solutions such as technology. In keeping with the adage "change or die," many transportation services have successfully introduced novel approaches to offering and financing new and existing services.

Despite the need for innovation, research reveals that successful transportation services share a number of important characteristics. These characteristics include: the need for on-time service and reliable scheduling; few if any connections, particularly when two different modes of transportation are involved; and an emphasis on convenience, vehicle comfort, schedule flexibility when possible, and safety and security always. Courteous drivers and limited waiting also rate high. (Burkhardt)

Relative to their neighbors in more densely-populated urban areas where transit services are more common, diverse, and ambitious, residents of rural America are more reliant upon personal vehicles to get around. While bikes are still utilized, dedicated bike lanes and destination-friendly bike paths are far less common in rural areas. Although the streets of many rural towns are lined with sidewalks, pedestrian transportation is limited by distance, time of travel, weather, and fitness.

With respect to existing service offerings, traditional approaches to rural transportation typically can be arranged into three categories: fixed-route service, where a vehicle follows a predetermined schedule and route on a regular, predicable basis; demand-response service, in which individuals or groups schedule specific rides or stops along existing or fluid schedules and/or routes; and car- or vanpools, where groups of workers (often coworkers) self-organize to establish designated schedules, vehicles, and drivers. However, as the push for innovation in rural transportation services continues, the lines distinguishing these categories often blur.

As part of the Transportation Research Board's "New Paradigms for Rural and Small Urban Transit Service" program (Rosenbloom), the related research effort established a list of new paradigms for rural transportation: require and build new organizational structures; involve new providers – or old providers in new roles; adopt different models of service delivery; extend jurisdictional and other boundaries; develop new partnerships and nontraditional alliances.

Focus on Coordination

As an important element of the "new paradigm" (Rosenbloom), as well as a recurring theme throughout the literature, coordination of services has emerged as a strategy for improving existing transportation offerings through streamlined services, operations, and financing. In essence, coordination of service is a strategy for managing resources that allows public agencies, nonprofits, and other organizations to do more with their limited, if not diminishing, resources. Specifically, coordination of services aims to reduce the average cost of providing trips by increasing the number of trips per hour, to enhance mobility within the local community and among neighboring communities, to generate new revenues for transportation services, and to preserve individual independence and to enhance quality of life.

Given such aims, the benefits of coordination include: the ability to leverage additional transportation funding; increased trip cost efficiencies for programs and providers; expanded travel and mobility; various service quality improvements; a demonstrable means of getting more results from limited resources.

To be successful, this approach requires sharing power, as well as responsibility, management, and funding shared among organizations. As a result, the effort can be rather process-oriented as it brings together a variety of stakeholders under the banner of improved transportation service. (Burkhardt)

Case Studies in Transit Service

Among the many examples of successful attempts at coordination of service is Chatham Area Transit, which serves the Savannah, Georgia, area. This transportation information and service exchange brands itself a "mobility enterprise" in that it coordinates services across a multi-county, bi-state area. The organization has enjoyed various efficiencies associated with economies of scale by reversing long-standing fragmentation in service delivery. (www.catchacat.org)

In Wichita, Kansas, the Sedgwick County Transportation Brokerage serves as a "modified" transportation brokerage in that some transportation services are provided for directly, while others are contracted out. (Kerschner and Hardin) Funded in part through the FTA 5311 program, the modified brokerage utilizes a centralized call center with one phone number to coordinate caller needs with existing transportation service from one of seven area providers. By coordinating a varied vehicle fleet – as well as multiple public and private funding streams – to serve mixed populations, the modified brokerage frees up time of care managers and social service advocates who otherwise would scramble to cobble together transportation schedules.

Finally, Prairie Hills Transit, located in Spearfish, South Dakota, highlights another approach to coordinated services. (Kerschner and Hardin) Here, the transit operator serves the capacity of a regional transportation coordinator, holding the titles of vehicles it leases back to nearby communities, managing vehicle purchase orders and schedules, providing for maintenance, and ensuring that a local match is available for vehicle purchases. Combined, these efforts result in increased use and efficiency of each community's vehicle fleet.

Flexible and Non-Traditional Funding

In Sanford, Maine, the York County Community Action Corp (YCCAC) leverages Medicaid reimbursements to subsidize transportation service. Specifically, the organization has an agreement with the local hospital that calls for YCCAC vans and buses to provide transportation to as many people as possible on days that its vehicles are scheduled to be available. In turn, the hospital fills the gaps in the schedule by providing transportation on days when YCCAC cannot due to scheduling conflicts. The hospital then bills YCCAC for all Medicaid eligible rides. By handling the data entry and billing processes required for Medicaid reimbursement, YCCAC coordinated services allows the hospital to reduce its costs for providing transportation, thus allowing it to better serve non-Medicaid eligible patients. (Kerschner and Hardin)

At the same time, YCCAC has a separate agreement with a local adult day program in which the latter identifies individuals who require transportation services and who are eligible for MaineCare. The program then collects and provides trip information to YCCAC on dates, time, and mileage for eligible riders. Rather than actually provide the transportation service directly, however, YCCAC processes the required paperwork and bills MaineCare, and finally reimburses eligible family members, personal care attendants, or adult day service programs for providing the transportation services.

In addition, YCCAC collaborates with the American Cancer Society (ACS) on the "Wheels That Heal" program by coordinating logistics for ACS volunteers to provide transportation services for non-Medicaid eligible patients.

Promoting Rural Transit

Stressing that "investment in a marketing program for a rural public transportation system is essential for the system's success," past research (Panebianco) into the importance of marketing in rural transit found that marketing must be conducted both internally and externally. That is, while it is important for the transit service to be promoted to targeted segments of the population deemed to be potential transit users, it is equally important for operator personnel to understand how they fit into the organization's broader marketing effort. For instance, maintenance workers must understand that clean, well-operating vehicles present the transit service in a positive light, while friendly, welcoming transit drivers convey a similar, inviting message. When combined with more traditional marketing efforts aimed at public education, this approach to marketing matches transit promotion with transit reality.

Another study (Cutler) examining the impact of marketing in rural transit systems determined that the proper execution of appropriate marketing techniques could lead to a

sizable increase in rural transit use. When adequately targeted and implemented, a set of marketing approaches – in this case, a television and radio ad campaign aimed at improving the local transit operator's image – resulted in an 11 percent increase in rural ridership over a six-month period in Twin Falls, Idaho. During this time, public support and awareness of public transportation improved in both Twin Falls and Idaho Falls; support for local government involvement in transportation also increased in both locations, as well as in Pocatello, Idaho.

In addition to offering effective coordinated services, the Sedgwick County Transportation Brokerage of Wichita, Kansas, offers low-level incentives for added transportation services through its "Extra Mile Program." Specifically, the organization encourages area taxi drivers to "go the extra mile" by accommodating senior-specific needs, such as a slower place, personal service, and assistance in getting to appointments. Using a system to garner rider feedback, the organization issues $20 gas cards to taxi drivers who elicit positive feedback from drivers.

When it comes to creative transit offerings in rural areas, the San Joaquin Valley, California, vanpool program serves as a strong model. In serving various populations, whether it be the elderly or low-income college students, agricultural workers or public employees, the vanpool program provides access to schools, jobs, and medical services, among other destinations. Above all, a safe, practical way for workers at a job site to "self-organize," with local government providing equipment, insurance and other logistics, the program requires that nine or more people from given job site organize a vanpool in which at least one person meets driver qualification criteria. In turn, the Kings Area Rural Transit (KART) receives grant money to purchase the van and to register the driver(s). KART then charges the vanpool an affordable monthly fee based on miles travelled. As an added service, KART provides 24-hour on-site repair services. In sum, the model has proven to be operationally self-sufficient, with the monthly fees fully covering program operating costs. (Kerschner and Hardin)

Carpooling

Although the practice of carpooling has been around for some time, recent advances in social media have given rise to new opportunities for matching personal transportation need with existing resources. One transportation-related product of the information and social networking revolution is Zimride, a self-styled "carpool community" that helps match trip supply and demand among mostly college, university, and corporate communities using a "route-matching algorithm." By combing this capacity with existing social media such as Facebook, Zimride not only matches ride-seekers with ride-providers, but it also allows the parties a chance to get to know one another prior to the ride or to stay in touch following the ride. (www.zimride.com)

Personal Vehicle Programs

Communities Investing in Families (CIF), an organization serving families in nearby Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, and Pine Counties, is dedicated to helping communities promote and sustain economic stability. CIF's stated mission is to "ensure that families have access to transportation, housing, jobs, education, and community support." (www.investinfamilies.org) To achieve this mission, the organization offers

several transportation-related programs, including one aimed at promoting car donations and matching them with those in need, such as the working poor, disabled, and recipients of public assistance. According to the program website, the car donation program provides eligible families with numerous benefits, including: receiving a donated vehicle; learning basic car maintenance; having adequate transportation for medical, dental or other appointments; the chance to drive children to quality child care; and the ability to participate in community and after-school activities. To encourage car donations, the organization educates donors on the tax incentives associated with such charitable giving.

In Anoka County, Minnesota, Free To Be, Inc. targets residents age 21 years or older, who qualify as Welfare-to-Work enrollees, immigrants, unemployed, underemployed, disabled or senior citizens, by providing assistance with car repairs, car donations, vehicle maintenance, and basic budgeting education. The program succeeds in matching needy residents with vehicle donations, volunteer mechanical services, and education programming, such as the popular "Car Care Saturdays." (www.freetobeinc.org)

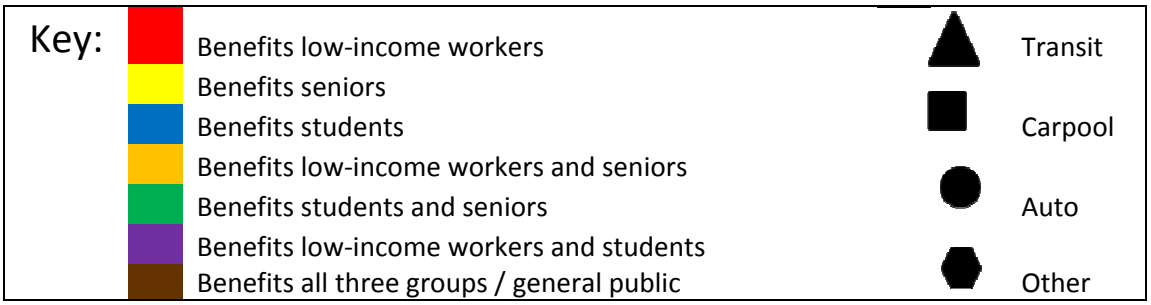
Carsharing

Although formal car sharing opportunities such as those offered by Zipcar, for instance, have typically been targeted toward urban centers, the practice of car sharing is catching on in less traditional settings. In areas where reasonable concentrations of individuals who do not require cars on a daily basis exist, carsharing opportunities are beginning to develop. For example, due to its large college and university student populations, Winona, Minnesota, now offers Zipcar service. (www.zipcar.com)

For rural areas lacking the critical mass for traditional carsharing models to prosper, but where coordination of services is in place, carsharing among local governments, nonprofits, and residents in need can be an attractive alternative.

Part VII: Itasca Transportation Solutions: Recommendations

We gratefully acknowledge that Arrowhead Transit has started to implement some of these recommendations already.



Policy and Administrative Changes

In general, these changes are relatively easy and low-cost to implement. They often involve a policy or administrative decision and no capital investment.

Coordinate housing policies and transportation investments

Description: A cross-sectoral partnership among local government agencies that promote integrated housing and transportation policies with specific aims to improve access to affordable housing and achieve the jobs/housing balance.

Rationale: Spatial analysis has shown that, while the majority of low-wage jobs cluster in Grand Rapids, low income workers in Itasca are sparsely distributed in the county and adjacent counties. This spatial mismatch phenomenon may not occur by choice. Compared to rural housing, housing price is less affordable in Grand Rapids and areas close to the city. Securing and sustaining affordable housing in the city could provide low-income workers more housing choices and ultimately help them to live closer to where they work.

Time to implement: An inter-agency partnership may be formed at the end of 2009 as the Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan is scheduled to be updated in 2009.

Lead implementing organization(s): Itasca County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), City of Grand Rapids HRA, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission, Grand Rapids City Council, and Arrowhead Transit.

Possible costs of implementation: The cost of establishing such an inter-agency partnership is relatively minimal. A small dedication of staff time and operational costs is all that would likely be necessary.

Possible funding source(s): Existing funds.

Create fare transfer policy for Arrowhead Transit

Description: An Arrowhead Transit fare policy that states a person may board a bus and ride it any number of times within a certain amount of time (e.g. two hours), while only paying one fare.

