2022 | Region 8

Local Human Services-Transit Coordination Plan

PREPARED BY: SRDC
SOUTHWEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

IN COOPERATION WITH REPRESENTATIVES & AGENCIES FROM:

Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock Counties

Executive Summary

The 2021 Local Human Services - Transit Coordination Plan was developed for the Region 8 in Southwest Minnesota to evaluate and improve transit needs and services for the region. Southwest Regional Development Commission and the Southwest Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordination Council (SWMRTCC) prepared the plan. Region 8 covers Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock Counties This plan serves as the strategic guide for transit services, both public and private, for Region 8 over the next five years.

REGION 8 TRANSIT OVERVIEW

Three major components were utilized to develop and create this plan, which includes a demographic profile of the region that supports the analysis of the mobility needs of the area's population with a focus on elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities. In addition, a view of mobility today looks at existing transportation needs, while a vision for tomorrow looks at goals and strategies to expand and improve services.

Demographic Data

According to the 2019 ACS 5-year estimates, the region's population was 116,572 and accounted for 2.0% of the state's total population.

Nearly half of the population is distributed between Lyon, Nobles and Redwood Counties, (amounting to 53.8% of the total regional population).

The Region's population is projected to decline 2.7% by 2025. The only county with projected population gain in this time period is Jackson (4.7%). Other counties are expected to start gaining population past this time period.

Demographic data for the region shows two counties with growing diverse populations (Lyon and Nobles).

Mobility Today

Many of the issues noted in previous iterations of the Local Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan for the region are still relevant today. However, when combined with the noted inflation rates, supply chain issues, and continued decline in workforce, transit-dependent populations are more vulnerable to not making it to their destinations as agencies and providers pivot efforts to maintain services rather than expand.

The RTCC serving the region acts as a community advocate to investigate needs, fill gaps, and bring partners to the table to formulate and implement solutions. Actions steps noted at the end of this plan are intended to guide the RTCC and its work-plan for the next five years.

Vision for Tomorrow

Expansion of mobility options, although ideal, is not the forward action that transit providers and their dependent agencies need to undertake. Re-pivoting to maintaining current services while facing driver shortages, fiscal constraints and backlogs on vehicles and parts is recommended.

While working to maintain current services, Actions Steps and Strategies are taking on a different form from the last iteration of this planning effort. In order to support their larger encompassing goals noted by steering committee members, focus group participants and survey respondents, Acton Steps are designed to be small tasks that prepare the RTCC and its partners so that they are ready to take on larger projects as possible funding and opportunities arise. This includes data gathering, marketing materials to encourage ridership, and breaking down barriers to entry to gain more drivers in the near future.

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to evaluate existing transportation providers, identity unmet needs and services, and establish transportation related goals for Region 8. The counties included in this region are Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock. This document 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 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, an inventory of existing transportation providers, an analysis of gaps in services, and a look at unmet needs throughout the region that have been identified though 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.
- Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) to identify coordination opportunities.

Table 1 below shows the timeline for the processes that depict project completion.

Table 1: Timeline for Plan Completion

Task	Jul 2021	Aug-Sep	Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan	Feb-Mar	Apr	May-Jun	Jul	Aug-Sep	Oct-Nov	Dec 2022	Jan-Feb	Mar	Apr 2023
Contracts Executed		X													
Appoint Steering Committee			X												
Survey & Questionnaire Collection					X	X	X	X	X	X					
Previous Effort Evaluation				X	X										
Steering Committee Meeting 1				X											
Focus Groups					X					X					
Steering Committee Meeting 2						X									
Planning Workshop (Steering Committee Meeting 3)								X							
MnDOT Draft Review											X				
Steering Committee Meeting 4											X				
MCOTA Draft Review													X		
30-Day Public Comment Period														X	X
Plan Adoption															X

Background

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.

Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 had a significant impact on transportation throughout the region. The first and most obvious impact is the loss of public transit riders and drivers that came from statewide service

shutdowns. Supply chain issues created by the pandemic have led to an aging fleet of vehicles and higher maintenance needs, which limit bus availability at times. There have also been losses of private providers in the region, which led to greater unmet transportation need.

While public transit did not completely shut down in the region—many areas continued to have some availability of critical transportation, even at the height of the pandemic—there was a significant drop in trips. This led to a cyclical problem.

Fewer trips, less service availability, and concerns about COVID led to a decrease in staff, volunteer drivers and riders. The decrease in personnel led to difficulty restarting routes in some areas. The difficulty getting back to full service led to riders finding alternative solutions. Ridership is slowly rebounding, but staffing in many communities throughout the region is still a problem, and some routes have yet to restart.

Even in areas where staffing is not a problem, the aging vehicle fleet can cause problems. If a county only has two vehicles, and one of the vehicles ends up in a mechanical emergency, this can cause service disruptions until a vehicle is available. This has happened in at least one county since the pandemic.

These and other factors after the pandemic, such as providers closing their doors, have led to service changes that do not look to be going back to the old normal. It is impossible to draw a direct link from COVID to these changes, but they affect the current reality, nonetheless.

Study Area

The study area includes nine counties in Southwest Minnesota. These counties include, Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood and Rock.

The total population in Southwest Minnesota in 2019 was 116,572 according to the ACS 5-year estimates. The state demographer's office offers population projections for each of the counties in Minnesota and estimates that the region's population will decrease to 113,393, roughly 2.7%. The only county projected to experience a population gain is Jackson County.

The largest county in the region population-wise is Lyon County which contributes 22.1% of the region's total population followed by Nobles at 18.6%, and Redwood at 13.1%. The smallest county in the region is Lincoln with a total of 5,677 and contributes about 4.9% to the regional population.

Figure 1: Region 8 Study Area (9 counties in Southwest Minnesota)
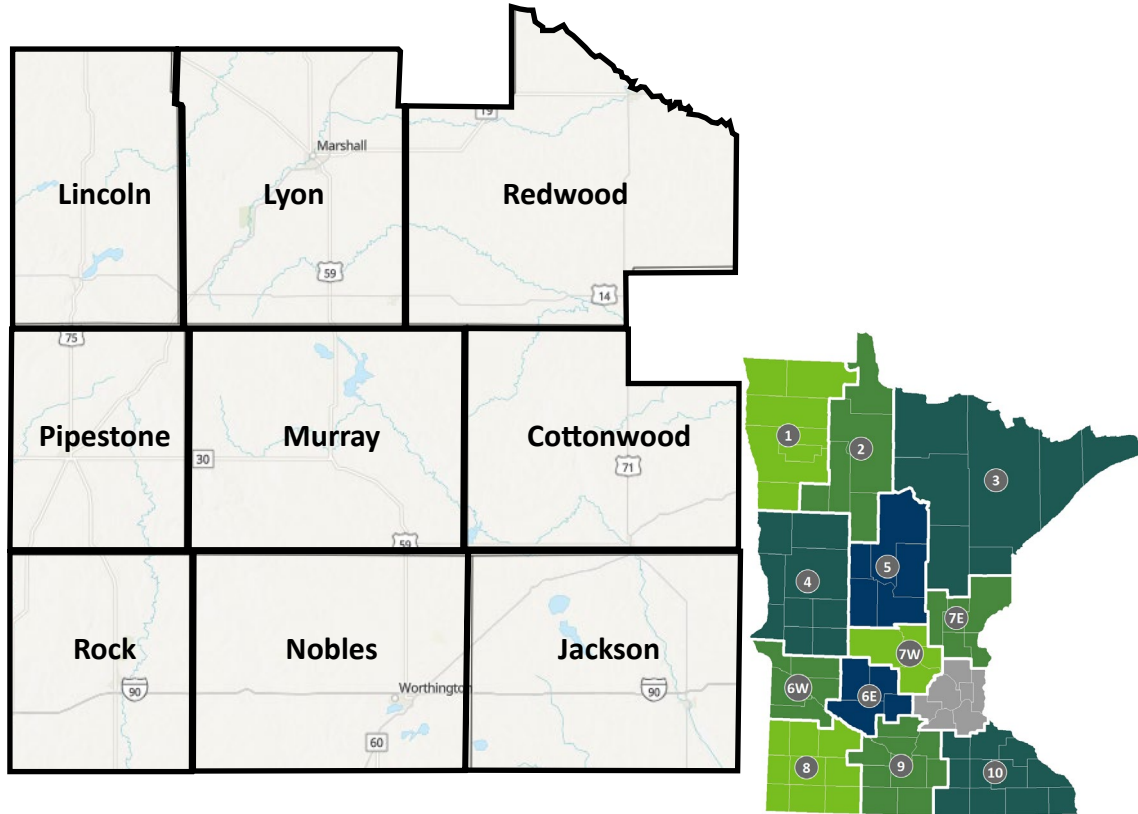
Total and Projected Population

Table 2 below shows the distribution of the regional population and their projections between each county.

Table 2: Current and Projected Population by County

County	2019 Population	Current Percent of Total	2025 Projected Population	Percentage Change
Cottonwood	11,299	9.7%	11,274	-0.2%
Jackson	9,954	8.5%	10,420	4.7%
Lincoln	5,677	4.9%	5,576	-1.8%
Lyon	25,758	22.1%	25,173	-2.3%
Murray	8,296	7.1%	7,893	-4.9%
Nobles	21,734	18.6%	21,664	-0.3%
Pipestone	9,191	7.9%	8,413	-8.5%
Redwood	15,261	13.1%	13,699	-10.2%
Rock	9,402	8.1%	9,281	-1.3%
Total Population	**116,572**		**113,393**	**-2.7%**

Source: Minnesota Demographer's Office

Population by Age

For most of the region, nearly half (55.7%) of the population is considered Adult Age (between 18-64 years old). Adults are likely to utilize transit if they do not have access to vehicles and need to get to/ from work, college or vocational courses, shop for necessities, and access medical appointments. Lyon County has the highest percentage of adults at 59.1% followed by Nobles and Jackson County at 56.8% each. The counties with the lowest percentage of adults were Lincoln and Cottonwood with 52.1% and 53.0% respectively.

The youth population (those under 18 years old) make up an estimated 22.74% of the population in Southwest Minnesota. Youth are likely to utilize transit to get to/from school, after school activities and part-time jobs. The counties with the highest percentage of youths were Nobles at 27.2% and Rock, Lyon, and Pipestone with 25.5% each. The county with the lowest percentage of youth was Murray at 21.5% followed by Jackson at 21.6%

The remaining 17.9% of the regional population in Southwest Minnesota is comprised of people 65 years and older. These people are of retirement age and may utilize transit to access medical appointments, and shop for necessities. In Southwest Minnesota, Murray County has the highest percentage of seniors at 25.3% followed by Lincoln County at 24.6%

Tables 3-5 show the number of youths, adults, and seniors within each county and the percent these populations make of the total county population.

Table 3: Youth Population (17 Years and Younger)

County	Total Population	Youth Population	Percent of Total
Cottonwood	11,299	2,744	24.3%
Jackson	9,954	2,149	21.6%
Lincoln	5,677	1,320	23.3%
Lyon	25,758	6,556	25.5%
Murray	8,296	1,781	21.5%
Nobles	21,734	5,905	27.2%
Pipestone	9,191	2,345	25.5%
Redwood	15,261	3,707	24.3%
Rock	9,402	2,395	25.5%
Region	**116,572**	**28,902**	**24.79%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 4: Adult Population (18 to 64 Years)

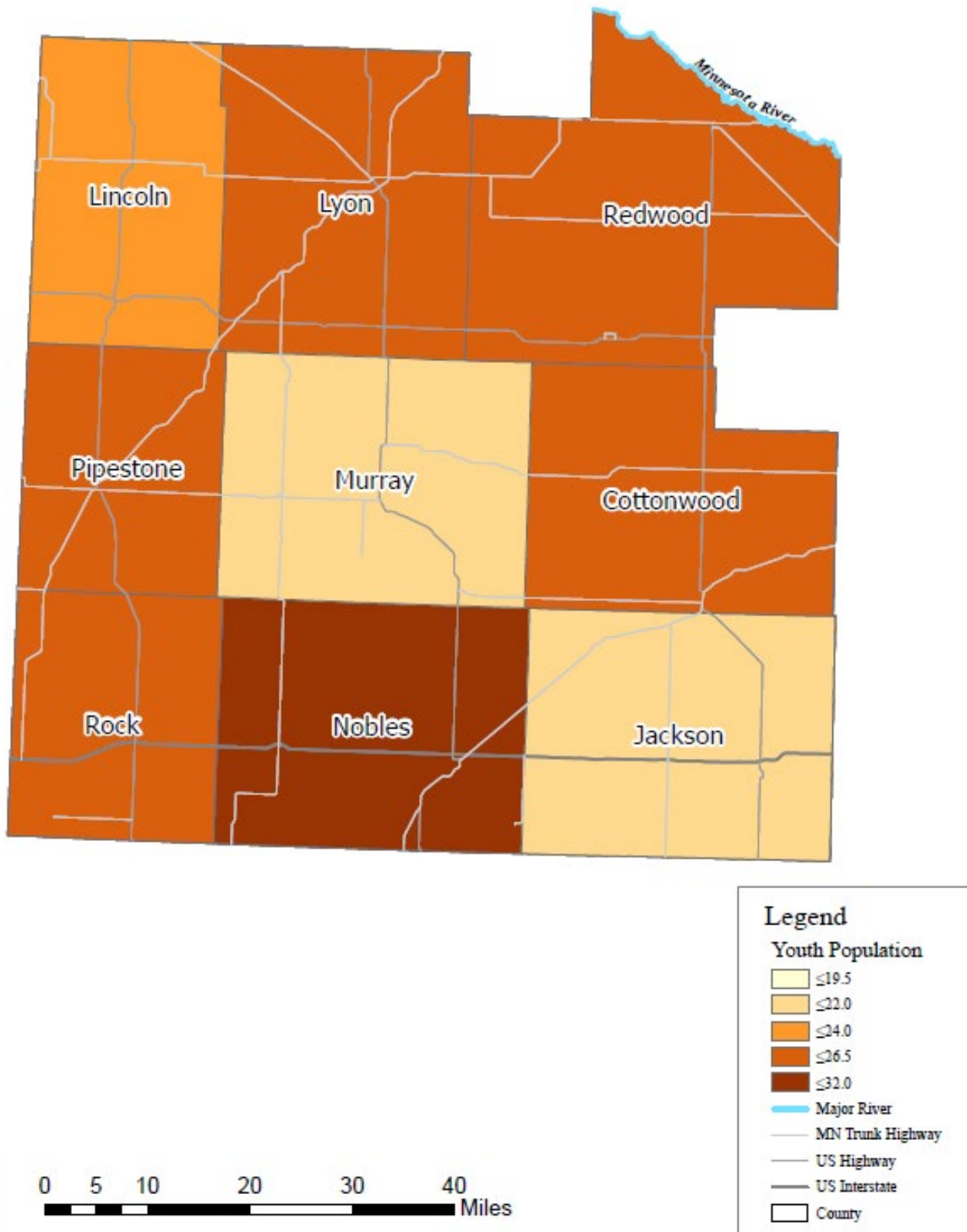| County	Total Population	Adult Population	Percent of Total
Cottonwood	11,299	5,987	53.0%
Jackson	9,954	5,653	56.8%
Lincoln	5,677	2,959	52.1%
Lyon	25,758	15,216	59.1%
Murray	8,296	4,412	53.2%
Nobles	21,734	12,341	56.8%
Pipestone	9,191	4,943	53.8%
Redwood	15,261	8,336	54.6%
Rock	9,402	5,141	54.7%
Region	**116,572**	**64,988**	**55.75%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 5: Senior Population (65 Years and Over)

County	Total Population	Senior Population	Percent of Total
Cottonwood	11,299	2,568	22.7%
Jackson	9,954	2,152	21.6%
Lincoln	5,677	1,398	24.6%
Lyon	25,758	3,986	15.5%
Murray	8,296	2,103	25.3%
Nobles	21,734	3,488	16.0%
Pipestone	9,191	1,903	20.7%
Redwood	15,261	3,218	21.1%
Rock	9,402	1,866	19.8%
Region	**116,572**	**22,682**	**19.46%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 2: Youth Population in Region 8

Legend

Youth Population
- ≤19.5
- ≤22.0
- ≤24.0
- ≤26.5
- ≤32.0
- Major River
- MN Trunk Highway
- US Highway
- US Interstate
- County

