

**2022**  
**REGION NINE**  
LOCAL HUMAN  
SERVICES TRANSIT  
COORDINATION  
PLAN

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# **2022 Region Nine Local Human Services-Transit Coordination Plan**

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Plan Prepared By:  
Region Nine Development Commission

In Cooperation with representatives and agencies from the following counties:  
Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Region Nine's Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan provides a detailed overview of transportation service needs, gaps, and opportunities for the nine-county region. The plan gives intentional focus to those with transportation barriers, including older individuals, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals.

The plan is divided into six sections, starting with an **introduction** that includes a description of the plan's purpose and states the major plan components and design.

The second section is a **regional background** section that includes brief foreword on the impact of COVID-19 on transportation services as well as a more general overview of the region's geography. This section also includes demographic information about the region to give an idea of what populations are represented, especially vulnerable groups.

The third section examines **mobility today** in the region. This provides an overview of the current mobility landscape, the region's primary transportation providers, and major trip generators (places that serve as frequent stops for transit users).

The fourth section describes **outreach efforts** in the development of the plan. This includes information on the steering committee, a review of the transit riders and transit providers surveys deployed, information on focus groups held with riders and providers, and information on the planning workshops held toward the end of the planning process.

The fifth section lists **coordination needs, gaps, and barriers**. It describes existing coordination efforts in the region as well as issues identified through public engagement.

The final section looks at **mobility tomorrow**. This includes an outline of transportation and transit-focused goals and strategies for providers, transit-adjacent organizations, and the region as a whole. It also shows a prioritization of projects for the region and relevant agencies to undertake to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the region's transportation system. Many of the priorities point to one overarching goal and project: the formation of a Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) to provide a central body that enables transit agencies, human service providers, and the private sector to coordinate efforts and fill transportation gaps in the region. Currently, coordination between counties and agencies is limited to a much smaller scale that cannot fully address the transit needs of the region. Larger scale coordination could make transit easier throughout the region and could provide a more centralized hub for resources that have been increasingly scarce in recent years like vehicles and volunteer drivers. Several transit users surveyed talked about the need for good transit access to Rochester and the Twin Cities for medical appointments, and many of them lived in areas where even accessing neighboring counties via transit was difficult. This made the need for regional coordination even more apparent as it shows people that need to travel

considerable distances are already hitting obstacles to transit when trying to travel shorter distances.

Other high priority projects that emerged were related to vehicle supply and volunteer drivers. COVID-19 disrupted supply chains and caused shortages in both paid and volunteer transit drivers (non-profit and for-profit agencies in the region both reported leadership and administrative staff taking driving shifts to help address the shortage!). While restrictions have eased and daily routines are similar to those of pre-pandemic times, the vehicle supply chain and driver supply have not recovered. In response to supply chain issues that have delayed shipments by over 2 years for some transit providers, stakeholders have prioritized creating a virtual hub to connect organizations to vehicles, which would facilitate swapping and/or selling vehicles between agencies in the region to create a stopgap solution for delayed orders. Also, the creation of an organization that owns vehicles for volunteer drivers to use emerged as a priority to combat the driver shortage. This would enable people without vehicles to volunteer and also encourage potential drivers that are reluctant to subject their personal vehicles to the wear-and-tear resulting from volunteer driving. While the COVID-19 pandemic is far from its peak, its effects still linger in transit systems, and some of the most important priorities outlined in this plan reflect that.

# INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this document is to evaluate existing transportation providers, identify the unmet needs and services, and establish transportation related goals for Region Nine. This includes assembling a committee of stakeholders made up of transit providers and riders and/or riders' advocates, conducting outreach in the region to learn what individuals are experiencing when navigating different parts of the region's numerous transit services, and using information from outreach efforts to identify gaps and shortcomings in existing services and service coordination. All this information is then used to create goals and strategies for the region to take to improve transit services and increase coordination efforts.

The counties included in this region are the Counties of Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan, Minnesota. This documentation fulfills planning requirements for the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) signed into law December 4, 2015.

As a requirement of the FAST Act, grantees under the Section 5310: Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program must have projects under a "locally developed coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan" (49 U.S.C. 5310) to receive federal funding. This plan must be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation services as well as human services providers and the public.

The local human service transportation coordination planning process encourages participation from all local stakeholders and public in the region, especially within target populations. The purpose of this process is to improve human service and public transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes through coordinated transportation.

The plan contains demographic conditions, inventory of existing transportation providers, gaps in service, and unmet needs throughout the region that have been identified through analysis, committee input, and stakeholder outreach.

## Major Plan Components

The plan has three major components:

- A demographic profile.
- A view of mobility today, analyzing existing transportation services, regional origins, and destinations, needs, gaps, and current coordination.
- A vision of mobility tomorrow, laying out goals and strategies to improve transportation services.

## Outline Design

The plan is designed to outline:

- A comprehensive review of existing public transportation and human services coordination.
- A context for continuing and broadening communication between human service agencies and transportation providers.
- A platform to enhance transportation access for older adults, people with disabilities, and those with low incomes through identification of unmet needs and strategies to address them.
- An educational tool for human service agencies, transportation providers, and Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) to identify coordination opportunities.

Table 1 below shows the suggested timeline for the processes that go along with plan completion.

**Timeline for Plan Completion:**

	July	Aug- Sept	Oct	Nov- Dec	Jan- Feb	Mar- Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
Contracts Executed	X											
Appoint Steering Committee	X											
Survey & Questionnaire Collection		X	X	X	X							
Previous Effort Evaluation		X										
Steering Committee Meeting 1		X										
Focus Groups			X		X	X						
Steering Committee Meeting 2					X							
Steering Committee Meeting 3						X						
Planning Workshop (Steering Committee Meeting 3 & 4)									X			
MnDOT Draft Review											X	
Steering Committee Meeting 5											X	
MCOTA Draft Review												X
Plan Adoption												X

# BACKGROUND

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## **Foreword: Impact of COVID-19**

Before examining the conditions, needs, gaps, and opportunities of transit systems in the region, we must acknowledge the great impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on the region. The beginning of the pandemic brought sharp declines in ridership across the entire region as people sheltered in place and largely avoided public places, mass transit services, and anywhere where large numbers of people would normally congregate indoors. Rides on transit services looked much different after the pandemic began. Vehicles were outfitted with hand sanitizer stations, and passengers and drivers were required to wear masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Providers made sure to publicize what precautionary efforts they took. For example, Brown County Heartland Express and Prairie Lakes Transit (Faribault and Martin Counties) mentioned in particular that their sanitization efforts included places with high rates of touch-contact like rails and seatbelt buckles. Trailblazer transit and other agencies in the region provided free transportation for people getting COVID vaccinations. SMART Transit, which serves Waseca County and a few other counties outside of Region Nine, added meal delivery to people in need to its services during the pandemic.

Even as more establishments were able to reopen, ridership lagged behind its pre-pandemic numbers as many things like doctor's appointments were being done increasingly via video conference. This did not eliminate the need for transit services to medical appointments, however. The South Central Community Based Initiative, a multiple-county consortium of public mental healthcare providers that serve all but one county in Region Nine, reported a huge uptick in telehealth appointments, but because of the rural nature of much of the service area, many patients lack access to broadband. SCCBI was able to lend hotspots to some patients, but many still had to travel for in-person appointments. Additionally, while there was telehealth availability, SCCBI's system was still in a pilot phase and ultimately did not have the capacity to meet the skyrocketing demand caused by the pandemic, keeping some need for transit even in a landscape that saw big decreases in demand for rides. Region Nine assisted SCCBI in pursuing a USDA Telemedicine grant to implement a more robust telemedicine system at the conclusion of their pilot program, but the project was not funded.

One of the largest impacts that transit agencies are still facing even as general conditions reflect pre-pandemic conditions is a serious shortage of drivers. Transit agencies are having difficulty hiring and retaining drivers, and human service organizations with volunteer drivers have fewer volunteers willing to drive. As demand has risen, particularly for specialized transportation services like non-emergency medical transit, providers have had to turn away people because there simply aren't enough drivers to provide the capacity needed for medical transit. This looks to be an ongoing issue even as the overall negative societal effects of COVID-19 are waning.

Region Nine has made other efforts to build resilience and assist people and businesses in the



region that were negatively affected by COVID-19. Region Nine helped multiple communities with resilience planning and started a regional task force on workforce resilience, a group that is examining bringing international talent to the region to fill its growing number of vacancies. Region Nine also made over \$1 million in low-interest loans available to business owners in the region (including private transit operators) through our Revolving Loan Fund and the CARES Act.

## **Study Area Geography and Demographics**

A key step in developing and evaluating transit plans is a careful analysis of the mobility needs of various segments of the population and the potential ridership of transit services. As part of the plan development process, an effort was undertaken to identify any concentrations of the following targeted population groups: elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities.

Transit demand analysis is the basic determination of demand for transportation in each area. There are several factors that affect demand, not all of which can be projected; however, demand estimation is an important task in developing any transportation plan and several methods of estimation are available for this purpose. The analysis makes intensive use of several demographic data and trends. In consideration of the limited resources available to prepare this plan, a decision was made to utilize the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) data to identify any concentrations of the targeted groups along with completing an analysis of the program demand. ACS data is also available and summarized at the Minnesota State Demographic Center.

This section provides information on individuals considered by the transportation and human services sectors to be dependent upon transit services. In general, the characteristics of these individuals preclude them from driving, and thereby make carpooling and transit their only viable alternative of motorized transportation available.

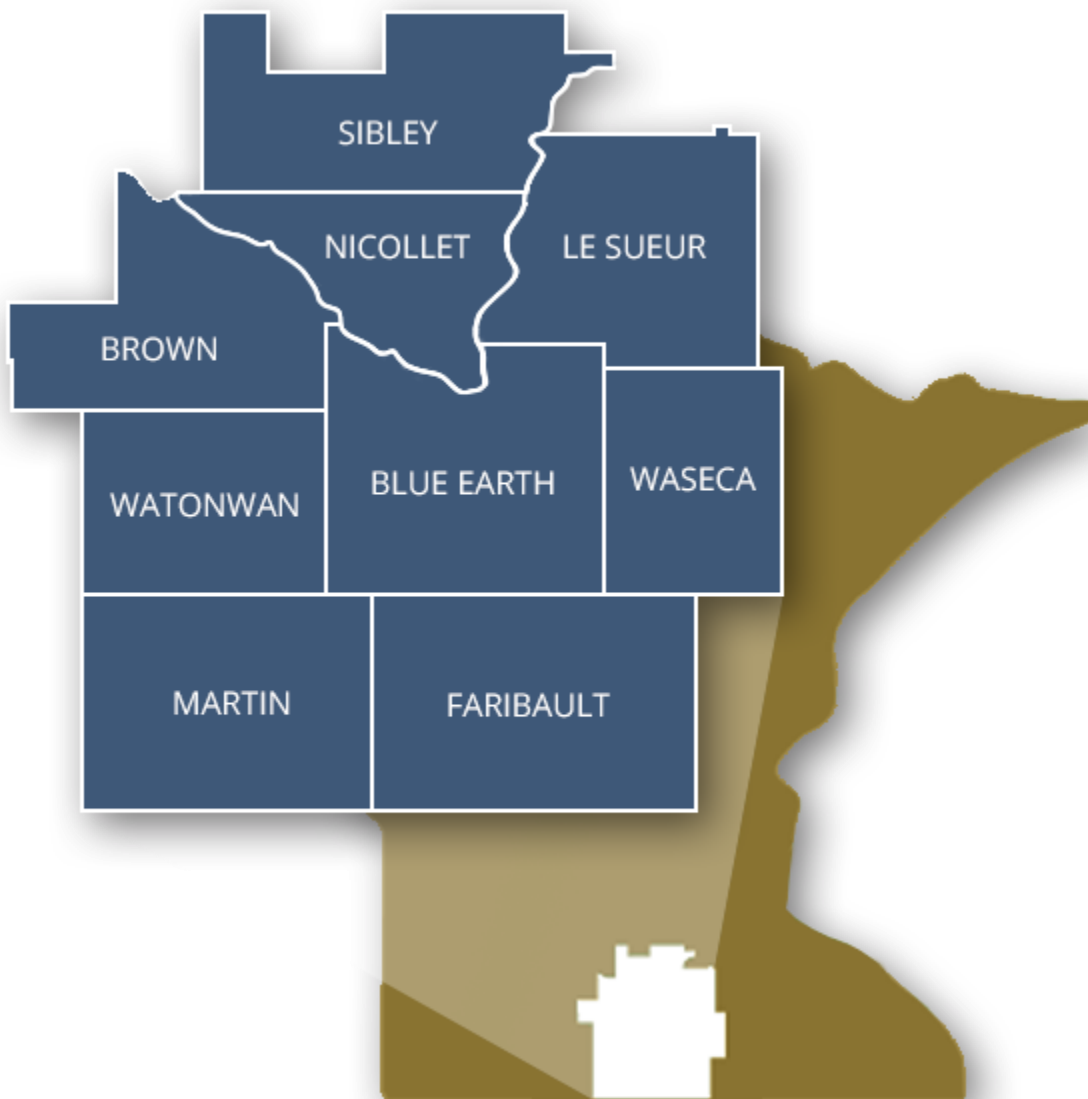
The four types of limitations which preclude persons from driving are:

1. physical limitations
2. financial limitations
3. legal limitations
4. self-imposed limitations

Physical limitations may include permanent disabilities due to age, blindness, paralysis, or developmental disabilities and temporary disabilities such as acute illnesses and head injuries. Financial limitations include those persons unable to purchase or rent their own vehicle. Legal limitations generally refer to limitations for persons who are too young to drive (generally under age 16). Self-imposed limitations refer to those people who choose not to own or drive a vehicle (some or all the time) for reasons other than those listed in the first three categories. The Census is generally capable of providing information about the first three categories of limitation. The fourth category of limitation is currently recognized as representing a relatively small proportion of transit ridership but is still significant to this study.

## Geography

The study area includes nine counties in South Central Minnesota. These counties include Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan. These counties are located southwest of the Twin Cities and span to the Iowa border. The region includes the Minnesota River and several of its tributaries, and its landscape is largely made up of prairie and the transition zone between the prairie of western Minnesota and the forests of southeastern Minnesota. Major highways that pass through the region are Interstate 90, US Highway 14, US Highway 169, and several Minnesota State Highways, including MN-4, MN-13, MN-15, MN-19, MN-22, MN-30, MN-60, and MN-99.



**Table 1a: Total Population**

Current and Forecasted Population in Region Nine Counties						
County	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Blue Earth	68,799	69,161	69,509	69,845	70,165	70,473
Brown	24,717	24,618	24,514	24,406	24,293	24,175
Faribault	13,306	13,199	13,089	12,977	12,863	12,745
Le Sueur	28,430	28,481	28,526	28,565	28,599	28,627
Martin	19,175	19,027	18,876	18,720	18,562	18,400
Nicollet	34,875	35,034	35,187	35,333	35,473	35,605
Sibley	14,688	14,636	14,582	14,525	14,465	14,402
Waseca	18,397	18,313	18,226	18,135	18,041	17,943
Watonwan	10,780	10,739	10,696	10,650	10,603	10,553
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>233,167</b>	<b>233,208</b>	<b>233,205</b>	<b>233,156</b>	<b>233,064</b>	<b>232,923</b>

Region Nine’s population is currently estimated at 233,167 residents as of 2022. The population is anticipated to be relatively stagnant in the next 5 years. Most counties in the region will see overall slight decreases in population with only Blue Earth, Le Sueur, and Nicollet Counties projected to see modest growth. This reflects a greater nationwide trend of rural to urban migration as the only growth is anticipated to be in the two Mankato MSA counties and one Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington MSA county in the region.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of the regional population between each county. Blue Earth County, home to the regional hub of Mankato, contains over a quarter of the region’s population. Nicollet County is the second largest county by population, and Le Sueur is the third largest. These three counties account for over half of the region’s population, and as noted before, they are the only counties projected to grow in the next several years. The remaining six counties (Brown, Faribault, Martin, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan) combine to make up about 44% of the population.

**Table 1b: Population by County**

County	Population	Percent of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	<b>66,795</b>	<b>28.7%</b>
<b>Brown</b>	<b>25,163</b>	<b>10.8%</b>
<b>Faribault</b>	<b>13,801</b>	<b>5.9%</b>
<b>Le Sueur</b>	<b>28,242</b>	<b>12.2%</b>
<b>Martin</b>	<b>19,852</b>	<b>8.5%</b>
<b>Nicollet</b>	<b>33,954</b>	<b>14.6%</b>
<b>Sibley</b>	<b>14,892</b>	<b>6.4%</b>
<b>Waseca</b>	<b>18,740</b>	<b>8.1%</b>
<b>Watonwan</b>	<b>10,972</b>	<b>4.7%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>232,411</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Population by Age

Blue Earth County is the youngest overall county in the region, though it has the lowest percentage of youth population of any county. However, its senior population is proportionally so much smaller than other counties that the average age ends up being younger than the rest. All counties aside from Blue Earth have a youth population of over 20%. In general, the most rural counties in the region have the highest senior populations. The two counties in the Mankato MSA (Blue Earth and Nicollet) and one county in the Twin Cities MSA (Le Sueur) have the lowest percentage of seniors.

Tables 2-4 show the number of youth, adults, and seniors within each county and the percent these populations make out of the total county population. Each of the nine counties have similar proportions of youth population. The counties differ in older demographics, however; Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties have a higher proportion of adults 18-64 than the rest of the counties. This can be partially attributed to the large number of working-age professionals in the Mankato-North Mankato MSA as well as the college campuses in these counties (Minnesota State University, Mankato; South Central College; Gustavus Adolphus College; and Bethany Lutheran College). Additionally, the Mankato-North Mankato MSA is the most urbanized part of the region, and the large population of adults goes along with the trend of rural-to-urban migration. Martin and Faribault Counties have the highest proportion of senior residents in the region. These two counties, along with Brown, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan, all have higher percentages of senior residents than the region as a whole.

**Table 2: Youth Population (17 years and younger)**

County	Total Population	Youth Population	Percent of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	<b>66,795</b>	13,210	19.8%
<b>Brown</b>	<b>25,163</b>	5,462	21.7%
<b>Faribault</b>	<b>13,801</b>	3,036	22.0%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	<b>28,242</b>	6,792	24.0%
<b>Martin</b>	<b>19,852</b>	4,329	21.8%
<b>Nicollet</b>	<b>33,954</b>	7,469	22.0%
<b>Sibley</b>	<b>14,892</b>	3,527	23.7%
<b>Waseca</b>	<b>18,740</b>	4,375	23.3%
<b>Watonwan</b>	<b>10,972</b>	2,685	24.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>232,411</b>	50,855	21.9%

Source: ACS

**Table 3: Adult Population (18 to 64 years)**

County	Total Population	Adult Population	Percent of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	<b>66,795</b>	44,564	66.7%

<b>Brown</b>	<b>25,163</b>	<b>14,458</b>	<b>57.5%</b>
<b>Faribault</b>	<b>13,801</b>	<b>7,631</b>	<b>55.3%</b>
<b>Le Sueur</b>	<b>28,242</b>	<b>16,621</b>	<b>58.9%</b>
<b>Martin</b>	<b>19,852</b>	<b>10,968</b>	<b>55.2%</b>
<b>Nicollet</b>	<b>33,954</b>	<b>21,168</b>	<b>62.3%</b>
<b>Sibley</b>	<b>14,892</b>	<b>8,673</b>	<b>58.2%</b>
<b>Waseca</b>	<b>18,740</b>	<b>11,106</b>	<b>59.3%</b>
<b>Watonwan</b>	<b>10,972</b>	<b>6,098</b>	<b>55.6%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>232,411</b>	<b>141,377</b>	<b>60.8%</b>