Rationale: A number of focus group participants felt uncomfortable with what they understood to be a need to pay a fare every time they boarded a bus. This included a senior who needed to ride only a short distance from her home to a Senior Center meeting, and a number of low-income workers who felt Arrowhead Transit could not work for them because they needed to drop their children at daycare. This perceived barrier led a number of these possible transit users to look to other modes. If they knew they could chain their trips on Arrowhead Transit, they may be more likely to use the service.

Time to implement: A policy could be implemented in less than six months.

Lead implementing organization: Arrowhead Transit

Possible costs of implementation: Such a change would likely impact the fare revenue of Arrowhead Transit. However, it is not clear whether this impact would be negative (same number of riders taking more trips), or positive (the transfer policy attracts enough new riders to offset any lost fares from existing riders that take advantage of the policy).

Possible funding source(s): If the policy does create greater costs, the additional operating costs could likely be funded through Section 5311 (Non-urbanized Area Formula Program), Section 5316 (Job Access & Reverse Commute) and Section 5317 (New Freedom) grants through Mn/DOT.

Implement "complete streets" for bicycles

Description: Adopt and implement a series of design guidelines for roads that provides space and other facilities for bicycle and pedestrian use.

Rationale: A number of study participants noted that they do not feel comfortable walking or biking around Itasca County due to wide highways with fast-travelling vehicles. Mn/DOT has developed a Complete Streets draft program that could be used to make these roads more attractive to alternative modes with minimal hindrance to motor vehicles

Time to implement: Can be adopted in less than a year. Widespread implementation will take several years as projects are funded and completed.

Lead implementing organization: City or local governments, such as the City of Grand Rapids, which could include this policy as part of their current comprehensive

planning process. Interested citizen groups, such as Get Fit Itasca, and Mn/DOT would be useful partners.

Possible costs of implementation: Adoption and promotion only have minimal costs for printing and other promotional and educational materials. Inclusion in construction projects varies by project.

Possible funding source(s): Mn/DOT may have recommendations for funding sources.

Communications, Outreach and Education Changes

These actions are intended to increase awareness of available services, promote the use of transit/ride-share services, and maintain contact with current and potential stakeholders to listen to their concerns and educate them about the transportation topics and services.

Print "bikes welcome," and/or "go to www.arrowheadtransit.com *or call 211 for information" on Arrowhead Transit buses*

Description: Some additional information about how to use Arrowhead Transit, placed right on the buses, stating "bikes welcome," and/or "go to http://www.arrowheadtransit.com or call 211 for information on how to ride."

Rationale: Over the course of this study we learned that potential users of Arrowhead Transit did not know that they could bring their bicycles aboard the bus, nor did they know how to contact Arrowhead Transit. Regarding the latter, it was suggested that the Arrowhead Transit phone number be posted on the side of the bus, but we learned this is not feasible due to the multiple phone numbers Arrowhead Transit uses to cover its service area.

Since these numbers are not always easy to find, we learned that many people obtain information about Arrowhead Transit services by calling United Way 211. Displaying this number on the buses could be an opportunity to cross-promote each other's services, at least until Arrowhead Transit is able consolidate its phone system (discussed in a later recommendation).

We did learn that Arrowhead Transit has created a new website at http://www.arrowheadtransit.com/, which dramatically improves the ease of finding information about obtaining a ride. Since this site appears to be newly launched, it will take some time for search engines to index it. It will also take people using/linking to the site for it to get some attention by the engines. One way to address this issue is to simply place the URL on the sides of the busses.

Another useful step would be for the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency Web site's link for Arrowhead Transit, (http://www.aeoa.org/atitasca.html) which is the first one to show up on Google, Yahoo, and Bing on a search for "Arrowhead Transit," to include a redirect or new prominent link to the new site.

Finally, to further improve the site, Arrowhead Transit may want to consider the following changes:

1. Remove underlining from everything - it should be reserved for links only.
2. Pick one font, and only 2 or 3 sizes of that font for headers.
3. Eliminate font colors, except in headers and links, everything else should be black.
4. Don't repeat content on the same page.
5. Move to a one-column layout on all pages - multiple columns can cause the search engine to catalog bizarre mixed-up content (from reading straight across 2 columns).
6. Use descriptive links, headers and page titles.

A related idea is to provide more information about how parents may ride with their kids. A number of focus group participants stated they believed they could not ride Arrowhead Transit buses with their kids, or at least that they needed to provide car seats.

Time to implement: These messages could be added as buses are brought in for maintenance.

Lead implementing organization: Arrowhead Transit

Possible costs of implementation: Possibly less than $100 per bus, which may be included as part of regular operating and maintenance costs.

Possible funding source(s): Existing funds

Publish information about how to access Duluth airport, including DTA transfer information

Description: A short, detailed description of the steps one needs to take from boarding the Arrowhead Transit bus at Grand Rapids to arriving at the Duluth airport. This should include information on Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) bus routes to transfer to, and frequency of service. This information should be available in paper and on-line formats. The latter could include links to the DTA website, including route maps and schedules.

Rationale: The senior citizens that participated in this study noted the lack of inter-city transportation available for trips out of Itasca County. Arrowhead Transit does provide weekly service to Duluth, a service we understand is well utilized, but participants did not seem to know how to maximize this opportunity. Their understanding, as we heard it, is that this trip terminates at a shopping mall in Duluth. However, we have since learned that this run not only includes stops at the mall, but also at Downtown Medical Facilities, the downtown transfer center, the Greyhound station, and the airport. In addition, we learned that the DTA runs Route 5 directly to the airport from this mall at least once an hour and Route 10 to the transfer point two or three times per hour.

If riders are aware of these additional stops and transfer opportunities, they should be able to plan connections to flights, intercity bus service and other intercity travel opportunities.

We also note that Duluth is in the process of planning a major multi-modal transportation depot. Should this come to fruition, information about how to take advantage of this service should obviously be developed.

Time to implement: A paper version of this brochure could be produced in a matter of weeks. An on-line version would ideally coincide with the upgrade of the Arrowhead Transit website we understand is underway.

Lead implementing organization: Arrowhead Transit. Coordination and assistance from DTA and Mn/DOT to ensure accuracy of this information would be beneficial.

Possible costs of implementation: Relatively minimal. A small dedication of staff time and costs for publishing the material is all that would likely be necessary.

Possible funding source(s): Existing funds. Enhancements to this service would likely qualify for Section 5311 funds.

Promote transit as safe, comfortable, economical and "green"

Description: Arrowhead Transit develops a new marketing message, printed on all materials that promote its advantages over other modes, including improved safety, comfort, money savings and reduced pollution.

Rationale: Several participants stated a belief that Arrowhead Transit was only for seniors or those with disabilities, while others, even though they knew they could use it, were reluctant to because of the stigma of using a service that others perceived as only being for those with special needs.

Time to implement: Can begin immediately, but may take years to change perceptions.

Lead implementing organization: Arrowhead Transit

Possible costs of implementation: Minimal – mostly to obtain agreement on how to state the new message.

Possible Funding source(s): Existing operational budget.

Consolidate Arrowhead Transit 1-800 numbers and place on buses

Description: Upgrade Arrowhead Transit's reservation / dispatching telecommunications infrastructure such that it is served by a single 1-800 number, with calls being routed to the proper location (county) either automatically, based

upon geographical data generated by location of the call, or selected manually by the caller.

Rationale: In the focus groups, it was suggested that possible users would be more likely to pick up the phone and learn about Arrowhead Transit services if the reservation number was listed on the sides of the buses. However, we learned that the reason this is not done is that the Arrowhead Transit service area is covered by four different reservation numbers, and that the buses are used throughout the area.

One method for addressing the problem is the location-specific information provided through arrowheadtransit.com, which we find to be an outstanding tool. However, it remains only available to those with Internet access. Consequently, in addition to our recommending placement of "arrowheadtransit.com" on the sides of buses as a method of publicizing the availability of this information, we recommend creation of a single 1-800 number that would cover the entire Arrowhead Transit service area. This would allow the placement of the number on sides of busses for everyone to see.

Time to implement: Up to two years, to secure funding, purchase hardware and software, and publicize the change.

Lead implementing organization: Arrowhead Transit

Possible costs of implementation: At least $10,000, and possibly much more.

Possible funding source(s): Mn/DOT's Capital Facility Grant Program seems to be the most likely candidate. Funding sources for these grants include the State General Fund, State Bond Funds, and FTA Section 5309 Capital Program Funds.

Opportunities for Coordination and Cooperation

In a large and low-density area such as Itasca County, it is very difficult for any one entity to satisfy the transportation needs of the community. Fortunately, many public and private entities exist that are engaged in providing or improving transportation services to specific segments of the population. This category encourages the formation of partnerships to share ideas, people, vehicles and funds to increase the effectiveness of the resources each brings to the table.

Create transit working group – possibly through existing Chamber of Commerce transportation committee.

Description: A multi-jurisdictional committee or working group that would include representation of employers, Arrowhead Transit, local government officials and other interested parties, with a mission of working together to identify and implement opportunities that benefit both employers and employees. The Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce already has a Transportation Committee with a mission of "serving as an active voice in transportation issues on behalf of the Grand Rapids area." While the current membership and action plans appear to focus on improving transportation for commerce, this group may be a logical base for creating a

subcommittee or working group focused on transit, and/or other employee transportation solutions. (http://www.grandmn.com/services/committees.html)

Rationale: We were impressed at the information exchange that occurred during the September listening session, where employers and local officials offered to assist in making transit work, and Arrowhead Transit representatives noted tax and other advantages may be available to employers that take advantage of transit programs for their employees. This recommendation seeks to take advantage of that apparent willingness to work together to find mutually beneficial solutions. It is possible that these solutions could also benefit all transit users.

Such cross-sector collaborations have worked in the past: e.g. "Team Transit" in the Twin Cities, which led to the creation of park-and-rides, bus-only shoulders and other innovative, low-cost projects that could be implemented quickly.

Time to implement: Two to six months to get started, depending on how easily the major stakeholders can be brought together. We note the Chamber transportation committee has another meeting scheduled on November 17, 2009 at 12:00 noon in Chamber Conference Room.

Lead implementing organization: Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce. Other local officials could also serve to convene this group, but leadership by the private sector could send a tremendous message to the community about commitment to discern and implement new, innovative programs.

Possible costs of implementation: Minimal for convening the meetings of the working group. Costs for projects moving forward should be quite small as well, or even negative, given the ideas discussed at the listening session (e.g. tax breaks to employers, providing information about transit to employees or the public through existing venues)

Possible funding source(s): Initial funding could likely come from existing budgets of the partners. More capital intensive programs could likely be funded in the long term by Mn/DOT grants (http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/grantapplications/grantapindex.html), or leadership grants from private organizations.

Periodically disseminate transit information with water bills or similar broadcast methods

Description: Several cities in the area also run municipal utilities. They could occasionally include general information about Arrowhead Transit in their bills, which reach nearly every household. This information could include a statement that Arrowhead Transit is available to everyone, provides benefits, and that information can be obtained at the reservation number or at arrowheadtransit.com

Rationale: This was suggested by one of the local officials attending the listening session. It provides a low-cost direct marketing opportunity to put information about the benefits and opportunities provided by transit in the hands of Itasca County residents.

Time to implement: Up to six months to create material and coordinate with billing efforts.

Lead implementing organization: Local governments and Arrowhead Transit.

Possible costs of implementation: Cost of creating and printing material.

Possible funding source(s): Might work best as a joint venture between Arrowhead Transit and local utilities or governments.

- *Create a Shared Rides program*

Description: A program that enables community members to provide rides to seniors who no longer drive, while investing in their own long-term mobility. This program should utilize, or be modeled after the Independent Transportation Network (ITN), which allows older people to trade their own cars to pay for rides, and enables volunteer drivers to store transportation credits for their own future transportation needs. ITN's Road Scholarship Program converts volunteer credits into a fund for low-income riders, and the gift certificate program helps adult children support their parents' transportation needs from across the street or across the nation. (http://itnamerica.org/content/Overview.php)

Rationale: Several seniors we talked with discussed considering a need to move from Itasca County once they gave up their car. A community-based ride-sharing system could allow them to continue to live at home.

Time to implement: ITN America is considering how their model could work in a rural community. It appears, however, that they would be willing to discuss options with someone with the ability to call and begin making changes. (http://itnamerica.org/content/StartingAnITNAffiliate.php)

Lead implementing organization: United Way is identified as a likely partner, although local government could also serve as a sponsor.

Possible costs of implementation: Training and creation of a program. ITN is not clear about the costs of using their model.

Possible funding source(s): Local government or private foundation for start up. It appears to be self-sustaining after start up.