Source: 2019 5-Year ACS Estimates

Figure 3: AdultPopulation in Region 8

Legend
Adult Population
- ≤54.0
- ≤56.0
- ≤58.5
- ≤61.0
- ≤67.0
- Major River
- MN Trunk Highway
- US Highway
- US Interstate
- County
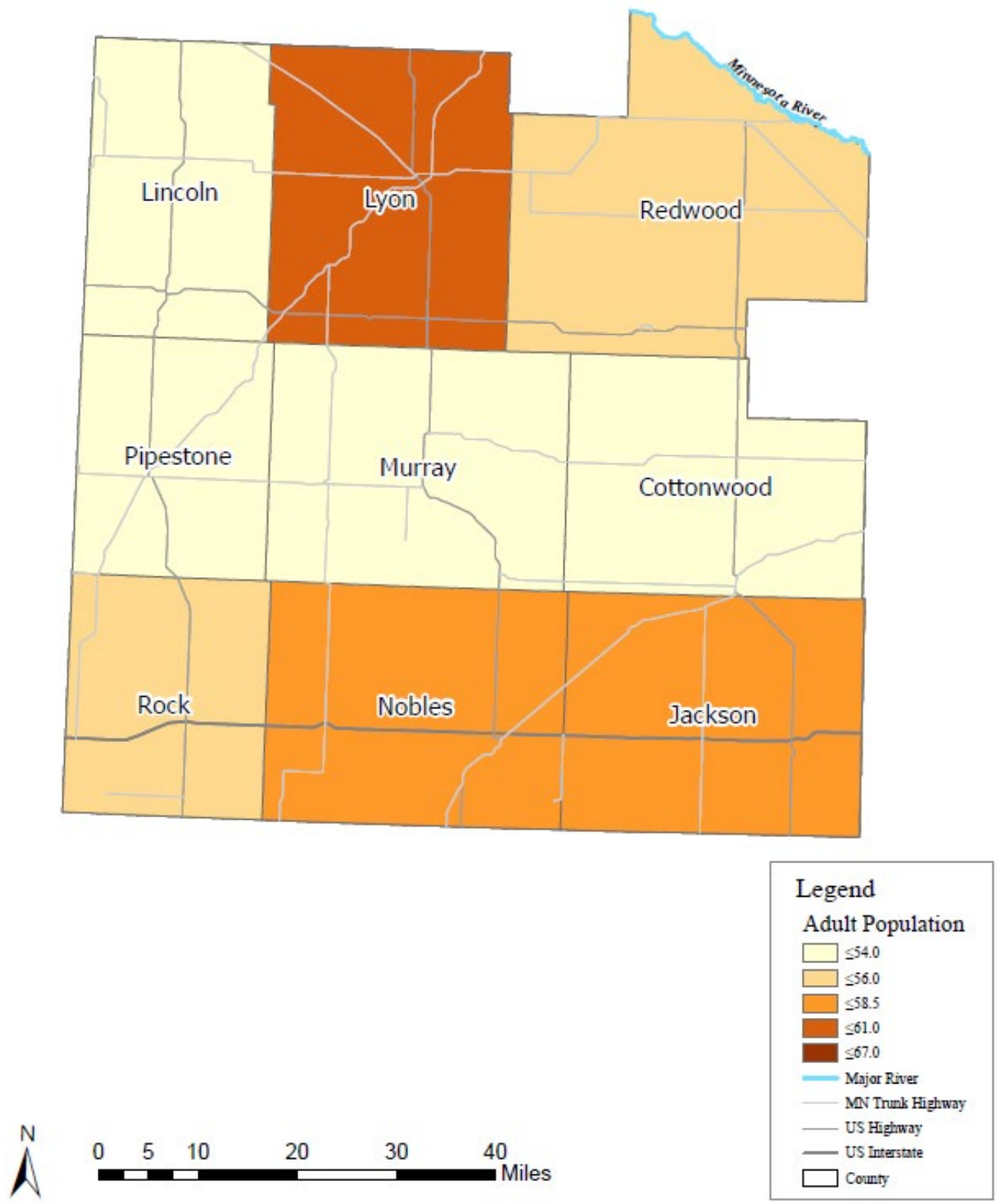
Source: 2019 5-Year ACS Estimates

Figure 4: Senior Population in Region 8
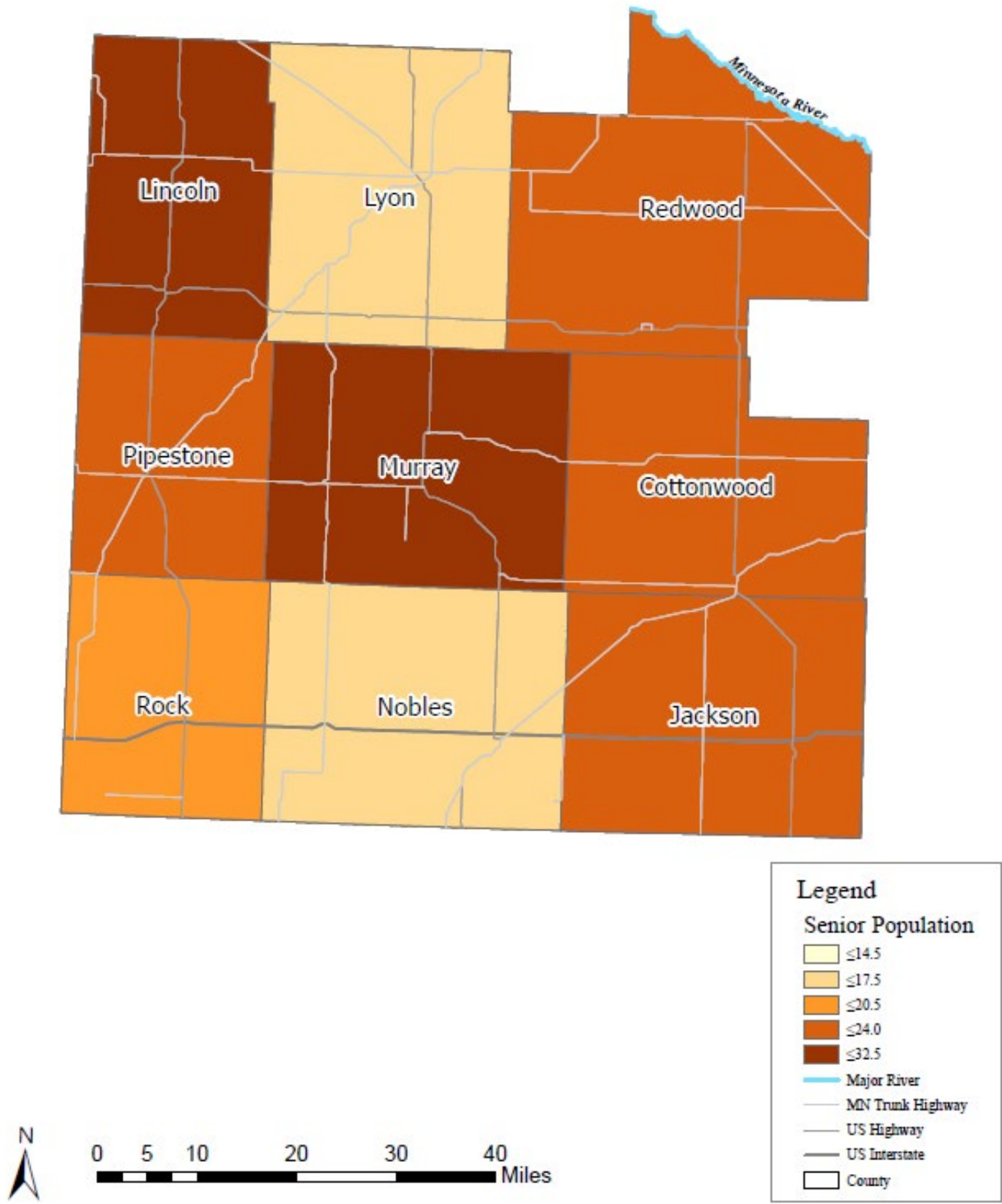
Source: 2019 5-Year ACS Estimates

Populations with a Disability

Table 6 contains the total county populations for individuals with disabilities, and the percent that population is of the total county population. Tables 7-9 break down that total population into youth, adults, and seniors with a disability. These groups are important to look at, as those with disabilities may face transportation issues due to inability to drive/obtain a license, ability to obtain or maintain a vehicle due to fixed income and other constraints.

The disabled population in the region comprises about 11.7% of the total population. Cottonwood and Pipestone County have the highest proportion of disabled people at 14.3% followed by Murray at 13.3% and Lincoln at 12.6%.

As age groups progress, so does the percentage of those people that experience some form of disability. For the region, 4.1% of the total youths experienced disability, followed by adults aged 18-64 at 8.7% and seniors at 29.7%.

Table 6: Populations with a Disability

County	Total Population	Disabled Population	Percent of Total
Cottonwood	11,299	1,621	14.3%
Jackson	9,954	1,139	11.4%
Lincoln	5,677	715	12.6%
Lyon	25,758	2,541	9.9%
Murray	8,296	1,106	13.3%
Nobles	21,734	2,602	12.0%
Pipestone	9,191	1,318	14.3%
Redwood	15,261	1,578	10.3%
Rock	9,402	983	10.5%
Region	**116,572**	**13,603**	**11.7%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 7: Youth Population with a Disability (5 to 15 years)

County	Total Youth	Disabled Population	Percent of Total
Cottonwood	2,744	98	3.6%
Jackson	2,149	104	4.8%
Lincoln	1,320	75	5.7%
Lyon	6,556	224	3.4%
Murray	1,781	62	3.5%
Nobles	5,905	283	4.8%
Pipestone	2,345	194	8.3%
Redwood	3,707	77	2.1%
Rock	2,395	72	3.0%
Region	**118,876**	**11,982**	**10.1%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 8: Adult Population with a Disability (16 to 64 Years)

County	Total Adult	Disabled Population	Percent of Total
Cottonwood	5,987	667	11.1%
Jackson	5,653	440	7.8%
Lincoln	2,959	231	7.8%
Lyon	15,216	1,102	7.2%
Murray	4,412	435	9.9%
Nobles	12,341	1,294	10.5%
Pipestone	4,943	527	10.7%
Redwood	8,336	601	7.2%
Rock	5,141	388	7.6%
Region	**64,988**	**5,685**	**8.75%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 9: Senior Population with a Disability (65 Years+)

County	Total Adult	Disabled Population	Percent of Total
Cottonwood	2,568	856	33.3%
Jackson	2,152	595	27.7%
Lincoln	1,398	409	29.3%
Lyon	3,986	1,215	30.5%
Murray	2,103	609	29.0%
Nobles	3,488	1,025	29.4%
Pipestone	1,903	597	31.4%
Redwood	3,218	900	28.0%
Rock	1,866	523	28.0%
Region	**22,682**	**6,729**	**29.67%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 5: Total Population with a Disability in Region 8

Legend

Total Disability Population

- ≤9.5
- ≤11.5
- ≤13.0
- ≤15.0
- ≤18.0
- Major River
- MN Trunk Highway
- US Highway
- US Interstate
- County
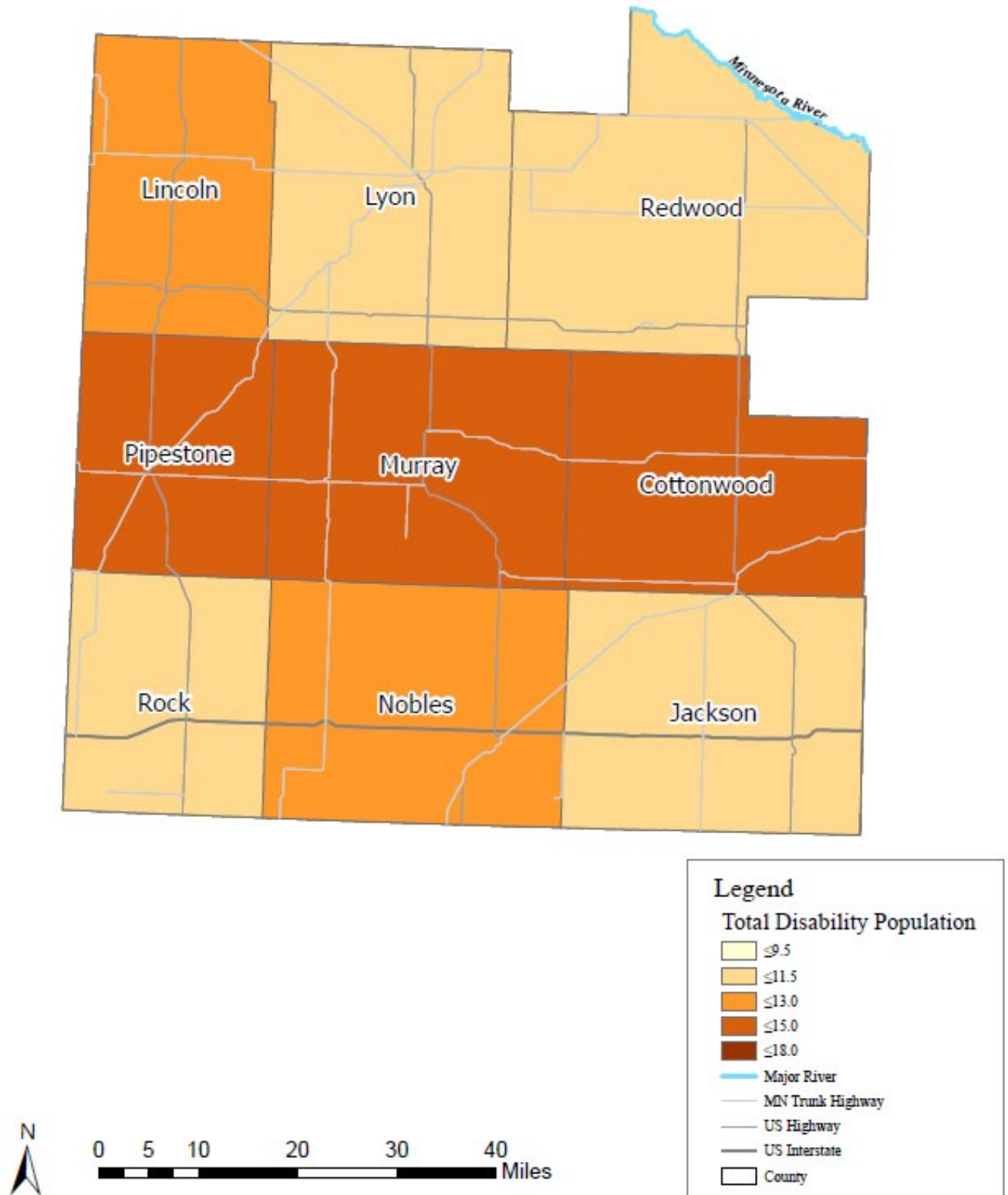
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 6: Youth Population with a Disability in Region 8

Legend

Disabled Youth Population
- ≤1.5
- ≤3.0
- ≤4.5
- ≤6.0
- ≤9.5
- Major River
- MN Trunk Highway
- US Highway
- US Interstate
- County
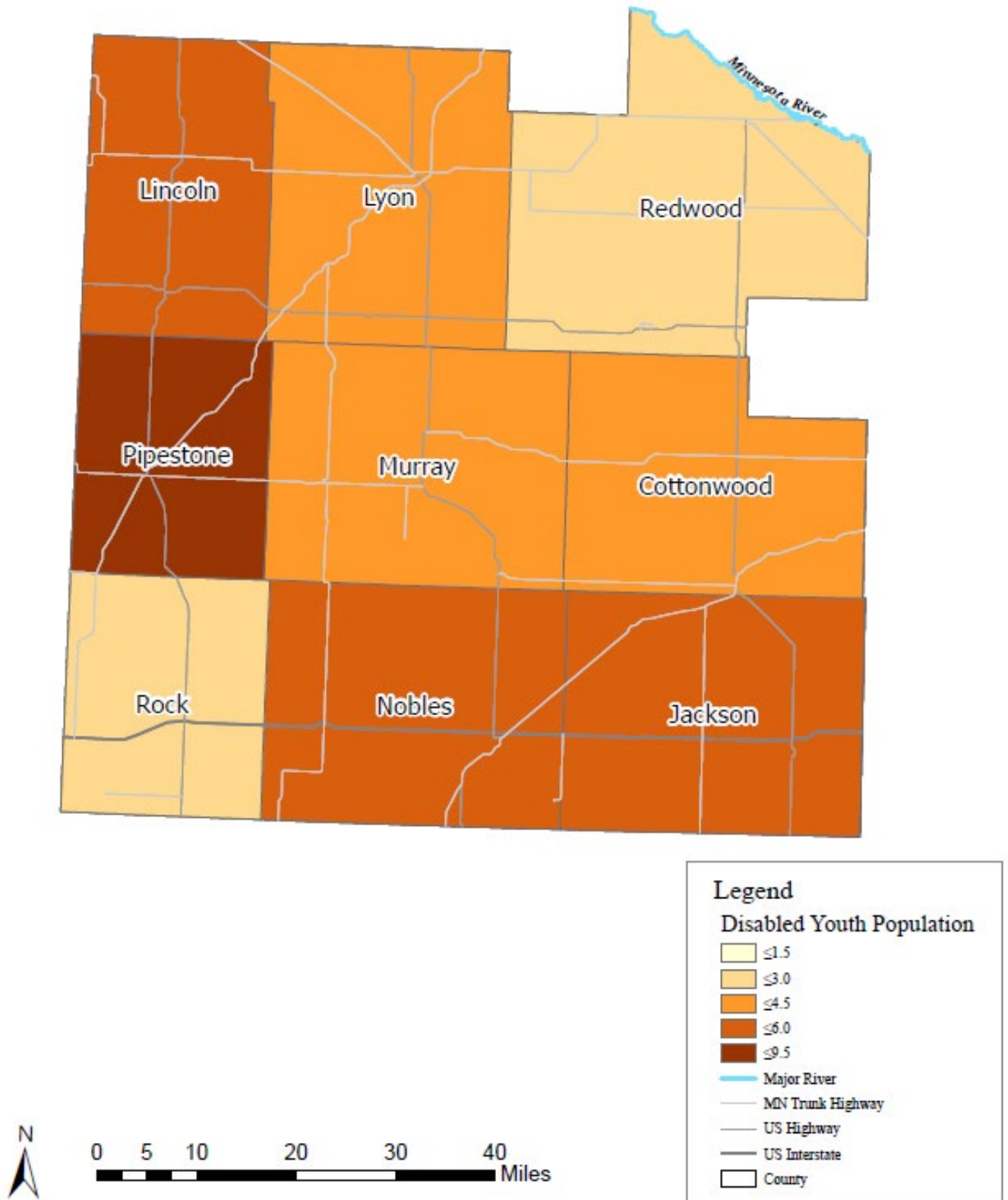
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 7: Adult Population with a Disability in Region 8