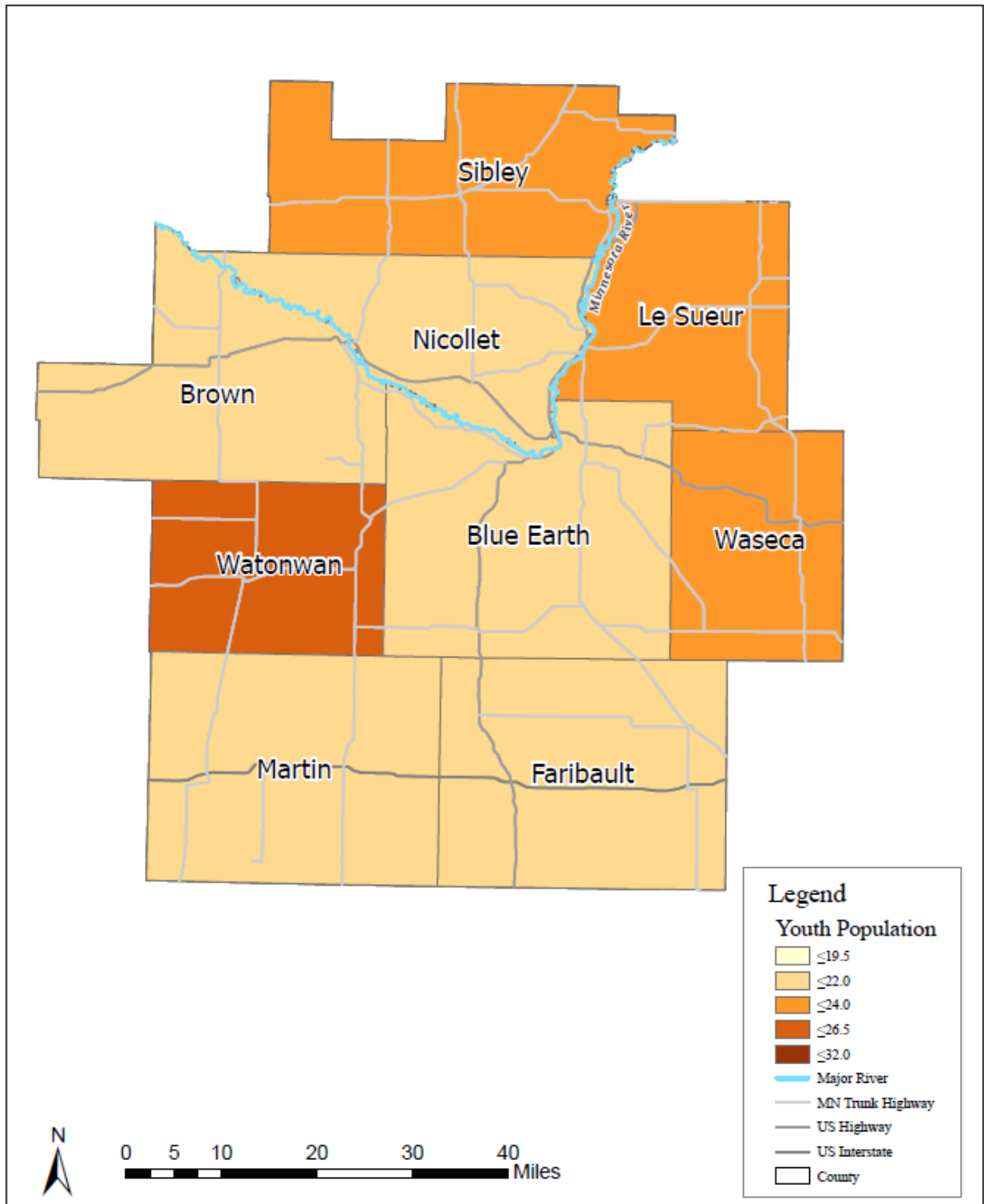
Source: ACS

**Table 4: Senior Population (65 years and over)**

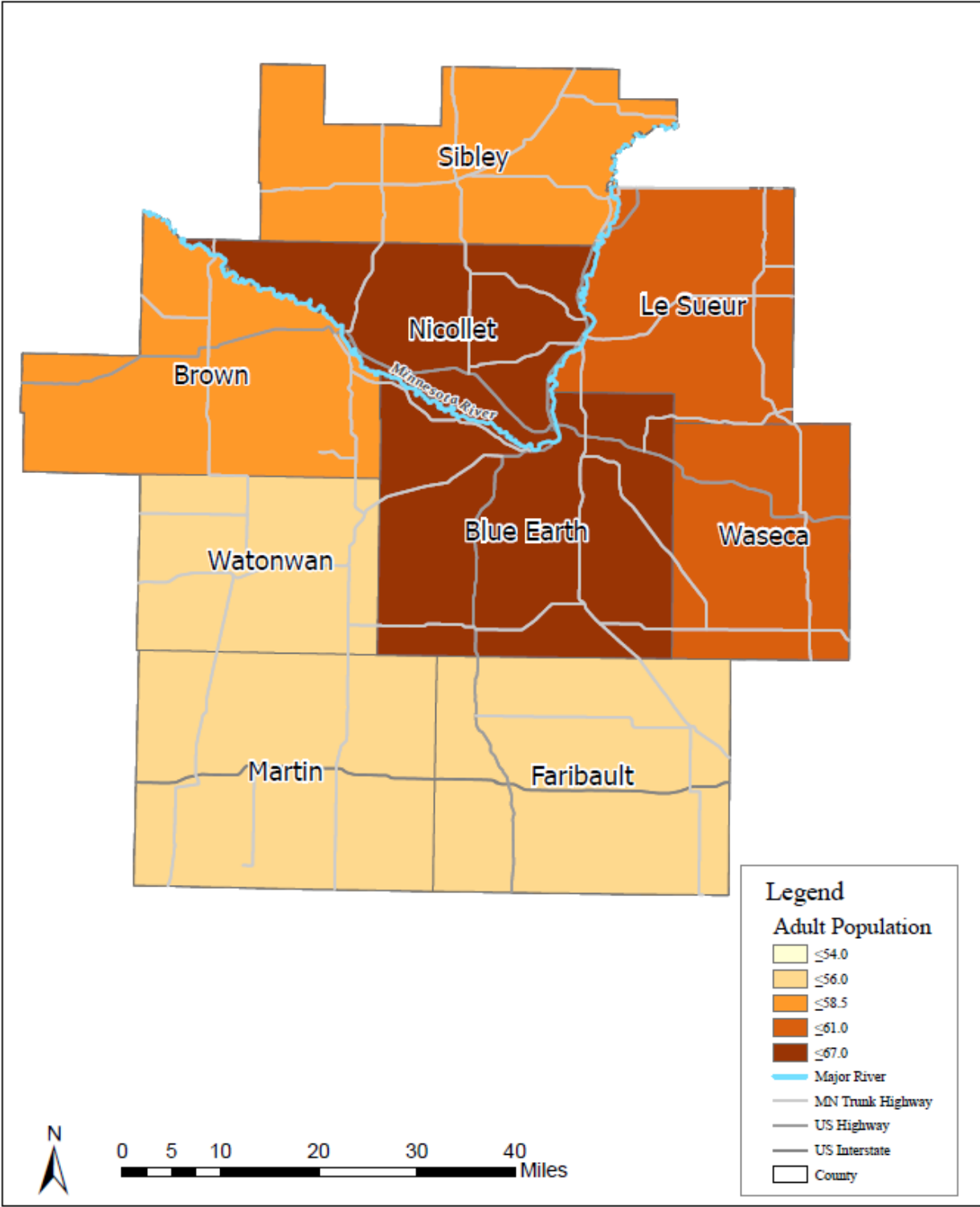
<b>County</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Senior Population</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
<b>Blue Earth</b>	<b>66,795</b>	<b>8,931</b>	<b>13.4%</b>
<b>Brown</b>	<b>25,163</b>	<b>5,243</b>	<b>20.8%</b>
<b>Faribault</b>	<b>13,801</b>	<b>3,134</b>	<b>22.7%</b>
<b>Le Sueur</b>	<b>28,242</b>	<b>4,829</b>	<b>17.1%</b>
<b>Martin</b>	<b>19,852</b>	<b>4,555</b>	<b>22.9%</b>
<b>Nicollet</b>	<b>33,954</b>	<b>5,317</b>	<b>15.7%</b>
<b>Sibley</b>	<b>14,892</b>	<b>2,692</b>	<b>18.1%</b>
<b>Waseca</b>	<b>18,740</b>	<b>3,259</b>	<b>17.4%</b>
<b>Watonwan</b>	<b>10,972</b>	<b>2,189</b>	<b>20.0%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>232,411</b>	<b>40,149</b>	<b>17.3%</b>

Source: ACS

# Region Nine - Percent Youth Population

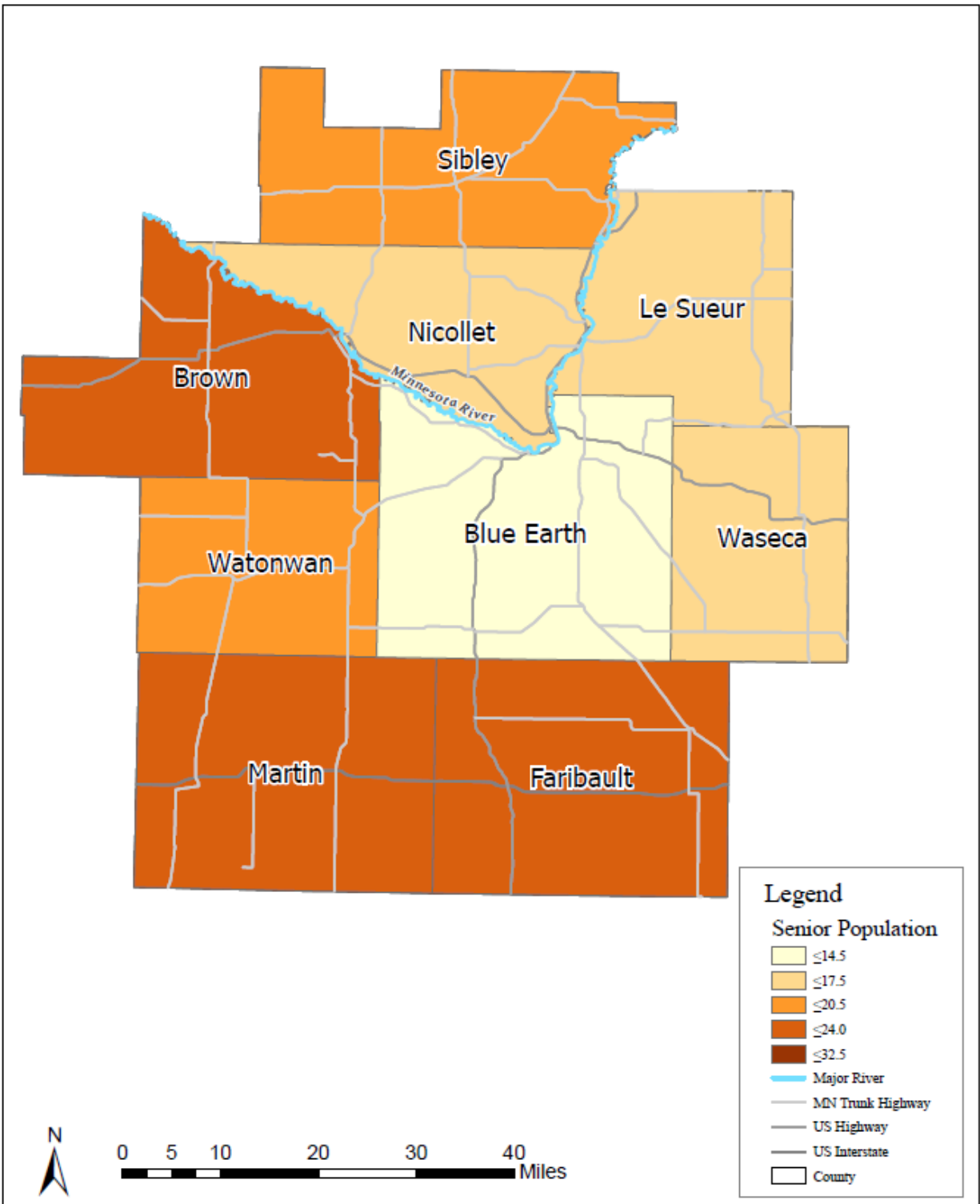


# Region Nine - Percent Adult Population



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

# Region Nine - Percent Senior Population





In the maps above, Watonwan County shows the highest proportion of youth residents in the region, and Le Sueur, Sibley, and Waseca Counties also show a comparatively high proportion of youth to the rest of the region. Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties have the highest adult populations. Martin, Faribault, and Brown Counties have the highest proportion of senior residents in the region.

### Populations with a Disability

Table 5 contains the total county populations for individuals with disabilities, and the percent that population is of the total county population. Tables 6-8 break down that total population into youth, adults, and seniors with a disability. Martin County has the highest percentage of residents with disabilities with 14.4% of the population having a disability. Blue Earth County has the lowest percentage of disabled residents, but it still has the highest raw number of disabled residents in the region given its larger overall population size. While Watonwan County has the smallest disabled population, it is the second highest percent of the total county population.

Martin County also has the highest percentage of disabled youth residents in the region at 6.4%. Most other counties in the region have a youth disability rate of around 4%, though Brown and Sibley Counties are lower at 2.7% and 2.5% respectively. 8.6% of the region’s adult residents are considered disabled. Martin County has the highest percentage of disabled adults at 11%. Along with Martin County, Faribault, Le Sueur, Nicollet, and Watonwan Counties have a higher percentage of disabled adults than the region as a whole.

**Table 5: Populations with a Disability**

County	Total Population	Disabled Population	Percent of Total
Blue Earth	66,795	6,487	9.7%
Brown	25,163	2,517	10.0%
Faribault	13,801	1,620	11.7%
Le Sueur	28,242	3,069	10.9%
Martin	19,852	2,862	14.4%
Nicollet	33,954	4,246	12.5%
Sibley	14,892	1,570	10.5%
Waseca	18,740	1,940	10.4%
Watonwan	10,972	1,456	13.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>232,411</b>	<b>25,767</b>	<b>11.1%</b>

Source: ACS

**Table 6: Youth Population with a Disability (5 to 15 years)**

County	Total Youth	Disabled Population	Percent of Total
Blue Earth	13,210	529	4.0%
Brown	5,462	145	2.7%
Faribault	3,036	131	4.3%

<b>Le Sueur</b>	6,792	270	4.0%
<b>Martin</b>	4,329	278	6.4%
<b>Nicollet</b>	7,469	320	4.3%
<b>Sibley</b>	3,527	89	2.5%
<b>Waseca</b>	4,375	174	4.0%
<b>Watonwan</b>	2,685	106	4.0%
<b>Total</b>	50,855	2,042	4.0%

Source: ACS

**Table 7: Adult Population with a Disability (16 to 64 years)**

County	Total Adult	Disabled Population	Percent of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	44,564	3,532	7.9%
<b>Brown</b>	14,458	1,051	7.3%
<b>Faribault</b>	7,631	683	9.0%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	16,621	1,438	8.7%
<b>Martin</b>	10,968	1,210	11.0%
<b>Nicollet</b>	21,168	2,166	10.2%
<b>Sibley</b>	8,673	662	7.6%
<b>Waseca</b>	11,106	851	7.6%
<b>Watonwan</b>	6,098	633	10.4%
<b>Total</b>	141,377	12,226	8.6%

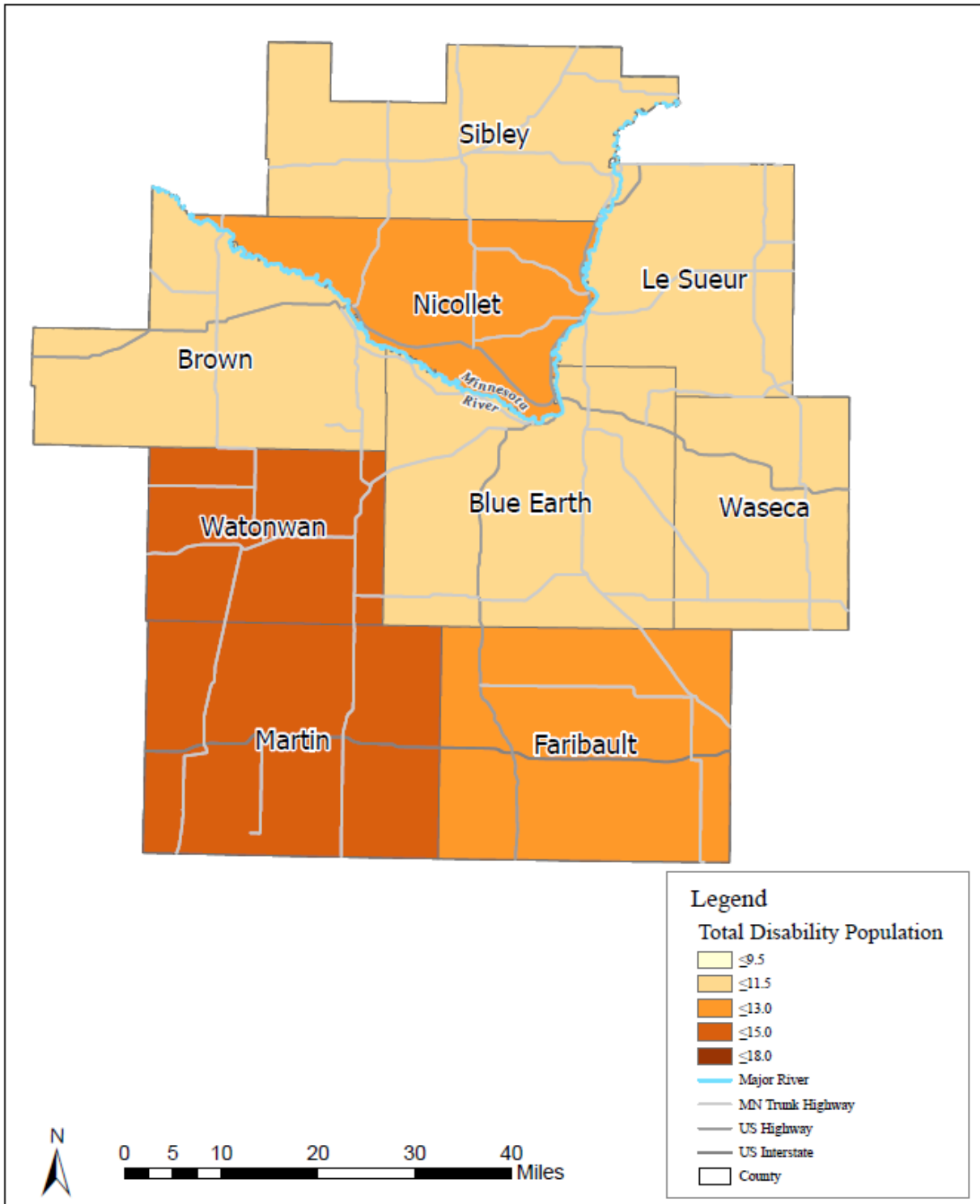
Source: U.S. ACS

**Table 8: Senior Population with a Disability (65 years+)**

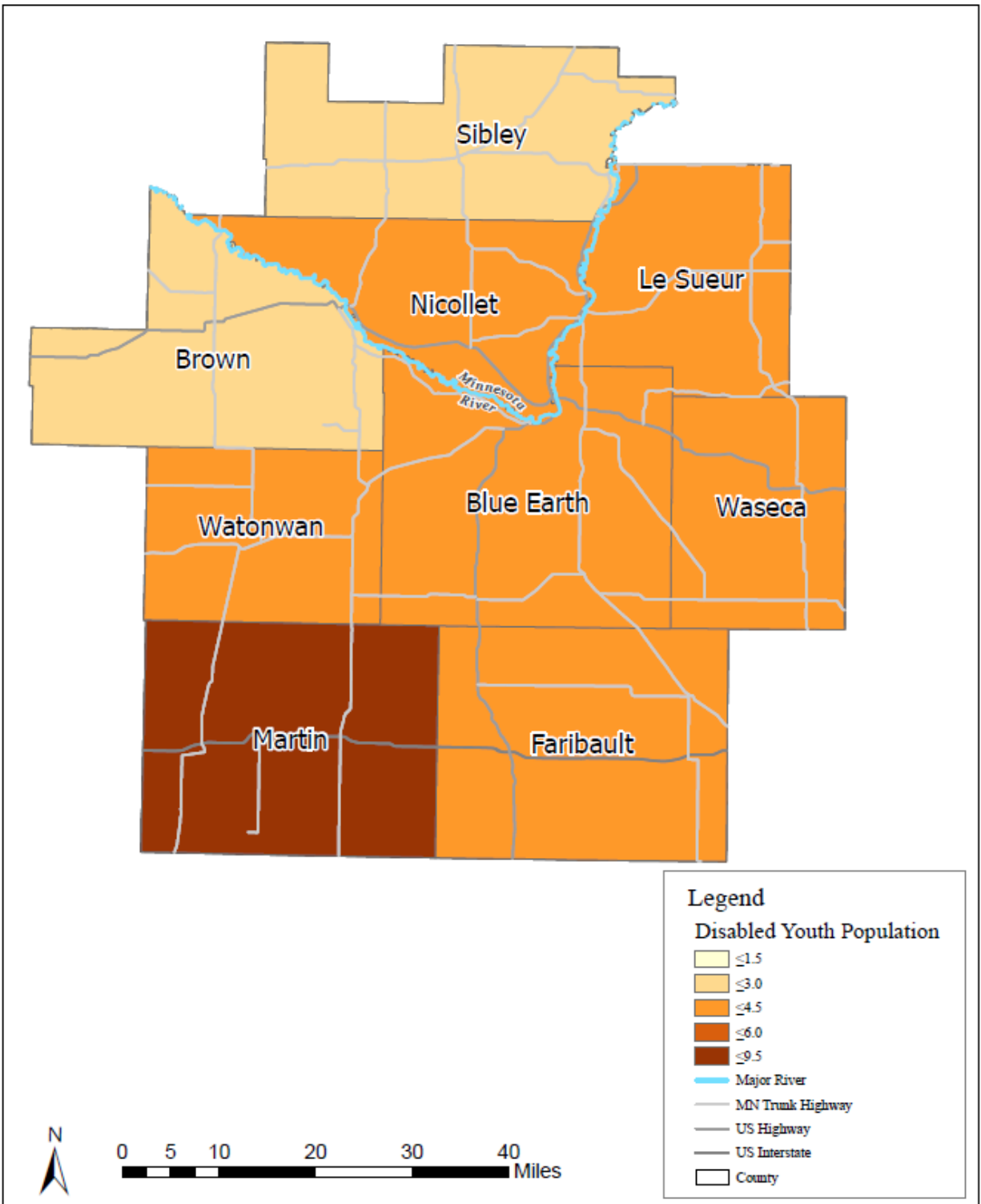
County	Total Seniors	Disabled Population	Percent of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	8,931	2,426	27.2%
<b>Brown</b>	5,243	1,321	25.2%
<b>Faribault</b>	3,134	806	25.7%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	4,829	1,361	28.2%
<b>Martin</b>	4,555	1,374	30.2%
<b>Nicollet</b>	5,317	1,760	33.1%
<b>Sibley</b>	2,692	819	30.4%
<b>Waseca</b>	3,259	915	28.1%
<b>Watonwan</b>	2,189	717	32.8%
<b>Total</b>	40,149	11,499	28.6%