Work with employers to create vanpools, publicize Rural Rides

Description: A program that supplies vehicles and reimbursement to drivers as incentive for employees and other groups to organize themselves into groups that share rides to common destinations. It creates opportunities for workers in areas with little or no transit service to have a ride to work exactly when they need it.
A similar, existing, program that could also be publicized as part of this effort is Rural Rides
(http://www.aeoa.org/info_resources/arrowhead_transit/Virginia%20Brochure.pdf)

Rationale: This is a program that has worked in other areas around the country that could work in Itasca County.

Time to implement: One to two years to develop program, purchase vehicles and organize drivers and riders.

Lead implementing organization: These are often organized by rural transit agencies, although non-profits also perform this service. Consequently, Arrowhead Transit or the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency appear to be well-placed to lead this effort.

Possible costs of implementation: Initial investment costs for purchase and maintenance of vehicles and driver training are likely to approach or exceed $50,000. However, as noted below, user fares can cover operational costs, and may even amortize the initial investment costs.

Possible funding source(s): Vanpools are usually paid for through a variety of methods. Grants often are needed for start up and capital costs, while user fares cover maintenance and other operational costs.

Create safe, visible and accessible carpool park and ride locations

Description: Designated parking lots, or designated spaces in existing parking lots, that visibly encourage people to convene at that point and form carpools.

Rationale: In a sparsely populated county like Itasca County, it may not be practical for all members of a carpool or vanpool to meet at the origin of the trip. Rather, it may make more sense from them to meet at a common point along the route, and then continue the journey in a single vehicle. However, such meeting locations are not obvious, and often may lead to leaving a vehicle in a store parking lot, where it may not be welcome, or on the street, which an owner may not feel is the safest option. Designating places where such meetings are allowed can address this issue.

Time to implement: Less than one year to choose location and publicize.

Lead implementing organization: This would be an ideal opportunity for the Chamber of Commerce group recommended above. Zip Ride or Zimride, and

arrowheadtransit.com could be used to publicize the locations, as could cities and counties through municipal utility bills and similar efforts.

Possible costs of implementation: Costs for signage and publicity would likely total less than $10,000.

Possible funding source(s): Businesses to help provide and publicize locations.

Include bicycle parking facilities in park and rides

Description: Include bicycle racks or lockers as part of the park and ride locations described above.

Rationale: Including a safe place for a person to leave their bike means that those who would rather not, or cannot, drive have an option for making part of their trip by bicycle, and completing it by vehicle, thus extending the possible trips they could make while minimizing inconvenience to those providing the ride.

Time to implement: Concurrent with creation of park and rides.

Lead implementing organization: Those creating and providing park and ride locations.

Possible costs of implementation: Bike racks (parks two bikes) can cost $150 to 300 each to purchase and install. Purchase and installation of bike lockers can cost $1,000 to $4,000 each (parks two bikes).
(http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/engineering/parking.cfm)

Possible funding source(s): Private funds could be raised through advertising, sponsorships, or bicycling organizations.

Operations, Maintenance and/or Service Improvements

These recommendations attempt to fill some of the service and program gaps identified. However, compared to the preceding categories, they require greater capital resources to develop and implement.

City-wide (county-wide?) ride-matching on-line

Description: An on-line tool that allows people to post when they have an extra space in their car for a rider to use, and for other to post when they need a ride. Two popular examples are Zimride (http://www.zimride.com/) and Zip Ride (http://www.zipride.com/). The former has partnerships with Facebook and ZipCar, a national carsharing service. Opportunities for carsharing are discussed elsewhere.

Rationale: While we heard many stories of people already ridesharing (carpooling) with family and friends when a car was not available. However, they felt uncomfortable always asking the same people for rides. These services take

advantage of the Internet to create a virtual community where many more possible drivers and riders can find common trips.

Time to implement: Up to one year to effectively market and create a "critical mass" of users.

Lead implementing organization: This kind of program would likely find initial success at educational institutions, where students have varying schedules, fewer available cars, but several origins and destinations in common. Consequently, Itasca Community College would be a likely candidate. Indeed, Zip Ride and Zimride have developed specific programs for colleges and universities. However, it does appear this kind of program could also work for high schools looking to coordinate rides to and from after school activities.

Possible costs of implementation: Zimride charges an annual fee of $5,000 - $10,000 per year. Zimride's Facebook service apparently is cheapest. We were unable to obtain a cost estimate for Zip Ride.

As Zip Ride notes on their website, "The best ridesharing site is of no use if no one knows about it." The annual fee likely pays for this marketing and coordination cost.

Possible funding source(s): Initial funding would likely come from local private sources.

▲ *Add "Arrowhead Transit Stop" signs, and even benches, at key locations*

Description: Knowledge of Arrowhead Transit services could be enhanced by increasing the visibility of locations it serves. This could be done by placing signs that convey the message that "Arrowhead Transit Stops Here" at some of the more highly trafficked areas. The signs could also include the reservation number and/or "arrowheadtransit.com" URL. Benches that could also display advertisements for sponsors could further enhance this amenity.

Rationale: Many of the people we contacted in this study were not aware of the services provided by Arrowhead Transit. By providing some visibility at common origins and destinations, new users might be compelled to look into whether the service could work for them. Since these signs (and possibly benches) are location-based, the existing reservation line phone number could be displayed, while also providing another opportunity to publicize the arrowheadtransit.com website.

Time to implement: Up to one year to design, create and post. Possibly longer if sponsored benches are to be offered and sold.

Lead implementing organization: Arrowhead Transit, perhaps in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce.

Possible costs of implementation: These signs and benches could few thousand dollars each for high quality for design and production.

Possible funding source(s): Advertising sponsorships.

▲ *After school "circulator" service*

Description: A free or low-cost circulator van or small bus service traveling established routes that connect children and youth to after school and summer learning opportunities such as camps and tutoring programs.

Rationale: While schools provide transportation between home and school for classes, and to and from school for school-related activities, various restrictions leave students responsible for their own transportation between school and home outside of regular school hours and for non-school related activities. An example of a transportation service that allows children to access these activities was recently started in St. Paul (http://blog.lib.umn.edu/cdc/bythepeople/2008/09/post_15.php) and we understand a similar service has run in the Deer River district.

Time to implement: Up to one to two years, to obtain buy-in from all key stakeholders.

Lead implementing organization: We understand Itasca Networks for Youth is an existing organization well positioned to lead this kind of effort.

Possible costs of implementation: Equipment and operations may cost $50,000 or more each year.

Possible funding source(s): Other examples of this kind of service have obtained grants from private foundations, local and state government.

▲ *Regular, scheduled bus routes*

Description: Buses that run regular routes at specific times.

Rationale: Most transit users in our study spoke of a desire to have a transit system where they knew a bus would be at a certain place at a certain time. This was listed as a critical need in the United Way "What Matters" study.

Time to implement: At least one year to plan and implement.

Lead implementing organization: Arrowhead Transit

Possible costs of implementation: Planning, perhaps purchase of route planning software, additional buses to handle route, and operating costs. This could at least double or triple Arrowhead Transit's existing budget for operating in the area.

Possible funding source(s): We were unable to find a funding source that would provide the necessary on-going subsidy.

 *Create a commuter rail service connecting communities along the Range*

Description: A commuter rail passenger train providing intercity service, probably to Duluth, at a time that allows workers to use this as their journey-to-work mode.

Rationale: Rail tracks already connect many communities along the range. A rapid, convenient and comfortable passenger train service between these communities could increase the mobility of workers, allowing them to access job opportunities throughout the range.

Time to implement: At least five years, if not more.

Lead implementing organization: Mn/DOT. Private freight railroads would have to be cooperative partners.

Possible costs of implementation: Significant investments in locomotives and cars, and possibly also in upgrades to rail, right of way and signaling. This can easily exceed several hundred thousand dollars per mile.

Possible funding source(s): Would require significant government funding from a new source.

Cost Sharing or Saving Opportunities

These recommendations require higher capital investments but have the potential for high effectiveness in satisfying segments of the population whose transportation needs are otherwise difficult to serve.

 *Discounted car maintenance program*

Description: A program that allows those with demonstrated need to bring their cars to a specific site or sites where they can have routine maintenance or repairs done to their car at a steeply discounted rate. Or, a program that provides reimbursement for routine car services and repairs for those with demonstrated need. Similar programs have been developed through churches elsewhere, and we note our low-income focus group was held in conjunction with a program focused on meeting the needs of low-income workers, which was located at a church. Perhaps car repairs could be completed during these meetings.

We have also learned of these programs being administered and funded through non-profit organizations, such as Communities Investing in Families, which provides grants for both car purchases and maintenance in other northeast Minnesota counties (http://www.investinfamilies.org/brochure-wtw.shtml), and the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation (grants for maintenance to other non-profits).

Rationale: While Arrowhead Transit provides very good service to the area, one must recognize that on 1% of all work trips are made on transit, and probably an even lower percentage for non-work trips among those that are able to drive. Consequently, the best way to provide mobility to those that can drive is to provide them access to reliable automobiles. Purchasing costs and maintenance costs are the major financial barriers to car ownerships for those that are able to drive. This program would help address the latter situation.

Time to implement: Up to one year to assemble funding and publicize.

Lead implementing organization: KOOTASCA Community Action, Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency, the Itasca County Health & Human Services or similar organizations could take the lead in organizing this effort. Similar efforts in the Twin Cities were initiated by the United Way. Cooperation of local mechanics is, obviously, also critical.

Once the program is running, the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency could publicize it through arrowheadtransit.com.

Possible costs of implementation: This type of program, if it proves popular, could have significant costs. Programs we found had annual budgets greater than $10,000 per year.

Possible funding source(s): Itasca County Sharing Fund provides grants up to $500 from the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation to non-profit agencies. Private foundations, perhaps in cooperation with local financial institutions to assist in determining need, would be the most likely sources of initial funding. This type of effort may also be eligible for Federal Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316) funds.

- *Subsidized car purchasing program*

Description: This program complements the Discounted Car Maintenance Program described above, providing subsidized loans or grants to those with demonstrated need to purchase reliable auto transportation. Cars could be obtained through private donations, lease returns, or fix-ups of individual donations.

Rationale: Similar to the Discounted Car Maintenance Program Rationale. The fastest way to have the greatest impact in meeting the transportation needs of those that are able to drive is to assist them in obtaining a safe and reliable vehicle.

Time to implement: One year or more to assemble funding and publicize.

Lead implementing organization: Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency, the Itasca County Health & Human Services or similar organizations could take the lead in organizing this effort. The best example we found was the Communities Investing in Families program (http://www.investinfamilies.org/brochure-wtw.shtml), which

appeared to coordinate several key partners, including banks, mechanics and other stakeholders.

Once the program is running, the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency could publicize it through arrowheadtransits.com.

Possible costs of implementation: If popular, this program could have costs greater than $10,000 per year. However, if set up as subsidized loan program, some of the funds could "revolve," significantly reducing the annual budget needed to support the program.

Possible funding source(s): Private foundations, perhaps in cooperation with local financial institutions to assist in determining need, would be the most likely sources of initial funding. This type of effort may also be eligible for Federal Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316) funds.

- *Small carsharing program (perhaps located at ICC?)*

Description: A program allows a number of people to "share" access to a car. The car is owned by a separate organization, which handles the car purchase, insurance, maintenance and gas costs. Individuals join the organization to have access to the car, and pay an hourly and/or mileage-based fee to cover the costs.

To succeed, the car needs to be located where most members can walk or bike to it, and roughly 20 members are needed to produce enough revenue for the car to cover its costs, without creating too many time conflicts between members. Consequently, Itasca Community College may be the best location for at least the first car, given that it is a walkable campus with a large number of people convening each day.

Rationale: Itasca Community College (ICC) has a concentration of students that have difficulty affording the purchase and maintenance costs of an automobile. While ICC is served by Arrowhead Transit, sometimes the bus schedule does not coincide with class or work schedules of students. If enough of these students signed up, it could be cost-effective to provide a vehicle they could use and pay for on an as-needed basis. This arrangement could allow students and ICC staff to take transit or carpool to and from campus without compromising their mobility during the day.

Time to implement: Given the small and low-density population of Itasca County, an existing carsharing organization is unlikely to set up a branch operation. Consequently an organization would need to be set up, which could take six months to two or three years.

Lead implementing organization: A separate non-profit would likely need to be set up, unless Itasca Community College is willing to house the organization, at least initially.

Possible costs of implementation: Purchase costs of the car, reservation software and access hardware can be significant – probably around $30,000 for a reliable car that can handle multiple trips and drivers each day. Insurance and gas costs could be up to an additional $10,000 per year.

Possible funding source(s): Most carsharing organizations hope to eventually cover their costs through member charges. However, start-up costs need to be raised initially. Some have been raised through private foundations while others have been able to secure government start-up funding. However, we are not aware of a car sharing service being attempted, let alone succeeding, in a setting similar to Itasca County.