Legend

Disabled Adult Population

- ☐ ≤8.0
- ☐ ≤9.0
- ☐ ≤11.0
- ☐ ≤13.0
- ☐ ≤15.0
- — Major River
- — MN Trunk Highway
- — US Highway
- — US Interstate
- ☐ County
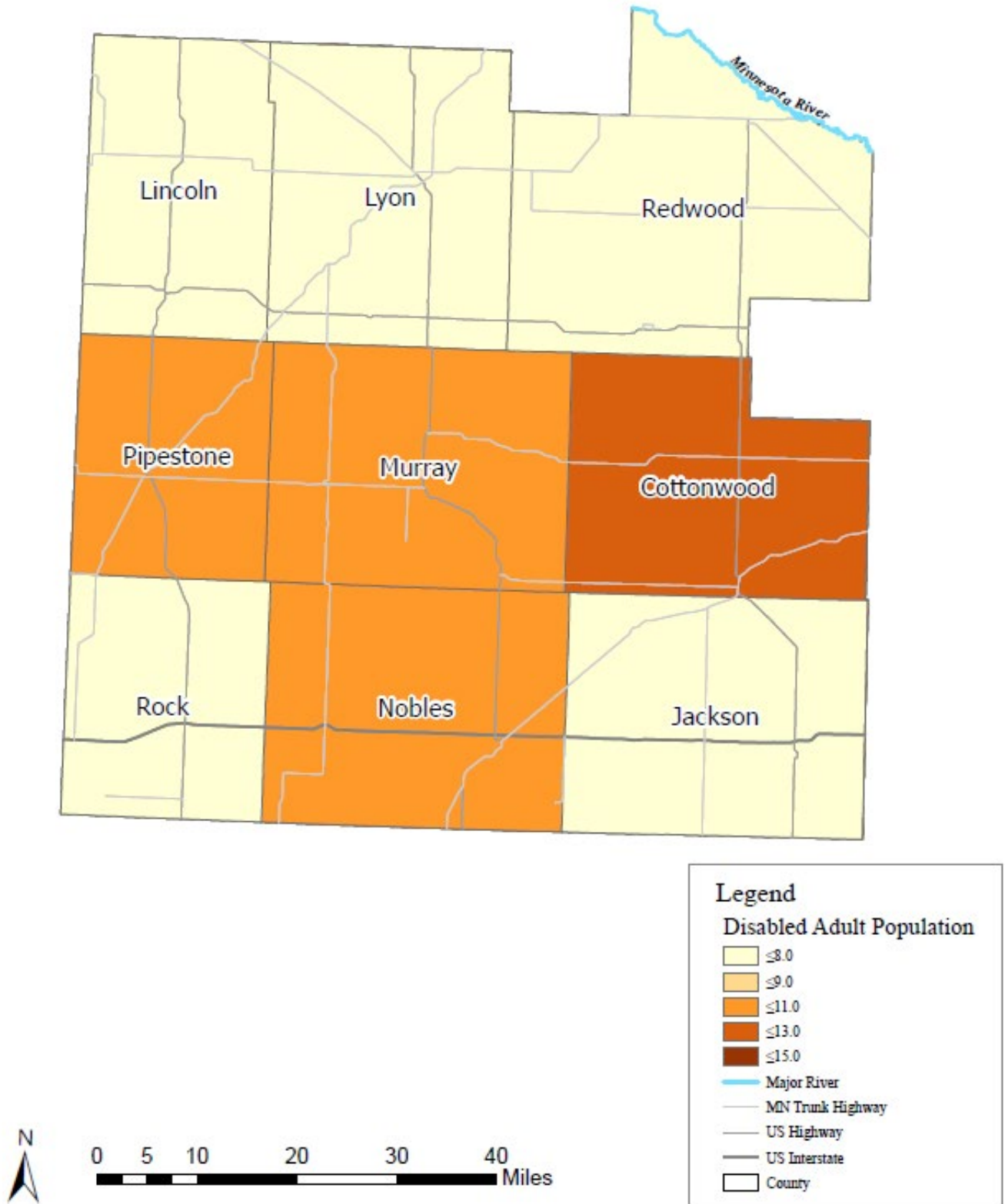
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 8: Senior Population with a Disability in Region 8

Legend

Disabled Senior Population

- ≤26.0
- ≤29.0
- ≤31.5
- ≤34.0
- ≤39.5
- Major River
- MN Trunk Highway
- US Highway
- US Interstate
- County
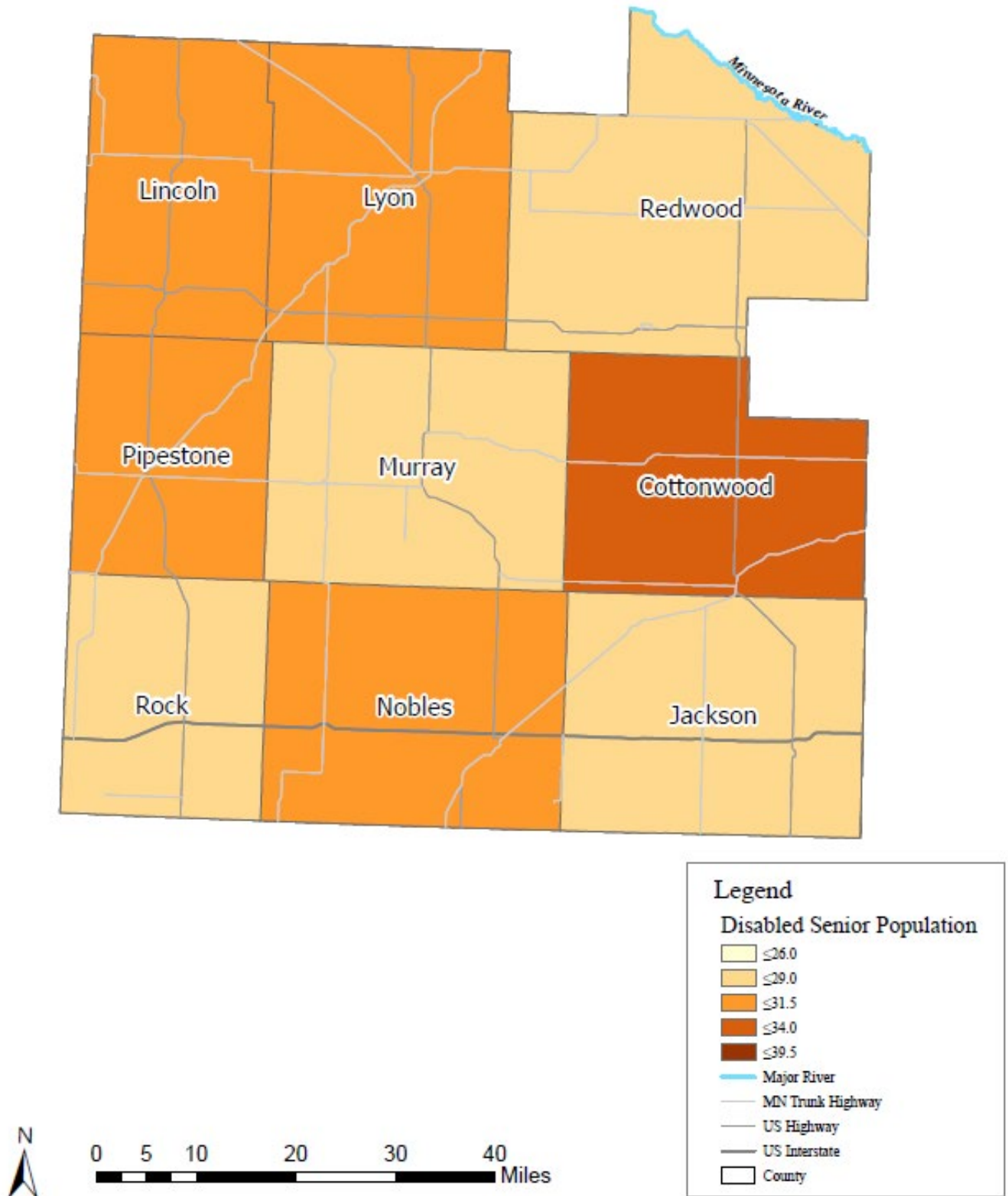
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

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 living below the poverty level. Table 10 below shows the population of individuals living below the poverty level per county, and the percent that population represents of the total. Tables 11-13 describe this population in more detail by showing county populations for youth, adults, seniors, and individuals below poverty.

People impacted by poverty make-up around 11.4% of the region's population according to the 2019 ACS estimates. Lyon County had the highest poverty rate at 14.1% followed by Nobles at 13.6%. Counties with the lowest poverty rates were Murray at 7.1% seconded by Jackson at 7.9%. When looking at poverty rates by age group, the trends for the counties follow youth, adults, and seniors in poverty. The age group most likely to experience poverty in the region were youth (17 years and younger) with 14.7% under the poverty level, followed by Seniors (65 years and older) at 8.9% Adults (18-64 years) at 8.7%.

Table 10: Population Below Poverty Level

County	Total Population	Population Below Poverty Level	Percent of Total
Cottonwood	11,299	1,243	11.0%
Jackson	9,954	786	7.9%
Lincoln	5,677	619	10.9%
Lyon	25,758	3,632	14.1%
Murray	8,296	589	7.1%
Nobles	21,734	2,956	13.6%
Pipestone	9,191	1,075	11.7%
Redwood	15,261	1,541	10.1%
Rock	9,402	846	9.0%
Region	**116,572**	**13,287**	**11.4%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 11: Youth Below Poverty Level (17 Years and Younger)

County	Total Youth	Youth Below Poverty Level	Percent of Total
Cottonwood	2,744	299	10.9%
Jackson	2,149	213	9.9%
Lincoln	1,320	168	12.7%
Lyon	6,556	1,206	18.4%
Murray	1,781	132	7.4%
Nobles	5,905	1,134	19.2%
Pipestone	2,345	361	15.4%
Redwood	3,707	489	13.2%
Rock	2,395	244	10.2%
Region	**28,902**	**4,246**	**14.7%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 12: Adults Below Poverty Level (18 to 64 Years)

County	Total Adults	Adults Below Poverty Level	Percent of Total
Cottonwood	5,987	665	11.1%
Jackson	5,653	492	8.7%
Lincoln	2,959	287	9.7%
Lyon	15,216	2,009	13.2%
Murray	4,412	322	7.3%
Nobles	21,168	1,419	11.5%
Pipestone	12,341	534	10.8%
Redwood	4,943	850	10.2%
Rock	8,336	432	8.4%
Region	**81,015**	**7,010**	**8.7%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 13: Seniors Below Poverty Level (65 Years and Over)

County	Total Seniors	Seniors Below Poverty Level	Percent of Total
Cottonwood	2,568	277	10.8%
Jackson	2,152	73	3.4%
Lincoln	1,398	162	11.6%
Lyon	3,986	415	10.4%
Murray	2,103	137	6.5%
Nobles	3,488	394	11.3%
Pipestone	1,903	179	9.4%
Redwood	3,218	206	6.4%
Rock	1,866	170	9.1%
Region	**22,682**	**2,013**	**8.9%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 9: Total Population Below Poverty Level in Region

Legend — Total in Poverty:
- ≤7.0
- ≤9.5
- ≤12.0
- ≤14.5
- ≤23.0
- Major River
- MN Trunk Highway
- US Highway
- US Interstate
- County
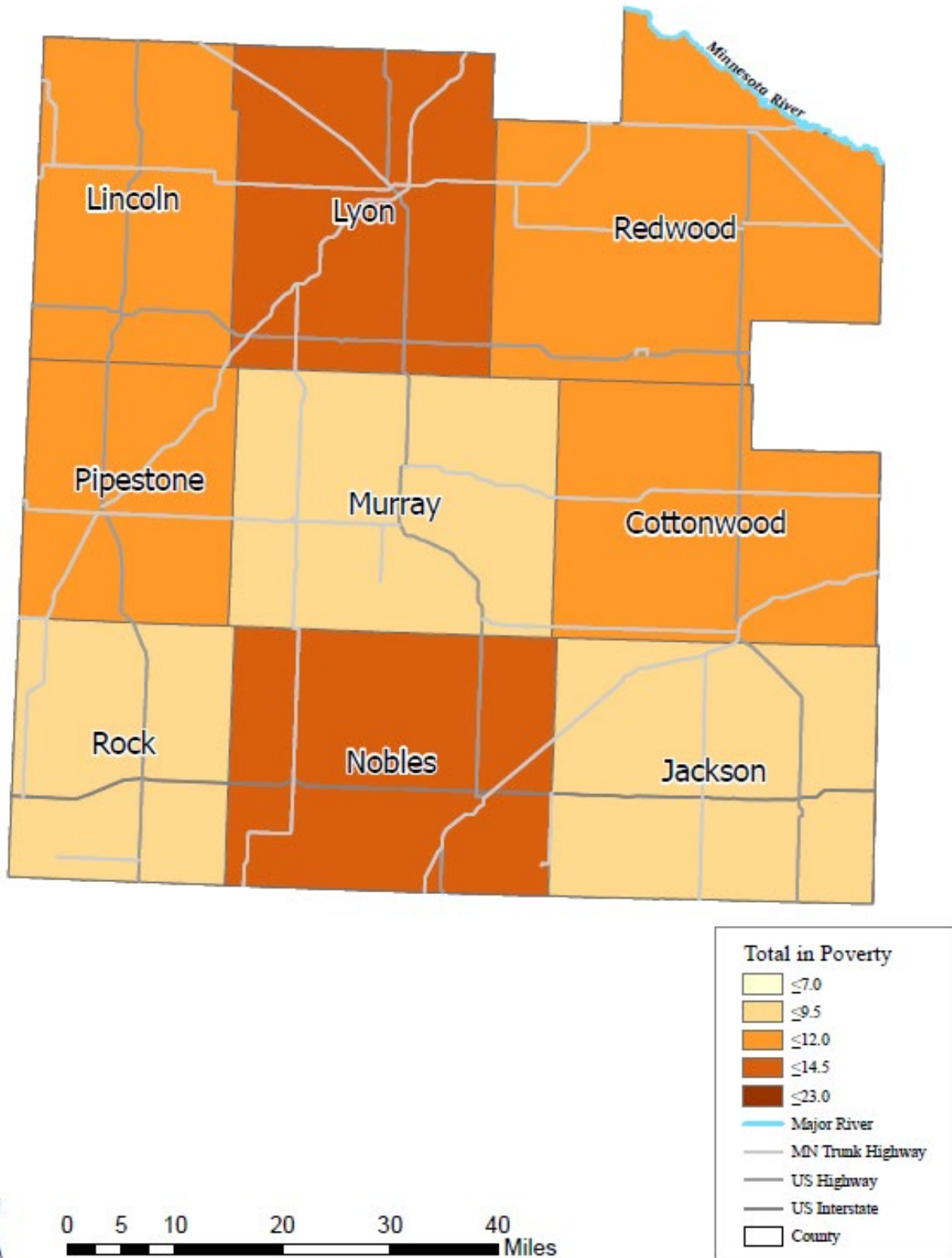
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 10: Youth Population Below Poverty Level in Region

Youth in Poverty

	≤7.5
	≤11.0
	≤14.5
	≤21.0
	≤34.0
	Major River
	MN Trunk Highway
	US Highway
	US Interstate
	County
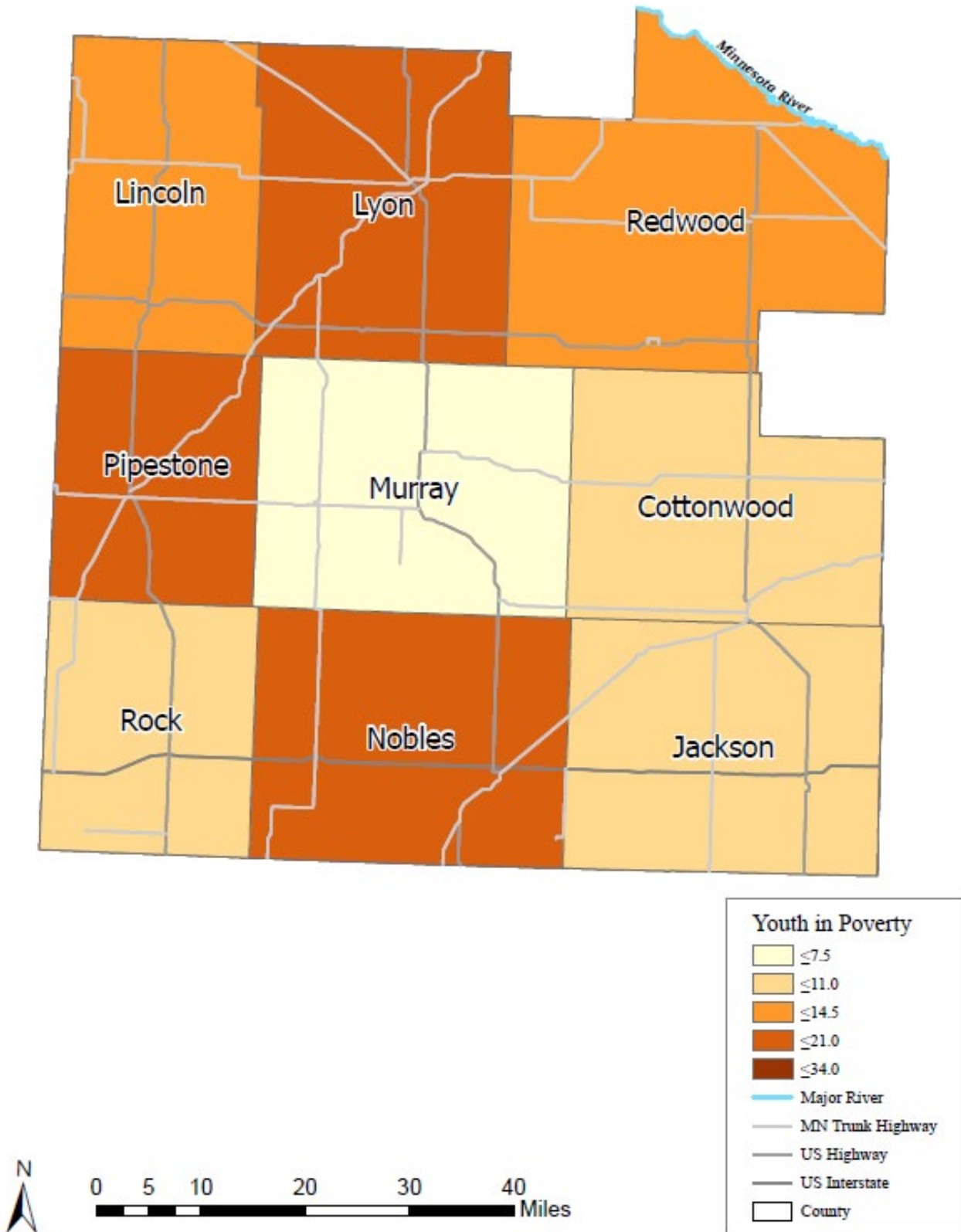
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 11: Adult Population Below Poverty Level in Region