Source: ACS

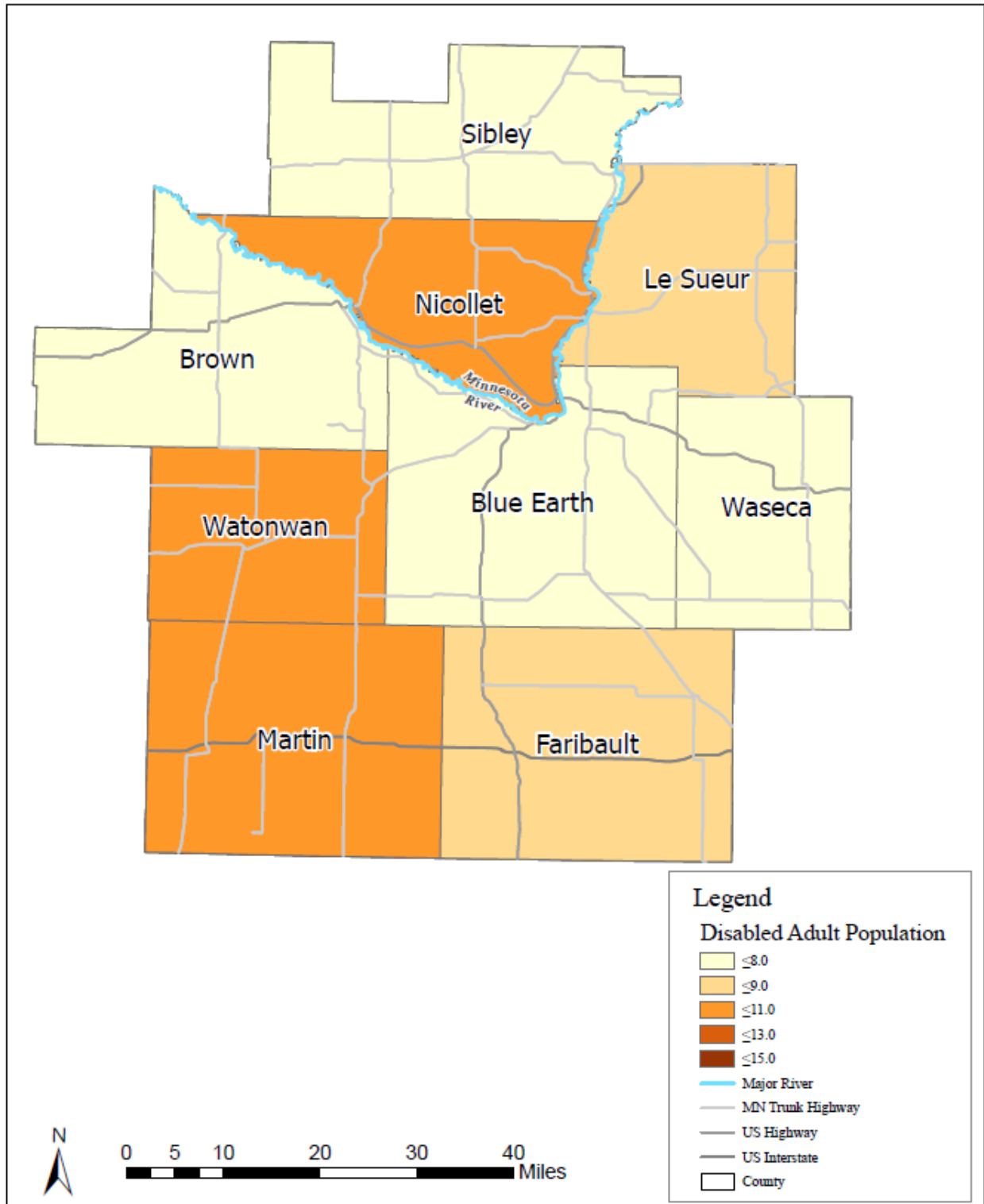
# Region Nine - Percent Total Disability Population



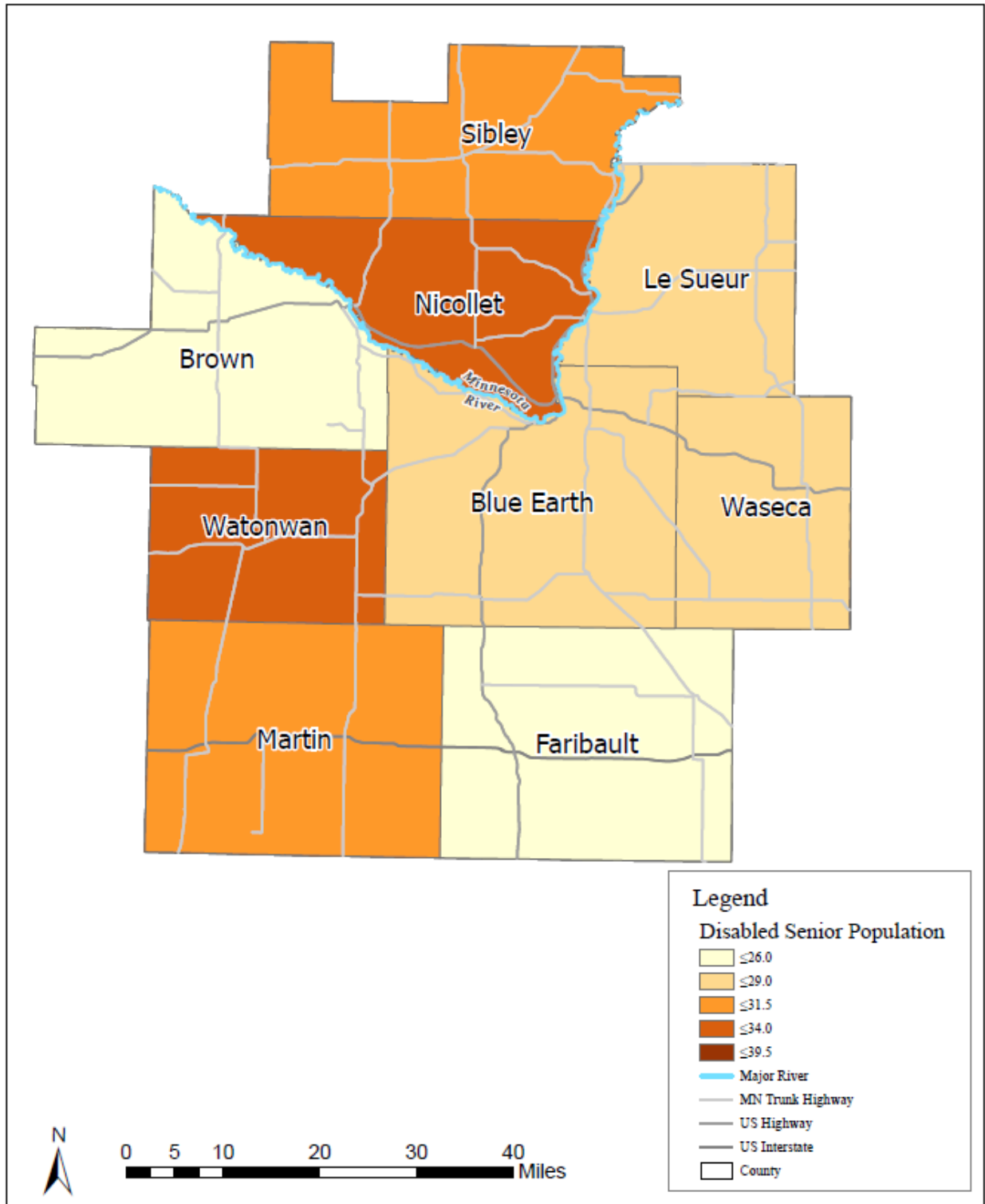
# Region Nine - Percent Disabled Youth Population



# Region Nine - Percent Disabled Adult Population



## Region Nine - Percent Disabled Senior Population



The maps above show percentages of disabled people by county in the region. Martin and Watonwan Counties have the highest percentage of disabled people in the region. Faribault

and Nicollet also have a higher percentage of disabled people than most other counties in the region. The disabled youth population map shows the percentage of disabled youths being a bit more evenly distributed than other population groups. Brown and Sibley Counties show the lowest percentages of disabled youths, while Martin County has the highest. Martin, Nicollet and Watonwan Counties have the highest percentage of disabled adults, and Nicollet and Watonwan Counties have the highest percentage of disabled seniors.

### Low-Income Population

As defined by the Department of Health and Human Services, an individual having an annual income of no more than \$12,880 is considered to be living below the poverty level. Table 9 below shows the population of individuals living below the poverty level per county, and the percent that population represents of the total. Tables 10-12 describe this population in more detail by showing county populations for youth, adults, seniors, and individuals with a disability living below poverty. As a whole, the 12.1% of the region’s population lives under the poverty line. Blue Earth County has the highest population as well as percentage of residents (17.6%) living below the poverty line. Other counties in the region with 10% or more of their populations living below the poverty line include Faribault, Martin, and Watonwan Counties. Brown County has the lowest percentage of its population living below the poverty line.

While Blue Earth County has the highest overall rate of poverty, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, and Watonwan Counties have higher youth poverty rates. Blue Earth County has the highest adult poverty rate by far at 21.4%; the next closest county is Martin with a 12.3% adult poverty rate. Martin County has the highest senior poverty rate of all Region Nine counties at 12.4%. Most other counties are in the 6-8% range aside from Watonwan at 9.1%.

**Table 9: Population Below Poverty Level**

County	Total Population	Population Below Poverty Level	Percent of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	66,795	11,756	17.6%
<b>Brown</b>	25,163	1,736	6.9%
<b>Faribault</b>	13,801	1,587	11.5%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	28,242	2,401	8.5%
<b>Martin</b>	19,852	2,720	13.7%
<b>Nicollet</b>	33,954	3,361	9.9%
<b>Sibley</b>	14,892	1,176	7.9%
<b>Waseca</b>	18,740	1,818	9.7%
<b>Watonwan</b>	10,972	1,470	13.4%
<b>Total</b>	232,411	28,025	12.1%

Source: ACS

**Table 10: Youth Below Poverty Level (17 years and younger)**

County	Total Youth	Population below Poverty Level	Percent of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	13,210	1,559	11.8%
<b>Brown</b>	5,462	448	8.2%
<b>Faribault</b>	3,036	510	16.8%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	6,792	869	12.8%
<b>Martin</b>	4,329	818	18.9%
<b>Nicollet</b>	7,469	680	9.1%
<b>Sibley</b>	3,527	370	10.5%
<b>Waseca</b>	4,375	438	10.0%
<b>Watonwan</b>	2,685	558	20.8%
<b>Total</b>	50,855	6,250	12.3%

Source: ACS

**Table 11: Adults Below Poverty Level (18 to 64 years)**

County	Total Adults	Population below Poverty Level	Percent of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	44,564	9,537	21.4%
<b>Brown</b>	14,458	969	6.7%
<b>Faribault</b>	7,631	862	11.3%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	16,621	1,213	7.3%
<b>Martin</b>	10,968	1,349	12.3%
<b>Nicollet</b>	21,168	2,286	10.8%
<b>Sibley</b>	8,673	624	7.2%
<b>Waseca</b>	11,106	1,122	10.1%
<b>Watonwan</b>	6,098	707	11.6%
<b>Total</b>	141,377	18,669	13.2%

Source: ACS

**Table 12: Seniors Below Poverty Level (65 years and over)**

County	Number of Seniors	Population below Poverty Level	Percent of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	8,931	661	7.4%
<b>Brown</b>	5,243	320	6.1%
<b>Faribault</b>	3,134	207	6.6%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	4,829	333	6.9%
<b>Martin</b>	4,555	565	12.4%
<b>Nicollet</b>	5,317	393	7.4%



<b>Sibley</b>	2,692	188	7.0%
<b>Waseca</b>	3,259	257	7.9%
<b>Watowan</b>	2,189	199	9.1%
<b>Total</b>	40,149	3,123	7.8%

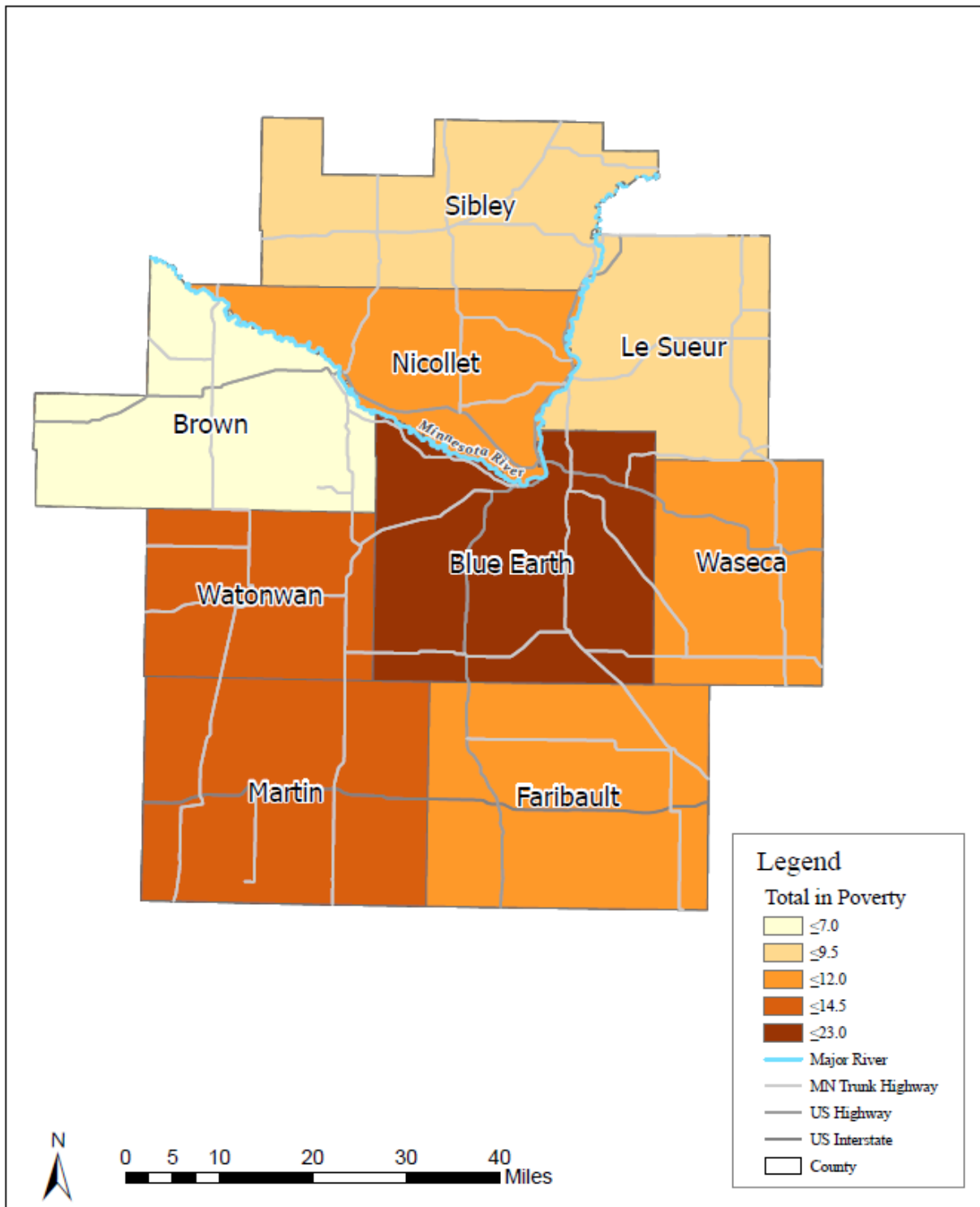
Source: ACS

**Table 13: Individuals with a Disability Below Poverty Level**

County	Number of Persons with a Disability	Population below Poverty Level	Percent of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	6,487	1,367	21.1%
<b>Brown</b>	2,517	376	14.9%
<b>Faribault</b>	1,620	323	19.9%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	3,069	473	15.4%
<b>Martin</b>	2,862	505	17.6%
<b>Nicollet</b>	4,246	1,106	26.0%
<b>Sibley</b>	1,570	230	14.6%
<b>Waseca</b>	1,940	340	17.5%
<b>Watowan</b>	1,456	306	21.0%
<b>Total</b>	25,767	5,026	19.5%

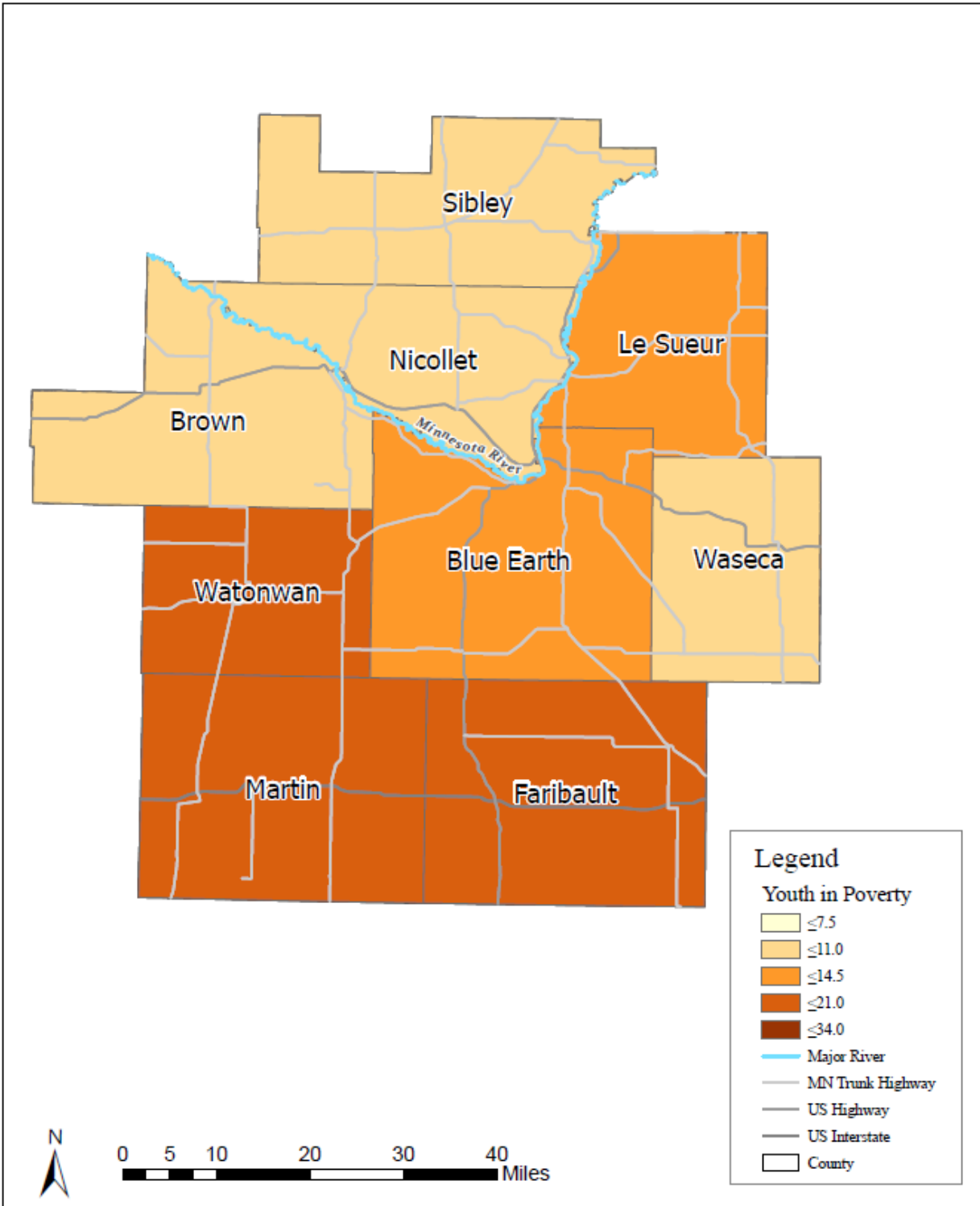
Source: ACS

# Region Nine - Percent Total in Poverty



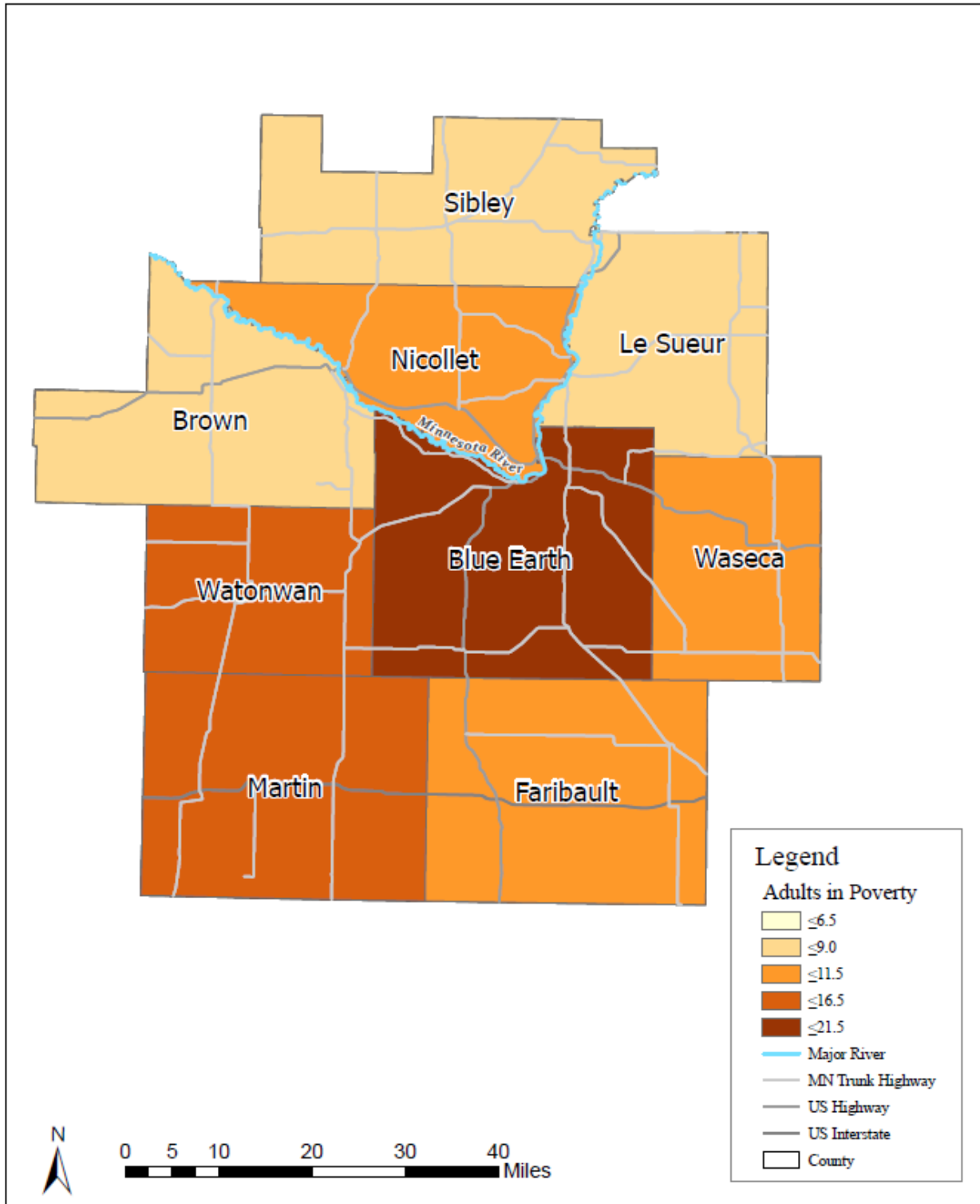
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