- *Community bike-sharing program*

Description: Similar to the carsharing program described above, this would be a program that allows a number of bikes to be used by a larger number of people on an "as needed" basis. Some original versions were quite *laissez-faire* in that they simply required the bikes be left unlocked and accessible upon completion of a ride, so that another person could use the bike. However, those programs often failed due to widespread theft and vandalism of the bikes. More successful models involve a system of membership and/or checking out the bikes for use. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicycle_sharing_system)

Rationale: Many trips can be made by bicycle, especially if someone has shared a ride over a long distance, but then has several shorter trips to make before returning. An example might be a resident of S-Lake running errands in Downtown Grand Rapids after getting a ride to Grand Rapids from a friend or relative. Having a bike available for use when and where they would use it could greatly enhance their mobility and efficient use of time.

Time to implement: Six months to two years to set up the necessary organization, accumulate bikes, set up protocol for sharing and returning bikes, and to publicize the option.

Lead implementing organization: This could be a non-profit or community-based organization.

Possible costs of implementation: Less than $1,000 if the bikes are donated and the program is run by volunteers. Using technology to reserve bikes, and/or to charge for use could increase start-up costs.

Possible funding source(s): Membership dues, sponsorship or a private grant could cover start-up costs.

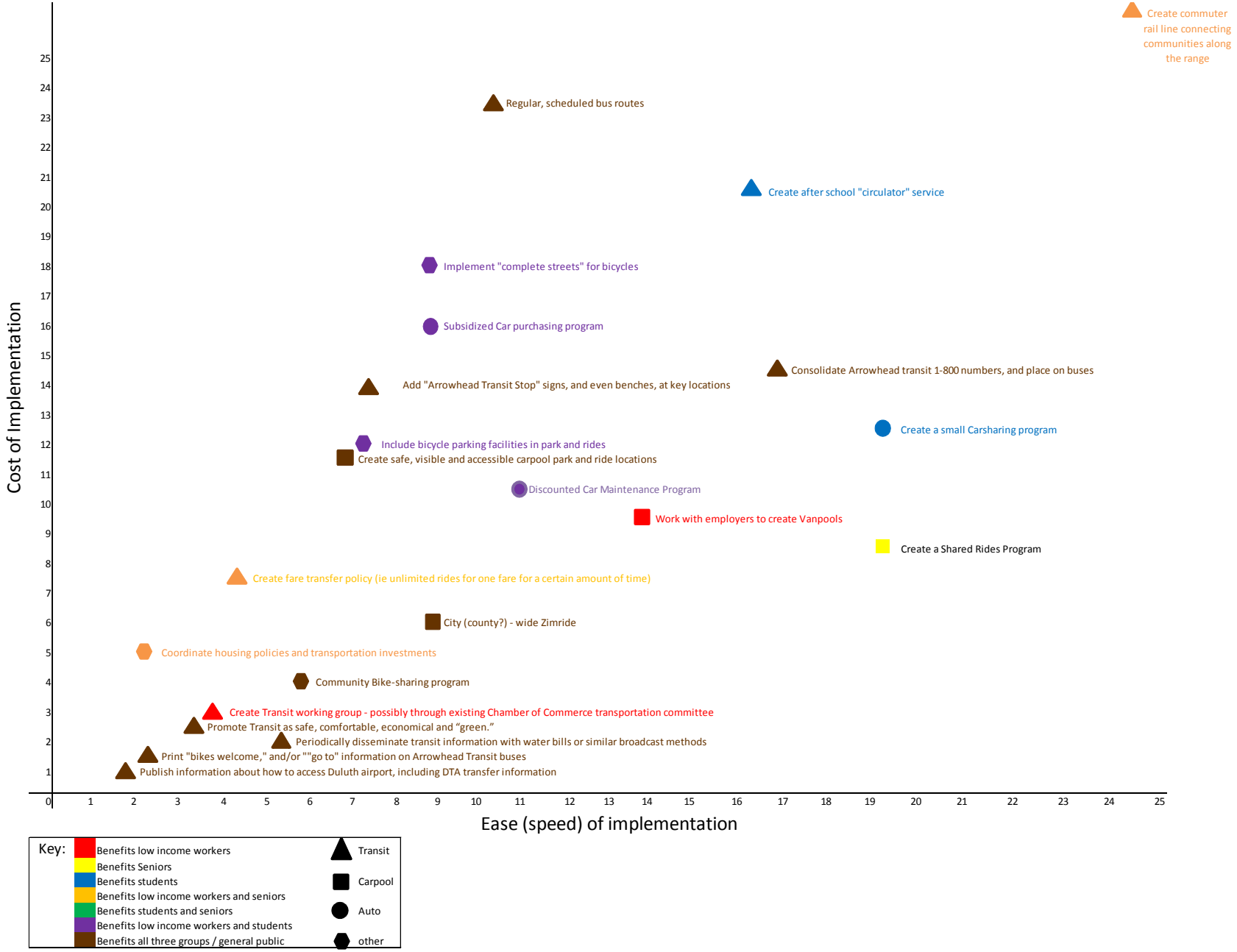


Figure 11: Recommendation Matrix.

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Appendix A: Request for Proposals

Request for Proposals

Itasca County Area Transportation Study

Issued: April 2, 2009

I. Statement of Purpose

This Request for Proposal (RFP) is an invitation by the Blandin Foundation to qualified organizations to conduct a study on transportation options for residents with limited resources in the Itasca County area. This RFP is issued under the Blandin Foundation's Transportation Initiative. Submission of a proposal does not create any right or expectation of a contract with the Foundation. The Foundation reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, and the Foundation further declares that it will incur no financial obligations for any costs by any company or individual in preparation of proposals.

Please email proposals to:

Linda Gibeau
lmgibeau@blandinfoundation.org
by COB May 15, 2009

Applicants are encouraged to contact Linda Gibeau at the above email address with any questions regarding this RFP or at 218.327.8702.

II. Background

Brief Description of the Foundation

Blandin Foundation is a private foundation based in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The Foundation was created in 1941, and is Minnesota's largest rural-based and rural-focused foundation. The Foundation is funded through annual contributions from the C.K. Blandin Residuary Trust and earnings from its own investments. At the end of 2008, the net assets of the Foundation and Residuary Trust were approximately $301 million.

The Foundation's mission "To strengthen rural communities in Minnesota, especially the Grand Rapids area," and vision "Healthy rural communities grounded in strong economies where the burdens and benefits are widely shared," guide our three program areas: grant making, community leadership training and public policy and engagement. Visit www.blandinfoundation.org for additional information.

Transportation Initiative

The adverse political, social and economic consequences associated with the lack of reliable transportation in the Itasca area for residents with limited resources have been well-known for years. In 2008, these issues were highlighted in a local United Way Needs Assessment report, "What Matters." The report positioned itself as "… the voice of the community" and gave a call to action for it "to be used by the community for taking action toward improving people's lives."

The Blandin Foundation acted on this invitation, and in February 2009 convened a group of community stakeholders to gauge their interest in forming an *ad hoc* working group. Interest was high, and the Itasca Area Transportation Initiative was launched. The group's purpose is to inform the development of this RFP, turn the findings and recommendations of the resulting report into an Action Plan, and to implement the plan. At present, stakeholders representing the elderly, low-income, schools, early childhood, human services, Native American populations, and large employers guide the initiative's work.

III. Scope of Work

The Opportunity

Itasca County has a population of approximately 43,000, and is located in north central Minnesota. The county is the third largest in the state, approximately 3,000 square miles. There are 16 cities and 42 organized townships. Among Itasca County residents, the overall poverty rate was 9.8 percent in 2007, compared to 9.5 percent in Minnesota in 2007. (http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/saipe/saipe.cgi)

Because Itasca County is geographically large and rural, reliable or alternative transportation is a challenge, especially for three segments of the population:

1. Low income workers: Hourly wage data from second quarter 2008 reveals that 27 percent of Itasca County workers earn between $6.16 and $9.99 per hour compared to 18 percent statewide[1]. Reliable transportation is key to low-income workers finding and keeping employment.

[1] Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Labor Market Information Office

2. Students: In 2006-2007, eligibility for free and reduced lunch in Itasca County school districts ran from 35 – 57 percent[2]. Transportation can be a barrier to student participation in academic and after-school programming, whether it be at their school or at another school district within the County, especially for students of low-income families and those not old enough to drive. At the college level, reliable transportation is also a barrier to participation in college courses and other college activities.
3. Senior Citizens: Itasca County has a large senior citizens population. There are currently limited modes of transportation within Itasca County to meet their needs.

While the focus of this RFP needs to be on these three population segments, it is the belief of the Transportation *Ad Hoc* Working Group that the resulting action plan should also have a positive impact on the residents of Itasca area as a whole.

Transportation options currently available to Itasca County area residents include: Arrowhead Transit, Rural Rides, school bus systems, taxi service, privately owned transportation (motorized and non-motorized), and the Leech Lake Indian Reservation transportation program.

After talking about this issue for years, Transportation Initiative participants are optimistic that the timing is right for the community to take action. Increased public attention to energy use, sustainability, the Green Economy, and the new administration all point to a needed change in how the Itasca area addresses transportation challenges now and into the future. For example, locally, the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative (IASC) has been discussing transportation issues as they relate to schools and students. There is an opportunity to include IASC in this broader initiative and to collaborate with them, especially in removing barriers to participation in after-school programming.

The challenges and opportunities to be addressed by respondents to this RFP include:

1. Focus on needs of low-income worker, student, and senior populations while identifying options to improve transportation options for all Itasca area residents;
2. Identify best practices and policies from other comparable rural areas that may be relevant to the Itasca area, with a focus on innovation and cost effectiveness;
3. Address he challenge and opportunities involved in changing public perceptions and behaviors as central to the success of this initiative.

[2] Numbers compiled by the Northwest Area Foundation, http://www.indicators.nwaf.org/DrawRegion.aspx?IndicatorID=24&RegionID=27061

Deliverables

The successful vendor will research, analyze, and make recommendations for increasing transportation options for resource-challenged residents of Itasca County area that are economically, socially, environmentally and politically viable.

Prior to the start of this project, the Blandin Foundation and the *Ad Hoc* Transportation Working Group will collect and provide existing area-specific data. Blandin Foundation staff will assist the successful vendor in setting up data collection visits to the Itasca area.

Research

Environmental Scan: Itasca County Area Specific

The outcome of this deliverable will be a thorough and comprehensive description of transportation options currently available in the Itasca area. The successful vendor will use existing data and collect data where there are gaps in knowledge. Central to this research will be talking to the targeted populations including low-income workers and their employers, students unable to participate in after-school programs and their parents, and area seniors to gain an understanding of the transportation barriers they face and to determine viable strategies for removing them. Information about interagency barriers, i.e., those faced by individuals living close to county borders, and/or choosing to seek social, medical or educational services in other counties, should be included.

Environmental Scan: Outside the Itasca County Area

The outcome of this deliverable will be a compilation of best practices and policies used in comparable rural areas, emerging trends, issues, situations, and potential pitfalls that may affect action planning of the *Ad Hoc* Transportation Working Group. This scan should include examples of successful social marketing campaigns used to change transportation behavior in ways that improve public health and provide other public benefits.

Analysis and Recommendations

The outcome of this deliverable will be a set of recommendations on how to increase the transportation options for residents with limited resources in the Itasca County area. The recommendations should be politically, socially, economically viable while minimizing adverse environmental impacts. Recommendations will be informed by the environmental scans to include:

- Opportunities to enhance, improve, expand, and integrate the area's existing transportation offerings.
- Opportunities to introduce new options based on best practices being used with success in comparable rural areas.
- Opportunities to introduce new and innovative options.
- Opportunities to use social marketing strategies to ensure the success of recommendations that require behavior change.

All recommendations should include an estimate of the costs of implementation, potential funding sources and mechanisms, and any public policy implications of which the Working Group should be aware. Recommendations should be prioritized by cost and ease of implementation, and identified as short or long-term solutions.

IV. Project Timeline

The selected agency/individual must be able to complete the project no later than October 31, 2009. A detailed project schedule is to be included in the proposal. The project schedule must include a face-to-face project kick-off meeting, check-in points, a presentation to the Transportation *Ad Hoc* Working Group of the draft document, and a comment period before the final report is delivered.

Proposal Review and Selection Process

Qualifications of Respondent

Responses to this RFP are welcome from individuals or firms. Respondents must have the following minimum qualifications:

- Proven capability to undertake a study of this scope and nature.
- Demonstrated working knowledge and experience with transportation planning and management, specifically in rural communities.