Adults in Poverty
- ≤6.5
- ≤9.0
- ≤11.5
- ≤16.5
- ≤21.5
- Major River
- MN Trunk Highway
- US Highway
- US Interstate
- County
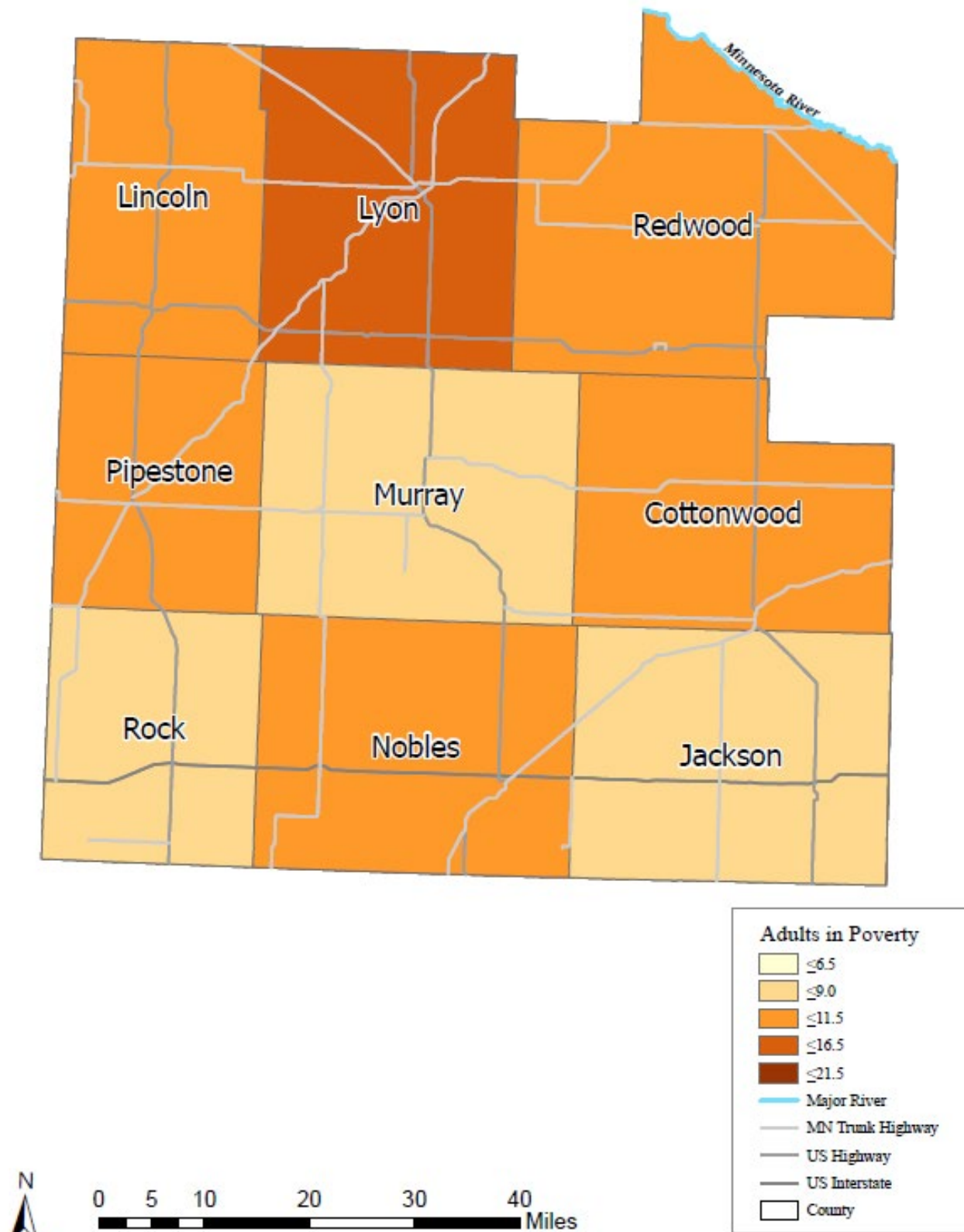
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 12: Senior Population Below Poverty Level in Region

Seniors in Poverty
- ≤1.0
- ≤6.0
- ≤8.5
- ≤11.5
- ≤18.0
- Major River
- MN Trunk Highway
- US Highway
- US Interstate
- County
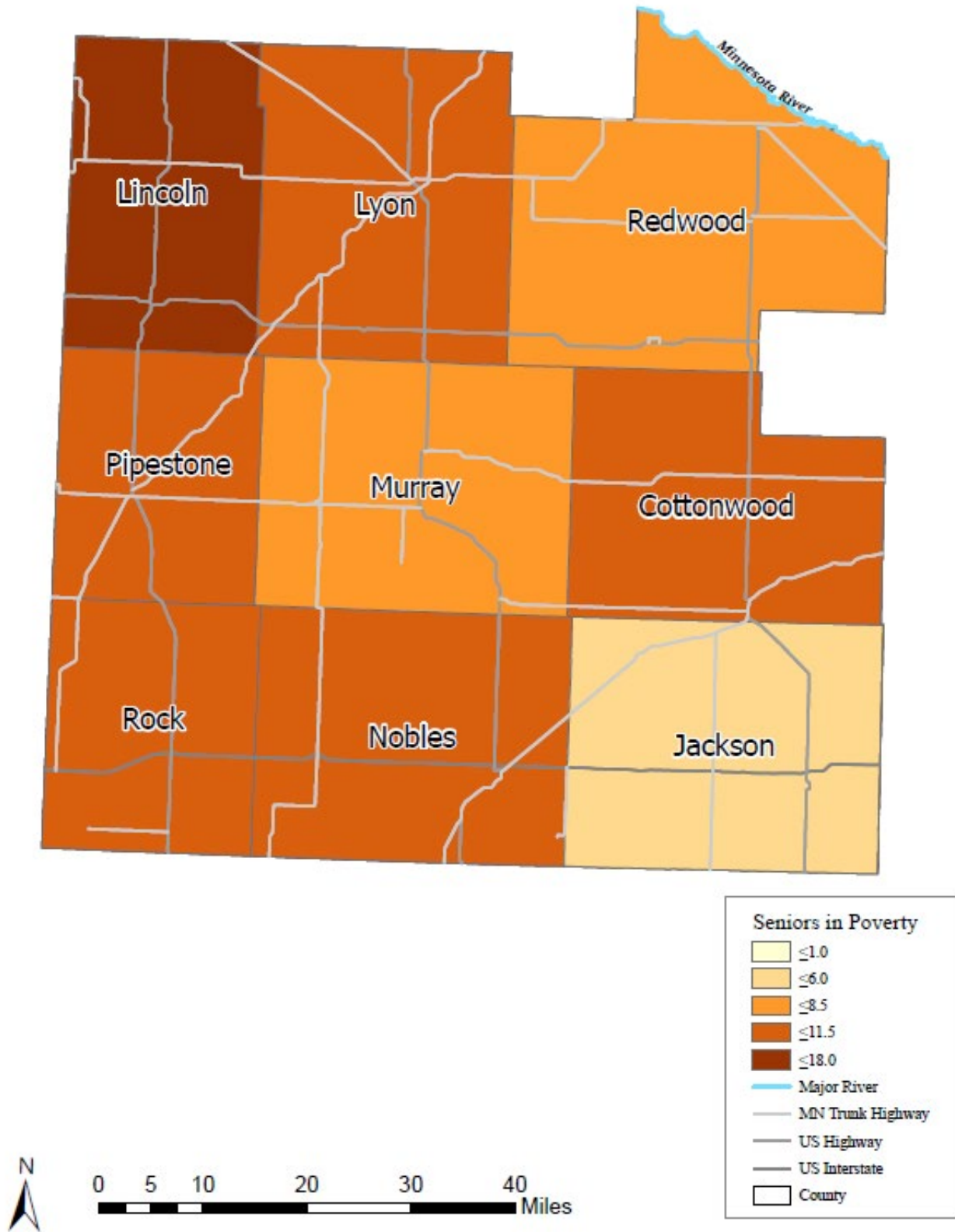
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

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.

For the region, 5.8% of households did not have access to a vehicle. Nobles County is the most affected as 8.1% of household in the county do not have a vehicle. This is especially notable due to fact that the county has the most transit needs and the lowest level of transit services. In Pipestone County, 7.7% of the totals household are without a vehicle followed by Lyon County (which has the highest level of transit service) at 6.4%.

Table 14 shows the number of vehicles per household and the percentage of households that contain zero-vehicles.

Table 14: Zero-Vehicle Households

County	Total Households	Zero Vehicle Households	Percent of Zero Vehicle Households
Cottonwood	4,849	257	5.3%
Jackson	4,472	161	3.6%
Lincoln	2,489	112	4.5%
Lyon	10,078	645	6.4%
Murray	3,600	144	4.0%
Nobles	8,074	654	8.1%
Pipestone	3,961	305	7.7%
Redwood	6,310	366	5.8%
Rock	3,931	114	2.9%
Region	**47,764**	**2758**	**5.8%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 13: Percent of Zero-Vehicle Households in Region

Zero Vehicle Households
- ≤3.5
- ≤5.0
- ≤6.0
- ≤7.5
- ≤10.0
- Major River
- MN Trunk Highway
- US Highway
- US Interstate
- County
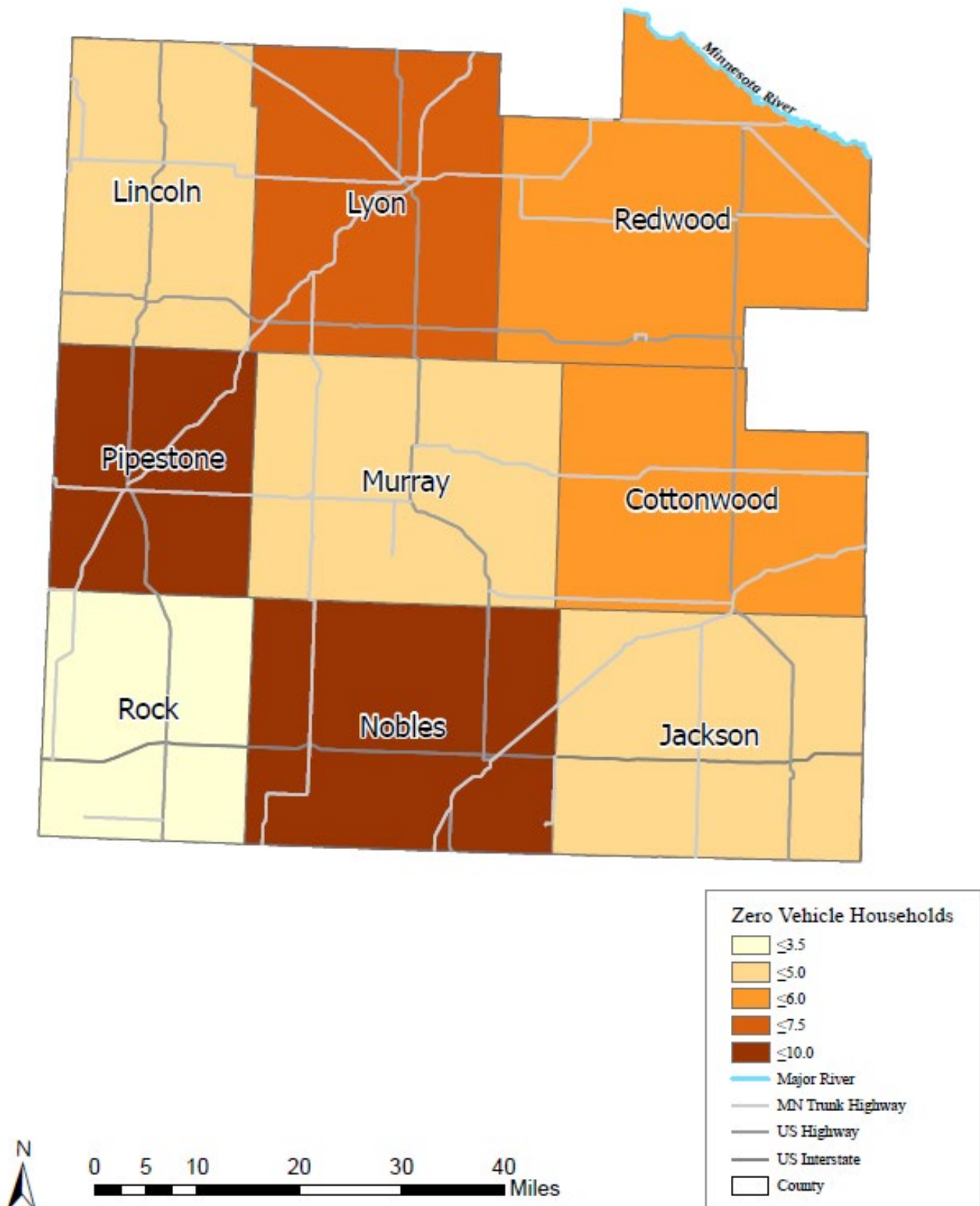
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Communities of Color

For the region, 88.4% of the population is considered white. Lincoln and Rock counties had the highest percentage of white population at 97.5 and 96.4% each. The counties with the most non-white populations was Nobles County. Nobles County has the highest percentage of Black or African Americans (4.3%), Asians (6.9%), and Other Races (7.8%). Ethnicity wise, the Nobles County population includes 27.8% of people considered Hispanic or Latino.

Redwood County had the highest percentage of people considered to be American Indian or Native at 5.0%. This is due to the Lower Sioux Native American Community in nearby Morton. Pipestone County has the highest percentage of people of two or more races.

Table 15: Population by Race and Ethnicity

County	White/ Caucasian	Black/ African American	Asian	American Indian/ Native	Other Race	Two or More Races	Hispanic/ Latino
Cottonwood	89.40%	0.95%	3.98%	0.1%	4.0%	1.4%	7.7%
Jackson	94.5%	0.4%	2.1%	0.0%	1.3%	1.7%	3.6%
Lincoln	97.5%	0.4%	0.2%	0.6%	0.2%	1.1%	2.1%
Lyon	86.2%	3.5%	4.3%	0.4%	3.9%	1.8%	6.9%
Murray	96.5%	0.4%	1.6%	0.3%	0.4%	1.0%	4.0%
Nobles	77.8%	4.3%	6.9%	0.7%	7.8%	2.6%	27.8%
Pipestone	92.1%	1.3%	0.2%	1.9%	1.7%	3.0%	6.9%
Redwood	88.0%	0.8%	2.7%	5.0%	1.8%	1.7%	3.5%
Rock	96.4%	0.9%	1.1%	0.3%	0.2%	1.0%	3.2%
Region	**88.4%**	**2.0%**	**3.4%**	**1.1%**	**3.2%**	**1.8%**	**9.4%**

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 14: Percent Minority Population in Region

Minority Population
- ≤4.5
- ≤7.5
- ≤12.5
- ≤22.0
- ≤53.0
- Major River
- MN Trunk Highway
- US Highway
- US Interstate
- County
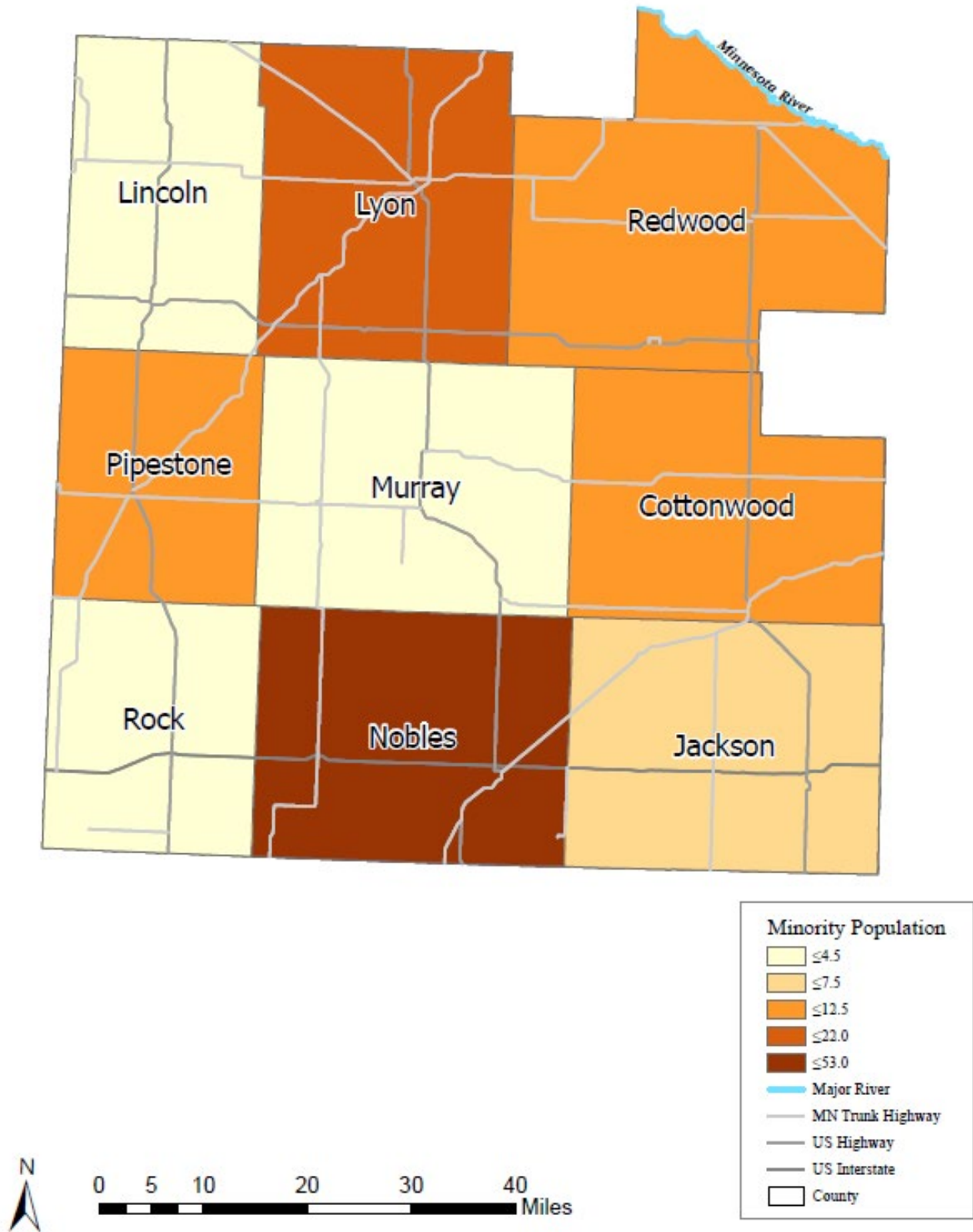
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Communities with Non-English Language Preferences

Ensuring a level of services that is equitable for the region goes beyond providing transit services to and from popular destinations. It included dissemination of information regarding routes, times, additional services, and ways to access transit service. By looking into the populations in the region with limited English proficiency transit providers can prioritized and assess the language barriers and needs to some of their most dependent clients. Nobles County has the most non-English speakers (11.8%) with a notable difference between it and Lyon County which had the second-highest proportion of non-English speakers (5.3%).