# Region Nine - Percent Youth in Poverty

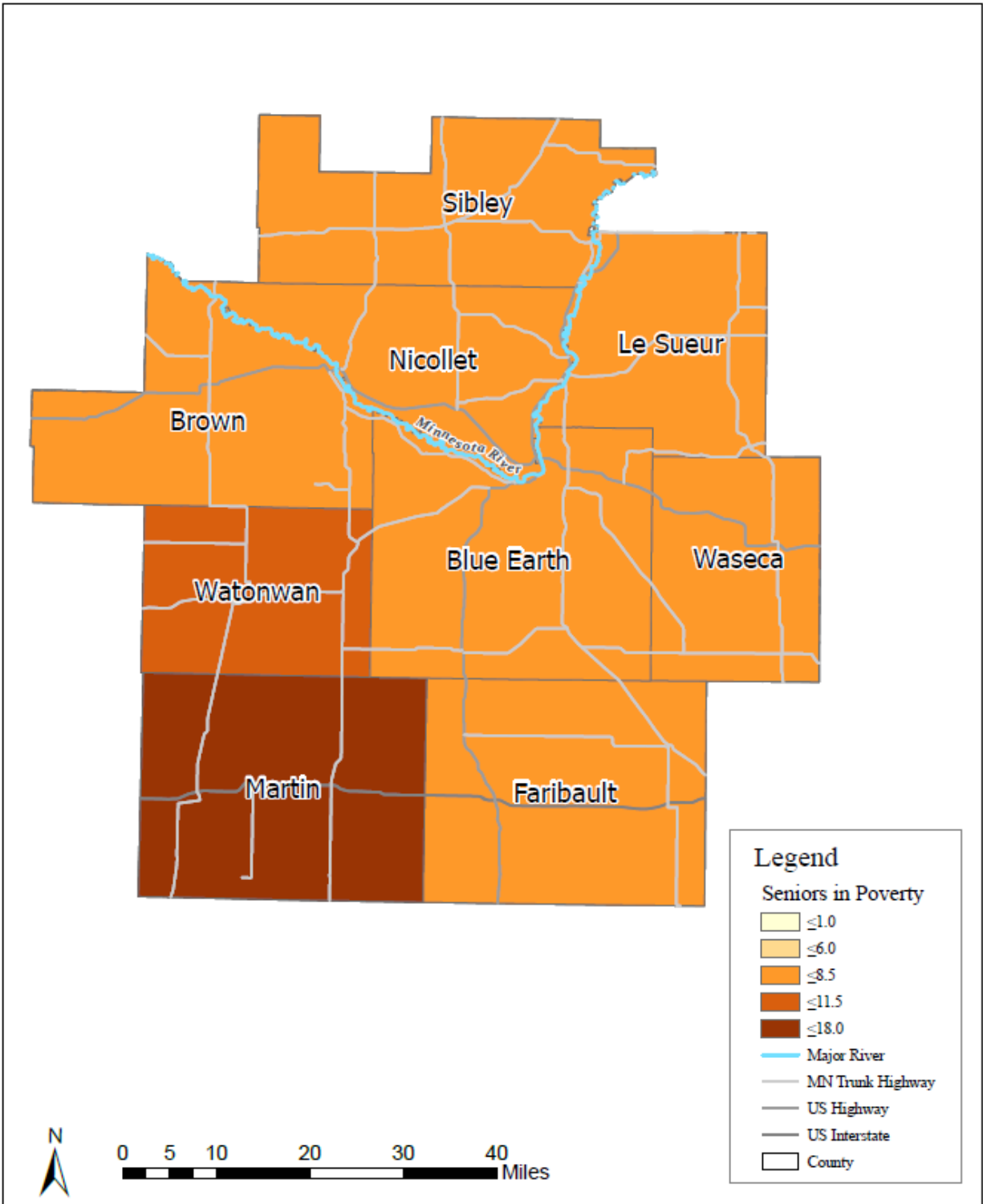


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

# Region Nine - Percent Adults in Poverty



## Region Nine - Percent Seniors in Poverty



The maps above show that Blue Earth County has the highest concentration of poverty in the region overall, and in general, there are higher concentrations of poverty in the central and

southern counties in the region. Faribault, Martin, and Watonwan Counties have the highest percentage of impoverished youths. Blue Earth County has the highest percentage of impoverished adults, and Martin County has the highest percentage of impoverished seniors.

### Households with Incomes Below the Poverty Level

Households below the federal poverty level are defined by the Department of Health and Human services as a household of four having an annual income of no more than \$26,500. Table 14 below depicts the number of households below the poverty level and the percentage of households in the area that are living below the poverty level.

Watonwan County has the highest percentage of households below poverty in the region at 10.5%. Martin County has the second most with 9.3%. While Blue Earth County is close to the regional average of households in poverty, the high population and number of households still lead to it having the highest raw number of households in poverty. Sibley County has both the lowest raw number and lowest percentage of households below the poverty line.

**Table 14: Households Below Poverty**

County	Households Below Poverty	Households Above Poverty	Percent Below Poverty of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	1,112	13,912	7.4%
<b>Brown</b>	322	6,682	4.6%
<b>Faribault</b>	300	3,502	7.9%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	495	7,249	6.4%
<b>Martin</b>	513	5,000	9.3%
<b>Nicollet</b>	447	8,154	5.2%
<b>Sibley</b>	168	3,928	4.1%
<b>Waseca</b>	392	4,513	8.0%
<b>Watonwan</b>	301	2,565	10.5%
<b>Total</b>	4,050	55,505	7.3%

### Zero-Vehicle Households

Households without a motor vehicle are important to identify in human services transportation and transit plans. Households without access to vehicles rely more heavily on transit and alternative transportation options.

Table 15 shows the number of vehicles per household and the percentage of households that contain zero-vehicles. Nicollet and Blue Earth Counties have the most zero vehicle households in terms of number and percentage. These counties have the two most urban cities in the region with St. Peter and Mankato, and both of those communities have considerable college

student populations.

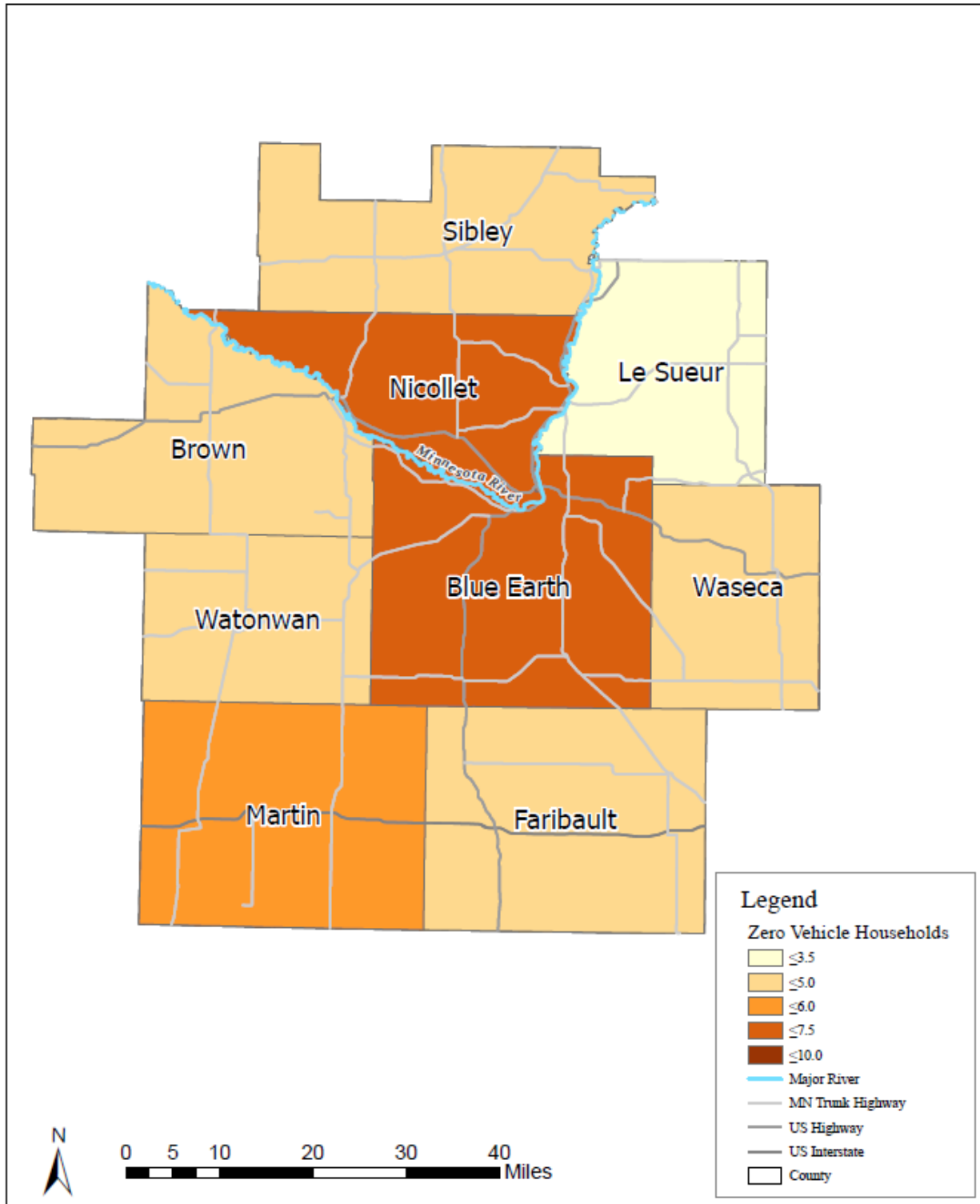
Le Sueur County has the lowest percentage of zero-vehicle households. Le Sueur is also situated between the population centers of Mankato and Minneapolis-St. Paul, leading to some suburban, car-oriented development. Watonwan County also has a remarkably low percentage of zero-vehicle households considering it has a high percentage of households below poverty. The rest of the counties fall within the range of 4.3% and 5.3%. These are all below average for the region as the sheer number of households in Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties gives their percentages more weight.

**Table 15: Household Vehicle Access**

County	Total Households	Zero Vehicle Households	1 Vehicle	2 Vehicle	3 or More Vehicles	Percent Zero-Vehicle of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	26,091	1,865	7,150	10,485	6,591	7.1%
<b>Brown</b>	10,764	490	2,927	4,266	3,081	4.6%
<b>Faribault</b>	6,137	306	1,859	2,260	1,712	5.0%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	10,939	355	2,498	4,310	3,776	3.2%
<b>Martin</b>	8,759	464	2,849	3,037	2,409	5.3%
<b>Nicollet</b>	12,885	924	3,449	5,620	2,892	7.2%
<b>Sibley</b>	6,031	258	1,296	2,250	2,227	4.3%
<b>Waseca</b>	7,425	335	2,041	2,730	2,319	4.5%
<b>Watonwan</b>	4,310	166	1,280	1,687	1,177	3.9%
<b>Total</b>	93,341	5,163	25,349	36,645	26,184	5.5%

Source: ACS

# Region Nine - Percent Zero Vehicle Households





## Commuting to Work

It is important to understand how residents are getting to their place of work when developing human service transportation and transit plans. Rural areas with lower population densities are more likely to be car-dependent, while denser areas tend to enable people to use a wider array of transportation options for commuting, including walking, biking, and public transportation.

Below, Table 16 outlines the way residents get to work in each county. The modes of getting to work are split into six categories. The majority of working people commute by car alone. Carpooling is the second most common mode of travel to the workplace for people who work outside their homes. The only counties where public transportation is used as a commuting option by more than 1% are Blue Earth County at 1.9% and Watonwan County at 1.1%. Walking is more common than public transit use, though it still has a relatively small share of commuters throughout the region. Biking also accounts for less than 1% of commuter travel in all nine counties.

Telecommuting is increasing in commonness in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The numbers in Table 16 represent pre-COVID numbers, and those are anticipated to rise. Over 11% of Nicollet County’s working population was already telecommuting prior to the pandemic. Brown and Sibley had the second highest rates of people working from home. Waseca County had the lowest percentage of the nine counties. Still, as telecommuting grows and broadband access becomes more universal, the share of employed people working from home is likely to increase.

**Table 16: Commuting to Work**

County	Drove Alone	Carpooled	Public Transportation	Walked	Bicycle	Worked at Home
<b>Blue Earth</b>	81.3%	6.9%	1.9%	3.2%	0.5%	5.5%
<b>Brown</b>	82.1%	5.5%	0.3%	3.4%	0.6%	7.8%
<b>Faribault</b>	80.6%	8.1%	0.1%	3.3%	0.2%	7.0%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	82.4%	8.3%	0.4%	2.9%	0.1%	5.4%
<b>Martin</b>	80.2%	7.6%	0.4%	3.1%	0.4%	7.3%
<b>Nicollet</b>	75.6%	7.7%	0.4%	3.6%	0.6%	11.4%
<b>Sibley</b>	81.4%	6.7%	0.4%	3.0%	0.1%	7.8%
<b>Waseca</b>	82.7%	8.5%	0.3%	2.0%	0.3%	4.8%
<b>Watonwan</b>	77.4%	8.9%	1.1%	5.8%	0.9%	5.7%

Source: ACS

## Place of Work

Knowing where current residents are working is useful in assessing the need of expanding transportation services. Le Sueur County has the highest percentage of residents working outside of their home county with over 62% of working residents commuting to another

county. Given Le Sueur’s geographic position on the outskirts of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area and bordering the Mankato-North Mankato metropolitan area, this is not surprising. Over half of the working population in Sibley County commutes outside of the county. This is also not surprising as Sibley County is included in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Statistical Area as well. Nicollet is the only other county with over half of its working residents commuting to other counties. With Nicollet County’s most populous city, St. Peter, being less than 15 miles from the regional hub of Mankato, this is also unsurprising. The rest of the region’s counties have more workers staying within their respective counties for work. Brown and Martin have particularly high rates of workers commuting within the county with both over 85%.

**Table 17: Place of Work**

County	Works in County of Resident	Percent of Total Work Within County	Works Outside County of Residence	Percent of Total Works Outside
<b>Blue Earth</b>	28,056	76.3%	8,567	23.3%
<b>Brown</b>	11,475	85.0%	1,971	14.6%
<b>Faribault</b>	4,746	68.6%	1,985	28.7%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	5,556	37.5%	9,230	62.3%
<b>Martin</b>	8,326	85.6%	1,255	12.9%
<b>Nicollet</b>	8,980	48.1%	9,634	51.6%
<b>Sibley</b>	3,609	46.0%	4,206	53.6%
<b>Waseca</b>	4,906	53.5%	4,172	45.5%
<b>Watonwan</b>	3,682	67.9%	2,614	48.2%

Source: ACS

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% as residents who work out-of-state are excluded from these percentages.

### **Minority Communities**

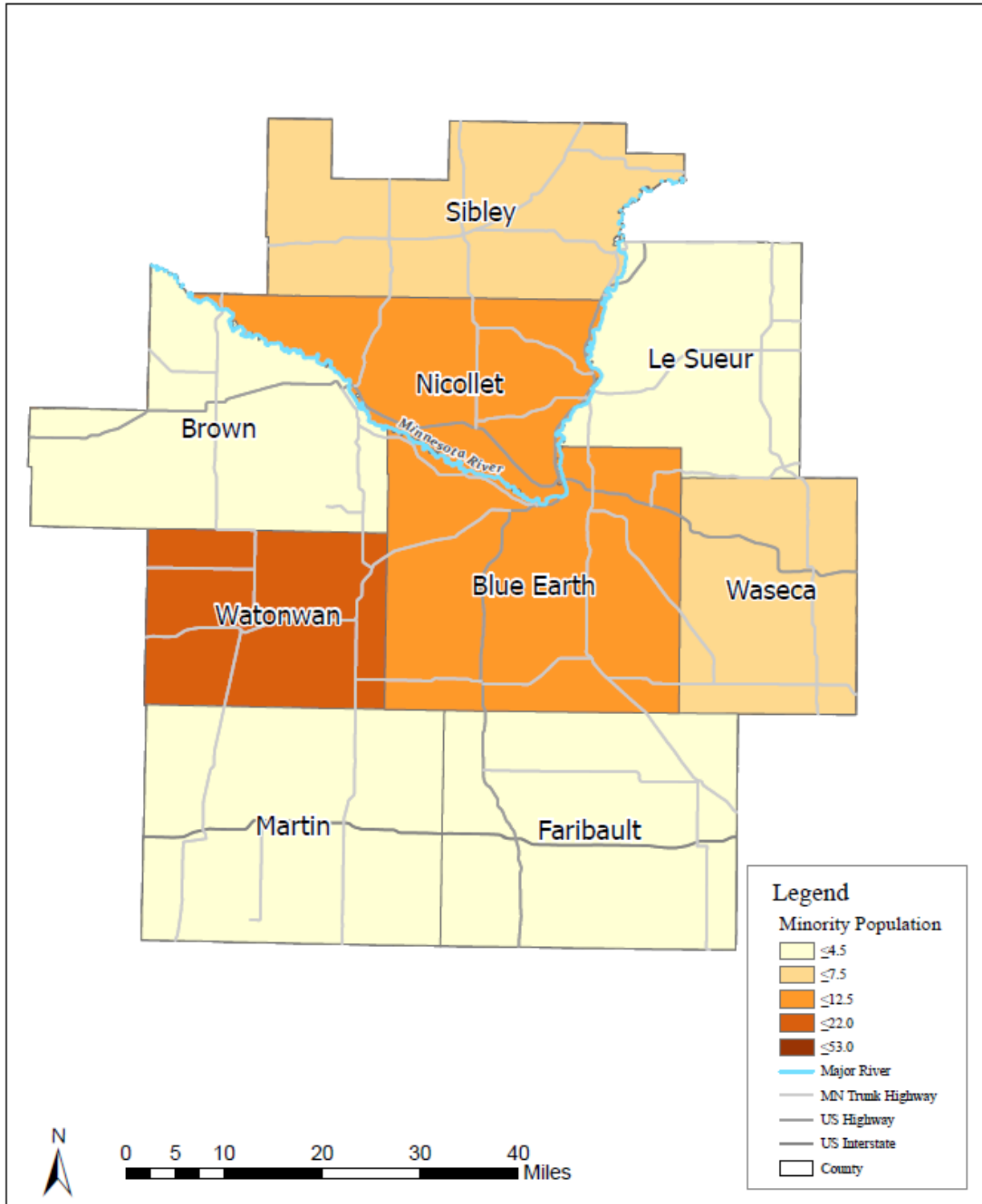
Region Nine’s population is quite racially homogeneous compared to much of the country, with all counties but one having white residents account for over 90% of the population. Watonwan is the only exception to this where about 86% of the residents identify as white. Additionally, over a quarter of Watonwan County’s residents identify as Hispanic or Latino (of any race). This is much higher than the rest of the region; Sibley County has the second highest percentage of Hispanic or Latino people of any race at about 9%. About 11% of Watonwan County’s population identifies as a race other than White, Black, Native American/Alaskan, Asian, or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. This reflects a larger national trend of Hispanic and Latino people in the United States not necessarily identifying as any race listed in the US Census questionnaire. Similarly, people of Middle Eastern and North African descent are considered White by the Census Bureau, though many people with familial ties to this region do not consider themselves to be White. This is relevant to the Mankato area in particular since there is a sizable community of residents there with Lebanese heritage.