Evaluation Criteria for this RFP

The Foundation will use the following criteria to evaluate bids submitted under this RFP:

- Cost effectiveness of the proposed scope of work.
- The respondent's qualifications and related experience as per the listed qualifications.
- Responsiveness to the RFP.
- The length of the time frame proposed to deliver the finished project.

Proposal Requirements

Respondents to this RFP shall include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Description of firm.
- Project overview and statement of approach.
- Statement of qualifications of firm/individual and key personnel who will be conducting work on the project.
- References and listing of related experience.
- Detailed work plan, to include process for collecting area-specific data.
- Cost proposal, including estimated cost for each major task in the work plan, billing and expense reimbursement rates. Costs must include a not-to-exceed amount for all work.

Thank you for your submission of a proposal to the Blandin Foundation.

Appendix B: Proposal

Itasca County Area Transportation Study

Proposal in Response to:
Blandin Foundation Request for Proposals:
Itasca Area Transportation Study

Project Duration:
4 Months
July 1 to October 31

Research Team:
Frank Douma, Principal Investigator
Yingling Fan, Co-Investigator
Ferrol Robinson, Co-Investigator
Gina Baas, Co-Investigator

Technical Point of Contact:
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Research Fellow
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
130 Humphrey Center
301 19th Ave S Room 280
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HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF FIRM

The Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs is pleased to submit this proposal in response to the Blandin Foundation's Request for Proposals for an Itasca County Area Transportation Study. As our nation shifts from an automobile and road-based system to one that is more multimodal and serves an increasingly diverse population, the time is ripe to examine how the current system is working well, and where opportunities exist to serve residents better. The Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and the Center for Transportation Studies, both at the University of Minnesota, will collaborate on this project.

1.1 Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs

The University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs is a nationally-ranked graduate institute of public affairs and a world-class research institution in urban and regional planning and public policy. Eight Humphrey Institute Faculty and Staff serve as Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) research scholars and several others have completed transportation-related studies through CTS.

The Principal Investigator for this project will be Frank Douma from the Humphrey Institute's State and Local Policy Program (SLPP). SLPP was founded in 1991 to increase the Humphrey Institute's commitment to state and local policy issues. SLPP helps policy leaders and citizens understand how changes in the global economy, technology and the workplace affect communities by: convening to increase discussion and awareness of policy issues; contributing to produce and integrate new information, ideas, and approaches; and changing to enhance and apply public policy that addresses community needs

SLPP aims to work as a highly visible regional policy resource by partnering with government, business, academic, labor, and community leaders and citizens, conducting itself in a manner that is sensitive to the practical problems of policymakers, the timing of public issues, the need to leverage limited resources, and the importance of citizen involvement. SLPP addresses strategic issues, taps the best in research and researchers, and uses telecommunications and information technology effectively to promote communication and cooperation among regional policy leaders.

SLPP undertakes projects in two major policy areas. The first, Transportation and the Community, works to understand the social, economic, and environmental impacts of transportation technology and policy and explores how new policy models can benefit communities. The second, Economic Development and Human Capital, examines how changes in the global economy affect regional economies and communities, including economic and income disparities, and how industry clusters relate to knowledge and workforce strategies.

SLPP currently has a staff of seven, including five full-time researchers, who are supported by a number of graduate research assistants. It attracts nearly $2 million annually for research and outreach programs, with funding coming from federal, state and local sponsors. Since its inception, SLPP's work has:

- gained a national and international reputation for research and educational work on transportation and the environment, telecommunications and transportation, and congestion pricing; and for public policy studies on economic development, including pioneering work on the industry clusters strategy;
- spurred the establishment of an office of investment analysis at the Minnesota Department of Transportation;
- led to the use of an industry cluster approach based on SLPP's industry cluster studies at the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities as they align their curriculum with changing industry workforce needs;
- employed over 100 Humphrey Institute graduate students as research assistants, gaining learning opportunities, financial support, and career preparation; and
- created useful on-line tools, such as www.saferoadmaps.org, for use by practitioners and members of the public, to better understand how they can maximize their beneficial use of the transportation system.

1.2 Center for Transportation Studies

The Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) is the University of Minnesota's focal point for transportation. The Center's work is in keeping with the University's land-grant mission—to provide education to a wide range of learners, to carry out new research, and to bring the results of this research into practical use. The mission of CTS is to be a catalyst for transportation innovation through research, education and outreach.

Today, CTS is a nationally prominent center that attracts more than $22 million annually for research, education, and outreach programs. The Center works with more than 75 faculty from 25 different departments in seven colleges—a spectrum of disciplines including engineering, economics, public policy, human factors, and environmental studies. Funding sources include numerous federal, state, local, and private-sector sponsors.

Throughout its history, the Center has served as a resource and facilitator, helping talented University researchers develop new knowledge about transportation and helping share that knowledge with transportation professionals and policymakers. Ultimately, this knowledge improves transportation decision making—meaning better and safer transportation systems, smarter investments, and a higher quality of life for Minnesota and the nation. CTS's strong partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) has led to significant advancements in transportation innovation and has fostered successful technology transfer.

2.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW AND STATEMENT OF APPROACH

2.1 Project Overview

2.1.1 *Research Problem Statement*

While the highway and automobile system developed in the latter half of the 20th century served the county well in that time, it is less well suited to serve the needs of the 21st century. As the "baby boom" generation ages, its needs change, and the population of the generations filling in behind them differs in many ways. The current population is less physically able, financially able, or simply less willing to rely on automobiles as their primary mode of transportation. While urban areas can adapt to these changing needs by adjusting resources dedicated to a variety of transportation modes, the issues raised in rural areas are much more acute.

In 2008, the United Way of 1000 Lakes identified transportation as a key barrier to accessing health and human service needs in Itasca County, Minnesota. Itasca County is a microcosm of many of the issues raised, as significant portions of its population are elderly and/or poor. In addition, children and students who are unable to drive face similar mobility challenges. The problem is compounded by Itasca County's large geographic size, and relatively small population, making it difficult to provide conventional alternative transportation options. Indeed, the United Way noted that "regularly scheduled, low cost 24/7 public transportation is not available to Itasca County Residents."

2.1.2 *Research Goals and Objectives*

This research will seek to identify opportunities to improve transportation options for low income workers, students and senior populations in Itasca County. Ideally, these innovations will not simply benefit each of these populations, but also improve options for all Itasca area residents.

To achieve this goal, the proposed research has the following objectives:

1. Learning and understanding the specific transportation needs and challenges of the noted populations, as well as the county as a whole;
2. Identifying comparable rural areas in the United States, and learning lessons from their successes and failures in meeting similar challenges;
3. Recommending practices and options that best fit Itasca County; and
4. Identifying key stakeholders and funding sources that need to be assembled to successfully implement the recommendations.

2.1.3 *Overview of the Research Team*

The Humphrey Institute brings an impressive set of skills and barriers to addressing these issues. Frank Douma brings 10 years of transportation research experience, which includes leading a 15-month, multifaceted study of Minnesota's transportation needs in the 21st century in 2003-2004. He will build upon this experience as Principal Investigator, guiding the research team, and identifying key needs and opportunities for Itasca County.

Professor Yingling Fan brings expertise in the fields of land use, transportation, social equity, and public health. She will provide insight and expertise regarding best practices in meeting the

needs of rural residents that are politically, socially and economically viable while minimizing adverse environmental impacts.

Ferrol Robinson brings over 40 years of experience as a transportation consultant and engineer, which he will utilize in assessing the practicality of various transportation options for Itasca County. He will assess costs and barriers to implementation and develop strategies for meeting these challenges, including identifying the funding sources and stakeholders that are necessary to successfully implement these identified options.

Gina Baas brings communication and outreach skills, as well as leadership of the University of Minnesota's Center for Transportation Studies Community Transportation Program. She will provide first rate leadership in assembling and communicating with key stakeholder groups, as well as knowledge of the latest advances and other developments in meeting the transportation needs of Minnesota's rural, low-income, disabled and elderly populations.

This team will be supported by Matt Schmit and Sara Aultman, who each have multiple years of experience supporting Humphrey Institute research projects. They, along with one incoming Humphrey Institute research assistant, and other administrative support staff will provide access to data, writing support and other coordinative efforts to ensure the team operates smoothly.

2.2 Research Approach

The research approach will follow the two-pronged method recommended in the Request for Proposals. The first part will include collection of relevant quantitative data for Itasca County and travel to Itasca County to meet with stakeholders from the targeted populations to obtain complementary qualitative data. Geospatial analysis of the collected quantitative and qualitative data will be conducted to identify possible geographic concentration of transportation-disadvantaged populations and to facilitate the generation of location-enhanced strategies. The second prong will include a scan of the relevant literature, followed by in-depth interviews and case studies of initiatives taken in counties similar to Itasca to obtain information about transportation system innovations that could succeed in Itasca County. The information obtained in these two efforts will be analyzed for feasibility in Itasca County, and strategies for implementation will be recommended.

3.0 QUALIFICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH TEAM

The Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs has assembled a strong research team, drawing upon experience in public transportation, the challenges of rural land use patterns, and development of surveys and other analytic methods to address the research questions highlighted in the Blandin Foundation proposal.

The Humphrey Institute's State and Local Policy Program (SLPP) offers extensive expertise in transportation research and practice and manages research projects in transportation and other disciplines. The Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) has participated in and led several interdisciplinary transportation research studies from a variety of funding sources.

3.1 Frank Douma, M.A., J.D. (Principal Investigator)

Assistant Program Director, State and Local Policy Program Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs University of Minnesota 301 19th Avenue S. Minneapolis, MN 55455	612-626-9946 (voice) 612-626-9833 (FAX) fdouma@umn.edu

Qualifications:
Frank Douma is the assistant director of the State and Local Policy Program at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and a research scholar at the Center for Transportation Studies, both located at the University of Minnesota. He manages research projects related to several different areas of transportation policy, including impacts of developments in information and communications technologies (ICT) and urban corridor development.

In addition to working at the Humphrey Institute, Mr. Douma has a wealth of experience in transportation, having worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Metropolitan Airports Commission, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. While working for these organizations, he gained experience in the legal aspects of transportation policy and an appreciation for the roles that different modes play in urban and rural transportation systems. Mr. Douma has a Masters degree in Public Affairs a Law Degree from the University of Minnesota and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Grinnell College.

He has been a Principal Investigator for more than 10 major research projects since 2000 and served as co-investigator or research staff on several others. These have resulted in a research report for each project and several peer reviewed publications.

Relevant surveys, case studies, and publications include:

Douma, F. "Using ITS to Better Serve Diverse Populations," March 2003 – August 2004.
Information available at
http://www.cts.umn.edu/Research/ProjectDetail.html?id=2003020.

Douma, F., Barnes, G. and Munnich, L. "Developing ITS to Serve Diverse Populations," April 2004 – August 2006. Information available at http://tzd.state.mn.us/Research/ProjectDetail.html?id=2004047.

Cao, X and Douma, F. "Substitution between E-shopping and Travel: Evidence from the Twin Cities," September 2008 – Present. Information available at http://tzd.state.mn.us/Research/ProjectDetail.html?id=2009040.

Douma, F. "Improving Car-sharing and Transit Service with ITS," December 2006 – November 2008. Information available at http://tzd.state.mn.us/Research/ProjectDetail.html?id=2006013.

Douma, F. "Examining the Success of Bus Only Shoulder Lanes," August 2006 – December 2007. Information available at http://tzd.state.mn.us/Research/ProjectDetail.html?id=2007014.

Douma, F. "Impact of Bicycle Facilities on Commute Mode Share," July 2006 – November 2008. Information available at http://tzd.state.mn.us/Research/ProjectDetail.html?id=2006075.

Douma, F. "In-Depth Examination of Urban Corridor Development," September 2003 – August 2005. Information available at http://tzd.state.mn.us/Research/ProjectDetail.html?id=2006083.

Douma, F. and Deckenbach, J. "The Implications of Current and Emerging Privacy Law for ITS," *University of Illinois Journal of Law, Technology and Policy* (forthcoming).

Douma, F. Poindexter, G. and Frooman, S. "Bus-Only Shoulders in the Twin Cities," *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, No. 2072, 2008.

Douma, F. and Hedblom, M. "Wireless Communication Applications for Transportation: User Boon or Booby Trap?" *William Mitchell Law Review*, Volume 27, Number 4 (Spring) 2001.

Wells, K., Douma, F. Loimer, H. Olson, L. and Pansing, C. "Telecommuting Implications for Travel Behavior: Case Studies from Minnesota," *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board* 1752, 2001.

Role on Project:
Mr. Douma will be the Principal Investigator on this project, guiding the research team, and identifying key needs and opportunities for Itasca County. In performing this role, he will build upon his knowledge and experience from the above "Using" and "Developing ITS for Diverse Populations" projects to guide the research team, and identify key needs and innovative transportation opportunities for Itasca County.