Table 16: Communities with Non-English Language Preferences

County	Total Population	Percent of Limited English Speakers
Cottonwood	11,372	1.7%
Jackson	10,047	0.8%
Lincoln	5,707	0.2%
Lyon*	25,758	5.3%
Murray	8,353	2.0%
Nobles*	21,734	11.8%
Pipestone	9,185	3.2%
Redwood	15,331	0.5%
Rock	9,413	0.4%

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 15: Percent Non-English Language Preference Population in Region

Lincoln
Lyon
Redwood

Pipestone
Murray
Cottonwood

Rock
Nobles
Jackson

Minnesota River

Limited English Speakers
- ≤0.35
- ≤2.36
- ≤12.00
- No Data
- Major River
- MN Trunk Highway
- US Highway
- US Interstate
- County

N

0 5 10 20 30 40
Miles
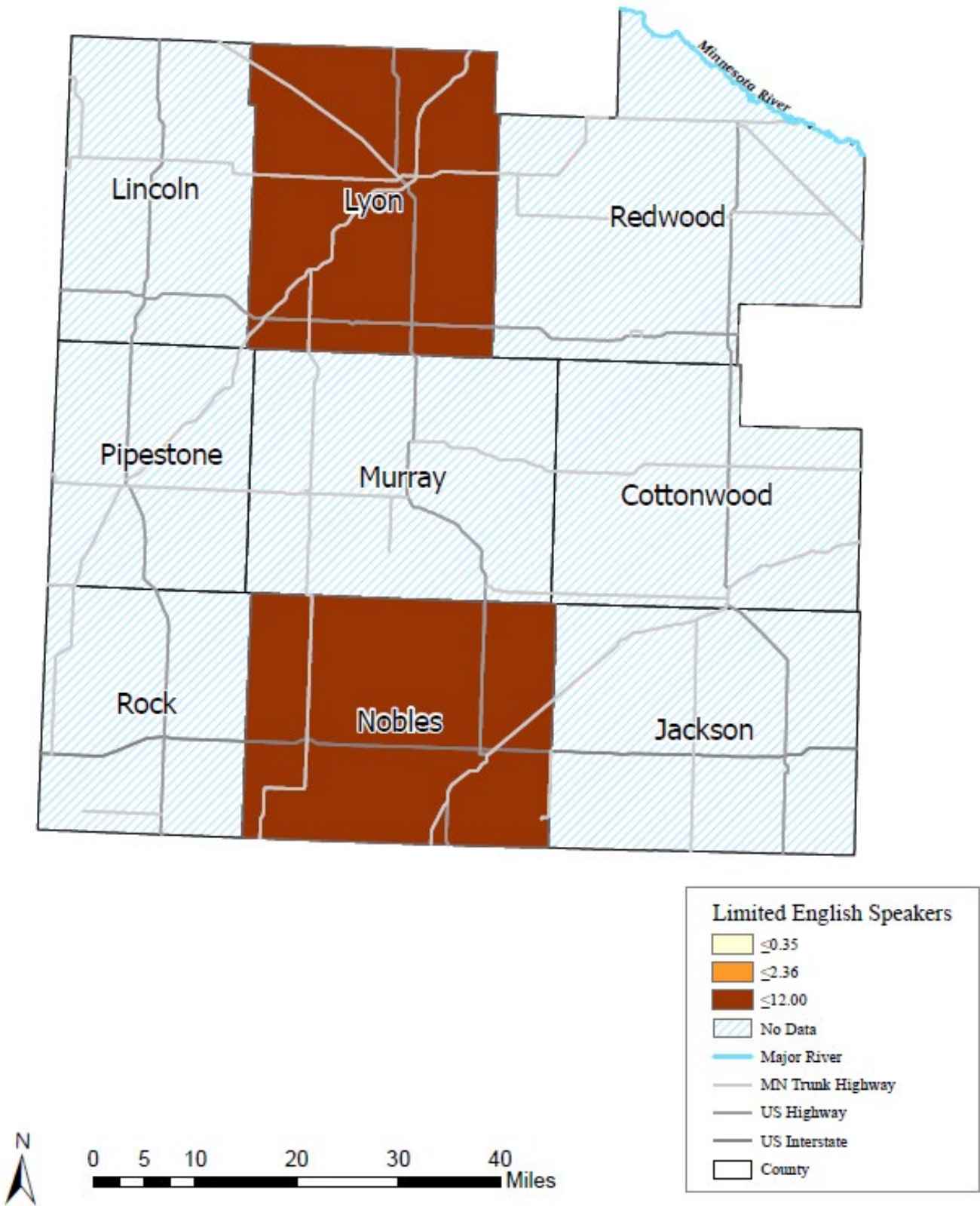
Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Economic Conditions

As of 2018, Region 8 had an estimated population of 116,910 and made up approximately 2.1% of the State of Minnesota population. The region experienced consistent growth until it hit its peak in 1960 at 149,268. Since then, Region 8 has experienced population loss. Population growth was stagnant from 1940-1960 at .04%. Since then, the regional population has declined, with the period of greatest population loss being between the years of 1980-1990 when the region's population decreased by 13,680 or 10.0%.

Taking a closer look at the Region's population since 2000 gives one a better insight on recent trends in population loss/gain. Since 2000, population in Region 8 has decreased by a total of 4,679 or 3.9%. There was a slight increase in regional population from 2009 to 2010 of 3,324 (2.9%). Since then, Population in Region 8 has been decreasing at an average annual rate of 0.2%.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population projections are provided on a county level for selected age categories by the Minnesota Demographic Center. According to these projections the region's population loss is slated to stabilize by 2050. By 2050, the regional population is projected to decrease to 109,126 or 6.9%. Most of the region's population is between the ages of 25–44-year-old at 23.6%. The second largest age cohort are those that are 65 years or older (23.1%). The Minnesota Demographic Center projects that those of retirement age will increase in percentage of the total population until 2030, when they are projected to make-up 25.9% of the total population in the region. They are then projected to decrease to 23.1% in 2050. The 15–24-year-old cohort (High school and young adults) comprised 12.2% of the total population in 2018 and is projected to increase in percentage until 2040 when they are estimated to peak at 14.5%. This age cohort is then expected to decrease to 11.7% by 2040 and increase to 13.4% by 2050. This will be an overall increase of 1.2% from, 2018-2050. Youth under 15 years old (typically children completely dependent on their head of household) made up 20.7% of the population in 2018 and this cohort is projected to decrease until 2030 when it is estimated to dip to 16.7%. By 2050, the 15 and younger cohort is projected to make up 18.3%, an overall decrease of 2.4% since 2018. The two main income earning cohorts (those aged 25—44 years and 45-64 years old) have opposite growth patterns. In 2018, those aged 25-44 and 45-64 years old made up 22.2% and 25.8% of the total population, respectively. By 2015, it is projected that the 25-44 and 45-64 cohorts will make up 23.6% and 21.6% of the total population. Combined, these main income earners expect to decline and overall make up 1.8% of the population by 2050.

Current Employment

According to 2018 ACS 5-year estimates[1], the education and health care sector employs the largest proportion of Region 8's (22.6%), the state of Minnesota's (25.2%) and the United States' (23.1%). workforce. Manufacturing is the second most common sector of employment for Region 8 at 16.8 percent and for Minnesota at 13.4 percent. On the national level, the professional and management sector is the second largest area of employment at 11.4 percent, closely followed by retail trade at 11.3

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1. Throughout this plan 2019 ACS 5-year estimates are utilized as they are available. During the time that the plan was being written, the most up-to date data on employment was from the 2018 ACS5-year estimates. This information is not anticipated to have experience a significant change between 2018 and 2022.

percent. The agricultural, forestry and hunting sector accounted for 9.9 percent of employment in the SRDC region. This out paces the state and national levels which employ 2.1 percent and 1.8 percent, respectively. The information sector employs the smallest proportion of employees for Region 8 (.08%), State of Minnesota (1.7%) and the United States 2.1%.

Table 17: Employment by Industry in Region, Minnesota, and U.S., 2018

Industry	Region 8		Minnesota		United States	
	Employment	Distribution	Employment	Distribution	Employment	Distribution
Total Industry	58,868		2,931,458		152,739,884	
Agriculture	5,837	9.9%	62,944	2.1%	2,793,463	1.8%
Construction	4,193	7.1%	173,411	5.9%	9,874,923	6.5%
Manufacturing	9,916	16.8%	392,925	13.4%	15,550,889	10.2%
Wholesale Trade	1,910	3.2%	84,129	2.9%	4,025,876	2.6%
Retail trade	6,652	11.3%	323,381	11.0%	17,240,297	11.3%
Transportation Warehousing	2,779	4.7%	134,249	4.6%	7,984,110	5.2%
Information	493	0.8%	50,572	1.7%	3,164,287	2.1%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	3,087	5.2%	208,236	7.1%	10,015,304	6.6%
Professional/ Scientific	2,481	4.2%	287,073	9.8%	17,455,119	11.4%
Education & Health Care	13,325	22.6%	740,013	25.2%	35,293,449	23.1%
Arts/Entertainment	3,919	6.7%	245,435	8.4%	14,800,927	9.7%
Other Services, Including Public Administration	4,276	4.0%	229,090	7.8%	7,461,333	4.9%

Source: 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Employment Status

Unemployment within Region 8 peaked in 2010 at 6.0% while Minnesota's peaked at 7.8% in 2009, with the US peaking at 9.6% in 2010. Region 8 peaked in its unemployment rate when the labor force was 66,572. This is the second largest labor force in Region 8 since 2010. The Regions labor force peaked in 2011 at 66,627 with an unemployment rate of 5.5%. From 2010 to 2013, unemployment rates decreased to the lowest seen so far at 3.0%. Unemployment rates slightly increased (3.0%-4.1%) from 2013-2015. This 1.1% increase was paired with the second largest labor force since 2000. The exceptions to this trend were the years 2003 and 2004, 2008 thru 2013 and 2016. In general, Region 8 is largely resistant to changes in unemployment that impact Minnesota and the United States as a whole. Typically, unemployment rates within Region 8 are below the state and national average with few exceptions and the rates of changes are less volatile in Region 8 than the state of Minnesota and the United States as a whole.

Table 18: Unemployment Rates for the Region, Minnesota & U.S. 2000-2019
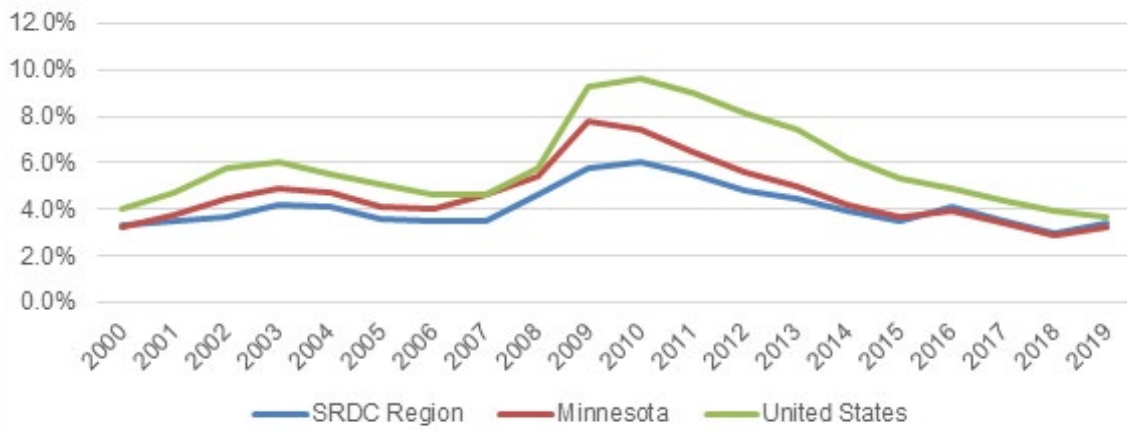
Local Area Unemployment Statistics, MN DEED

Mobility Today

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

Key employment destinations are where the larger employers are located: Worthington, Marshall, Jackson, Pipestone, Edgerton, Windom, and Chandler. Workers commute from surrounding areas to those locations. Commuting is often in a single vehicle or a non-formal shared ride/carpool. There are many small employers both in communities and scattered throughout the rural areas that people commute to. When workforce availability issues became a hardship for three employers in the Southwest Region, they hired buses to drive employees to and from work from nearby counties and states (Sioux Falls, South Dakota to Worthington, Marshall to Wabasso and Worthington to Chandler).

Shopping, including Grocery Stores and Supermarkets

Region 8's shopping hubs are Marshall, Worthington, Jackson, Windom, Redwood Falls, and Pipestone, serving smaller retail regions. Beyond Region 8, major retail and shopping center destinations are Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Spirit Lake, Iowa, Mankato, Rochester, Willmar, St. Cloud, and the Twin Cities. Marshall, Pipestone, Luverne, Slayton, Worthington, Windom, Jackson, and Redwood Falls have supermarket access, but a vast area of the Region is not within 10 miles of a supermarket. This low retail access in rural settings is a problem for minorities, elderly, and low-income residents in accessing fresh, healthy foods.

Education and Higher Education

There are 32 school districts within the region that serve approx. 28,902 students. In some instances, elementary and/or high schools have closed due to declining enrollments and with those closures comes the necessity for students to travel farther to school. Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, and Minnesota West Community and Technical College facilities are destinations because students often commute to these schools, which are located in Pipestone, Worthington, and Jackson with satellites in Redwood Falls, Marshall and Luverne.

Public Services

These destinations, typically in county seats, are often destinations to go to in order to obtain driver's licenses, access public health, human services and other county programs, attend court and more.

Medical Care

Outpatient care centers, hospitals, family doctors, dentists and therapy services can be found throughout the region, however, specialists are clustered between Marshall and Worthington. Due to the lack of providers in the region, patients are often referred to Sioux Falls for specialty care or to avoid waiting months for preventative care.

LIST OF HUMAN SERVICE PROGRAM PROVIDERS IMPACTED BY TRANSPORTATION

Table 19: List of Human Service Providers Impacted by Transportation

Agency	Service Provided	Phone Number	Website
Southwest Health and Human Services	Help with transportation payment and/or scheduling for people on qualifying programs or waivers.	888-837-6713	https://swmhhs.com/
Southwest Center for Independent Living (SWCIL)	Offers services for individuals, businesses, and communities to serve with and responding to the changing needs of the people with disabilities.	507-532-2221	https://www.swcil.com/
Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services	Help with transportation payment and/or scheduling for people on qualifying programs or waivers.	N/A	https://www.dvhhs.org/
Minnesota Ride Link	Minnesota Ride Link provides quick and easy information about transportation services by linking veterans, military families, and others to a single source of information for trips in their local area. Uses MN Help.	651-602-5465	http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/minnesota-ride/
Salvation Army	Help for people in need, including one-time financial assistance for basic needs, including transportation.	507-326-5017	https://centralusa.salvationarmy.org/northern/southwestern-minnesota-service-extension/
Senior LinkAge Line®	Talk to an expert about resources for persons 60 and older	800-333-2433	https://mn.gov/senior-linkage-line/
UCare Health Ride	Medical transportation scheduling and payment for people with qualifying UCare plans	N/A	https://home.ucare.org/en-us/health-wellness/health-ride/
Blue Ride	Medical transportation scheduling and payment for people with qualifying Blue Cross Blue Shield plans	507-326-5017	https://www.bluecrossmn.com/shop-plans/minnesota-health-care-programs/blueride-transportation
PrimeWest Health	Medical transportation scheduling and payment for people with qualifying PrimeWest plans	800-333-2433	https://www.primewest.org/
United Way	Community Resource Specialists to get connected to community health and social services in your area.	800-864-2157	https://www.unitedwayswmn.org/

Agency	Service Provided	Phone Number	Website
BlueRide Transportation	Veterans can link to an expert to help them find resources.	866-340-8648	https://www.bluecrossmn.com/members/shop-plans/minnesota-health-care-programs/blueride-transportation
United Community Action Partnership	Programs to help prevent homelessness and gain self-sufficiency.	888-588-4420	www.unitedcapmn.org
Southwest MN Opportunity Council	Programs to help prevent homelessness and gain self-sufficiency.	507-376-4195	http://www.smoc.us/
Disability Hub MN	People with disabilities can link to an expert to help them find resources	888-546-5838	https://disabilityhubmn.org/
Career Force	Resources to help people gain and maintain employment.	507-537-1416	https://www.careerforcemn.com/marshall
Southwest Health and Human Services	Help with transportation payment and/or scheduling for people on qualifying programs or waivers.	507-376-4195	https://swmhhs.com/
Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services	Help with transportation payment and/or scheduling for people on qualifying programs or waivers.	866-333-2466	https://www.dvhhs.org/

N/A= Not Applicable

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 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.

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 our area. Staff along with assistance from the Southwest Minnesota Regional Transit Coordination Council reached out to area providers to obtain the following information:

- Number of program participants
- How often the program meets
- The number of weeks per year the program is offered
- The proportion of program participants who attend the program

During outreach, many programs and agencies either did not have counts of people they served or didn't track who was and was not transit dependent. Transit demand estimates utilize information gathered from regional agencies and organizations. The information provided below is not a comprehensive representation of the programs in the region or the proportion of participants that are transit dependent. For calculation purposes, transit-dependent participants are derived by multiplying total participants by the average percentage of zero-vehicle households in the region (5.4%) and rounding the answer to the nearest whole number. For programs whose calculated transit-depended participants were less than 0.5, the "one "was entered rather than zero. Total transit demand depicted below is by far an underestimate of the total demand in the region and intended to act as a starting point for future analysis.