**Table 18: Population by Race/Ethnicity**

County	White	Black	Native American/Native Alaskan	Asian	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Other	Two or More Races	Hispanic/Latino (any race)
<b>Blue Earth</b>	90.73%	3.86%	0.26%	2.16%	0.02%	0.51%	2.46%	3.65%
<b>Brown</b>	95.46%	0.72%	0.30%	0.66%	0.00%	2.11%	0.75%	4.40%
<b>Faribault</b>	96.73%	0.25%	0.30%	0.37%	0.00%	0.94%	1.41%	6.91%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	95.50%	0.84%	0.18%	0.41%	0.01%	1.66%	1.40%	6.21%
<b>Martin</b>	96.30%	0.46%	0.15%	0.51%	0.08%	1.07%	1.43%	4.47%
<b>Nicollet</b>	91.97%	2.82%	0.04%	1.74%	0.00%	0.85%	2.58%	4.56%
<b>Sibley</b>	95.35%	1.05%	0.29%	0.72%	0.03%	1.81%	0.75%	8.96%
<b>Waseca</b>	92.90%	2.37%	0.70%	0.60%	0.02%	1.68%	1.73%	6.00%
<b>Watonwan</b>	85.77%	0.93%	0.08%	1.18%	0.00%	10.91%	1.13%	25.49%

Source: ACS

# Region Nine - Percent Minority Population



## Limited English Communities

Residents speaking English exclusively or speaking English very well make up the vast majority of Region Nine’s population. However, there are concentrations of populations that do not speak English very well. Watonwan County has the highest percentage of residents that speak English less than very well at 10.4%; this can be attributed to a large Spanish-speaking immigrant population. While only 1.9% of Blue Earth County residents speak English less than very well, the county still has the largest number of people speaking English less than very well. This can be attributed to growing refugee populations from East African nations (primarily Somalia and South Sudan) as well as a sizable Latino immigrant community. Minnesota Council of Churches, the main organization in the region working to resettle refugees, has also recently seen increases in people seeking asylum from Afghanistan and Ukraine, so these refugee populations could grow in the region in the future.

**Table 19: Population with Limited English Proficiency**

County	Speak English only or speak English “very well”	Percent of Total	Speak English less than “very well”	Percent of Total
<b>Blue Earth</b>	61,918	98.1%	1,213	1.9%
<b>Brown</b>	23,439	98.6%	334	1.4%
<b>Faribault</b>	12,270	98.0%	259	2.0%
<b>Le Sueur</b>	25,965	98.0%	541	2.0%
<b>Martin</b>	18,545	98.8%	234	1.2%
<b>Nicollet</b>	31,083	97.2%	889	2.8%
<b>Sibley</b>	13,408	95.5%	637	4.5%
<b>Waseca</b>	17,288	97.9%	372	2.1%
<b>Watonwan</b>	9,092	89.6%	1,050	10.4%

Source: ACS

## **Economic Conditions**

Region Nine's largest industries by employment are manufacturing (17.9% of total jobs), healthcare and social assistance (17.7%), retail (11.1%), education (9.0%), and accommodation and food services (7.6%). The Region Nine Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) identified many economic strengths in the region: human capital, knowledge creation, a high portfolio diversity among manufacturers, a high workforce participation rate, and a high economic well-being when compared to other economic development districts across the United States. There are opportunities for industries within the same clusters to collaborate and/or consolidate to increase efficiency and take advantage of cost savings. The statewide growth in the healthcare industry also bodes well for the region's economy in the future.

The CEDS also identified many possible barriers to economic growth and sustainability in the region. These include manufacturers producing at a scale dwarfed by global competitors, expensive logistics, a lack of industry synergy, poor access to capital, and a poor ratio of business establishment births to deaths. An aging populace as well as population stagnation and decline also present a threat to future economic prosperity in the region. Only three of Region Nine's nine counties showed growth between 2010 and 2019. Labor shortages and brain drain are also a threat. While low unemployment is generally perceived as a good thing, some industries have vacancies beyond a healthy level. A shortage of childcare also makes it difficult for parents who are forced to stay at home and care for children even if they do want to be part of the workforce. A lack of affordable housing is also a problem in the region, with some counties having nearly half their households spending 30% or more of their income on housing. Some areas also have unhealthily low rental vacancy rates.

The region's large healthcare industry and proximity to Rochester and the Twin Cities make it a good location for elderly and disabled people that need specialized healthcare. While an abundance of jobs means that employers pay higher wages, the low supply of housing and higher rent and home prices take away some of the benefit that higher wages provide to lower income residents. While telework was already on the upswing prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it further increased as a result of the pandemic. However, many of the region's largest industries are those which are less suited to telework (manufacturing, retail, food service).

## **Employment Status**

Unemployed individuals need a mode of transportation to seek job opportunities. Region Nine is fortunate overall to have low unemployment numbers compared to much of the United States. However, this in turn has led to high job vacancies, so it is critically important to have a transportation system in place that can get the remaining transportation disadvantaged people seeking work into jobs that urgently need filling.

Blue Earth County has the highest unemployment rate at 2.8%. It also has the highest number of working age not in the labor force with over 15,000 people not currently seeking employment. This high number can be partially attributed to people attending school at one of the area's colleges. Other reasons for people not participating in the labor force include illness

and disability, being retired, and being a stay-at-home spouse/parent.

**Table 20: Regional Employment Status**

County	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labor Force	Percent of Total Population Unemployed
Blue Earth	38,033	1,516	15,418	2.8%
Brown	13,695	220	6,490	1.1%
Faribault	7,016	234	3,823	2.1%
Le Sueur	15,086	524	6,573	2.4%
Martin	9,910	412	5,649	2.6%
Nicollet	19,230	613	7,384	2.2%
Sibley	7,935	224	3,598	1.9%
Waseca	9,704	9,317	383	2.6%
Watsonwan	5,550	165	2,876	1.9%

## MOBILITY TODAY

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### Major Trip Generators

The location of major trip generators within the county is an important component in understanding the transportation needs of the county.

Each trip generator category represents the following:

- Employment – Top employers, employers with transit dependent populations.
  - Region Nine’s largest industries by employment are manufacturing (17.9% of total jobs), healthcare and social assistance (17.7%), retail (11.1%), education (9.0%), and accommodation and food services (7.6%). Employers falling under these categories are all major trip generators for the region.
- Shopping - Supermarkets and other grocery stores, department stores, and malls.
  - Malls and large retail establishments in Mankato are major trip generators.
  - Large grocery stores in the city’s biggest cities are major trip generators.
  - Smaller grocery stores and culturally specific grocery stores are also trip generators, though they may not be at the same level as the largest grocery retailers.
- Education - Elementary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, and professional schools.
  - There are 33 independent school districts, several private schools, and multiple colleges and universities in the region. Each educational institution represents

- a major trip generator for the region.
- Public Service - Justice, public order, safety activities, and the administration of human resource programs.
  - County seats in each of the nine counties house most of the public service programs in the region; county courthouses, municipal buildings, and other administrative buildings are all major trip generators for the region.
- Medical - Outpatient care centers, hospitals, nursing care facilities, residential, intellectual, and developmental disability, mental health, and substance abuse facilities.
  - Hospitals within the region are all major trip generators.
  - Additionally, the region's proximity to Rochester and the Twin Cities allow for the Mayo Clinic Rochester campus and twin cities hospitals, particularly those in the southern metro, to also be major trip generators.
- Specialty Services - Services for the elderly and persons with disabilities, museums, historical sites, and similar institutions.
  - Assisted living, nursing facilities and other senior care facilities are major trip generators.
  - State, regional, and local parks are major trip generators for general recreation seekers and organized sports.
  - Event centers that host concerts and other cultural events are a major trip generator for the region.

## Program Demand Analysis

### Demand Estimation as Part of Needs Assessment

Program Trips are defined as those trips that would not be made without the existence of a specific social-service program or activity. The distinguishing factor is that the trip time and destination are set not by the traveler, but by the agency sponsoring the trip. Equations were presented in the Federal Transit Administration's Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 3 for use in estimating Program Trip demand based on specific Census data. These formulas can be accessed from TCRP Report 3 online ([https://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp\\_rpt\\_03-a.pdf](https://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_03-a.pdf)).

Given the high variance in program trip demand that was observed in data obtained since the publication of TCRP Report 3, it is recommended that better estimates can be derived by using specific information collected directly from individual programs. To develop an estimate of the demand for program trips begin by listing the known programs in your area. Obtain from the agencies providing these services the following data using Table 20 below:

- Number of program participants
- Number of days per week that the program meets
- The number of weeks per year the program is offered



- The proportion of program participants who attend the program on an average day
- The proportion of program participants who require transportation service. (It has been observed that some people use provided transportation even though they can drive and own a vehicle because the ride is considered a part of the social aspect of the program, and it saves the participants money. These individuals should be included in the proportion figure.)

**Table 21: Program Transportation Data**

Program Name	VINE Health, Wellness, Education	MVAC Head Start School Readiness
Number of Participants	1,772	684
Number of Events per Week	50	5
Percent of Participants who Attended on an Average Day	18%	100%
Percent of Participants who are Transit Dependent or Likely to use Transit	25.9%	100%
Number of Weeks the Program is Offered per Year	52	37
Results x 2	429,575	253,080

## Existing Transportation Services

The following information is based on tabulations from the survey, interview results, and public information.

## List of Transportation Service Providers

**Table 22: Transportation Resources**

Public Transportation Resource	Availability	Cost	Usage	Service Area
VINE True Transit	800am-500pm M-F	\$3 in-town, \$5 out-of-town	11,029 rides in 2022	Blue Earth, Nicollet, and Le Sueur Counties
Mankato City Transit	Route dependent; varying degrees of	\$1.50 (frequent rider passes available); 75	377,956 rides in 2022	Cities of Mankato and North Mankato

	service M-F 600am-1000pm with some later service on the MSU campus; Sat. 10am-530pm; Sunday 10am-400pm	cents for Medicare patients, seniors, persons with disabilities; free for veterans with VA health card, youth, and MSU Mankato students/faculty/staff  Flex zone fare: \$2  Paratransit fare: \$3		
Minnesota River Valley Transit	St. Peter: M-F 630am-800pm; Sat. 700am-430pm Le Sueur: M-F 700am-430pm  Gustavus Adolphus "Gus Bus" 900pm-200am Fri-Sat	St. Peter: \$3 Kasota: \$4.50 Le Sueur: \$3 Preschool/K-12: \$2	Data forthcoming	St. Peter, Le Sueur, Kasota
Prairie Lakes Transit	Fairmont-Blue Earth Shuttle: 5am-630pm M-F  Fairmont and Blue Earth Deviated Routes: 600am-600pm  Demand Response: 600am-600pm M-Th; 600am-1000pm F; 800am-1000pm Sat (Fairmont) 800am-600pm Sat (Blue Earth)	Demand Response: \$4 Demand Response Fri Evening/Sat: \$3  Fairmont-Blue Earth Shuttle: \$3  Deviated Routes: \$2  Children 4 and under free, 5-12 half price  Aides/attendants free	Data forthcoming	Faribault and Martin Counties
SMART Transit	Waseca Demand Response: 600am-600pm M-F; 900am-100pm Sat; 800am-1200pm Sun  Deviated route: M-F 700am-500pm	Demand response: \$2.50 within city limits; \$3 county-wide  Deviated route: \$2  Free for veterans	Data forthcoming	Freeborn, Mower, Steele, and Waseca Counties
Brown County Heartland Express	New Ulm: 615am-545pm M-F; 800am-1200pm Sun  Countywide: 800am-500pm M-F	In-town: \$1.50 In County: \$3.00 Nutrition Site: \$0.75	39,590 in 2022	Brown County
Hermann Express	800am-1200pm and 100pm-400pm M-F	\$1	New service (insufficient data)	City of New Ulm
Watonwan Take Me There	600am-500pm M-F	\$1.50 within city limits; \$3 within	Data forthcoming	Watonwan County

		county limits \$6 to Mountain Lake, Trimont, Truman \$7.25 to Hanska, Northrup, Sherburn, Sleepy Eye, Welcome, Windom \$8.50 to Fairmont, New Ulm, Lake Crystal \$11 to Mankato		
Trailblazer Transit	630am-530pm M-F	\$2 within city limits; \$4 outside city limits within 25 miles; \$8 over 25 miles	5,043 trips per week	All cities in McLeod, Sibley, and Wright Counties; additional service to portions of, Meeker, Sherburne, Carver, Scott, Le Sueur, and Nicollet Counties

The following table contains the technology used by each transportation provider for scheduling, dispatching and/or GPS tracking.

**Table 23: Technology**

Agency Name	Name of Scheduling Software	Do you have an App for Transportation (Y/N)?	Name of Dispatching Software	AVL System/GPS (Y/N)?
Mankato Transit	N/A (to be purchased in 2023)	Y	N/A (to be purchased in 2023)	Y
Minnesota River Valley Transit		Y		Y
Trailblazer Transit	NOVUS (from TripSpark)	N	NOVUS (from TripSpark)	Y
VINE True Transit	RouteMatch	Y	RouteMatch	Y
Prairie Lakes Transit				
SMART Transit		Y		Y
Brown County Heartland Express	RouteMatch	Y	RouteMatch	Y
Hermann Express				
Watonwan Take Me There		Y		Y

## Vehicles

The table below is an inventory of public transit vehicles in the region.

**Table 24: Vehicle Utilization Table**

Number of Vehicles	Type	Wheelchair Accessible	Days of the Week the Vehicle is in Service	Service Hours	Service Area
<b>VINE True Transit</b>					
5	Ford E-450 cutaway style buses	5	5	8:00am-5:00pm	Blue Earth, Nicollet, Le Sueur Counties
<b>Mankato City Transit</b>					
25	14 Class 400 Buses, 11 Class 700 Buses	25	7	Route dependent; varying degrees of service M-F 6:00am-10:00pm with some later service on the MSU campus; Saturday 10:00am-5:30pm; Sunday 10am-400pm	City of Mankato, parts of City of North Mankato
<b>Minnesota River Valley Transit</b>					
9	Class 400 Buses		6	St. Peter: M-F 630am-800pm; Sat. 700am-430pm Le Sueur: M-F 700am-430pm  Gustavus Adolphus "Gus Bus" 900pm-200am Fri-Sat	Cities of St. Peter, Kasota, and Le Sueur
<b>Prairie Lakes Transit</b>					
9	Class 400 Buses		6	Fairmont-Blue Earth Shuttle: 5am-630pm M-F  Fairmont and Blue Earth Deviated Routes: 600am-600pm  Demand Response: 600am-600pm M-Th; 600am-1000pm F; 800am-1000pm Sat (Fairmont) 800am-600pm Sat (Blue Earth)	Faribault and Martin Counties (in Region Nine), City of Albert Lea (outside Region Nine)
<b>SMART Transit</b>					
34	32 Class 400 Buses, 1 Class 500 Bus, 1 Van		7	Waseca Demand Response: 600am-600pm M-F; 900am-100pm Sat; 800am-1200pm Sun  Deviated route: M-F 700am-500pm	Waseca County (in Region Nine); Freeborn, Mower, and Steele Counties (outside of Region Nine)

<b>Brown County Heartland Express</b>					
8	Ford E-450s	8	6	New Ulm: 615am-545pm M-F; 800am-1200pm Sun  Countywide: 800am- 500pm M-F	Brown County
Hermann Express					
<b>Watonwan Take Me There</b>					
5	4 Class 400 Buses, 1 Mini-van		5	600am-500pm M-F	Watonwan County; destinations outside county include: Mountain Lake, Trimont, Truman, Hanska, Northrup, Sherburn, Sleepy Eye, Welcome, Windom, Fairmont, New Ulm, and Mankato
<b>Trailblazer Transit</b>					
44	44 Class 400 Buses	44	5	630am-630pm	All cities in McLeod, Sibley, and Wright Counties; additional service to portions of, Meeker, Sherburne, Carver, Scott, Le Sueur, and Nicollet Counties

# OUTREACH EFFORTS

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## Steering Committee

The Steering Committee guides the plan development. Steering Committee duties included:

- Evaluating strategies and assessing outcomes of projects identified in the 2017 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan.
- Developing project ideas and identifying priority strategies as part of the public workshop of the draft plan.
- Prioritizing project ideas identified at the public workshop for inclusion in the final plan.

The Steering Committee was made up of representatives from county human service agencies, area agency on aging representatives, centers for independent living representatives, passengers and their advocates, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and others. The table below lists the members of the Steering Committee. Use the table outlining recommended membership representatives provided by MnDOT.

**Table 25: Steering Committee Membership**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Tina Riley	Mayo Clinic
Kimberly Simpson	Mayo Clinic
Mike Pinske	AmeriCare Mobility Van
Nicole Worlds	Faribault & Martin County Human Services
Shawn Schloesser	City of Mankato Transit/Mankato-North Mankato Area Planning Organization
Ron Decker	VINE Faith in Action/True Transit
Sarah Berry	Waseca County Public Health
Kelly McDonough	Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging
Patrick LaCourse	Brown County Heartland Express
Allison Karau	Watonwan Take Me There
Klea Rettmann	Sibley County Public Health and Human Services
Angie Piltaver	MnDOT District 7
Julia Lutz-Lawlor	The Arc Minnesota – Southwest
Habiba Rashid	Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services

## Client Experience

Region Nine deployed a survey in English, Spanish and Somali seeking feedback on riders' experiences using transit throughout the region. To increase participation among non-English speakers, Region Nine worked with the host of a Spanish radio show to promote the survey, as

well as with organizations like COPAL (Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Accion Latina). Region Nine also partnered with Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services to distribute the survey via popular WhatsApp channels in the Somali community. The survey included both objective and subjective questions. The questions and their responses can be found in Appendix II. The results showed broad purposes for using transit services, large variances in frequency of transit use, respondents of all ages but skewed considerably toward people 55 and older. While most riders ultimately were more satisfied with transit services than not, the most common improvement sought by survey respondents was longer service hours. Over half of the survey respondents were people with disabilities. All nine counties in the region were represented in the survey, with the largest number of responses coming from Blue Earth and Brown Counties.

## **Focus Group**

### *Riders Focus Group: VINE Elder Immigrants Literacy Class*

Region Nine Development Commission staff conducted a focus group of transit riders and potential riders at the VINE elder immigrants literacy class in Mankato. The class was comprised of Somali and Latina women.

The Somali women in the class used VINE transit services. Though all of them were residents of Mankato, they never used Mankato Public Transit. They mostly relied on family to assist with transportation to errands and appointments. Though a single group is a small sample size, this could still nonetheless be indicative of a need for encouragement and better accommodation of non-English speaking riders.

The Latina women in the literacy class were from Le Sueur County and relied on VINE for transportation to and from the class. They reported some bad experiences trying to utilize other transit services. One reported being hung up on when trying to schedule a ride, and in general, the language barrier was frequently a hurdle too high to overcome.

The focus group showed that transit services in the region are currently difficult to navigate for non-English speakers. Focus group participants also reported a desire for increased service within Mankato and St. Peter and a desire for new service to Owatonna.

### *Minnesota State University, Mankato – Student Transportation and Food Security Project*

While it was not a project or focus group conducted by Region Nine, sociology students at Minnesota State University, Mankato completed a study on transportation and food insecurity in Mankato. This provided another perspective on navigating transit for basic needs from a different demographic. The project examined the intersection of transportation access and food security for MSU students. The students each gave firsthand accounts on their efforts to access groceries only using public transportation.

The quickest round trip time any student made going to a grocery store was just under 2 hours, and the longest was 3 hours and 14 minutes. Additionally, students were restricted in what

they could purchase by public transit bag limit policies as well as their own physical abilities to carry things. It was especially difficult to get food when students had dietary restrictions, and culturally specific foods were also less readily accessible to the students conducting the study. The City of Mankato’s hilly topography, harsh winter climate, and the lack of weekend bus service also added difficulties to the students’ efforts to buy groceries without using a car. The study showed that simply accessing food was a time intensive process, and it was a process that had to be repeated more frequently because the students were limited in what they were able to carry. Some progress has been made as the bag limit policy was eliminated in 2022, but an individual’s physical limitations can still be a barrier to food access.

#### *Providers Focus Group*

Because transit providers are understaffed across the board, in lieu of trying to convene a focus group, Region Nine staff sent focus group questions to providers across the region. The trend of being understaffed was reflected in their responses as nearly all respondents mentioned a need for more drivers so that ridership demands can be met. The COVID-19 pandemic saw a big decrease in both paid and volunteer drivers, and staff capacity is still a struggle even as daily activities become more reflective of pre-pandemic activities.

Providers also noted that expanded hours are needed, though it is simply unfeasible at the moment for a lot of them because of the aforementioned staffing issues.

Also, while there is still a demand for ridership, maintaining that ridership is a recurring concern. The COVID-19 pandemic saw sharp decreases in ridership as many people sheltered in place and avoided public spaces, including transit services. However, free fares provided by COVID relief legislation helped mitigate that decrease in ridership.

### **Planning Workshop**

The planning workshop took place virtually in two sessions on October 19, 2022 and December 8, 2022. These workshops incorporated input from interested stakeholders across the region, including transit riders and providers, advocacy groups for people with disabilities, the Area Agency on Aging, other agencies that serve aging adults, local refugee service groups, and local and state MnDOT representatives. At the workshops, stakeholders identified strengths and weaknesses of transit coordination in the region. Building from these, stakeholders identified priority strategies and potential projects that could address these strategies. Using input from the workshops, the steering committee prioritized the strategies and projects in the final plan.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

During the planning workshop sessions, participants identified strengths and weaknesses of existing coordination efforts in Region Nine. Combined with the plan’s technical findings, these strengths and weaknesses form the basis for identifying strategies to address transportation coordination in this region.