3.2 Yingling Fan, Ph.D. (Co-Investigator)

Assistant Professor Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs University of Minnesota 301 19th Avenue S. Minneapolis, MN 55455	612-626-2930 (voice) 612-625-3513 (FAX) yingling@umn.edu

Qualifications:
Yingling Fan is an assistant professor of regional planning and policy at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. She works in the fields of land use, transportation, social equity, and public health. Her research inquiries focus on seeking spatial, place-making solutions to improve community health and livability, especially for low income, underprivileged, and underserved communities.

Dr. Fan's work has appeared in publications such as Transportation Research Record; Transportation Research Part F-Traffic Psychology and Behavior; and Landscape and Urban Planning. She is also an active speaker on livable and healthy urban and rural development at many forums, including the Transportation Research Board Annual Meetings, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning Annual Conferences, the International Making Cities Livable Annual Conferences, and the Biannual International Conferences on Computers in Urban Planning and Urban Management. In 2008, she won the Transportation Research Board Pedestrian Committee Best Paper Award and the international Patricia F. Waller Award for the outstanding paper in the field of safety and system users.

Dr. Fan has led several significant research projects that explored how public-sector planning and policies (e.g., land use regulations and transportation planning) may improve social equity and public health among urban and rural residents. For example, she is the principal investigator on projects examining the impact of light rail transit on urban low income job accessibility, the impact of urban form on health-related time use behavior, the impact of sprawl on health disparities burdening urban population, and the impact of neighborhood design on family-oriented activity engagement and stress levels.

Relevant publications include:

Fan Y. and Khattak, A. (in press) "Does urban form matter in solo and joint activity engagement decisions?" *Journal of Landscape and Urban Planning.*

Fan Y. and Song, Y. (in press) "Is sprawl associated with a widening urban-suburban mortality gap?" *Journal of Urban Health.*

Fan, Y. and Khattak, A. (2008). "Urban form, individual spatial footprints, and travel: An examination of space-use behavior." *Transportation Research Record,* No. 2082, 98-106.

Khattak, A., Fan, Y., and Teague, C. (2008). "Economic impacts of traffic incidents on businesses." *Transportation Research Record,* No. 2067, 93-100.

Khattak, A. and Fan, Y. (2008). "What exacerbates injury and harm in car-SUV collisions?" *ASCE Journal of Transportation Engineering*, 134(2), 93-104.

Zegeer, C., Blomberg, R., Henderson, D., Marchetti, L., Masten, S., Fan, Y., Brown, A., Stutts, J., Sandt, L., and Thomas, L. (2008). "Evaluation of the Miami-Dade pedestrian safety demonstration project." *Transportation Research Record*, 2073, 1-10. (2008 Patricia F. Waller Award: Outstanding Paper on Safety and System Users)

Khattak, A., Pan, X., Williams, B., Rouphail, N., and Fan, Y. (2008). "Traveler information delivery mechanisms: Impact on consumer behavior." *Transportation Research Record*, 2069, 77-84.

Fan, Y., Khattak, A., and Shay, E. (2007). "Intelligent Transportation Systems: What do publications and patents tell us?" *Journal of Intelligent Transportation Systems*, 11, 91-103.

Shay, E., Fan, Y., Khattak, A., and Rodriguez, D. (2007). "Drive or walk? Utilitarian trips within a neo-traditional neighborhood." *Transportation Research Record*, No. 1985, 154-161.

Song, Y., Gee, G., Fan, Y., and Takeuchi, D. (2007). "Do physical neighborhood characteristics matter in predicting traffic stress and health outcomes?" *Transportation Research Part F*, 10, 164-176.

Fan, Y., Li, T., and Xie, Y. (2002). "Urban transportation impact assessment: gray clustering evaluation and fuzzy hierarchy analysis." *Journal of Environmental Conservation in Transportation*, 6, 1-14 (in Chinese).

Role on Project:

Dr. Fan will serve as a Co-Investigator on this project. In this role she will lead the project's quantitative, qualitative, and geospatial analysis efforts. She has completed several projects on exploring the social and health aspects of transportation and will draw upon her extensive experience to guide the research team through all phases of this proposed study.

3.3 Ferrol Robinson (Co-Investigator)

Research Fellow, State and Local Policy Program Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs University of Minnesota 301 19th Avenue S. Minneapolis, MN 55455	612-210-9552 (voice) 612-626-9833 (FAX) cwrobins2@comcast.net

Qualifications:
Ferrol Robinson is a research fellow at the State and Local Policy Program at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. His major areas of expertise include transportation and transit planning, transportation policy, performance measures and pricing.

Mr. Robinson joined the Humphrey Institute in May 2009, having worked for SRF Consulting Group since 1985. He was SRF's executive vice president in charge of transportation groups, with responsibility for transportation and transit planning, intelligent transportation systems, congestion and road pricing, and freight planning.

Mr. Robinson has been the principal-in-charge of many transportation projects including Mn/DOT's Statewide Transportation Plan, the Minnesota Interregional Corridor Plan, the Statewide Advanced Transportation Information System, and the Minnesota Guidestar Statewide Strategic and Implementation plans. Mr. Robinson also led the preparation of many city and county transportation plans and was principal-in-charge of the Northwest Hennepin Human Services Transportation Plan. Mr. Robinson has a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering and a Master of Science degree in Civil Engineering with a transportation planning specialty and a minor in Economics, both from the University of Minnesota.

Role on Project:
Mr. Robinson will draw upon his extensive experience in transportation engineering and consulting to assist in data collection and analysis, and to provide cost estimates and other advice as the team develops recommendations and strategies for implementation.

3.4 Gina Baas (Co-Investigator)

Assistant Director, Education and Outreach Center for Transportation Studies University of Minnesota 511 Washington Avenue S.E. Minneapolis, MN 55455	612-626-7331 (voice) 612-625-6381 (FAX) Baasx001@umn.edu

Qualifications:
Gina Baas is the assistant director for outreach and education at the University of Minnesota's Center for Transportation Studies (CTS). She leads project delivery to meet the needs of clients, directs communications and outreach, and manages education services. In 11 years at CTS, Ms. Baas has overseen conference and event planning and facilitated groups, including the Community Transportation Executive Committee, a group of local stakeholders that works to address coordination of transportation services for those who cannot use automobiles or traditional fixed-route transit.

In addition to working at CTS, Ms. Baas has experience in transportation consulting at LJR, Inc., a transportation consulting and planning firm. There she designed surveys, implemented an employee commuting summary and supervised data collection projects. Ms. Baas has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Iowa.

Presentations and publications include:

Baas, G., Hoagland, T., Johnson, K.J., Pakalns, T., and Williams J., Performance Management and Career Mobility at the University of Minnesota, PEL Web Site, University of Minnesota President's Emerging Leaders Program, June 2006.

Johns, Robert C., Baas, G., and Mathison, A., CEO Engagement Options for Discussing Strategic Issues and Sharing Best Practices, NCHRP 20-24(14) Web Site, Transportation Research Board, January 2005.

Baas, G., "Community Transportation Project." Presentation at the Minnesota Public Transit Conference, September 2004.

Baas, G., "Market Choices and Fair Prices: Research Suggests Surprising Answers to Regional Growth Dilemma." Presentation at the Women's Transportation Seminar National Conference, May 2004.

Role on Project:
Ms. Baas will facilitate the meetings with advisory groups both at the University and in Itasca County, as well as meetings with stakeholders for the purpose of data gathering. She will also offer perspectives on current transportation trends for transportation-disadvantaged populations. In addition, she will manage the editorial review and final publication of the deliverable.

4.0 RELATED EXPERIENCE

Key projects, each with references, are discussed below.

4.1 Using ITS to Service Diverse Populations

Proposal Participants:
Frank Douma, Principal Investigator. Mr. Douma has led two significant research projects (this project and "Developing ITS to Better Serve Diverse Populations" below) that examined methods for meeting the transportation needs of Minnesota's increasingly diverse population. Both projects consisted of a large, diverse research team using different methods to identify innovative uses of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) that would benefit people who could not, or did not want to, own a car.

Scope:
This project began an investigation into ways ITS can be used to serve the transportation needs of populations that have not been addressed in the traditional transportation planning process. Traditionally, transportation spending and policy have been oriented toward the needs of a singular traveler, characterized as a car-owning adult who drives a moderate distance to work and who satisfies most non-work travel reasonably nearby (or between home and work). However, as Minnesota moves into the 21st century, the traveling public will become increasingly diverse, in terms of travel behavior, age, and abilities. A substantial portion will not be able to drive themselves due to age (both old and young), disability, or poverty, among other reasons. But even among people who drive, an increasing number will not fit the traditional definition of a traveler; for example, they might have very long commutes to work, they may choose to not drive for environmental reasons, or they might drive long distances on a regular basis for recreation or other purposes.

The final project report consists of three sections: the first examines recent demographic data to assess the potential demand for new ITS applications, concluding that the populations not traditionally addressed in the transportation planning process that could most benefit from these applications are senior citizens, immigrant and non-English-speaking populations, and the disabled; the second section presents findings from efforts to collect primary data from these groups in surveys and focus groups; and the third section presents an assessment of community-based transit (CBT), car-sharing, telework and telemedicine, and advanced traveler information services (ATIS), which are ITS applications that could benefit these populations. The results of this research show that CBT holds the greatest potential for serving the needs of each of the identified populations, while car-sharing also presents significant opportunities for the immigrant populations. In addition, the findings suggest that combining ATIS with CBT or car-sharing could create even greater benefits by allowing users to customize ATIS for the modes that serve them most effectively.

Client and Status:
Minnesota Department of Transportation. Completed in August 2004.

Reference:
Kenneth Buckeye
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St Paul, MN 55155-1899
651-366-3737
kenneth.buckeye@dot.state.mn.us

Application:
The report has been published by the Center for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota. The research has been presented to several audiences, including at a Center for Transportation Studies seminar that is webcasted online.

4.2 Developing ITS to Better Serve Diverse Populations

Proposal Participants:
Frank Douma, Principal Investigator.

Scope:
In 2003, the State and Local Policy Program (SLPP) at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs began research into how intelligent transportation system (ITS) technologies can be used to deliver transportation services to an increasingly diverse population in Minnesota. The research objective was to identify the nature of the gap between the emerging needs and existing services, and to propose ways of using technology to bridge the gap, both in terms of providing better transportation options and in reducing the cost of these options. Using the information obtained from emerging demographic data, the 2003 study focused on identifying transportation challenges and opportunities for several different populations, with a particular focus on those that do not or cannot drive. This project continues this general theme through a series of analyses of ITS applications that appear most promising to improve mobility and access for Minnesota's increasingly diverse population. These applications include technologically advanced community-based transit, car sharing, use of ITS to implement value pricing through conversion of a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane to a high-occupancy/toll (HOT) lane, and evaluation of Web-based advanced traveler information systems (ATIS).

Client and Status:
Minnesota Department of Transportation. Completed in November 2006.

Reference:
Kenneth Buckeye
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St Paul, MN 55155-1899
651-366-3737
kenneth.buckeye@dot.state.mn.us

Application:
The report has been published by the Center for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota. The research has been presented to several audiences, including at a Center for Transportation Studies seminar that is webcasted online.

4.3 Impact of Twin Cities Transitways on Regional Labor Market Accessibility: A Transportation Equity Perspective

Proposal Participants:
Yingling Fan, Co-Investigator. Dr. Fan is leading this project.

Scope:
Infused with a transportation equity perspective, the overarching goal of this project is to evaluate the impact of Twin Cities transitways on job accessibility of economically disadvantaged populations. The evaluation is intended to help understand the role of transit in promoting social equity, identify the latent demand for commuting among the working poor, and inform equitable transit policies and improvements. The study area of this project encompasses the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area and the 10 transit corridors included in the Metropolitan Council's 2030 Regional Transportation Plan. The project employs data from various sources, including longitudinal employment datasets form Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), yearly block-level home to work flow data from the Minnesota Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), Census socio-demographic data, and transit network information of all modes from Metro Transit and other transit service providers. More specifically, the project has three objectives:

- to empirically evaluate the impact of existing Twin Cities transitways on low income individuals' access to suitable job opportunities;
- to empirically examine whether there has been reorientation of households relative to jobs to take advantage of existing transitways; and
- to develop a generalizable approach and to collect baseline data, which can be used for future evaluation of planned transitways and other available transit modes in the Twin Cities area.