Events per year are equal to the number of locations that offer special programs and services multiplied by the number of times those programs and services are available. Total trip demand is then calculated by multiplying the number of transit-dependent participants, by the number of times these agencies and organizations offer their services in a year. Total trip demand is then doubled to account for rides needed to attend and return from these events.

The program-related demand for transit is 22,462 rides in the region. The remainder of this section is a breakdown of the transit demand derived from the local services and agencies.

Action Steps called out at the end of the plan include creating partnerships with those agencies and organizations that offer these programs with the intent to have a better understanding of not only their client's needs but how these partnerships can collaborate in the future.

Senior Centers (Weekly Programs)

Nineteen senior centers offer weekly re-occurring programs such as meals and other events. Each one attracts an average of fifty participants a week. Of these participants, one (5.4%) is estimated to come from a zero-vehicle household. These Senior Centers offer their weekly programs an average of 50 weeks out of the year, which equals 950 events in the region.

- Number of Locations: 19
- Average number of Participants per Event: 50
- Average Transit Dependent Participants: 3
- Events per year: 950
- Total Trip Demand: 2,850
- Trip Demand Doubled: 5,700

Senior Centers (Special Programs)

In addition to the reoccurring programs, senior centers offer at least one special programs or event that differs from their weekly programming. These special programs attract an average of twenty participants. Of these participants, 1 (5.4%) is estimated to come from a zero-vehicle household. These special programs are offered at each location at least once a month which equals 228 total events.

- Number of Locations: 19
- Average number of Participants per Event: 20
- Average Transit Dependent Participants: 1
- Total Events per year: 228
- Total Trip Demand: 288
- Trip Demand Doubled: 576

A.C.E. Programs

The A.C.E. (Advocate, Connect, and Education) program in Southwest Minnesota offers services and resources that enable adults to live safely and independently for as long as possible. Evidence-based classes are offered throughout the region excluding Jackson and Lincoln County. Each of these classes attracts an average of ten participants. Of these participants, 1 (5.4%) is estimated to come from a zero-vehicle households. In each of these counties, an average of four programs are offered each year. Each of these programs meets twice a week and last about seven weeks. Calculating the total events per year entails multiplying four figures, the average number of programs offered each year (four), the number of times each class meets every week (two), the average length of each class (seven weeks), and the number of counties where classes are offered (seven).

- Number of Locations: 7
- Average number of Participants per Event: 10
- Transit Dependent Participants: 1
- Total Events per year: 392
- Total Trip Demand: 392
- Trip Demand Doubled: 786

A.C.E. Programs in Lincoln County

In addition to the services noted in the A.C.E. programs noted above, three communities offer classes in Lincoln County. These classes attract an average of ten participants. Of these participants, two (5.4%) are estimated to come from zero-vehicle households. All three locations meet at least twice a week, year-round (52 weeks) equaling 312 events per year.

- Average number of Participants per Event: 30
- Transit Dependent Participants: 2
- Total Events per year: 312
- Total Trip Demand: 624
- Trip Demand Doubled: 1,248

Food Shelves in the Region

Food shelves help provide food and some household necessities such as toilet paper, hygiene products, and infant care items. Typically, households visit these locations once a week, but others may offer services on a different schedule.

Twenty-two food shelves in the region serve an average of seventy-five families each. Of these participants, four (5.4%) are estimated to come from zero-vehicle households. Households typically visit these locations, once a week, year-round (52 weeks) equaling 1,144 events per year.

- Average number of Participants per Event: 75
- Transit Dependent Participants: 4
- Total Events per year: 1,144
- Total Trip Demand: 4,576
- Trip Demand Doubled: 9,152

Head Start

Head Start is an early childhood education program for eligible children whose household income is equal to or below the poverty level, who are eligible for public assistance, are homeless, or are in foster care. There are ten Head Start programs in the region. Each of these programs serves an average of five families. Of those households, one is estimated to have zero access to vehicles. Each Head Start (ten) hosts an estimated twenty programs/events each month totaling 2,400 events per year.

- Average number of Participants per Event: 5
- Transit Dependent Participants: 1
- Total Events per year: 2,400
- Total Trip Demand: 2,400
- Trip Demand Doubled: 4,800

SWCIL

SWCIL (Southwest Center for Independent Living) is dedicated to working with and responding to the needs of persons with disabilities in Southwest Minnesota. SWCIL hosts ten programs and services a year which attracts ten participants at an event.

- Average number of Participants per Event: 10
- Transit Dependent Participants: 1
- Total Events per year: 100
- Total Trip Demand: 100
- Trip Demand Doubled: 200

Table 20: Program Transit Demand

Program	Senior Centers (Weekly)	Senior Centers (Special)	A.C.E. Programs	A.C.E Classes (Lincoln Co)	Food Shelves	Head Start	SWCIL
Number of Locations	19	19	7	3	22	10	10
Participants per Event	50	20	10	30	75	5	10
Transit Dependent Participants	3	1	1	2	4	1	1
Total Events Per Year	950	228	392	312	1,144	2,400	100
Total Trip Demand	2,850	288	392	624	4,576	2,400	100
Trip Demand Doubled	5,700	576	786	1,248	9,152	4,800	200

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The following information is based on tabulations from survey and interview results. A total of 57 organizations provided information about their services.

List of Transportation Services by Provider Type

Table 21: Public Transportation Services

Provider	Address	Phone	Website	Service Provided	Service Area	Eligibility Requirements
United Community Action Partnership Community Transit	1400 S Saratoga ST., Marshall, MN 56258	507-847-2632: Cottonwood, Jackson & Murray Counties 507-537-7628: Lincoln, Lyon & Redwood Counties 507-825-1180: Pipestone County 507-283-5058: Rock County	www.community transitswmn.org	Dial-a-ride, Flexible fixed route	Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock Counties	Open to Public
Prairieland Transit System- Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc.	1106 3rd Ave PO Box 787 Worthington, MN 56187	507-376-3322	www.smoc.us/ prairielandtransit. html	Dial-a-ride, Flexible fixed route	Nobles County	Open to Public

Table 22: Day Training & Habilitation Transportation Services

Provider	Address	Phone	Website	Service Provided	Service Area	Eligibility Requirements
Advance Opportunities	1401 Peterson St., Marshall, MN 56258	507-537-7018	https://www.advanceopp.org/	Rides to job sites	Entire Region	Client of Agency
Cottonwood County DAC	1049 5th St., Windom, MN 56101	507-831-1511	N/A	Rides to job sites	Cottonwood County and the Surrounding Area	Client of Agency
Jackson County DAC	220 Main St., Lakefield, Mn 56101	507 662-6156	www.jacksoncountydac.com/	Rides to job sites	Jackson County	Client of Agency
Service Enterprises	515 W Bridge St. PO Box 248, Redwood Falls, MN 56283 700 N 7th St. PO Box 94 Marshall, MN 56258	Redwood Falls: 507-637-3259 Marshall: 507-532-1094	http://www.service-enterprises.org/index.html	Rides to job sites	Redwood, Lyon Lincoln, Pipestone, and Murray Counties. Services Enterprises also serves the southern portion of Renville County	Client of Agency
Nobles County DAC (linked with MRCI)	2121 Nobles St., Worthington, MN 56187	(507) 372-7619	N/A	Rides to job sites	Nobles County	Client of Agency
Hope DAC	330 E Highway 14, Tyler, MN 56178	507-247-5340	https://www.advanceopp.org/	Rides to job sites	Tyler and the surrounding Areas	Client of Agency
Rock County Opportunities	807 West Main St., Luverne, MN 56156	507-283-4582	https://www.rockcountyopp.com/	Rides to job sites	Rock County	Client of Agency

Table 23: Private Provider Transportation Services

Provider	Address	Phone	Website	Service Provided	Service Area	Eligibility Requirements
Cottonwood Ambulance	100 W 2nd St Cottonwood, MN 56229	507-423-6488	www.cityof cottonwoodmn. com	Emergency medical transportation	Region-wide	N/A
Tyler Bus Service	201 E Highway 14, Tyler, MN 56178	507-247-5866	Https://www. medi-van.org/ home/3163823	Dial-A-Ride, non-emergency medical transportation	Region-wide	Disabled or Elderly
Medi-Van	103 Lake St. Worthington, MN 56187	218-847-1729 800-422-0976	https://www. medi-van.org/	Dial-A-Ride, non-emergency medical transportation	Region-wide	Disabled or Elderly
People's Express INC	15578 shady Acres Dr. Wadena, MN 56482	800-450-0123; 218-631-2909	https://peoples expressmn.com/	Dial-A-ride, non-emergency medical transportation	Redwood county and surrounding areas	Disabled or Elderly
Handi-van	33206 County Road 19 Morton, MN 56270	507-697-6203	http://www. handivanrides. com/	Dial-A-ride, non-emergency medical transportation	Region-wide	Disabled, Elderly or Special Needs
Handi-van	1836 3rd Ave. Rochester, MN 55904	855-268-2539	Https://www. bluemound transport.com/	Dial-A-Ride, non-emergency medical transportation	Region-wide	Disabled, Elderly or Special Needs
Blue Mound Transport	Harrisburg, SD	507-449-4646	https://www. readingbusline. com	Charter	Region-wide	Open to Public
Reading bus line	9771 McCall Ave., Reading, MN 56165	507-926-5404	Https:// swtourandtravel. com/	Charter and school bus	Region-wide	Open to Public

Provider	Address	Phone	Website	Service Provided	Service Area	Eligibility Requirements
Southwest Tour & Travel	1500 Travis Road Marshall, MN 56258; 79602 550th Ave Jackson, MN 56143; 1115 E 1st ST., Fairmont, MN 56031	507-532-5536 507-847-2380 507-238-6300	https://www.carecabmn.com/	Dial-A-Ride	Region-wide	Open to Public
Care Cab	2600 7th St., St Cloud, MN 56303	320-253-7729	https://www.carecabmn.com/	Charter	Region-wide	Students and people with disabilities
Thielen Coaches	220 W 11th St., Redwood Falls, MN 56283	507-637-3600	https://thielencoaches.com/	Dial-A-Ride, non-emergency medical transportation, taxi	Region-wide	Open to Public
A2B Transportation	110 Century Ln., Silver Lake, MN, 55381	320-753-6035	https://a2b-transportation.com/	Charter/school bus	Region-wide	Open to Public
Ludolph Bus Service	810 4th Street NW Pipestone, MN 56164	507-825-2303	N/A	Charter	Region-wide	N/A
Jackson City Ambulance	309 Sheridan St., Jackson, MN 56143	507-847-5306	N/A	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Jackson County and surrounding area	Open to Public
Lakefield Ambulance Service	206 Broadway Ave., Lakefield, MN 56150	507-622-5148	N/A	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Jackson County and surrounding area	Open to Public

Provider	Address	Phone	Website	Service Provided	Service Area	Eligibility Requirements
Tyler Ambulance	240 Willow St., Tyler, MN 56178	507-247-5521	N/A	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Lincoln County and surrounding area	Open to Public
Tyler Bus Service	201 E highway 14, Tyler, MN 56178	507-247-5866	N/A	Charter	Region-wide	Open to Public
A2B Transportation	110 Century Ln, Silver Lake, MN, 55381	320-753-6035	N/A	Dial-a-ride, non-emergency medical transportation, taxi	Region-wide	Open to Public
Balaton Fire & Ambulance	100 Lake Ave., Balaton, MN 56115	507-734-4711	N/A	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Lyon County and surrounding area	Varies by trip, bills a variety of sources
Granite Falls Ambulance	345 10th Ave., Granite Falls, MN 56241	320-564-6274	N/A	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Yellow Medicine County and surrounding area	Varies by trip, bills a variety of sources
Tracy Ambulance	105 Center St., Tracy, MN 56175	507-629-3297	N/A	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Lyon County and surrounding area	Varies by trip, bills a variety of sources
North Memorial Ambulance	111 S A St., Marshall, MN 56258	507-537-9677	N/A	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Lyon County and surrounding area	Varies by trip, bills a variety of sources

Provider	Address	Phone	Website	Service Provided	Service Area	Eligibility Requirements
Southwest Transportation	109 S 5th St., Suite 350 Marshall, MN 56258	507-401-0694	http://www.swmntaxi.com/	Dial-a-ride	Marshall-based, travels anywhere	Varies by trip
Reading Bus Line	9771 McCall Ave., Reading, MN 56165	507-926-5404	https://www.readingbusline.com	Charter	Region-wide	Varies by trip and service
Palmer Bus Service	305 E 4th St., Cottonwood, MN 56229	507-423-6080	https://palmerbusservice.com/lakeview/	School bus	Cottonwood, MN	As contracted with school
Marshall Taxi	301 W College Dr., Marshall, MN 56258	507-829-3055	https://marshalltaxi.com/	Dial-a-ride	Marshall-based, travel anywhere	Varies by trip
Fulda Village Ambulance	305 E Front St., Fulda, MN 56131	507-425-2818	N/A	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Murray County and surrounding area	Open to Public
Adrian Volunteer Ambulance Service	310 Maine Ave., Adrian, MN 56110	507-483-2525	N/A	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Nobles County and surrounding area	Open to Public
Worthington Ambulance Service	1018 6th Ave., Worthington, MN 56187	507-372-2941	N/A	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Nobles County and surrounding area	Open to Public

Provider	Address	Phone	Website	Service Provided	Service Area	Eligibility Requirements
Pipestone County Ambulance	811 5th St., Pipestone, MN 56164	507-825-1170	https://www.pipestone-county.com/board/departments_offices/ambulance.php	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Pipestone County and surrounding area	Open to Public
North Ambulance	614 S Mill St., Redwood Falls, MN 56283	507-637-5055	N/A	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation	Redwood County & surrounding areas	Open to Public
Wabasso Ambulance Association	PO Box 60 Wabasso, MN 56293	507-342-5519	N/A	Emergency medical transportation	Redwood County	Open to Public
Morgan Fire Department and Ambulance	405 Front St., Morgan, MN 56266	507-249-2457	N/A	Emergency medical transportation	Redwood County	Open to Public
Blue Mound Transport	Harrisburg, SD	507-449-4646	Https://www.bluemoundtransport.com/	Dial-A-Ride	Region-wide	Open to Public

Table 24: Customized Living Services Transportation Providers

Provider	Address	Phone	Website	Service Provided	Service Area	Eligibility Requirements
REM Southwest Services	1005 N 4th St., Marshall, MN 56258	507-537-1458	www. remminnesota. com	Rides for daily living	Yellow medicine, Lac Qui Parle, Chippewa, Rock, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, Jackson, Nobles, Cottonwood, Swift, Renville, and Redwood County	Residents of the facility
Heritage Pointe	410 E Bridge St., PO Box 506 Redwood Falls, MN 56283	507-637-3541	https://heritage pointemn.com/	Rides to activities	Marshall	Residents of the facility
Client Community Services	826 5th Ave., Worthington, MN, 56187	(507) 376-3171	N/A	Rides to activities	Cottonwood, Jackson, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Rock County & others	Rides provided for clients of CCSI for services related to their plan
Crossroads Care Center	965 McMillan St., Worthington, MN 56187	507-376-5312	https://www. crossroads caremn.com /	Group outings	Nobles County	Rides provided for residents
Golden Horizons	1970 College Way Worthington, MN 56187	507-376-3111	https:// goldenhorizons. org/locations/ worthington-mn/	Group outings	Nobles County	Rides provided for residents
The Meadows	1801 College Way Worthington, MN 566187	507-372-7838	https://www. ecumen meadows.org/	Group outings	Nobles County	Rides provided for residents

Provider	Address	Phone	Website	Service Provided	Service Area	Eligibility Requirements
Adrian Country Cottages	200 W 7th St., Adrian, MN 56110	507-483-2511	https://www.adriancottages.com/	Group outings, non-medical	Nobles County	Rides provided for residents
Parkview Manor	308 Sherman Ave., Ellsworth, MN 56129	507-967-2482	http://www.parkviewmanormn.com/	Group outings	Nobles County	Rides provided for residents
Good Samaritan Society	308 Sherman Ave., Ellsworth, MN 56129	507-967-2482	https://www.good-sam.com/locations/luverne	Group activities	Rock County	Resident of facility
Veteran's Home	110 S Walnut Ave., Luverne, MN 56156	507-283-2375	https://mn.gov/mdva/homes/luverne/	Group activities	Rock County	Resident of facility

Table 25: Veterans Transportation Services

Provider	Address	Phone	Website	Service Provided	Service Area	Eligibility Requirements
Jackson County Veterans Services	402 White St., Jackson, MN 56143	507-847-4774	https://www.co.jackson.mn.us/veterans	Dial-a-ride	Jackson County	Veteran
Lyon County Veterans services	607 West Main St., Marshall, MN 56258	507-537-6729	https://www.lyonco.org/departments/veteran-services	Dial-a-ride	Marshall, Sioux Falls, Montevideo, Minneapolis	Veteran
Redwood County Veterans Services	403 S Mill St., Redwood Falls, MN 26283	507-637-4034	https://redwoodcounty-mn.us/departments/veterans-services/	Dial-a-ride, Non-Emergency Medical Transportation	Redwood County	Veteran

Transportation Resources & Technology

Transit providers were surveyed on the transportation resources and technologies utilized for their services provided. There was no response from them at the time of document completion. Community Transit did note that they will be upgrading and installing Myride on their buses. This new technology will allow the provider to collect fares electronically, track their vehicles with GPS, provide arrival times to users and offer Wi-Fi on the buses for users to access.

Vehicles

Survey/Interview participants listed a combined total of 48 vehicles. All but three vehicles note wheelchair accessibility. Below are vehicle utilization tables by provider.

Community Transit provides Dial-A-Ride and route services to the counties of Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock. Dial-A-Ride is available Monday-Friday 5:45 am-9 pm and Saturday-Sunday from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm. Route services are available Monday-Friday from 7:00 am-7:00 pm, and Saturday-Sunday from 10:00 am-7:00 pm. Individual routes may vary. Vehicles are not dedicated to any route or region as they are rotated to keep maintenance costs consistent.