**Table 26: Public Workshop Outcomes**



Strengths	Weaknesses
Phase I of the RTCC is complete	There is currently no host agency for subsequent implementation phases of the RTCC, so coordination efforts are limited
Technological advances in transit like the multiple autonomous vehicle pilot programs in Minnesota.	Transit access is difficult for non-English speakers
Mobility as a Service pilot project	Inter-county transit is frequently hard to accomplish
New bus service in New Ulm	Lack of paid and volunteer drivers
Electric buses coming to Brown County, SMART Transit, Prairie Lakes Transit, and Minnesota River Valley Transit via grants	Need for increased funding and support
Proximity to Twin Cities and Rochester	Need for expanded service hours and weekend service
	Purchasing vehicles is becoming more difficult for transit agencies (supply chain issues mean years can pass between ordering vehicles and receiving them), and agencies are forced to keep vehicles in operation well-past their normal useful lives

# COORDINATION, NEEDS, GAPS, and BARRIERS

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## Coordination

MAPO launched a 10-month planning process in November 2019 focused on better coordination of transit services in the nine-county area of South Central Minnesota. The first phase of this planning process identified that a Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) should be established. The planning process also resulted in the development of a work plan and an implementation plan for the RTCC. To move to the next stage, a host agency is needed for the RTCC. Currently, no host agency has been identified in Region Nine's service area, thus the RTCC has not been established. Of the nine counties in the region, six provided resolutions of support for establishing an RTCC (Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, and Nicollet). Waseca and Watonwan Counties did not provide resolutions of support, and Sibley County, while involved in the planning process, opted to join the Mid-Minnesota RTCC as many of its public services, including transit, are more closely tied to counties outside of Region Nine. Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan Counties are still eligible to join if they pass supporting resolutions.

## Regional Needs & Gaps

Service needs and gaps persist despite on-going efforts to improve the quality of community transportation services by transportation and human service providers. This section identifies needs revealed by stakeholder input.

- Service Limitations, Gaps & Unmet Needs
  - Demand for non-emergency medical transit greatly outweighs the amount of service that can be provided.
  - Inter-county transit is possible in some cases, but not all, and with multiple agencies serving different areas, it can be difficult to navigate
  - Demand for weekend service and extended hours in existing service.
  - More drivers and more vehicles needed in both public and private transit operations.
- Centralized Information
  - Centralized website with routes, schedules, cost information, contact information
  - Information on how to plan a trip that requires multiple providers.
  - Information on driver training.
  - Centralized website/plan with information on written, read, and spoken languages in the region, a database of translation services available, and the best avenues for disseminating information to people who communicate in languages other than English

- Spatial Limitations
  - County boundaries often require multijurisdictional cooperation
  - Regional boundaries do not always align with where people need/want to travel. For example, while Mankato is a regional hub, many of Region Nine’s eastern communities may see Faribault, Owatonna, and Albert Lea as hubs for their communities, creating the need for further coordination between government and transit agencies.
- Temporal Limitations
  - Weekend and evening services are in demand.
  - Wait times and frequency of service.
  - Timeframe for scheduling rides can be difficult to negotiate for some.
- Program Eligibility and Trip Purpose Limitations
  - Need for increased flexibility on medical trips to ensure that prescription pick-ups also qualify; perhaps allow for a single retail stop
- Service Quality and Miscellaneous Issues
  - Some issues with driver and dispatch courtesies.
  - An app to schedule rides and purchase passes would be beneficial.

# MOBILITY TOMORROW

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## A Review of 2017 Goals & Strategies

The 2017 Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan identified three strategy areas and several projects and goals that fell within these strategy areas. The following table is a review of those as well as the status of each project.

**Table 27: 2017 Goals and Strategies**

<b>Strategy: Coordination and Consolidation of Transportation Services and Resources</b>		
Project	Status	Successes/Barriers
Form a transit cooperative company to bring all non-profit providers under one organization	Phase I of RTCC completed; implementation not started	No host agency has stepped forward to move toward implementation of the RTCC
Form a transit cooperative program to pool resources	Phase I of RTCC completed; implementation not started	No host agency has stepped forward to move toward implementation of the RTCC
Coordinate with agencies that have unused vehicles	No formal implementation, though some agencies have completed inter-agency vehicle purchases	Some inter-agency vehicle purchases have occurred in light of a constrained supply chain delaying delivery of new transit vehicles

Coordinate dispatch operations	Phase I of RTCC completed; no implementation started; Mobility as a Service pilot has begun with Mankato Transit, TRUE Transit, SMART, Jefferson Lines, and Land-to-Air among those participating that operate within Region Nine’s boundaries	No host agency has stepped forward to move toward implementation of the RTCC; Mobility as a Service is an app-based type of dispatch coordination, but not all providers in the region are participating
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**Strategy: Communications, Training, and Organizational Support**

Project	Status	Successes/Barriers
Create a virtual hub which connects organizations and vehicles	Not started	This could be a role an RTCC could play, but to date, there is no host agency for the RTCC
Educate the community and provide classes on the services available	Some educational events like Project Community Connect in Mankato, but less in the way of actual classes	Each area served by a different transit service would likely have a different approach to classes
Create an app to connect providers, routes, and riders	Underway (Mobility as a Service pilot)	MaaS pilot is underway but does not include all transit providers in the Region Nine area
Encourage more volunteer drivers	Legislation to reduce tax burden on volunteer drivers reimbursed for mileage	Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of volunteer and paid drivers dropped significantly and has yet to recover fully
Coordinate with healthcare providers on which days could work best for rural clients	Not started	Logistically challenging; can be difficult to navigate with a large number of transit providers and medical providers

**Strategy: Mobility Strategies**

Project	Status	Successes/Barriers
Enhance subsidy programs for existing programs (especially taxis)	Not started	Funding is a barrier
Create a virtual hub for park-and-ride	Not started	Limited park and ride facilities in the region; demand is difficult to gauge with Mankato being a regional hub but the Twin Cities being close enough to also create

		demand, especially in northern counties within Region Nine
Create a virtual hub for share-a-ride	Nothing region-specific, but a national site exists (shareyourride.net)	Shareyourride.net has very low use in Minnesota

## Goals & Strategies

The purpose of formulating goals and objectives is to determine what direction planning efforts should take, independent of timeframe and individual projects. A goal is defined as an end state that will be brought about by implementing this. The steering committee reviewed past goals, assessed needs based on present conditions, and incorporated feedback from surveys, steering committee meetings, and planning workshops to formulate the goals below. The committee then prioritized the projects from most important to least. These goals will direct general human service transit planning activities for the next few years, and should an RTCC be officially formed, these goals can inform the work that the RTCC does.

**Table 28: Goals and Strategies**

<b>Goal 1:</b>	<b>Form a Regional Transportation Coordination Council</b>	
<b>Strategy</b>		<b>Action/Progress</b>
1.1	Create a regional coordinating body that works to push for improved conditions and efficiency in the region	Use the completed Phase I plan and collaborate with MnDOT and a host agency to implement the RTCC
1.2	Engage potential host agencies	Contact potential host agencies (including ones contacted in the past) to gauge interest in becoming the RTCC host
1.3	Consider a multi-agency approach	If a single agency is unwilling to assume all responsibilities of an RTCC, find agencies that could collaborate on the RTCC effort

<b>Goal 2:</b>	<b>Coordinate Transit Services (after forming the RTCC)</b>	
<b>Strategy</b>		<b>Action/Progress</b>
2.1	Connects transit providers/organizations and vehicles.	Create a virtual hub which connects organizations and vehicles to facilitate inter-agency exchange and acquisition of vehicles
2.2	Connect riders to providers and routes	Create an app and website for this; use findings from the Mobility as a Service pilot project to refine the riders' user experiences. Website can be a hub for information on available transit options and their focus areas (general

		transit, medical, etc.) as well
		Create a virtual hub for park-and-ride and share-a-ride programs
2.3	Coordinate dispatch	Coordinate dispatch operations by having all calls go to a single facility and developing a triage approach to direct calls based on client needs
2.4	Educate the public on transit services	Under the auspices of the RTCC, create a website and materials to educate the public on transportation options and procedures to develop an awareness for programs and how to use them
2.5	Centralize information about services, funding, and grants for providers and organizations that use transit.	Create an online regional hub with information on transit services and funding opportunities for transit providers

Goal 3:	Increase the ease of transit access for people who speak languages other than English.	
Strategy		Action/Progress
3.1	Create a plan/resource document	Create a periodically updated plan document for public agencies in the region that includes written, read, and spoken languages in the region, a database of translation services available, and the best avenues for disseminating information to people who communicate in languages other than English
3.2	Create partnerships	Create a partnership with Minnesota State University-Mankato and/or other higher education institutions to utilize students to address the need for translation services

Goal 4:	Coordinate transit services with healthcare providers	
Strategy		Action/Progress
4.1	Increase flexibility of medical trips	Coordinate with medical assistance programs to create solutions allowing pharmacy and non-medical stops during medical trips
4.2	Increase coordination between healthcare and transit	Create healthcare and transit partnerships that allow people with disabilities, the elderly, and others that are unable to drive to get to their appointments (and helps medical providers avoid repeated rescheduling and delaying treatment, leading to better patient health outcomes)
		Coordinate with healthcare providers on what days work best for rural clients

		Coordinate with health providers to promote scheduling that aligns with service patterns and promotes service at discharge
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Goal 5:	Increase the number of volunteer drivers in programs that provide transport to the elderly, people with disabilities, and people who are otherwise unable to drive	
Strategy		Action/Progress
5.1	Create partnerships	Create a partnership with Minnesota State University-Mankato and/or other higher education institutions to help address the driver shortage with students
5.2	Rethink the current volunteer driver model	Create an organization that owns vehicles for volunteer drivers to use rather than the traditional model of volunteers using their own vehicles

Goal 6:	Extend service hours and increase the availability of weekend service	
Strategy		Action/Progress
6.1	Form partnerships	Form partnerships between transit providers and other organizations to find solutions to extend service hours and add weekend service
6.2	Increase funding	Increase local funding and seek additional federal and/or other outside funding to extend service hours and increase weekend service

Goal 7:	Embrace technological advancements	
Strategy		Action/Progress
7.1	Stay aware of new technological developments in transit	Keep abreast of technological advancements and how they will affect transit services, especially autonomous vehicles

Goal 8:	Plan for future rail service	
Strategy		Action/Progress
8.1	Utilize existing plan documents	Use the State Rail Plan to help guide decision making for future passenger rail projects
8.2	Monitor existing bus routes; create additional inter-city bus routes on corridors	Monitor existing bus routes and identify future routes suitable for conversion to passenger rail service

Goal 9:	Connect low-income workers to jobs	
Strategy		Action/Progress

9.1	Utilize subsidy programs	Establish or enhance subsidy programs that connect low-income workers to jobs
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## Priority of Projects

**Table 28: Priority of Projects**

Priority	Project	Goal, Strategy
1	Form a Regional Transportation Coordination Council	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.3
2	Create an organization that owns vehicles for volunteer drivers to use rather than the traditional model of volunteers using their own vehicles	5.2
3	Create a virtual hub which connects organizations and vehicles.	2.3
4	Find solutions and create partnerships to extend service hours.	6.1, 6.2
5	Create an app and website to connect riders to providers and routes. Use findings from the Mobility as a Service pilot project to refine the riders' user experiences. Website can be a hub for information on available transit options and their focus areas (general transit, medical, etc.) as well.	2.4
6	Improve regional connections by using internet technology to activate inter-county trip coordination.	2.2, 2.3, 7.1
7	Create healthcare and transit partnerships that allow people with disabilities, the elderly, and others that are unable to drive to get to their appointments (and helps medical providers avoid repeated rescheduling and delaying treatment, leading to better patient health outcomes)	4.2
8	Coordinate dispatch operations by having all calls go to a single facility and developing a triage approach to direct calls based on client needs.	2.3
9	Coordinate with medical assistance	4.1, 4.2



	programs to create solutions that allow pharmacy and non-medical stops during medical trips.	
10	Create a periodically updated plan document including written, read, and spoken languages in the region, a database of translation services available, and the best avenues for disseminating information to people who communicate in languages other than English	3.1, 3.2
11	Educate the public about transportation options and procedures, and provide classes to develop an awareness for programs and how to use them.	2.4
12	Increase number of volunteers drivers to increase personal, affordable and direct transportation service for individuals that qualify for volunteer rides	5.1, 5.2
13	Create a partnership with Minnesota State University-Mankato and/or other higher education institutions to help address the driver shortage and need for translation services with students.	5.1
14	Create a virtual hub for share-a-ride.	2.2
15	Keep abreast of technological advancements and how they will affect transit services, especially autonomous vehicles	7.1
16	Establish or enhance subsidy programs to connect low-income workers to jobs.	9.1
17	Create a virtual hub for park-and-ride.	2.2
18	Centralize information about services, funding and grants for providers and organizations that use transit. Riders could benefit from an inventory of transit organizations and focus areas in one location as well.	2.2, 2.5
19	Coordinate with health providers to promote scheduling that aligns with	4.2

	service patterns and promotes service at discharge.	
20	Coordinate with healthcare providers on which days could work best for rural clients.	4.2
21	Monitor existing bus routes and identify potential routes suitable for future rail service.	8.2

## APPENDIX I

### List of Human Service Program Providers Impacted by Transportation

Private Non-Profit Organizations - Senior Services	
<p><b>Aging Services for Communities</b>            Medical, Non-Medical, and Senior Transport  <b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Le Sueur County  <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Available to all residents who are on Medical Assistance or over age 55  <b>Other Services provided:</b> Homemaker service</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b>            507-364-5663 Ext 3  <a href="http://aging-services.org/">http://aging-services.org/</a>            212 1st Street S, PO Box 7            Montgomery, MN 56069  <b>Hours:</b> Monday - Friday            8:00 AM to 5:00 PM</p>
<p><b>Caregiver Response Effort &amp; Service Team (CREST)</b>            Provides non-professional services including transportation  <b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Martin County  <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Registration and a home visit by CREST staff  <b>Other Services provided:</b> Caregiver support, Homemaker service</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b>            507-235-3833  <a href="http://crestvolunteers.org/">http://crestvolunteers.org/</a>            820 Winnebago Ave, Suite 2            Fairmont, MN 56031  <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Thursday            8:00 AM to 4:30 PM            Friday            8:00 AM to 3:00 PM</p>
<p><b>Interfaith Caregivers</b>            Non-medical services including transportation  <b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Faribault County  <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Older adults living in the county or close proximity.  <b>Other Services provided:</b> Caregiver support and equipment loan. Alertlink service includes Martin County</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b>            507-526-4684  <a href="https://interfaithcaregivers.net/">https://interfaithcaregivers.net/</a>            301 N Main Street            Blue Earth, MN 56013  <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Thursday            8:30 AM to 4:30 PM</p>
<p><b>VINE Faith in Action</b>            Door2Door transportation program, dial-a-ride public transportation (TRUE)  <b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Door2Door see requirements below; TRUE for Blue Earth, Nicollet, and Le Sueur Counties  <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Community</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b>            507-387-1666  <a href="http://vinevolunteers.com/">http://vinevolunteers.com/</a>            421 E Hickory Street            Mankato, MN 56001  <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Friday</p>

members 60+ living in Mankato and North Mankato; Limited under 60 with disabilities or difficult life circumstances <b>Other Services provided:</b> Caregiver support, Meals on Wheels, Chores	8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
<b>Wellspring Faith In Action</b> Non-medical services including transportation <b>Transportation Service Area:</b> In St. James and out-of-town appointments. <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> None noted, suggested donation <b>Other Services provided:</b> Caregiver support, Light house keeping. Senior Exercise	<b>Contact Information:</b> 507-375-1276 <a href="https://wellspringfia.org/">https://wellspringfia.org/</a> 108 8th Street S, Suite 7 St. James, MN 56081 <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Thursday 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM
<b>Private Non-Profit Organizations - Employment Services</b>	
<b>Lifeworks Services, Inc</b> Employment exploration, development and support. Coordinates transport support. <b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Varies by location, utilizes existing providers <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Day Service program attendee <b>Other Services provided:</b> Day service	<b>Contact Information:</b> 612-702-9861 <a href="https://www.lifeworks.org/">https://www.lifeworks.org/</a> 424 N Riverfront Drive, Suite 300 Mankato, MN 56001 <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Friday 7:30 AM to 3:00 PM
<b>MRCI WorkSource</b> Employment exploration and employment services <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> people with disabilities or disadvantages at home, at work and in the community. <b>Other Services provided:</b> Day service	<b>Contact Information:</b> 507.386.5600 <a href="https://www.mymrci.org/">https://www.mymrci.org/</a> 1750 Energy Drive Mankato, MN 56001 <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM
<b>STEP, Inc.</b> Day training and habilitation services, supported employment services. <b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Fairmont and Blue Earth	<b>Contact Information:</b> 507 238-4341 <a href="https://www.stepinc.org/">https://www.stepinc.org/</a> 5 Downtown Plaza, P.O. Box 110 Fairmont, MN 56031 <b>Hours:</b> Unknown
<b>Transportation Providers</b>	
<b>Brown County Heartland Express</b>	<b>Contact Information:</b>

<p>Demand response service on weekdays and Sundays. Morning and afternoon deviated fixed route service between New Ulm and Springfield. There is one round trip per day from east to west (five weekdays) and one round trip per day from west to east (five weekdays).</p> <p><b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Brown County; City New Ulm</p> <p><b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Fare payment</p>	<p>507-359-2717; 1-800-707-2717  <a href="https://www.co.brown.mn.us/heartland-express-transit">https://www.co.brown.mn.us/heartland-express-transit</a>  <b>Office:</b> 1900 N Franklin Street  New Ulm, MN</p> <p><b>Office Hours:</b> Monday - Friday  8:00 AM to 5:00 PM  <b>Bus Service Hours:</b> Weekdays 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM; Sunday New Ulm Only 8:00 AM – 12:00 P.M.</p>
<p><b>Mankato City Transit</b>  The City of Mankato Transit System offers a range of bussing transportation options, several fixed-routes, Kato flex a shared ride, curb-to-curb service for individuals residing in areas where there is no fixed route bus service and Paratransit/Mobility bus service for origin-to-destination.</p> <p><b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Service operates within the Mankato Urbanized Area which includes major portions of Mankato, North Mankato, Eagle Lake (service ending in 2024, to be taken over by TRUE Transit), Skyline and South Bend Township. It includes all points within the 3/4-mile range of the fixed route service.</p> <p><b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Fare payment; Paratransit/Mobility Bus Service eligible individuals with disabilities based upon categorical limitations.</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b>  507-387-8600 or 311  <a href="https://www.mankatomn.gov/your-government/departments/mass-transit">https://www.mankatomn.gov/your-government/departments/mass-transit</a></p> <p><b>Office:</b> Intergovernmental Center  10 Civic Center Plaza  Mankato, MN 56001</p> <p><b>Office Hours:</b> Monday – Friday  8:00 AM to 5:30 PM  <b>Bus Service Hours:</b> Monday-Sunday 6:00 AM - 10:00 PM; route specific days and hours.</p>
<p><b>Minnesota River Valley Transit</b>  Dial-a-Ride (DAR) only service; GuS Bus student transportation provided in conjunction with Gustavus Adolphus College</p> <p><b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Services in the cities of Saint Peter, Le Sueur and Kasota.</p> <p><b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Fare payment</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b>  888-880-4696  <a href="https://www.saintpetermn.gov/322/Minnesota-River-Valley-Transit">https://www.saintpetermn.gov/322/Minnesota-River-Valley-Transit</a></p> <p><b>Office:</b> 227 South Front Street  Saint Peter, MN 56082</p> <p><b>Office Hours:</b> Monday - Friday  8:00 AM to 5:00 PM  <b>Bus Service Hours:</b> Saint Peter Monday – Friday 6:30 AM – 8:00 PM, Saturday 9:00 AM – 7:00</p>

	PM; Le Sueur Monday-Friday 7:00 AM – 4:30 P.M.
<p><b>Prairie Lakes Transit</b> Demand response service on weekdays and Saturday (cities). Deviated route.</p> <p><b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Faribault and Martin County; Cities Blue Earth and Fairmont</p> <p><b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Fare payment</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b> 507-235-5558; 1-800-382-7433 TTY/TDD/VOICE 1-800-627-3529 <a href="http://pltransit.com/">http://pltransit.com/</a> 1033 N Dewey Street Fairmont, MN</p> <p><b>Office Hours:</b> Monday – Friday 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM</p> <p><b>Bus Service Hours:</b> Vary by County and City</p>
<p><b>SMART Transit</b> Route deviation services and demand response services.</p> <p><b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Albert Lea, Austin, Owatonna, and Waseca and surroundings.</p> <p><b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Fare payment</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b> 855-762-7821  <a href="https://smartbusmn.org/">https://smartbusmn.org/</a></p> <p><b>Office:</b> 1300 S State Street Waseca, MN 56093; Other locations</p> <p><b>Hours:</b> On request...call to schedule</p> <p><b>Bus Service Hours:</b> Waseca Monday – Friday 6:00 AM – 6:00 PM, Saturday 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM, Sunday 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM.</p>
<p><b>Trailblazer Transit</b> Dial-A-Ride service throughout Sibley, McLeod, and Wright Counties plus some limited service into other neighboring cities.</p> <p><b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Sibley, McLeod and Wright Counties</p> <p><b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Fare payment</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b> 1-888-743-3828; 320-864-1000 <a href="https://www.trailblazertransit.com/">https://www.trailblazertransit.com/</a> <b>Office:</b> 207 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street Glencoe, MN 55336</p> <p><b>Office Hours:</b> Monday - Friday 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM</p> <p><b>Bus Service Hours:</b> Monday – Friday 6:30 AM – 5:30 PM</p>
<p><b>VINE True Transit</b> Dial-A-Ride service throughout Blue Earth, Nicollet and Le Sueur Counties.</p> <p><b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Blue Earth, Nicollet and Le Sueur Counties. Do NOT provide transportation within Mankato, North Mankato, St. Peter or Le Sueur, only into or out of these cities</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b> 800-560-1575; 507-388-8783 <a href="https://truetransit.org/">https://truetransit.org/</a> <b>Office:</b> 421 East Hickory Street Mankato, MN 56001</p> <p><b>Office Hours:</b> Monday - Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM</p>