To quantify the impact of existing transitways, the project assesses changes in entry-level job accessibility by the Hiawatha light rail transit (LRT) corridor using a before-and-after evaluation at the Census block level. Changes of job accessibility in transit-dependent and poverty concentration zones are compared to the overall region-wide job accessibility changes. To investigate household relocations associated with the transitway development, the project examines changes in block-level home-to-work commuting flows before and after Hiawatha for high-pay workers versus low-pay workers. Finally, a generalizable approach is developed and baseline data are collected for future examination of the planned transitways and other transit modes in the seven-county metropolitan area. Caveats and limitations regarding generalizablity are discussed in great detail to ensure appropriate, tailored, and context-sensitive application of the approach in the future.

Client and Status:
Minnesota Department of Transportation and Hennepin County. In Progress. Project to be completed in November 2009.

Reference:
Kathie Doty
Hennepin County Relations Liaison
330 HHH Center
301 19th Avenue S
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612-625-4383
kdoty@umn.edu

Application:
The methods and results will be documented in a full report to be published by the Center for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota. The project team will further conduct a technology transfer with conference presentations.

4.4 Community Transportation: A Framework for Action

Proposal Participants:
Gina Baas, Principal Investigator

Scope:
In 2004 and again in 2007, Hennepin County contracted with the Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) to develop outreach mechanisms to disseminate information about community transportation issues; to conduct research on the transportation needs of the elderly and developmentally disabled; and to identify current and ongoing state, regional, and local community transportation efforts that impact, or may impact, Hennepin County. Products from this project include a Web site (www.cts.umn.edu/ct) and a quarterly electronic newsletter, the *Community Transportation E-news*. Additionally, two research reports and a project summary report are available on the Publications and Resources sections of the Web site.

Client and Status:
Hennepin County. In Progress. Project to be completed in June 2009.

Reference:
Robert Luckow
Hennepin County Community Works and Transit
417 North 5th Street, Suite 320
Minneapolis, MN 55401
612-348-9344
Robert.Luckow@co.hennepin.mn.us

Application:
The project has served as a community transportation networking outlet as well as providing outreach in the form of a community transportation workshop. The project will conclude with a deliverable tracking best practices and Minnesota transportation coordination.

5.0 PROJECT WORK PLAN

5.1 Tasks and Deliverables

5.1.1 Task 1: *Itasca County Environmental Scan*

This task will be the central focus of the research, as the team will direct its energy toward obtaining the necessary data to create an accurate description of the transportation options and needs in Itasca County, along with where gaps exist. Steps in this process will include collecting data in the following categories: (1) data sources known to the sponsor; (2) data sources available through the University and other public sources; and (3) in-depth interviews and focus groups with key groups in Itasca County. Key categories for analysis will include a geospatial analysis of the collected quantitative and qualitative data to identify possible geographic concentration of transportation-disadvantaged populations and to facilitate the generation of location-enhanced strategies along with transportation barriers for low-income workers, seniors, and students and their families. Identifying barriers caused by agency restrictions, such as municipal and county borders, funding mandates and other issues will be a priority.

5.1.2 Task 2: *National Environmental Scan for Best Practices and Policies*

In this task, the research team will review the literature, and review personal research and networks to identify and document cases of strategies that have been implemented across the United States in an attempt to address issues similar to those of Itasca County. Both successes and failures will be documented, where possible.

5.1.3 Task 3: *Synthesis of Tasks 1 and 2: What will Work in Itasca County?*

In this task, the research team will compare the lessons learned and best practices identified in task 2 with the transportation gaps and barriers identified in task 1 to discern the practices, policies and other opportunities that have the greatest potential for success in Itasca County.

5.1.4 Task 4: *Recommendations and Strategies for Implementation*

The research team will bring its substantial practical experience to bear in this task, identifying the key stakeholders, funding sources and strategies that will be necessary to implement the policies and practices identified in task 3. Step-by-step recommendations for implementation will be provided.

5.1.5 Task 5: *Advisory Meetings and Final Report*

Throughout this project, the research team will seek guidance from the sponsor, local stakeholders and operational experts in the field. This will occur in the form of at least two meetings in Itasca County (at the beginning and end of the project, and as necessary during data collection), and two to three meetings of an advisory group at the University as data analysis is underway and recommendations are developed. The team will also write and submit a final report with all findings, recommendations, and strategies at the end of the project.

5.2 Project Schedule

The project will take place between July and October 2009, following the schedule shown below:

month	July				August				September				October			
week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Task 1																
Task 2																
Task 3																
Task 4																
Task 5																

6.0 COST PROPOSAL

6.1 Budget Details

Personnel			
Name	**Salary**	**Fringe Benefits**	**Total**
Frank Douma	$5,633	$1,819	$7,452
Yingling Fan	$2,466	$796	$3,262
Ferrol Robinson	$3,433	$1,108	$4,541
Gina Baas	$2,788	$900	$3,688
Graduate Research Associates	$5,864	$474	$6,338
Graduate Research Assistant	$3,266	$3,342	$6,608
Joseph Barbeau	$552	$178	$730
Support Staff	$1,508	$557	$2,065
			$34,684
Subconsultants	Editing services for final report		$2,000
Subcontracts			
Capital Equipment			
Materials / Services	Materials and food for meetings		$2,000
Communications	Long distance phone and other services for interviews, data requests, meeting logistics		$500
Printing and Mailing	Meeting materials, mailing of information materials, and printing/mailing final report		$500
Travel	Travel to Itasca County to meet with Ad Hoc Group		$3,800
Indirect Costs			$6,522
		Budget Not to Exceed Total =	**$50,006**

6.2 Budget by Task

Task 1	$17,502
Task 2	$8,001
Task 3	$7,501
Task 4	$7,001
Task 5	$10,001
Budget Not to Exceed Total =	**$50,006**

The University of Minnesota uses the United States General Services Administration (GSA) Federal reimbursement rates for per diem and mileage.

7.0 LETTERS OF SUPPORT

June 4, 2009

Linda Gibeau
Blandin Foundation

Dear Ms. Gibeau:

As an employee of the Minnesota Department of Transportation who has worked with the Humphrey Institute on several research projects, I am pleased to provide support for the "Itasca County Area Transportation Study" proposal submitted by the Humphrey Institute in response to the Blandin Foundation's Request for Proposals.

Providing transportation for all members of society is an increasing challenge as our population ages and becomes more diverse. Providing safe, affordable and easy to access transportation options beyond automobiles and roadways, particularly in rural areas, requires creativity, innovation and collaboration. Success in these efforts is not always guaranteed, and strategies for achieving success should be researched and documented.

The University of Minnesota's research team, led by Frank Douma, plans to conduct this kind of research and documentation in a way that will directly benefit not only low income, elderly and student populations, but everyone in Isanti County. As the department faces these transportation challenges every day, I can say that the proposed research could significantly advance the state of knowledge in this area, thereby improving mobility for a large portion of the population.

In support of this effort, I will support the proposed project by participating on an advisory board assembled by the research team, providing contacts, technical advice and contributing knowledge from my own experience to facilitate their data collection and analysis.

Sincerely,

Kenneth R. Buckeye

Kenneth R. Buckeye, AICP
Program Manager, Value Pricing
Minnesota Department of Transportation

DARTS
your connection to possibilities

1645 Marthaler Lane
West St. Paul, Minnesota 55118

Phone: 651.455.1560
Fax: 651.234.2280
Toll Free: 866.514.9290

Internet: darts1.org
caregiverMN.org

June 5, 2009

Linda Gibeau
Blandin Foundation
100 North Pokegama Ave.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Dear Ms. Gibeau:

On behalf of DARTS I am pleased to provide support for the "Itasca County Area Transportation Study" proposal submitted by the Humphrey Institute in response to the Blandin Foundation's Request for Proposals.

Providing transportation for all members of society is an increasing challenge as our population ages and becomes more diverse. Providing safe, affordable and easy to access transportation options beyond automobiles and roadways, particularly in rural areas, requires creativity, innovation and collaboration. Success in these efforts is not always guaranteed, and strategies for achieving success should be researched and documented.

The University of Minnesota's research team, led by Frank Douma, plans to conduct this kind of research and documentation in a way that will directly benefit not only low income, elderly and student populations, but everyone in Isanti County. As President of DARTS, an organization that has a 35 year history of supporting and providing mobility options for the community and transit dependent populations, I can say that the proposed research could significantly advance the state of knowledge in this area, thereby improving mobility for a large portion of the population.

In support of this effort, DARTS will support the proposed project by participating on an advisory board assembled by the research team, providing contacts, technical advice and contributing knowledge from our own experience to facilitate their data collection and analysis.

Sincerely,

Mark Hoisser
President
DARTS

Appendix C: Focus Group Materials

Itasca County Area Transportation Study

Discussion of Trips

Introduction of project team.

The Blandin Foundation has asked us to conduct a study of current transportation options in the area and to recommend possible improvements for the future. To get a handle on the situation, we'd like to ask you some questions about your everyday experiences related to getting to and from your regular activities. By answering our questions honestly, you'll help us determine what's working, what's not, and how things might be improved down the road. If at any point you feel uncomfortable with a question, let us know. If you don't feel like participating any longer, you're welcome to leave at any point. With that said, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.

1. What brings you here today? (Please state your first name & tell us why you're interested in talking about your transportation experiences.)

2. How do you usually travel?
   - Drive your own car ____
   - Get a ride from a friend or relative ____
   - Regularly-scheduled bus ____
   - Bus by reservation ____
   - Social service ____
   - Taxi ____
   - Motorcycle ____
   - Bicycle ____
   - Walk ____
   - Other _____

   a. Is this your preferred method, or would you prefer to do it another way?

   b. (If preferred method): why do you prefer this method?

   c. (If not preferred method): why do you not use your preferred method?

3. Do you make most of your trips by yourself? Or do you need assistance? If you need assistance, who usually provides it?

4. Have there been times when you have been unable to make a trip due to lack of transportation? Give an example when you have been limited by your (lack of) transportation options.

5. Are you aware of other options that would also allow you to complete your trips?

   If yes, what are they?

6. Do you believe it is easy to use public transportation?

   Is it easy to obtain information about using public transportation?

   Is it easy to obtain information about other modes of transportation?

7. Describe the ideal transportation system for you?

First Name: _____ Date: _____ Zip Code of Your Residence: _____

REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITES	**How OFTEN do you make trips for these activities per week?**	**What TIME do you normally start these trips?**	**How long on average do these trips take? (minutes per trip)**	**How FAR on average are these trips? (miles per trip)**	**HOW do you get to these activities? (transportation mode)**	**Are you SATISFIED with your travel options?**	**How many TRIPS do you wish to make every week?**	**Which MODE do you wish to use for participating in these activities?**	**If you wish you could travel differently than you do (mode or frequency), WHY?**
1. Work and work-related Activities									
2. School									
3. Shopping									
4. Restaurants and Bars									
5. Daycare Services									
6. Doctor and Medical Appointments									
7. Visiting Family and Friends									
8. Exercise and Entertainment									
9. Religious and Spiritual Activities									
10. Other Personal Activities									

Appendix D: Focus Group Summary Notes

Itasca County Area Transportation Study – Listening Session Summary Notes

September 25, 2009

Small Group Discussion Summarized by Lori:

Above all, the group would like to see a comprehensive policy solution that addresses transportation needs in Itasca County. The "complete street" model was raised and should serve as a good example. Specifically, the group recommends the following: (1) Consider current infrastructure and make sure potential reconstruction is conducive to all modes of transportation; (2) following the "Everyday Democracy" approach, promote a public engagement strategy to address stigma of mass transit (e.g. the "blue bus") and close education gaps pursuant to current transportation options; (3) employing a comprehensive, inclusive process, develop a marketing plan in which all stakeholders vet the plan and have a stake in outcome; (4) make multi-modal transit easier, such as installing bike racks on buses and bike storage lockers at various strategic locations, for instance; (5) offer more subsidies for car repairs to make it easier for people to maintain current transportation options; and (6) launch and maintain a website that serves as a clearinghouse for multi-modal transportation options in the area (perhaps simply supplement the arrowheadtransit.com website).

Small Group Discussion Summarized by Gina:

The group identified several specific options that might improve transportation options in the area. These recommendations include: (1) creation of an "information portal" designed to serve as a one-stop shop for transportation options for area residents; (2) utilize enhanced marketing and communication techniques such that we can maximize benefit of existing transportation services (for instance, include transparent ads on buses that are both visually appealing and informative); (3) improve understanding of current state law so that we can leverage current transportation options to their fullest and identify specific areas for lobby or reform (for instance, tight state restrictions governing the use of school buses); and (4) identify other potential stakeholders not currently involved in the project (for instance, Leach Lake Gaming, Mn/DOT representative, county mayors/managers group) to garner input and buy-in, as well as to work toward maximizing benefit of current resources (such as transportation options associated with Leach Lake Gaming, political influence of mayors/managers group).