Table 26: Vehicle Fleet Operated Community Transit

Make	Model	Year	Vin Number	Capacity/ Wheelchair Capacity
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2010	1FDFE45S49DA69211	13/3
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2013	1FDFE4FS0DDB32780	21/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2019	1FDFE4FS0KDC63687	19/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2019	1FDFE4FS0KDC63690	19/2
ElDorado National	Aerotech	2015	1FDFE4FS1FDA37597	15/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2016	1FDFE4FS2GDC10979	15/8
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2019	1FDFE4FS2KDC63688	19/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2013	1FDFE4FS4DDB32779	21/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2019	1FDFE4FS4KDC63689	19/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2019	1FDFE4FS5KDC55438	19/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2016	1FDFE4FS7GDC21895	21/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2019	1FDFE4FS7KDC55439	19/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2016	1FDFE4FS8GDC25955	15/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2017	1FDFE4FS8HDC23382	21/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2016	1FDFE4FS9GDC21896	21/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2015	1FDFE4FSXFDA07093	21/2
Startrans (Supreme Corp)	Candidate CII	2019	1FDFES6PM2KKB87580	10/1
Goshen Coach	Pacer II	2013	1FDWE3FS5DDA02987	12/2

Make	Model	Year	Vin Number	Capacity/ Wheelchair Capacity
Ford Motor Corporation	Escape	2018	1FMCU9GD0JUA31074	N/A
Ford Motor Corporation	Escape	2019	1FMCU9GDKUC270069	N/A
Ford Motor Corporation	Escape	2019	1FMCU9GO5KUA05801	N/A
Glaval Bus	Titan II	2012	1GB6G5BG0C1180435	17/4
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2015	1GB6G5BG0F1130476	21/2
Glaval Bus	Titan II	2013	1GB6G5BG2D1157336	14/3
Glaval Bus	Titan II	2014	1GB6G5BG7E1200831	14/3
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2015	1GB6G5BLSF1138084	15/4
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2017	1GB6GUBG7H1130777	21/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2017	1GB6GUBG7H1131668	21/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2017	1GB6GUBG8H1142808	15/4
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2017	1GB6GUBG9H1130697	15/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2018	1HA6GUBG0HN011212	21/2
Elkhart Coach	ECII	2019	1HA6GUBG0KN000234	19/2
Elkhart Coach	ECII	2019	1HA6GUBG3KN000017	19/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2019	1HA6GUBG9KN000300	19/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2017	1HA6GUBGOHN008472	21/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2017	1HA6GUBGXHN008530	21/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2018	1HA6GUBGXHN011248	21/2
Glaval Bus	Universal	2016	1FDFE4FS2GDC19004	21/4
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2017	1FDFE4FS4HDC10192	8/4
Glaval Bus	Universal	2016	1FDFE4FS2GDC19004	15/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2017	1FDFE4FS4HDC10192	18/2

Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council provides county-wide transit services(Heartland Express), and a city bus service in Worthington. The County-wide routes are available from Monday-Thursday 7:00 am-5:30 pm. The city bus is available Monday-Friday from 8:00 am-4:00 pm.

Individual routes may vary. Vehicles are not dedicated to any route or region as they are rotated to keep maintenance costs consistent.

Table 27: Vehicle Fleet Operated by Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc.

Make	Model	Year	Vin Number	Capacity/ Wheelchair Capacity
Elkhart Coach	EC II	Not Provided	1FDFE45S29DA64555	15/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	Not Provided	1FDFE4FS3DDA41972	15/2
ElDorado National	240 Aerotech	Not Provided	1FDXE45S93HB48425	18/2
ElDorado National	Aerotech 240	Not Provided	1FDXE45S95HB24306	18/2
Elkhart Coach	EC II	Not Provided	1FDXE4FS5HDC22260	15/2

Rock County Opportunities Inc. provides transportation services to clients of the agency. This service covers the area of Rock county to destinations that support the client's support Plan.

Table 28: Rock County Opportunities, Inc.

Make	Model	Year	Vin Number	Capacity/ Wheelchair Capacity
Elkhart Coach	EC II	2017	1HA6GUBGXHN008818	15/3

Outreach Efforts

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee guides the plan development process. 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, Southwest Center for Independent Living representatives, passengers, and others. The table below lists the members of the Steering Committee.

Table 29: Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan Steering Committee

Members	Position	Organization Representing
Shelly Pflaum	Mobility Administrator	United Community Action Program
Denae Winter	CNO/Manager Behavioral Health Services	Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services
Justin Ahlers	Nobles County Commissioner	Nobles County, Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council
Kris Hohensee	Director Of Administrative Services	Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging
Matt Magnuson	Director of Membership & Program Development	Local Employer (Prime West)
Robin Weis	Deputy Director	Economic Development (Southwest Regional Development Commission)
Beth Mulso	Financial Assistance Supervisor	Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services
Jan Roers	CEO	People's Express Transportation Provider
Karen Deboer	Transit Director	Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council
Mary Mulder	Program Manager	Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council
Mic VanDeVere	Lincoln County Commissioner	Lincoln County, United Community Action Partnership Board
Ted Stamp	Independent Living Advocate	Southwest Center for Independent Living

Steering Committee Meeting #1

The first Steering Committee Meeting was held on November 10th, 2021. During this meeting, the committee was presented with information regarding the LHSTCP, the planning process and the anticipated timeline. Steering committee members were then given the goals and strategies from the previous planning effort and were asked to look over them and be prepared to provide feedback on them at the next meeting.

Steering Committee Meeting #2

The Second Steering Committee meeting took place on January 19th, 2022. Participants evaluated the strategies established in the 2017 Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan, the progress of these strategies, and their current relevancy. Participants noted that some strategies needed to pivot to a new direction, some needed to be combined with others, and other changes. Table 31 depicts each strategy from 2017, a brief description of its context, and comments from the steering committee at this meeting.

Table 30: Strategies from the 2017 Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan, Their Context, and Comments from Steering Committee

Strategies Adopted in 2017	Context	Comments from Current Steering Committee
Identify local community investment options for identified transportation services.	Actions under this support accessing resources for providers and organizations. This includes identifying grants and funding, identifying projects, and implementing those projects.	No additional comments were provided on this strategy.
Identify Languages needed for scheduling service and marketing materials.	The regional providers are aware of the languages spoken and written in the region. Languages Document is updated 2 years before the LHSTCP.	This strategy should pivot toward accessing and reaching the non-English speakers in Southwest Minnesota rather than identifying them.
Increase/improve public relations as part of public and private transportation services marketing.	This strategy includes actions that attempt to increase the net users of the transit services available. Actions under this strategy do not included changes in operations, scheduling, or fares.	Possible connections with local employers were mentioned as a future focus. If these connections are made, there does need to be some strategy to it to ensure connections made are meaningful .
Improve Service Convenience	This strategy includes actions that attempt to increase the net users of the transit services available. Actions under this strategy may include changes in operations, scheduling, or fares.	It was noted that actions under this strategy have room for equity-minded measures. This includes how destinations are determined, how fares are collected, and hours of service.

Strategies Adopted in 2017	Context	Comments from Current Steering Committee
Maintain/increase the fleet of accessible cost-effective small and mid-sized vehicles.	Actions under this strategy include measures that help providers access vehicular fleets (including funding and volunteer drivers).	This strategy will need to change to maintain rather than increase. There is potential room to include an EV fleet for SW Minnesota.
Establish or enhance assisted transportation programs (door through door, rider companion, travel training).	Actions under this strategy are meant to help more users access transit services without or with minimal assistance. Intended beneficiaries include the elderly, disabled, and those whose destinations are not within a reasonable distance of a transit stop.	This strategy can encompass a wide variety of actions that already include volunteer coordination, door-to-door services (offered in some areas in the region). There was the noted potential to include multimodal options to facilitate those connections to transit.
Increase access to language interpreters.	Actions under this strategy are intended to assist non-English speakers to access transit services.	It was suggested that this strategy be consolidated with strategy #2.
Identify Existing Resources.	Actions under this strategy, include ways to find funds for projects and improvements mentioned.	It was suggested that this strategy be consolidated with strategy #1.
Research possibility of a Regional Transportation Network Company (TNC).	This strategy is meant to help consolidate and coordinate the transit needs and resources available in the region through an established network.	There is something like this that is starting to form in the region.
Volunteer driver recruitment / incentives	This strategy is meant to address the volunteer driver shortage.	It was suggested that this strategy expand to address paid and volunteer driver shortages. There was also mention of looking at barriers to entry for both paid and volunteer drivers.
Public and private coordination and integration of scheduling software/technology	This strategy includes actions that intend to find technological practices that can advance the utilization of transit resources. This strategy also is meant to address ways to connect available drivers to requested routes in real-time.	This topic includes a wide range of actions that can result in an even wider range of results.

Human Service Client Survey

The Human Service Client survey was open for responses from November 2021 through August 2022 and received 46 responses. Surveys were distributed online using survey monkey and written forms were distributed to UCAP and Human Services offices throughout the region. Media kits were available for partners to share that included language, survey links and contact information for interested participants. Although available in multiple languages (Hmong, Karen, Somali, and Spanish), there were only 45 responses to the survey.

Surveys were advertised on the Southwest Regional Development Commission's website, and Facebook page. Survey material that was sent to UCAP offices to be displayed on buses did not generate survey responses. The most response came from human services clients, online through the SRDC page, and collected in-person during ride-along on bus routes.

Low response rates did not only impact Region 8. All of Greater Minnesota struggled to get feedback from transit users. The survey consisted of 19 questions, and depending on the user feedback, took about 4-5 minutes to complete.

Question 1: What language do you speak?
This question received 45 responses for English. One survey taker noted that they speak Karen , however due to computer issues, they were not able to take the online version of the survey and they did not have a paper copy available.

Question 2: For what primary purpose do you most frequently ride the bus?
This question received 31 responses and was skipped by 15 people. Respondents were given the choices of Work, School, Shopping/Errands, Medical needs, Social, Events and Other. "work" got the most responses (11), followed by "shopping/errands" (10) school and medical (five responses each). No respondents stated that they utilized transit for any of the remaining survey choices.

Question 3: What is your Age?
This question received 31 responses and was skipped by 15 people. Respondents were given the choices of "under 18", "25-34", "35-44", "45-54", "55-64" and "65 or older". No respondent stated that they were under 18. The most common response was "18-24" (9), followed by "35-44" (7), "55-64" (6), "25-34" (4), "65 and older" (3) and "45-54" (2).

Question 4: How often do you use an agency transportation service?
This question received 30 responses and was skipped by 16 people. Respondents were given the choices pf "5-7 days a week", 2-4 days per week", "once a week", "a few days per month" and "once a month or less". Most responses (13) indicated that they use transit services "2-4 days per week" followed by "a few days per month" (6). The two options "5-7 days per week" and "once a week" bother received four responses and three indicated that they take transit "once a month or less".

Question 5: How long have you been using this transportation service?
This question received 31 responses and was skipped by 15 people. Respondents were given the choices of "less than 1 month", "1 month to a year", "1-5 years" and more than 5 years". Most respondents (12) had been using transit services from "1 month to a year" followed by "1-5 years" (11),

"more than 5 years" (5) and "less than one month" (3).

Question 6: How satisfied are you with the availability of transportation services from the agency?
This question received 30 responses and was skipped by 16 people. Respondents were given the choices of "Very Satisfied." "Satisfied," "somewhat satisfied," "somewhat dissatisfied," dissatisfied" and "very dissatisfied". Most respondents (19) were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied". "Somewhat satisfied" received 7 responses and "somewhat dissatisfied" and "dissatisfied" both received 2 responses each.

Question 7: Do you have any other means of transportation?
This question received 30 answers and was skipped by 16 people. Most respondents (22) stated that they did not have other means of transportation.

Question 8: In the past week, what percentage of your transportation needs have been met by the agency?
This question received 24 answers and was skipped by 22 people. This question was open-ended allowing users to input whatever percentage of their needs they felt had been met by local transit. Out of these answers, five respondents indicated that all their needs are met using the local transit services available. Nine respondents stated that less than 30% of their needs were met by transit services.

Question 9: What improvements to this service would make it most likely that you would ride more frequently? Check all that apply.
This question received 28 total responses and was skipped by 18 people. The most popular choice was longer service hours with 13 responses, followed by reliability (7 responses). Better information, and shorter travel time (2 responses each). Better driver courtesy, and lower fares was noted by once each.

Question 10: Is there anywhere you need to travel that you cannot get to by using the transportation service?
This question received 27 total responses and was skipped by 19 people. Most respondents (16) answered "no", ten responded "yes" and one responded "other".

Question 11: If additional service was added, where should it go?
This question received 18 total responses and was skipped by 28 people. Seven responses state that they did not know where extended services should go. Other responses included going to the cities, extending service times, food shelves/human services and specific cities like Marshall, Lakefield, Fulda, and Tracy.

Question 12: How often do you think you would ride the bus to the location listed above?
This question received 24 total responses and was skipped by 22 people. This question was asked as a follow-up to question ten to assess how much survey respondents wanted to travel to the locations mentioned. Results were spread out as "almost every day," and "a few days per week," "a few days per month" and "very rarely" all received 5 responses each. "Once or twice a week" and "once a month" received two responses each.

Question 13: What is your gender?
This question received 28 total responses and was skipped by 18 people. Most respondents (19) were females the rest were males as no one indicated that they were non-binary.

Question 14: Do you have a driver's license?

This question received 28 total responses and was skipped by 18 people. Most respondents (19) did not have a driver's license.

Question 15: What is your race/ethnicity?

This question received 28 total responses and was skipped by 18 people. Most respondents identified themselves as white (17), nine indicated that they were African American, and two stated that they were either Hispanic/Latino or mixed.

Question 16: Do you identify as someone with a disability?

This question received 27 total responses and was skipped by 19 people. Most respondents (18) stated that they do not identify as someone with a disability while nine stated that they did.

Question 17: Do you have any conditions that require assistance to use this transportation service?

This question received 22 total responses and was skipped by 18 people. Most respondents (22) reported that they did not require assistance to use transportation service. Four people stated that they had difficulty walking, one had visual impairments and one had another disability.

Question 18: What is your zip code?

This question received 26 total responses and was skipped by 14 people. Seventeen of these responses came from the Marshall area and four came from Worthington. Other responses came from Murray County, the Tracy/Amiret area, and Redwood Falls.

Question 19: How do you prefer to receive information/updates about transit services?

This question received 25 total responses and was skipped by 21 people. Most respondents (13) wanted to receive information/updates about transit services via Facebook, followed by emails (9 responses). This indicates that people want to have subscriptions so that they can opt for push notifications. Receiving updates in the mail and putting information on public display each received 4 responses and one person wanted to receive information on the transit provider webpage. Five people offered additional options, of those five three mentioned getting a text or phone call. Other options pointed out specific places where information could be put on display such as SMSU.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups provided additional data input into plan development by allowing participants to offer their insights into the current needs of transit.

First Focus Group

The first focus group took place on March 17th in the Lyon County Library. This focus group focused on providers and those who represent transit providers' issues. Focus group participants included:

- Michelle Miranowski, Operations Manager from Community Transit is Rock and Pipestone County
- Ted Stamp, Independent living advocate from Southwest Council for Independent Living.
- Shelly Pflaum, Mobility Manager from United Community Action Program

Key Findings from the First Focus Group

The current driver shortage is not a new constraint but has become an even greater threat to maintaining transit services in the region.

As drivers are taking on additional shifts, less are available to train new drivers and scheduling/arranging for their mandatory trainings to maintain their licenses is more difficult.

Some components of driver training could, in-theory, be moved to an online course. However, this is not allowed on the state level.

Agencies need to become creative in how they not only recruit new drivers, but retain the ones they have.

Second Focus Group

The second Focus Group took place on August 24th in the Nobles County Government Center. This focus group focused on transit users and their barriers to accessing and utilizing transit. Participants in this focus group included:

- Carrie Bendix, Executive Director from the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council

- Mary Mulder, Program Manager for Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council

- Nathalie Nkashama, Owner of Word-Mart and representing the African community in Worthington.

- Ayano Badassa, Owner USA Transportation Service, LLC and Oromo speaking community in Worthington

- Ayayew Bejica, from JBS and Oromo speaking community in Worthington

- Blanca Estrada, Spanish speaking community in Windom

- Mariana Estrada, Spanish speaking community in Windom

- Kevin Mohejano, Spanish speaking community in Windom

Key Findings from the Second Focus Group

- There is an extensive gap between transit services offered and client awareness.

- There currently are willing community members in Nobles County that would volunteer to be drivers, however, there is little to no access to vehicles in the county.

- When transit options are limited, people are vulnerable to taking on risks to get to their destinations. These include finding rides on the internet through strangers, driving to work without a license, and more.

- Transit issues impact people from all walks of life from high schoolers who miss the bus to school to working adults and elderly people who need to make it to appointments.

- For many people, transit constraints are the barriers between "survival" and "thriving". This included employees who have to turn down promotions due to anticipated shift changes outside of service hours, choosing to grocery shop at an actual grocery store vs a convenience store, getting to appointments for preventive care and more.

During the first planning workshop, participants discussed the gaps or constraints that transit systems face in Southwest Minnesota. These gaps and constraints were divided into four main planning topics. Steering Committee members and Tom Gottfried from the MnDOT office of Transit participated in this workshop.

Accessibility

Ability to access and use the transit service. The Southwest Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordination Council recognizes that having transit available, although important, does not solve all transit-related issues. People need to know how to access/navigate the system to get to their destinations. Providing that support should not be viewed as an extension of transit services but a vital component of being a transit agency/organization. This support is to consider user types and their obstacles to ensure effectiveness and inclusivity.

Gaps and Constraints in Accessibility

- Currently there is no main Community Transit Page so the agency page can share updates.
- Bird scooters can help with connecting younger populations to transit stops. Be mindful of the physical locations of these scooters and the community's development pattern.
- There is no route along MN-68 to connect those communities with their needs in Marshall.
- Inter-county connections are a must for the area.
- Educating riders and potential riders of the transit options that are available and are viable options.
- People can't get to their destinations, sometimes even when planning. Sometimes Planning ahead is not an option.
- Creating a call center to assist current and potential riders.
- The out-of-pocket cost on the current and potential riders.