<p><b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Fare payment</p>	<p><b>Bus Service Hours:</b> Monday - Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM</p>
<p><b>Watonwan Take Me There</b> Operates demand response/dial-a-ride and scheduled transit.</p> <p><b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Watonwan County, including the cities of Butterfield, Darfur, La Salle, Lewisville, Madelia, Odin, Ormsby, and St. James. Some transit routes extend to cities outside of Watonwan County, including Fairmont and Mankato.</p> <p><b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Fare payment</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b> 507-375-7385 <a href="https://www.co.watonwan.mn.us/213/TMT-Public-Transportation">https://www.co.watonwan.mn.us/213/TMT-Public-Transportation</a> <b>Office:</b> 1304 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue S St. James, MN 56081 <b>Office Hours:</b> Monday - Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM</p> <p><b>Bus Service Hours:</b> Monday – Friday 6:00 AM – 5:00 PM.</p>
<p><b>Private For-Profit Transportation Providers</b></p>	
<p><b>AMV Transportation</b> Medical equipment, social transportation, shuttle services and transportation for children.</p> <p><b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Blue Earth, Faribault, Freeborn, Le Sueur, Mower, Nicollet, Rice, Steele, and Waseca counties.</p> <p><b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Special Transportation for people using wheelchairs, and those that need assistance in ambulating.</p> <p><b>Blue Earth Taxi</b> Medical equipment, social transportation, shuttle services</p> <p><b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Mankato Area</p> <p><b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> None</p> <p><b>Care Transport Services</b> Non-emergency medical transport, social events</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b> 507-625-6741; 800-963-7233</p> <p><a href="http://amvan.com/">http://amvan.com/</a></p> <p>307 Pine Street, P.O. Box 3610 Mankato, MN 56002-3610 <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM</p> <p><b>Contact Information:</b> 507-388-2227</p> <p><a href="http://www.blueearthtaxi.com">http://www.blueearthtaxi.com</a></p> <p>111 Butterworth St Mankato MN 56001 <b>Hours:</b> Variable</p> <p><b>Contact Information:</b> 507-344-8900</p>

**Transportation Service Area:** Mankato Area

**Eligibility Requirements:** None

**Jefferson Lines**

Intercity bus service

**Transportation Service Area:** Statewide in Minnesota and multiple other states

**Eligibility Requirements:** None

**Land-to-Air Express**

Intercity bus service; shuttle service; charters

**Transportation Service Area:** Mankato, St. Peter, Le Sueur, and other cities along US 169 between Mankato and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport; Albert Lea, Austin, Waseca, Owatonna, Dodge Center, Rochester

**Eligibility Requirements:** None

**Palmer Bus Service**

School bus service

**Transportation Service Area:** Various locations throughout the state, including the Region Nine area

**Eligibility Requirements:** Student enrolled in district that contracts with the service

**Yaeger Bus Service**

School bus service

**Transportation Service Area:** Mankato

**Eligibility Requirements:** Student in Mankato Area Public Schools

**Saints Bus Service**

School bus service

**Transportation Service Area:** St. Peter,

<http://caretransportservices.net>

931 Madison Ave Suite 203

Mankato MN 56001

**Hours:** Monday-Friday

8:00 AM to 5:00 PM

**Contact Information:**

612-359-3408

<https://www.jeffersonlines.com>

2100 E 26<sup>th</sup> Street

Minneapolis, MN 55404

**Hours:** Variable

**Contact Information:**

888-736-9190

50 Sibley Parkway

Mankato, MN 56001

**Hours:** Monday to Friday

7:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Saturday to Sunday

7:00 AM to 5:00 PM

**Contact Information:**

507-386-0210

PO Box 2026

North Mankato, MN 56002

**Contact Information:**

507-345-5470

56548 Doc Jones Road

Mankato, MN 56001

**Contact Information:**

507-613-0935

4332 371<sup>st</sup> Avenue



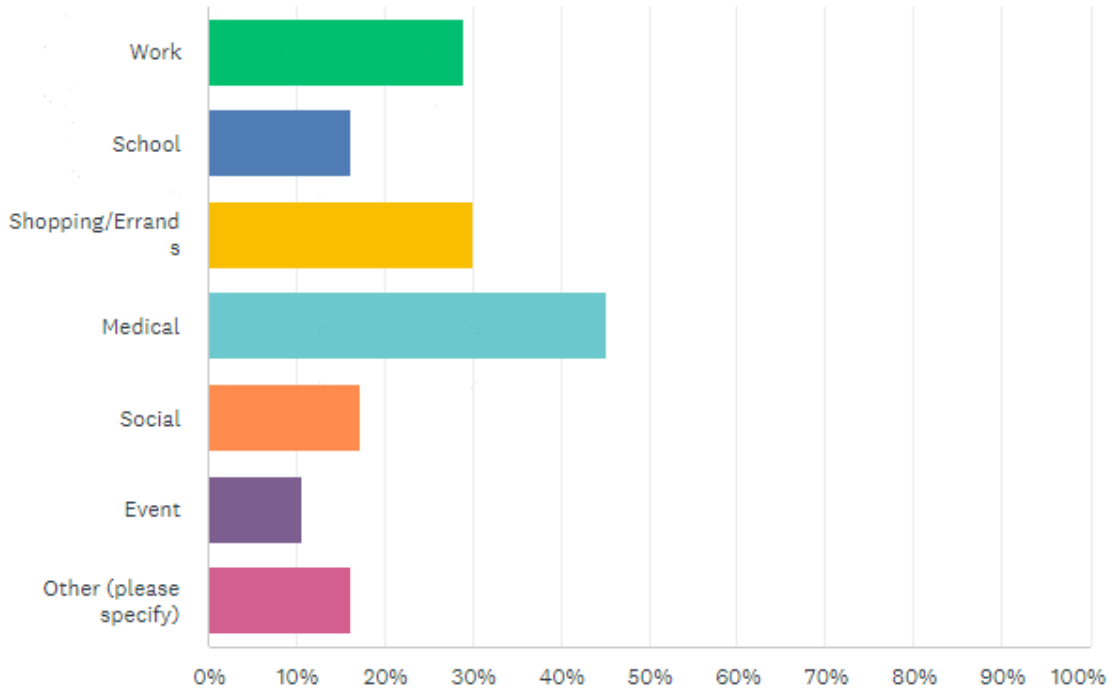
<p>Kasota, surrounding area  <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Student in St. Peter area schools</p> <p><b>Madelia Bus Service</b>  School bus service  <b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Madelia Area  <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Student in Madelia Schools (public or private)</p> <p><b>Lake Crystal Coaches</b>  Charter bus service  <b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Mankato Area  <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> None</p> <p><b>Superior Transportation Services &amp; Superior Mobility</b>  School bus service; non-emergency medical transportation  <b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Southeastern and Southwestern Minnesota  <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Students/Patients</p> <p><b>Ready to Ride Transportation</b>  Non-emergency medical transportation  <b>Transportation Service Area:</b> Mankato area  <b>Eligibility Requirements:</b> Medical</p>	<p>Box 150  St. Peter, MN 56082</p> <p><b>Contact Information:</b>  507-642-8426  247 Old Highway 60 SE  Madelia, MN 56062</p> <p><b>Contact Information:</b>  507-243-3282  <a href="https://www.lakecrystalcoaches.com">https://www.lakecrystalcoaches.com</a>  59780 235<sup>th</sup> Street  Madison Lake, MN 56063</p> <p><b>Contact Information:</b>  507-920-7864  <a href="https://www.superiortm.com">https://www.superiortm.com</a>  21 North Cass Avenue  Springfield, MN 56087</p> <p><b>Contact Information:</b>  507-779-7482  217 Maxfield Street  Mankato, MN 56001</p>
<b>Other Organizations</b>	
<p><b>Blue Earth County Human Services</b></p> <p><b>Service Area:</b> Blue Earth County  <b>Services provided:</b> Cash assistance, Health Care assistance, Food programs, Foster Care</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b>  507-304-4222  <a href="https://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/">https://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/</a>  410 S Fifth Street  Mankato, MN 56001  <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Friday  8:00 AM to 5:00 PM</p>

<p><b>Brown County Human Services</b></p> <p><b>Service Area:</b> Brown County</p> <p><b>Services provided:</b> Cash assistance, Health Care assistance, Food programs, Foster Care</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b></p> <p>(507) 354-8246 or 1 (800) 450-8246 <a href="https://www.co.brown.mn.us/">https://www.co.brown.mn.us/</a> 1117 Center Street New Ulm, MN 56073 <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM</p>
<p><b>Faribault County Human Services</b></p> <p><b>Service Area:</b> Faribault and Martin Counties</p> <p><b>Services provided:</b> Cash assistance, Health Care assistance, Food programs, Foster Care</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b></p> <p>507-526-3265 <a href="https://www.fmchs.com/">https://www.fmchs.com/</a> 412 North Nicollet Blue Earth, MN 56013 <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM</p>
<p><b>Le Sueur County Human Services</b></p> <p><b>Service Area:</b> Le Sueur County</p> <p><b>Services provided:</b> Cash assistance, Health Care assistance, Food programs, Foster Care</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b></p> <p>507-357-8288 <a href="https://www.co.le-sueur.mn.us/170/Human-Services">https://www.co.le-sueur.mn.us/170/Human-Services</a> 88 S Park Avenue Le Center, MN 56057 <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Thursday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM</p>
<p><b>Martin County Human Services</b></p> <p><b>Service Area:</b> Faribault and Martin Counties</p> <p><b>Services provided:</b> Cash assistance, Health Care assistance, Food programs, Foster Care</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b></p> <p>507-238-4757 <a href="https://www.fmchs.com/">https://www.fmchs.com/</a> 115 W First Street Fairmont, MN 56031 <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM</p>
<p><b>Sibley County Human Services</b></p> <p><b>Service Area:</b> Sibley County</p> <p><b>Services provided:</b> Cash assistance, Health Care assistance, Food programs, Foster Care</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b></p> <p>507-237-4000 <a href="https://www.sibleycounty.gov/330/Public-Health-Human-Services">https://www.sibleycounty.gov/330/Public-Health-Human-Services</a> 118 8<sup>th</sup> Street Gaylord, MN 55334 <b>Hours:</b> Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM</p>

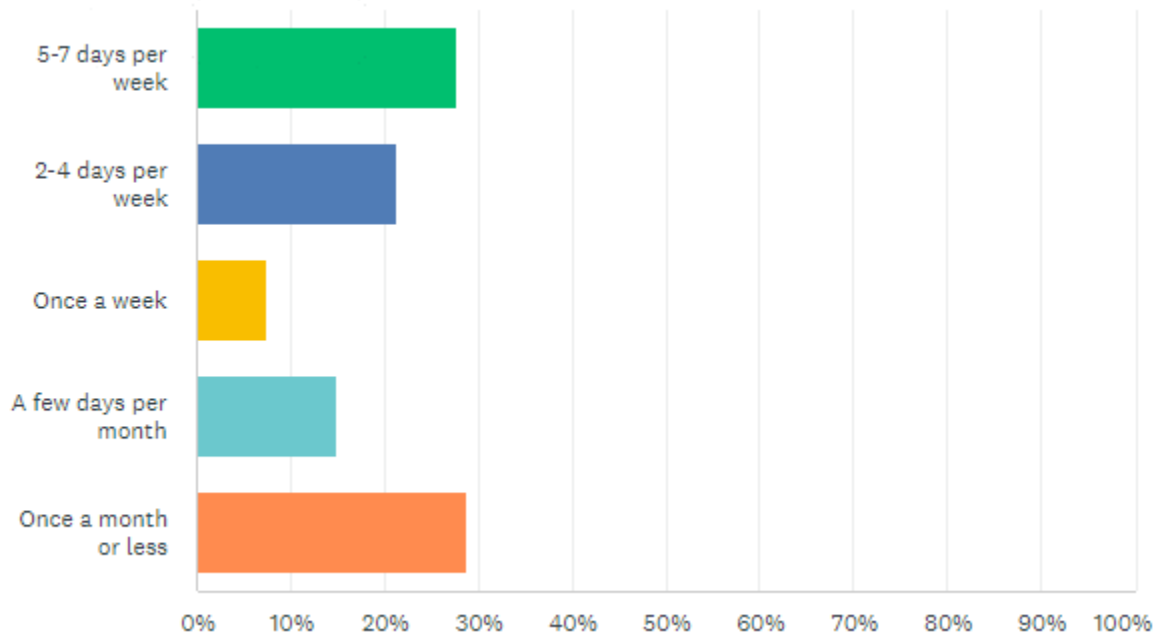
<p><b>Minnesota Prairie County Alliance</b></p> <p><b>Service Area:</b> Waseca County</p> <p><b>Services provided:</b> Cash assistance, Health Care assistance, Food programs, Foster Care</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b></p> <p>507-837-6600</p> <p><a href="https://www.mnprairie.gov/">https://www.mnprairie.gov/</a></p> <p>1000 West Elm Avenue Waseca, MN 56093</p> <p><b>Hours:</b> Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM</p>
<p><b>Watonwan County Human Services</b></p> <p><b>Service Area:</b> Watonwan County</p> <p><b>Services provided:</b> Cash assistance, Health Care assistance, Food programs, Foster Care</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b></p> <p>507-304-4222</p> <p><a href="https://www.co.watonwan.mn.us/154/Human-Services">https://www.co.watonwan.mn.us/154/Human-Services</a></p> <p>715 Second Avenue S St. James, MN 56081</p> <p><b>Hours:</b> Monday – Friday</p>
<p><b>Disabled American Veterans (DAV) of Minnesota</b></p> <p><b>Service Area:</b> Blue Earth County and surrounding area, Olmsted County and surrounding area, Winona County and surrounding area</p>	<p><b>Contact Information:</b></p> <p>507-703-1139</p> <p><a href="https://davn.org/our-programs/veteran-transportation/southeast-mn/">https://davn.org/our-programs/veteran-transportation/southeast-mn/</a></p> <p>State Veterans Service Building Floor 3 20 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street St. Paul, MN 55155</p> <p><b>Hours:</b> Monday-Friday 7:30 AM to 3:30 PM</p>

## APPENDIX II Rider Survey

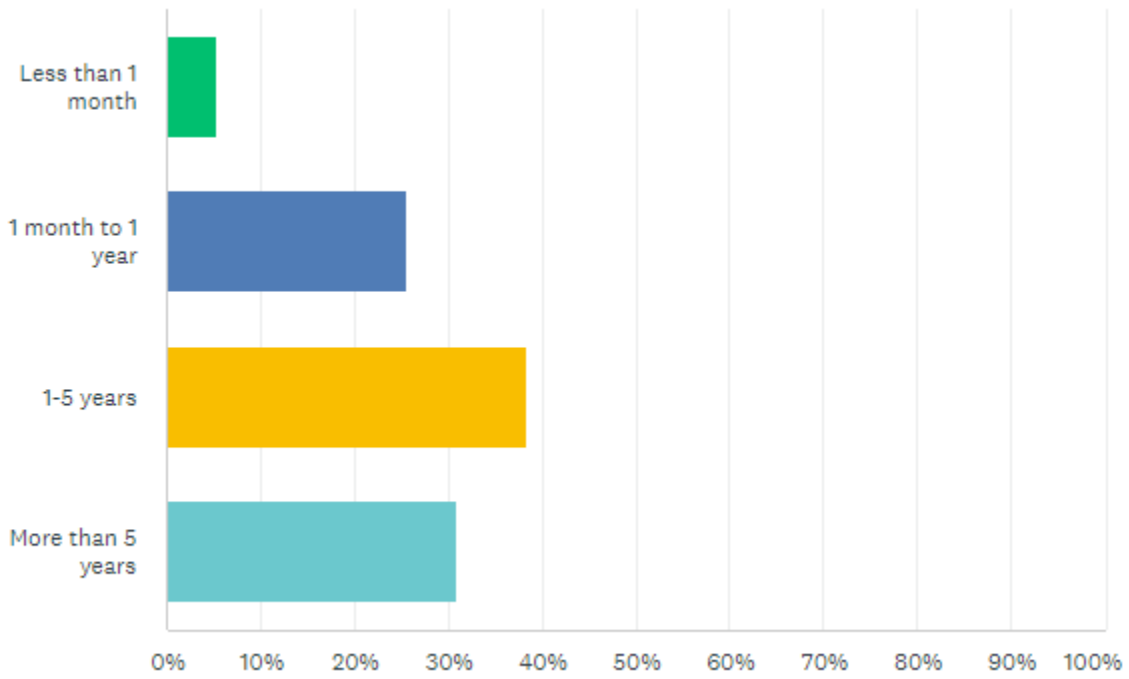
*For what primary purpose do you most frequently ride the bus?*



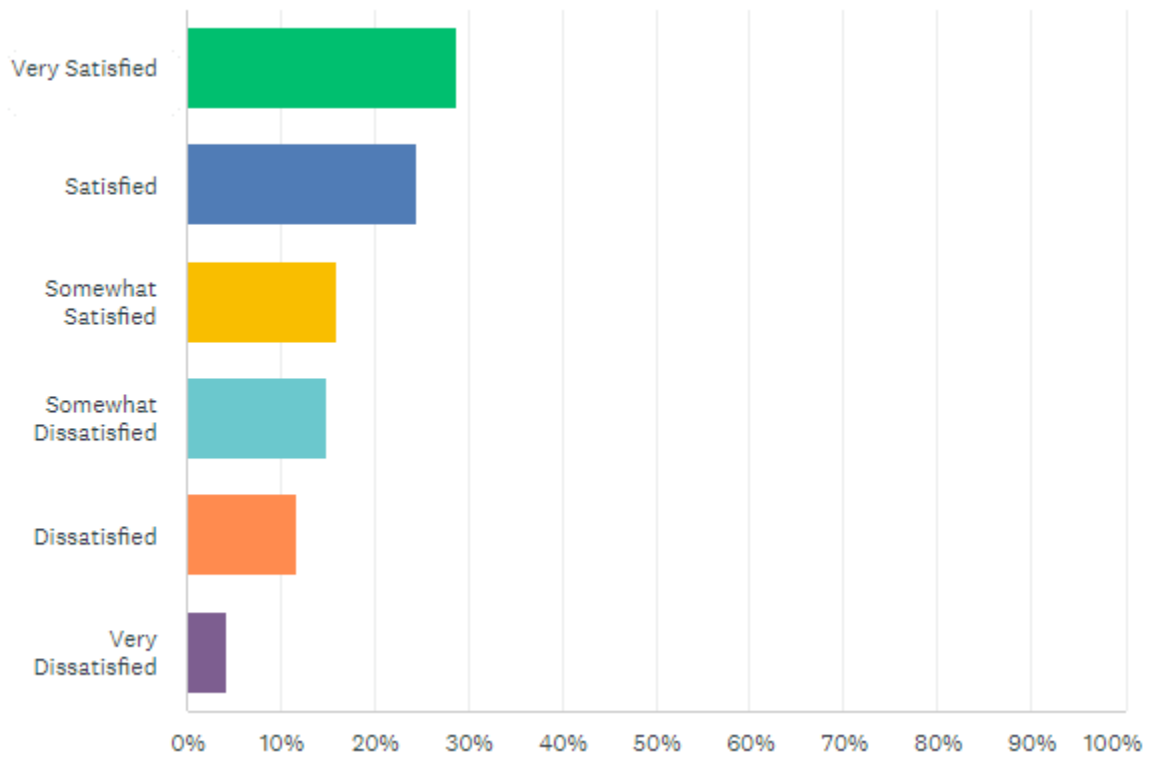
*How often do you use an agency transportation service?*



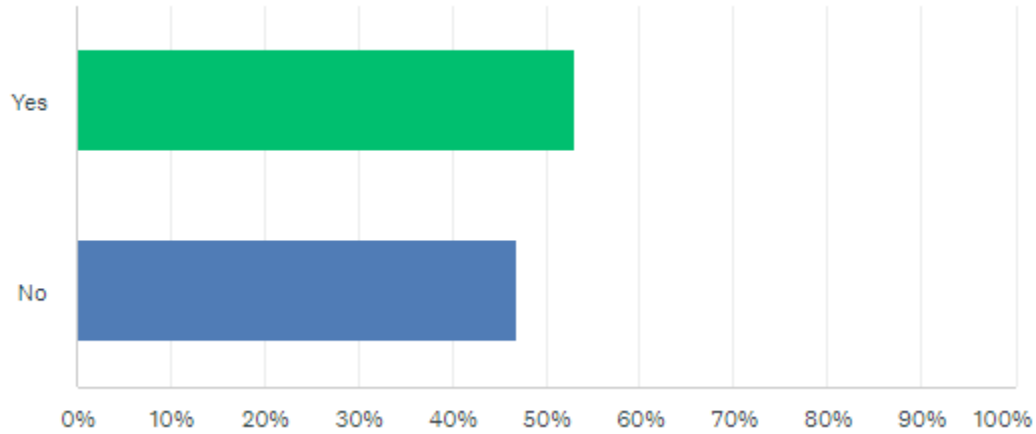
*How long have you been using transportation services?*



*How satisfied are you with the availability of transportation services from the agency?*