Suggestions Recorded from Break-Out Groups and Large Group Flipcharts:

- Promote non-motorized options, such as bike lanes
- Design roads to promote bike use, safety
- Maintain facilities, especially in winter months
- Remove need for a bus transfer between Grand Rapids and Duluth airport
- Take advantage of under-utilized capacity in public school transportation
- Employment flex-time may allow residents to take advantage of current transportation options and schedules
- Inconsistent work schedules can make it difficult to utilize transit on a regular basis
- Address transit reliability
- Get information out on what is currently available
- Medical rides can be limited to certain programs
- Long-held stigma that Arrowhead Transit is only for elderly or poor
- Cost of acquiring and/or maintaining automobile transportation can be prohibitive

- Employers lack knowledge on issue of tax breaks for transit promotion
- Flat funding for transportation and transit specifically create a bleak environment for improved service and options
- A prevailing rural mindset that transit is only for urban areas limits current programs and future options
- Poor understanding as to how current funding mechanisms might be better utilized
- Access to reliable vehicles is a problem.

Appendix E: Blandin Foundation Press Releases

Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

Blandin Foundation awards grant for residential transportation study

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (August 20, 2009) – As part of Blandin Foundation's continued commitment to strengthen communities in rural Minnesota, especially the Grand Rapids area, the Foundation has awarded a $50,000 grant to study the types and systems of transportation Itasca County residents use to get to work, school and other local destinations, and to make recommendations for improving these.

Itasca Transportation Solutions, a local committee, selected the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs to conduct the study. Itasca Transportation Solutions includes representatives from Itasca County service providers, schools and private-sector employers.

The study project will build on results of a 2008 community assessment conducted by the United Way of 1000 Lakes. *What Matters – Assessment of Health and Human Service Needs in Itasca County* found that "accessibility to services, education, health care and employment is key to meeting the needs of our most vulnerable populations."

"This finding corroborated what we've been hearing for several years – that transportation is an issue for significant segments of Itasca County residents, including those in poverty, the elderly and students," said Wade Fauth, Blandin Foundation director of grants. "The work of Itasca Transportation Solutions and Humphrey Institute will provide data organizations throughout the county can use to accurately assess the scope of need."

The Humphrey study team – which includes professionals with specialties in technology and transportation systems, mapping, community-based transit and project development – will conduct local focus groups in late August and listening sessions in late September at sites throughout Itasca County.

Action items based on this data and evaluations of rural transportation solutions in other rural areas will be a key component of the final report, due the first of December 2009.

"The most important thing is that when the study is complete, we will have some specific, concrete tasks to begin bridging the transportation gap and to help all residents start thinking differently about transit," said Jody Hane, executive director of United Way of 1000 Lakes and Itasca Transportation Solutions member.

"Itasca County has a low population density, so transportation solutions that fit other regions may not fit here," said Frank Douma, Assistant Program Director of the State and Local Policy Program at the Humphrey Institute, and lead researcher for the project. "We're excited to be working in the area, and to learn more about how the county might coordinate its existing transportation resources to increase mobility and access for everyone."

# # #

Blandin Foundation, Minnesota's largest rural-based private foundation is located in Grand Rapids, Minn. Its mission is to strengthen rural Minnesota communities, especially the Grand Rapids area, through grants, leadership development programs and public policy initiatives. www.blandinfoundation.org.

For additional information, contact:
Allison Rajala Ahcan, communications director
218-326-0523 or cell 218-259-2893
arahcan@blandinfoundation.org
www.blandinfoundation.org

Jody Hane, Executive Director
United Way of 1000 Lakes
218-999-7570
jody@unitedway1000.org
www.unitedway1000lakes.org

Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

Public comment sought on Itasca County transportation recommendations

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (November 5, 2009) – As part of Blandin Foundation's continued commitment to strengthen communities in rural Minnesota, especially the Grand Rapids area, the Foundation is seeking comments on draft recommendations to improve transportation options for residents of Itasca County to get to work, school activities and other local destinations.

Recommendations are based largely on input received from focus groups, listening sessions, and one-on-one interviews, and are presented in five categories:

- Policy and Administrative changes
- Communications, Education and Outreach changes
- Opportunities for Coordination and Cooperation
- Operations, Maintenance and/or Service Improvements
- Cost Sharing or Saving Opportunities

The draft recommendations are part of a study evaluating the cost and ease of implementing a variety of options for people to travel within and outside the county, from bike routes and use of public transportation, to raising awareness of bus service linking Itasca County to Duluth and launching an online carpool service. The study will be finalized in December.

Copies of the draft recommendations are available at the Blandin Foundation and on the Foundation's web site at: http://www.blandinfoundation.org/policy/policy-detail.php?intResourceID=428.
Comments can be submitted by using the online form that accompanies the recommendations, or by calling 218-327-8766. Deadline for comments is November 20, 2009.

In partnership with Itasca Transportation Solutions, a local committee of representatives of area social service providers, schools and businesses, the Foundation worked with the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and the U of M's Center for Transportation Studies to conduct the study, which will be finalized in December 2009.

# # #

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especially the Grand Rapids area, through grants, leadership development programs and public policy initiatives. www.blandinfoundation.org.

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arahcan@blandinfoundation.org
www.blandinfoundation.org

Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

Hello area leaders,

I am writing today to invite you to participate in a "Listening Session" on September 25, facilitated by a team of researchers from the Humphrey Institute's Centers for Public Affairs and Transportation Studies.

Please read on to learn more about the project. If this opportunity is of interest to you, click this link to indicate your availability:
http://www.doodle.com/r3xpqeyixak7q5ym

The 2008 community assessment conducted by the United Way of 1000 Lakes entitled *What Matters - Assessment of Health and Human Service Needs in Itasca County*, found that "accessibility to services, education, health care and employment is key to meeting the needs of our most vulnerable populations."

This finding corroborates what we've been hearing for several years - that transportation is an issue for significant segments of Itasca County residents, including those in poverty, the elderly and students.

In February 2009, we convened Itasca Transportation Solutions, a committee of area residents representing service providers, schools, and private-sector employers. This group was instrumental in selecting the Humphrey Institute to do the study, which is now in its data collection phase.

Your participation in this Listening Session would enrich the discussion and broaden the base of research being conducted on this important issue. Please join us.

With best regards,

Jim Hoolihan, President
Blandin Foundation

Open House

Friday, September 25
1:00 - 3:30 pm
Blandin Foundation

Itasca Transportation Solutions, a group of Itasca County volunteers, is seeking input from area residents working low-wage jobs, the elderly and students to answer the question: What transportation solutions would better connect you to the places you need to go?

Representatives from the Humphrey Institute's Transportation Center will be on-hand to talk about the project and listen to your suggestions.

Call Linda Gibeau at 327-8702 for more information.

Refreshments will be served.

Appendix F: The Research Team

Frank Douma, M.A, J.D. (Principal Investigator)

Assistant Program Director, State and Local Policy Program Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs University of Minnesota 301 19th Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55455	612-626-9946 (voice) 612-626-9833 (FAX) fdouma@umn.edu

Qualifications:
Frank Douma is the assistant director of the State and Local Policy Program at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and a Research Scholar at the Center for Transportation Studies, both located at the University of Minnesota. He manages research projects related to several different areas of transportation policy, including impacts of developments in information and communications technologies (ICT) and urban corridor development.

In addition to working at the Humphrey Institute, Mr. Douma has a wealth of experience in transportation, having worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Metropolitan Airports Commission, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. While working for these organizations, he gained experience in the legal aspects of transportation policy and an appreciation for the roles that different modes play in urban and rural transportation systems. Mr. Douma has a Masters degree in Public Affairs and a Law Degree from the University of Minnesota and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Grinnell College.

He has been a Principal Investigator for more than 10 major research projects since 2000 and served as co-investigator or research staff on several others. These have resulted in a research report for each project and several peer reviewed publications.

Gina Baas (Co-Investigator)

Assistant Director, Education and Outreach Center for Transportation Studies University of Minnesota 511 Washington Avenue S.E. Minneapolis, MN 55455	612-626-7331 (voice) 612-625-6381 (FAX) baasx001@umn.edu

Qualifications:
Gina Baas is the assistant director for outreach and education at the University of Minnesota's Center for Transportation Studies. She leads project delivery to meet the needs of clients, directs communications and outreach and manages education services. In 11 years at CTS, Ms. Baas has overseen conference and event planning and facilitated groups, including the Community Transportation Executive Committee, a group of local stakeholders that works to address coordination of transportation services for those who cannot use automobiles or traditional fixed-route transit.

In addition to working at CTS, Ms. Baas has experience in transportation consulting at LJR, Inc., a transportation consulting and planning firm. There she designed surveys, implemented an employee commuting summary and supervised data collection projects. Ms. Baas has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Iowa.

Yingling Fan, Ph.D. (Co-Investigator)

Assistant Professor Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs University of Minnesota 301 19th Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55455	612-626-2930 (voice) 612-625-3513 (FAX) yingling@umn.edu

Qualifications:

Yingling Fan is an Assistant Professor of Regional Planning and Policy at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. She works interdisciplinary in the fields of land use, transportation, social equity, and public health. Her research inquiries focus on seeking spatial, place-making solutions to improve community health and livability, especially for those poor, underprivileged, and underserved communities.

Dr. Fan's work has appeared in publications such as Transportation Research Record; Transportation Research Part F-Traffic Psychology and Behavior; and Landscape and Urban Planning. She is also an active speaker on livable and healthy urban and rural development at many forums, including the Transportation Research Board Annual Meetings, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning Annual Conferences, the International Making Cities Livable Annual Conferences, and the Biannual International Conferences on Computers in Urban Planning and Urban Management. In 2008, she won the Transportation Research Board Pedestrian Committee Best Paper Award and the international Patricia F. Waller Award for the outstanding paper in the field of safety and system users.

Dr. Fan has led several significant research projects that explored how public-sector planning and policies (e.g., land use regulations and transportation planning) may improve social equity and public health among urban and rural residents. For example, she is the principal investigator on projects examining the impact of light rail transit on urban poor's job accessibility, the impact of urban form on health-related time use behavior, the impact of sprawl on health disparities burdening urban population, and the impact of neighborhood design on family-oriented activity engagement and stress levels.

Ferrol Robinson (Co-Investigator)

Research Fellow, State and Local Policy Program Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs University of Minnesota 301 19th Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55455	612-626-4647 (voice) 612-626-9833 (FAX) robin684@umn.edu

Qualifications:
Ferrol Robinson is a research fellow at the State and Local Policy Program at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. His major areas of expertise include transportation and transit planning, transportation policy, performance measures and pricing.

Mr. Robinson joined the Humphrey Institute in May 2009, having worked for SRF Consulting Group since 1985. He was SRF's executive vice president in charge of transportation groups, with responsibility for transportation and transit planning, intelligent transportation systems, congestion and road pricing, and freight planning.

Mr. Robinson has been the principal-in-charge of many transportation projects including Mn/DOT's Statewide Transportation Plan, the Minnesota Interregional Corridor (ICR) Plan, the Statewide Advanced Transportation Information System, the Minnesota Guidestar Statewide Strategic and Implementation plans. Mr. Robinson also led the preparation of many city and county transportation plans and was Principal-in-Charge of the Northwest Hennepin Human Services Transportation Plan. Mr. Robinson has a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering and a Master of Science degree in Civil Engineering with a transportation planning specialty and a minor in Economics, both from the University of Minnesota.

Matt Schmit (Research Assistant)

State and Local Policy Program Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs University of Minnesota 301 19th Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55455	612-624-2082 (voice) 612-626-9833 (FAX) mschmit@umn.edu

Qualifications:
Matt Schmit has worked for the State and Local Policy Program for several years, with a focus on congestion pricing, and additional work on a variety of other research projects, including telecommunications and telecommuting. Mr. Schmit also has served as Vice President for Public Affairs in the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly at the University of Minnesota, and is a native of Northern Minnesota.

In addition to his work towards a Masters Degree at the Humphrey Institute, he has a Bachelor's Degree from St. John's University and is currently working toward a Ph.D. in Applied Economics.

Colin Cureton (Research Assistant)

State and Local Policy Program Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs University of Minnesota 301 19th Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55455	612-624-2082 (voice) 612-626-9833 (FAX) cure0012@umn.edu

Qualifications:

Colin Cureton is a Research Assistant for the State and Local Policy Program at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. In this role, Colin assists in literature reviews, conducting field research, and report writing.

Colin is currently a candidate for a Masters in Public Policy at the Humphrey Institute with a concentration in Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy. Colin is also a Graduate Assistant for the Little Earth Food Justice Project, a Public Policy Intern for the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, and the Education Committee Co-Chair of the Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative. Prior to these experiences, Colin has worked as an educator, organizer, and policy advocate throughout the Twin Cities nonprofit community. Colin holds a B.A. in History and Environmental Studies from Carleton College.