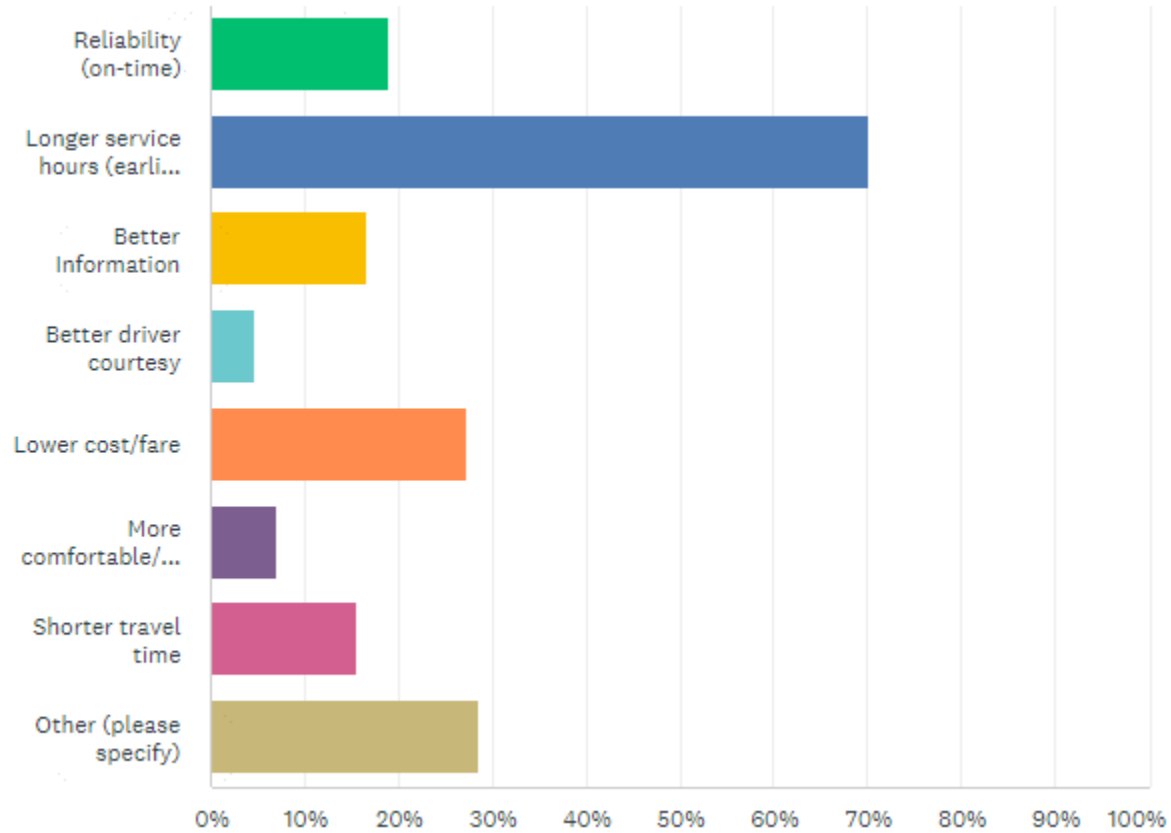
*Do you have any other means of transportation?*



*In the past week, what percentage of your transportation needs have been met by the agency?*

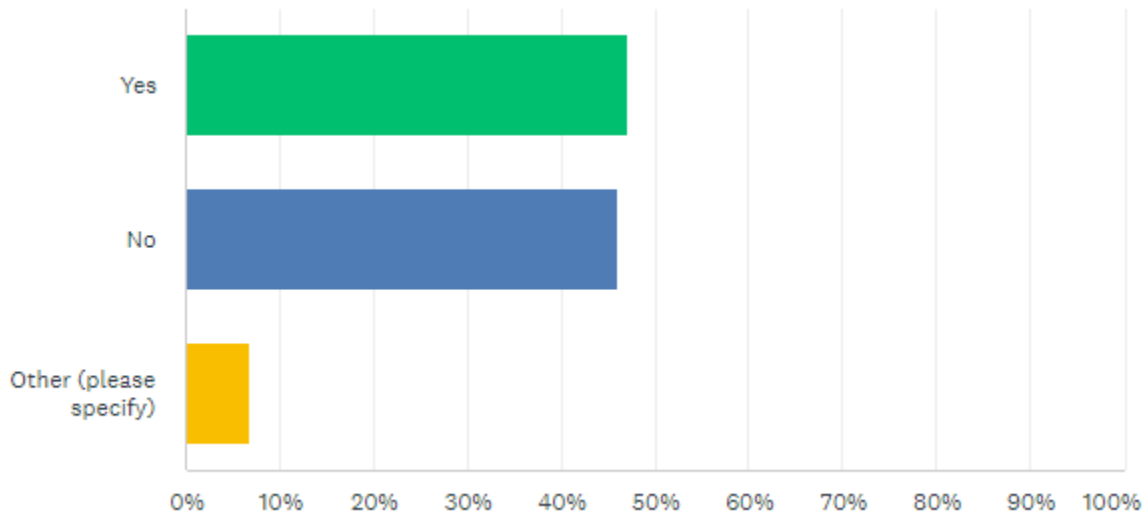
Note: There is no graph for this question as it was a free response. The most frequent responses were 100 and 0, and most other responses were within 30% of either extreme. Only a couple of respondents indicated that around half of their needs were met. Also, some respondents did not precisely quantify their needs met (i.e. most, unsure, only ride seasonally).

What improvements to this service would make it most likely that you would ride more frequently? Check all that apply.



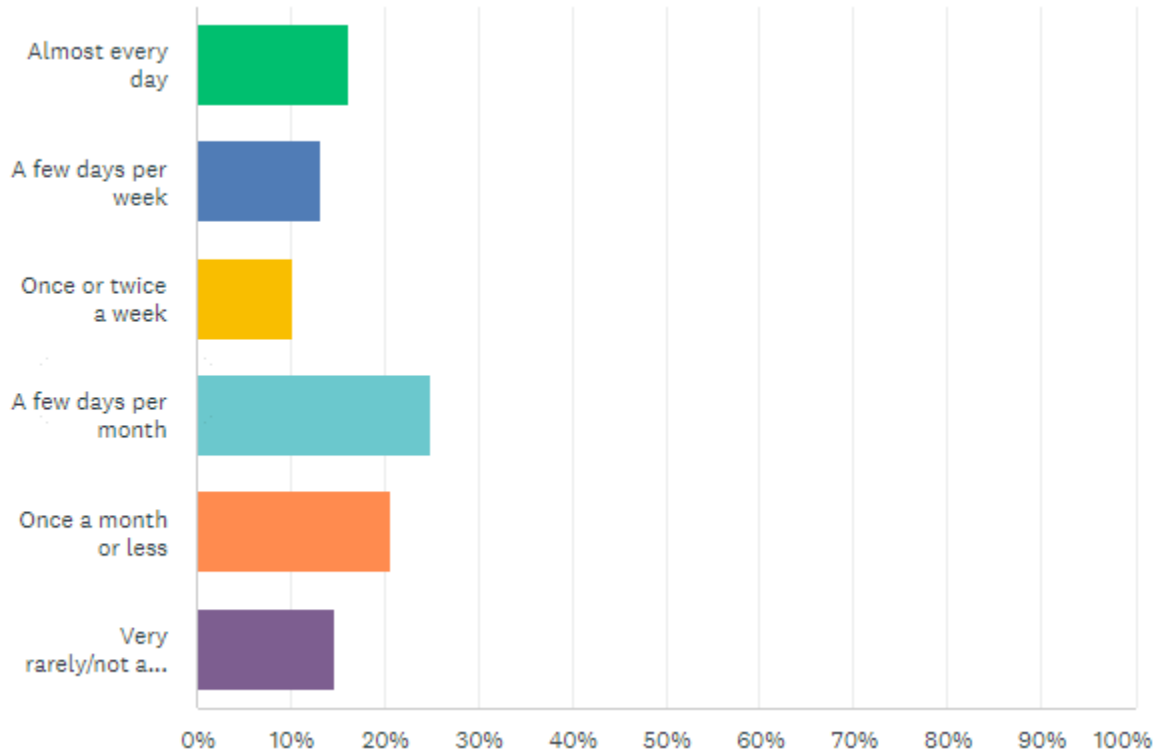
“Other” responses included more routes, larger service areas, and multilingual drivers.

Is there anywhere you need to travel that you cannot get to by using the transportation service?



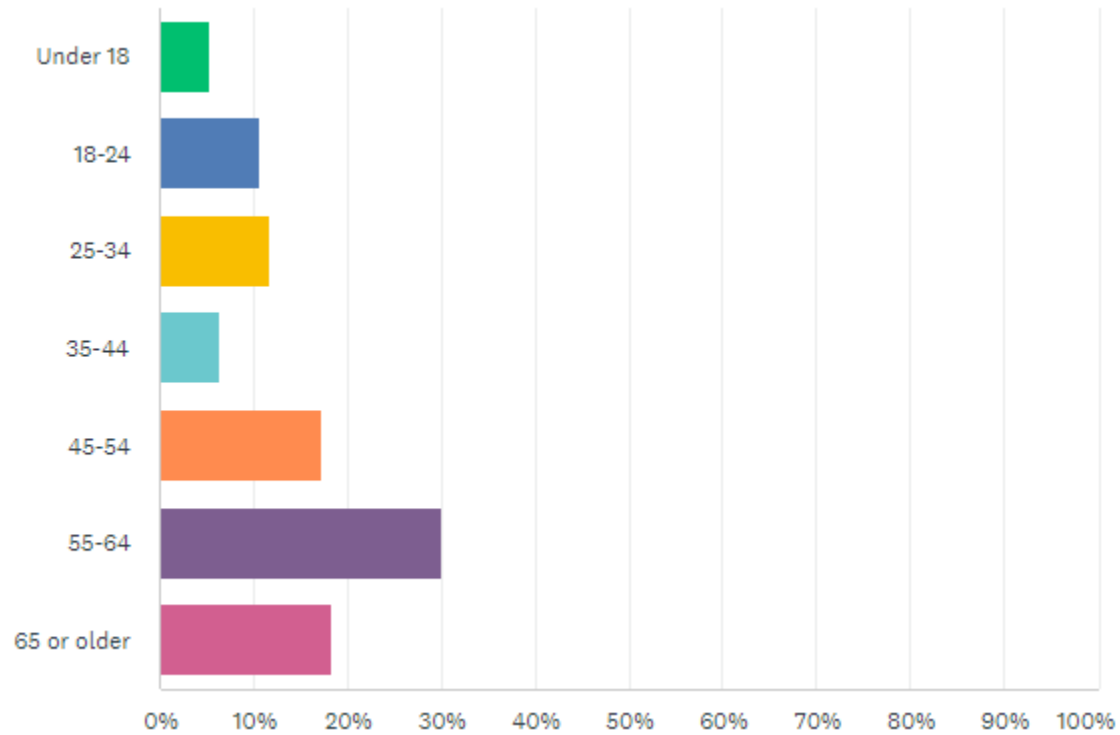
*If additional service was added, where should it go? How often do you think you would ride the bus to that location?*

The first part of this question was open-ended. Frequent responses included the Twin Cities metropolitan area, Rochester, medical providers, churches on Sunday, schools, factories, hotels and motels, public school sites, and towns within 60 miles. The second part's responses are below.

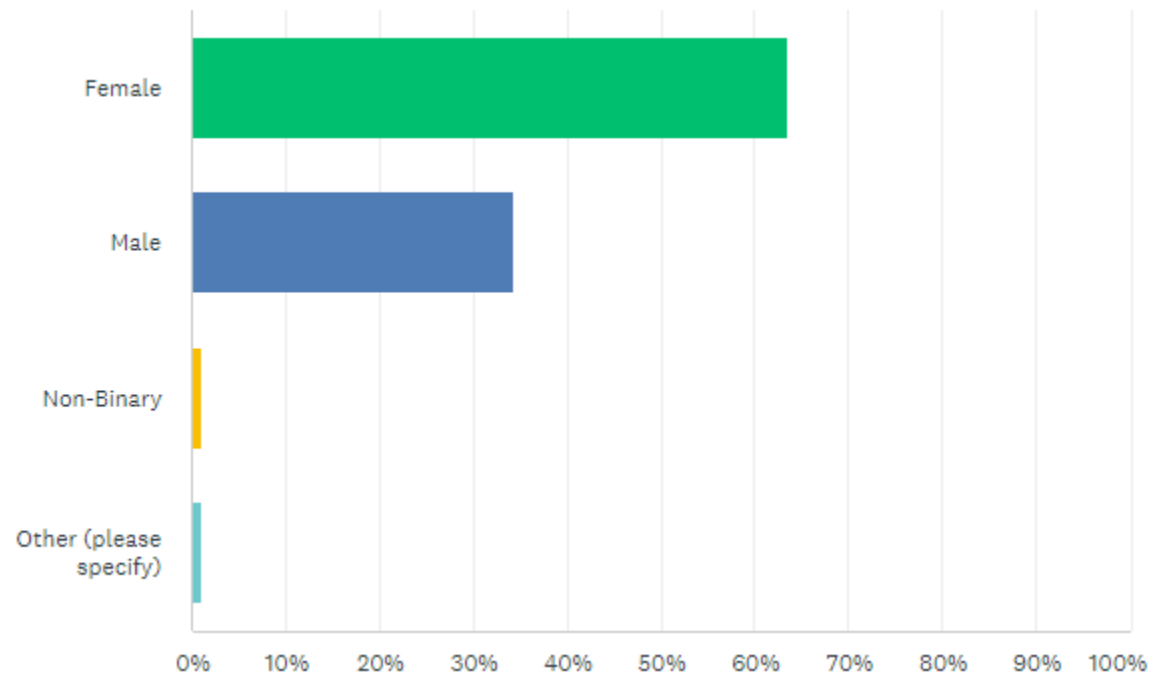




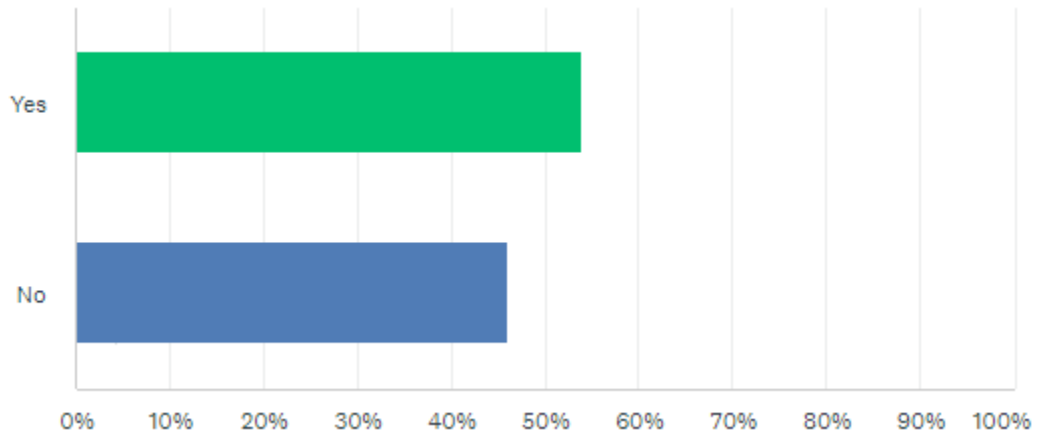
*What's your age?*



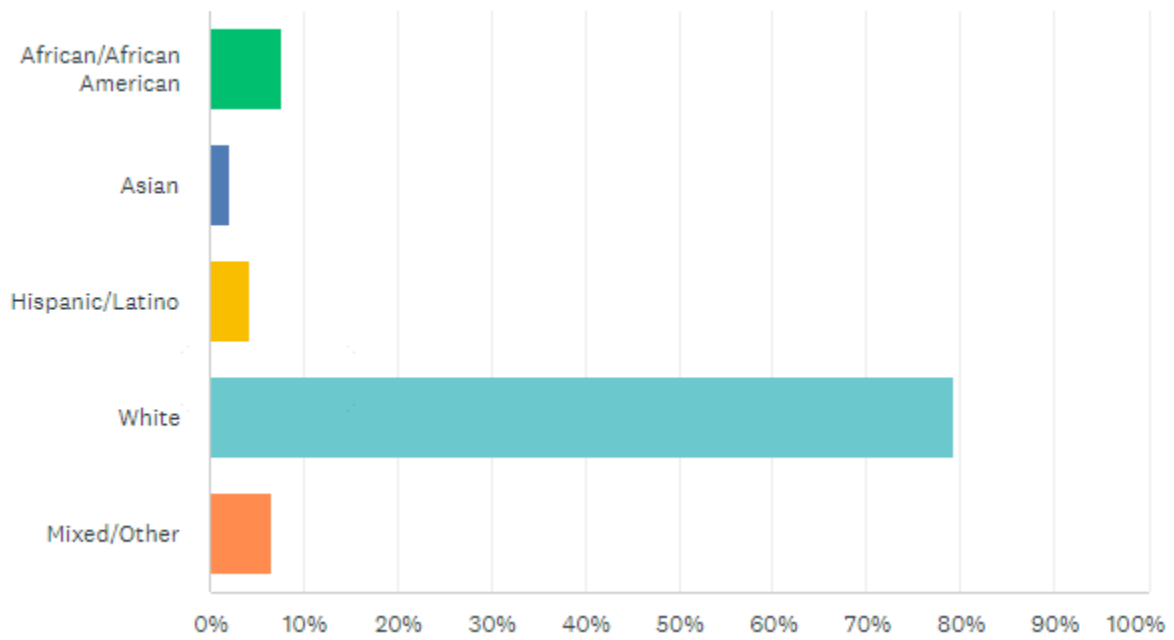
*What gender do you identify with?*



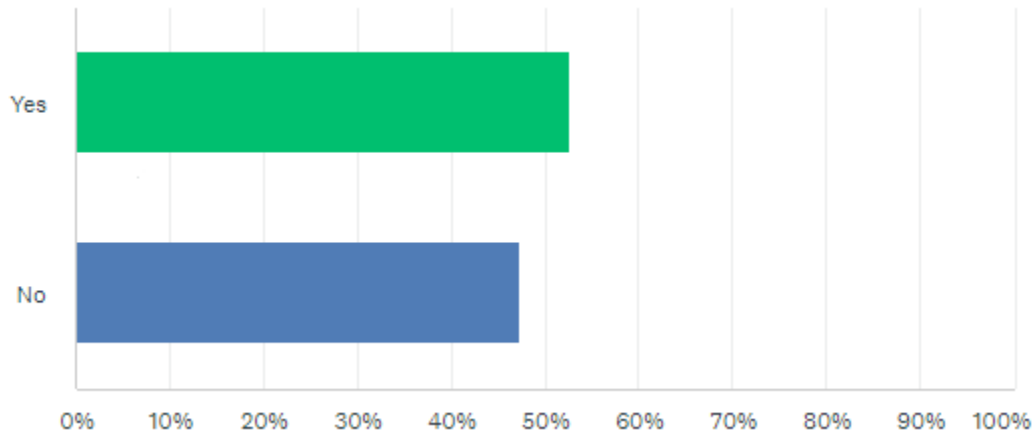
*Do you have a driver's license?*



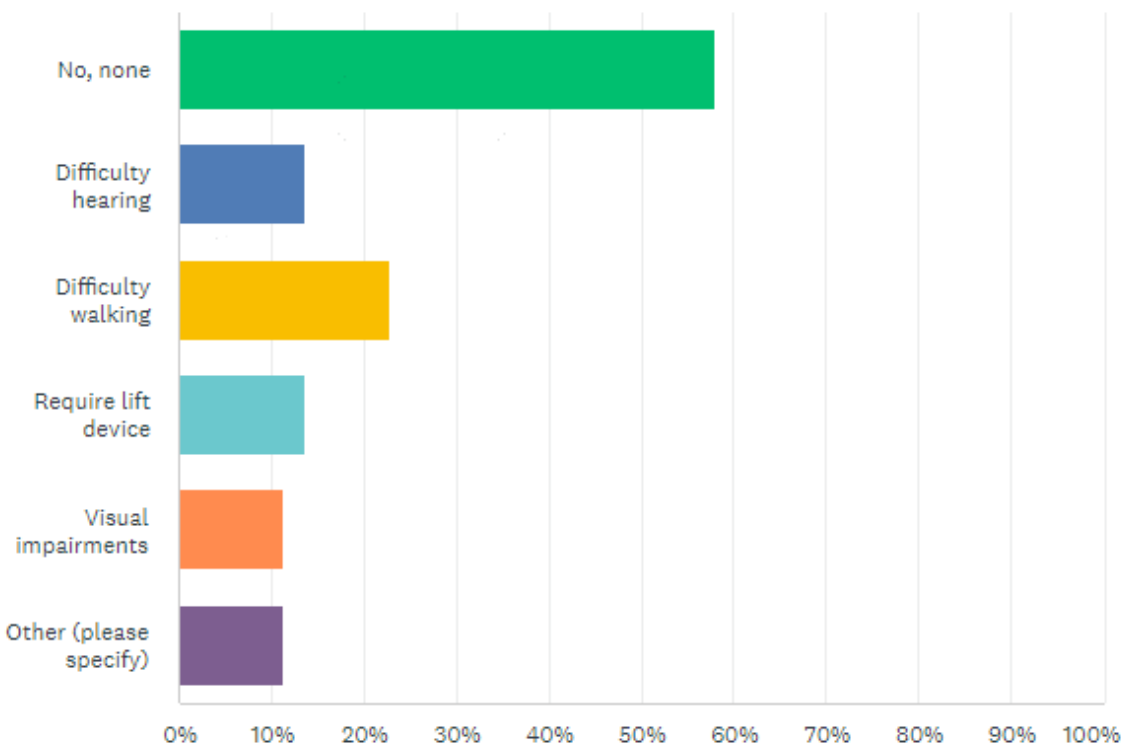
*What race/ethnicity do you identify with?*



*Do you identify as someone with a disability?*



*Do you have any conditions that require assistance to use this transportation service?*



*What is your zip code?*

This was a free form response question, so there is no graph to accompany the question. While there was participation in all nine counties and approximately 25 cities (or rural areas near cities that have the same ZIP code as a city), the largest number of responses came from Blue Earth and Brown Counties.