Infrastructure

Programs and built environment that supports transit services. As noted above, providing transit services goes beyond giving people rides to destinations. Many different factors and investments go into supporting the transit services that already exist and will exist in the future. These include facilities to house vehicles, software to collect fares, signage along routes, and much more. Many of the items that fall into this planning topic are invisible to the rider but glaring to the providers.

Gaps and Constraints in Infrastructure

- Lincoln county needs shelters for their current vehicle fleet.
- Current providers are working towards fare collection methods such as using cards and apps.
- Signage is needed on routes that are newer or upcoming.
- Connections to transit stops (first and last mile connections).
- Facilities are needed in general (including bus shelters, and places to store buses.

- Working towards "my ride" modems to be installed in current fleet. Doing so will allow Wi-Fi accessibility on the buses.
- Some communities have connected with providers to provide residents with transit services but have fallen off may. Will need to reconnect.

Funding

Funding is how transit and complementary services are paid for. All planning documents and public services investments experience fiscal constraints. Simply working on increasing funds does not solve all these issues, as several funding sources have their requirements and constraints on what they can and cannot be used for. Therefore, it is important to consider various funding sources to build flexibility into future investments.

Gaps and Constraints in Funding
- Setting budgets during times of unknown future inflation is challenging.
- Setting local shares for providing services and equipment will be difficult, it is unclear what can be asked from the local communities.
- Current inflation impacting fuel and labor costs.
- Will have to invest in smaller vehicle fleet to optimize resources.
- Fare free is in the talks, so is paying what you can – some systems have gained riders during free fares.
- There are creative funding opportunities for electric vehicle fleets.
- Although grants are helpful but are difficult to secure and keep going.

Workforce

Transit needs of current workforce and workforce needs for providing transit services. This planning topic is two-fold as it addresses the transit needs to be faced by the general workforce and their employers in Southwest Minnesota, along with the workforce constraints faced by transit providers. There is currently a shortage of both paid and volunteer drivers in the region. This shortage alone is the greatest constraint in expanding and maintaining routes and services offered. Addressing this planning topic requires a two-pronged approach that addresses workforce recruitment/attraction along with reducing barriers to entry for those interested in driving as a volunteer or paid transit employee.

Gaps and Constraints in Workforce
- There is a current driver shortage. UCAP in Marshall usually has nineteen drivers, currently has ten.
- Some local employers have started providing transit using vans.
- Transportation providers need staff -this is needed before partnerships.
- Driver shortage is the biggest services constraint. UCAP has started a driver referral program.
- Non-Profits are having issues with competing wages.
- Shift work transportation is needed for employees.

Priorities from Steering Committee

At the close of this workshop, steering committee members were asked to provide their top priorities for future project to address the previous gaps and constraints. The priorities provided are as follows:

- Nobles county needs assistance with translation and interpretive services.
- Research funding options for internet or programming that will become available.
- Long-term on-going transit options for those with serious illness, such as dialysis treatments.
- Increase awareness to the public about services available to the public.
- Make connections to businesses, chambers, and community education to increase awareness of transit needs.
- Explore ride share options to address gaps, nights, and weekend transit needs.
- Add smaller vehicles to current fleet.
- Make services more convenient to users.

PLANNING WORKSHOP #2

The second planning workshop took place during the SWMRTCC quarterly meeting on September 21st. This meeting was attended by, the steering committee along with Tom Gottfried from the MnDOT's office of Transit. Participants were presented with the results from the transit rider survey and the second focus group. The group was then presented with the draft strategies of the plan and asked to assist with brainstorming action items that the RTCC, along with its current and future partners can partake in to help work towards those goals/strategies. The results from this workshop assisted with the creation of the final proposed strategies notes in tables 33-41.

COORDINATION

Formation of Minnesota Council of Transportation Access (MCOTA)

In 2010, the Minnesota State Legislature formed the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access Under Minn. Stat. 174.285 to "study, evaluate, oversee and make recommendations to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and safety of transportation services provide to the transit public." To assist with those efforts, MCOTA developed Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCC) across Greater Minnesota and Transportation Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs) in the Twin Cities Metro. These entities use their local expertise and partnerships to help identify opportunities for transit improvement, increase efficiencies, support the sharing of new approaches ad best practices, and help respond more rapidly to crises.

MCOTA has also authorized funds to assist with the creation and establishment of these RTCCs and TCAPS. Funding was distributed in four phases

Phase 1: Organizational Plan
This phase included tasks identifying an entity to carry out the implementation of RTCCs.

Phase 2: Operational Implementation Plan
During this phase, RTCCs formally established councils, proceed with gaps analysis and created a transportation providers' inventory (tables 21-25).

Phase 3: Implementation of Comprehensive Work Plan
This phase facilitated continued stakeholder engagement development of committees, publishing, and distribution of the transportation directory from phase 2, and establishing relationships with transportation providers, health care organizations and consumers.

Phase 4: Continue Implementation of comprehensive Work Plan
Phase 4 emphasizes seven focus areas, transportation guidance and consultation, vehicle sharing, private nonprofit and for-profit providers engagement, volunteer drivers' programs, staff training, Local Human service Transit coordination Plans and Emergency preparedness. This phase also introduced the Logic Model which allowed for RTCC's and TCAP's to determine their performance measures based on regional needs and issues.

Formation of the Southwest Regional Transportation Coordination Council (SWRTCC)

In 2017, **United Community Action Partnership (UCAP)** and the **Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC)** began meeting with stakeholders from throughout the nine counties of southwest Minnesota in response to action from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MN/DOT) calling for the development of Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils to Coordinate transportation/ transit efforts statewide. These stakeholder meetings resulted in an application to MN/DOT from UCAP for planning funding for the southwest. This application was not approved as it sought to develop an organizational structure in conjunction with an existing entity in the region. After review with MN/ DOT and stakeholders, particularly county representatives, UCAP applied for and was granted planning dollars in the second round of funding provided that a stand-alone RTCC was created. UCAP and the SRDC reconvened the RTCC stakeholder group and began working on implementing the proposal. During these stakeholder meetings, in response to numerous inquiries from the counties, MN/DOT decided to allow the development of the RTCC as a partnership with an existing entity. Due to the vast transit experience of UCAP, the stakeholder group asked UCAP if they would be the governing agency and UCAP agreed.

Organizational Structure

The business and affairs of the Southwest RTCC shall be managed by the RTCC members with staff support from UCAP. Duties and responsibilities may be modified from time to time by the RTCC. The RTCC may operate at less than full membership. The membership of the Southwest RTCC will consist of thirteen (13) individuals representing (but not limited to) the following sectors or agencies:

- Service Provider sub-committee
- User from the User sub-committee
- Public Transportation Provider from the Transportation Provider sub-committee
- Private Transportation Provider from the Transportation provider sub-committee
- County Health and Human Services
- Private Employers whose workers use transit
- Southwest Center for Independent Living (SWCIL)
- Healthcare provider

- PrimeWest Health
- Board of United Community Action Partnership (UCAP)
- Board of the Southwest Minnesota Opportunity Council (SMOC)
- Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging (MNRAAA)
- Regional Economic Development

Other representatives may be added to support achieving the intended purpose of the RTCC. Consideration of geographic representation will be a factor in determining membership.

CURRENT PROJECTS

SWRTCC Phase 4 Logic Model Workplan

As of June 30th, 2022, the Southwest Regional Transportation Coordination Council had applied and received phase 4 funds to transition into its own Logic Model Workplan. This workplan covers a two-year time-period that acknowledges task in all but one of the focus areas noted above (the Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan was already underway at the time of creating the phase 4 workplan). A brief summary of the SWRTCC Logic Model Workplan is included below. For more information regarding specific activities, and components reach out the Southwest RTCC lead Staff, Shelly Pflaum at shelly.pflaum@unitedcapmn.org.

Table 31: SWRTCC Phase 4 Logic Model Work Plan Focus Area, Current Context, & Goals

Focus Area	Current Context (or Objective)	Goal
Transit Guidance	Services are underutilized because Consumers have limited knowledge about current services	To inform people in the community about existing services
Vehicle Sharing	Potential shared opportunities are not identified and need assistance to build partnerships for transportation coordination	To maximize utilization of existing vehicles used by organizations including 5310
Private non-profit and for-profit providers engagement	Addressing transportation issues will be limited without private for-profit providers and non-profit organizations' involvement	To engage private for profit and non – profit organizations as stakeholders
Volunteer Driver Program	Current programs need assistance to re-start and/or increase service post Covid-19	To have supportive resources to develop and sustain volunteer driver programs
Staff Training	Need to develop and sustain expertise for RTCC staff and maintain engagement with MCOTA/MNDOT	RTCC staff gain expertise as a regional transportation resource
Emergency Preparedness Facilitation	Local counties and emergency operations center may not have identified and established relationships with all transportation providers for emergency response	To facilitate networking with all emergency response units and all transportation providers within the region.

Mobility Tomorrow

GOALS & STRATEGIES

Although there are similarities between these goals and the strategies outlined in this plan and the Phase 4 Logic Model, there is a difference in what the plans cover and who can implement the plans. The goals and tasks of the Phase 4 Logic model are specific to the SWRTCC itself. The Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plans' Strategies and action steps are specific to the region and can be undertaken by any transportation provider, entity, Joint Powers Agreement, or organization whether they are a part of the SWRTCC or not.

Below are the recommended strategies, along with a brief description of the current context, and potential indicators of progress. Each strategy is broken down into action steps that support their corresponding strategy. In addition, each action step comes with guidance on how to approach/ prioritize each action step.

Strategy 1: **Identify local community investment options that enhance local partnerships with local businesses, populations, and community groups so that there is potential for collaborations regarding transportation options for all populations.**

Actions under this strategy support connecting resources, populations and community groups to providers and organizations. This includes identifying funding, identifying projects and studies, and implementing those projects.

Progress could be noted through local stakeholder groups, community organizations/groups, and previously underserved populations, that are aware of the transit story in the region, and are willing to participate in future improvement efforts.

Table 32: Strategy 1 Action Steps and Approach

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
1.1	Gather stories from the region regarding transit constraints and how it impacts their life.	Action steps 1.1-1.3 are intended to implement an over encompassing goal to get businesses/other organizations involved in Transit Opportunities in the region. This effort was identified as priority by the steering committee and has been broken down into smaller action steps to work on over the next implementations phase.
1.2	Create targeted materials for both transit dependents and businesses alike to work on methods to fill those transit gaps	
1.3	Create criteria for businesses/organizations to reach out to for collaboration regarding transit in Southwest Minnesota.	
1.4	Identify local groups whose goals align with and enhance the RTCCs goals. Invite them to participate in advisory groups regarding the issues above	This action step can be undertaken at any time to garner feedback from various stakeholder groups. This task is ongoing and can complement the remaining strategies.

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
1.5	Gather information on employers who do, and do not provide transit.	This step is intended to be accomplished as staff time is available preferably a volunteer or for an intern from one the member organizations of the Southwest Minnesota Regional Transit Coordination Council. There is some awareness of employers that do provide transit, but these is no comprehensive list.
1.6	Distribute information on transit and transportation services available to all the chambers in the region.	This task is a straightforward task that can be easily done after completing actions steps 1.1-1.3.

Strategy 2: **Identify Languages, Places/Destinations and Community Connectors to help disseminate information, schedule services, create marketing materials and communicate changes in services available.**

The regional providers are aware of the languages spoken and written in the region. Languages Document is updated 2 years before the LHSTCP. The next update should include a how-to-engage component rather than an acknowledgment of other languages spoken and/or written. It has become evident that having materials in the languages spoken/written in the region is one of many steps to be taken to reach out to the community members who need the information. Strategies in this approach are meant to 1) increase awareness of the marginalized populations and their needs, 2) build trust between marginalized populations in the regional and transit professionals, and 3) engage with local marginalized population in a meaningful and deliberate manner.

Progress could be noted through an increase in awareness of the cultures, and languages spoken/ written in the region. This could lead to not only an increase in the number of users who feel comfortable and empowered to utilize transit services, but in the number of transit professionals that feel comfortable and confident serving those populations as well.

Table 33: Strategy 2 Action Steps and Approach

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
2.1	When updating the languages spoken and written in Southwest Minnesota Document, include an engagement portion that includes suggested engagement methods and places where people meet and gather.	This is an on-going, already scheduled task. This task does include adding to the document an engagement component.
2.2	Create a list of minority-owned businesses and organizations that is updated periodically by reaching out to chambers in the region.	This task will involve reaching out to local chambers. This task will be considered on-going but is required to be done prior to 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5. Accomplishing this task will assist in learning more about minority communities and finding the individuals that transit professionals are aiming to better serve.

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
2.3	When setting up educational events for transportation, incorporate them into events organized and attended by the populations they are intended for. Not the other way around.	This task is intended to re-orient outreach so that it builds trust between community members and the Southwest Minnesota Regional Transit Coordination Council/Transit Providers. To be done after reaching out to local community leaders garnered from task 2.2.
2.4	Continue to actively look for ways to connect with leaders in minority communities so that we can work with those leaders to help the community members access transportation once they understand how it works (i.e. Give them a workable solution for how they can schedule transportation in a language they are comfortable with).	This task is intended to reorient outreach so that it builds trust between community members and the Southwest Minnesota Regional Transit Coordination Council/Transit Providers. To be done after reaching out to local community leaders garnered from task 2.2.
2.5	Find ways to connect with local university/ vo-tech students in Southwest Minnesota that can become a potential connection for those need additional language services.	This task is intended to reorient outreach so that it builds trust between community members and the Southwest Minnesota Regional Transit Coordination Council/Transit Providers. To be done after reaching out to local community leaders garnered from task 2.2.

Strategy 3: **Market transit services as viable options for those how are not transit dependent as well as those who need it.**

This is a new strategy purposed as a method to combat against the currently negative perception of transit services and users. Marketing transit for all populations not only aims to increase the net users, but helps battle stigma associated with public transit. This will be easier to do once Myride and wireless bus modems are implemented. This strategy is aimed to increase ridership leading to an increase in revenues.

Progress in this strategy can be noted when discussing transit options with community members. Their assumptions on who is utilizing those options become vaguer and encompass more groups of people like young adults and students. Other ways to note progress is through a net increase in users, leading to an increase in revenue.

Table 34: Strategy 3 Action Steps and Approach

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
3.1	Publicize success stories including quotes	This can be effectively done after accomplishing Action Step 1.1-1.3.
3.2	Create marketing materials that depict various age groups using Public Transit to all types of locations.	This strategy can be done as funding options open for marking transit.

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
3.3	Work with healthcare providers to include transit options with after-care instructions, appointment cards/reminders etc.	This strategy can be done almost immediately. The initial step is to reach out to medical offices and what they would need to include this information.
3.4	Explore opportunities to provide services for youth sports and extracurricular activities.	This actions step is to the undertaken immediately in areas where sports and extracurricular activities are near or along transit routes/service areas.

Strategy 4: **Consider destinations/stops that empower individuals to access opportunities that improve their quality of life.**

This strategy works to enhance the economic mobility of all transit users. Not only addressing the current needs of current/potential transit users but those of the next income quantile up. This includes accessing services such as the library, courthouse, medical appointments (including therapy), food pantries and grocery stores during their hours of operation.

Progress in this strategy is noted by people facing less barriers when planning trips to their destinations.

Table 35: Strategy 4 Action Steps and Approach

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
4.1	Reach out to different types of services (Human Services, Educational healthcare, and others) to learn about their clients' needs to access them, and how they could partner with transportation providers to address these needs.	This action is meant to compliment 4.2. Part of planning stops that empower individuals is learning more about their needs from other agencies/organizations that serve them and working on potential collaborations for the future.
4.2	Research methods to prioritize future inter-county routes.	Once started on 4.1, it will be easier to identify where potential future inter-county routes are in demand. There is currently a cost vs benefits (time constraint vs. passengers served) constraint on these routes so careful consideration is needed before making those investments.
4.3	Design and distribute media that depicts inter-county connections that are already provided.	Some transit professionals are under the impression that routes cannot cross county lines. On the same token, there are some inter-county routes that exist, but people are not aware of them. This method is meant to attach both of these perceptions as a way to increase ridership.

Strategy 5:   Create community transit page that allows users to subscribe to so they can learn more about route changes and other transit updates.

Currently providers have very little information that is posted a common space that is accessible to all users. Having something that can send out push notifications and help users access routes will make services easier to navigate.

Progress in this strategy leads to the creation of a site or page that users can subscribe to.

Table 36: Strategy 5 Action Steps and Approach

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
5.1	Create a singular site that highlights transit opportunities in the region.	This action step is one that should be undertaken immediately.

Strategy 6:   Maintain fleet of accessible cost-effective small to mid-sized vehicle fleet.

This strategy can still include EV vehicles in SW Minnesota Fleet, depending on discretionary IIJA grants. In general smaller fleet vehicles fit the needs in the region do to their lower operational cost, long distance travel needs of current population.

This strategy should lead to a steady inventory of small and mid-size vehicles are available to volunteers and drivers that do not have a CDL.

Table 37: Strategy 6 Action Steps and Approach

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
6.1	Apply for grants and other funding sources for the purchase of mid-size and smaller vehicles.	These action steps should be undertaken when the opportunities arise. While this plan is being written, there are supply chain issues causing major backlogs in the ordering of transit vehicles, their replacement parts and more. This could become a threat in the near future if any vehicle in the fleet needs to be taken off the route longer than anticipated.
6.2	Apply for grants and other funding sources for the purchase of electric vehicles.	

Strategy 7:   Establish or enhance assisted transportation programs and increase access to transit services and their stops.

This strategy can encompass a wide variety of actions that already include volunteer coordination, door-to-door services (offered in some areas in the region). There was the noted potential to include multimodal options to facilitate those connections to transit.

Progress in this strategy is noted through increased access to transit options and users that are more comfortable navigating those options.

Table 38: Strategy 7 Action Steps and Approach

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
7.1	Create travel training classes with senior centers, high-schoolers, and college students.	This action is intended to reach out to individuals to introduce them to the transit options that are available and make them confident in using them in the future.
7.2	Provide info to consumers on reimbursement options through insurance to check into.	This action is intended to reach out to individuals that face financial constraints when deciding their transit options for medical appointments.

Strategy 8: **Work with community groups and potential workforce alike to break down barriers to entry for both paid and volunteer drivers.**

This strategy is meant to address paid and volunteer driver shortages.

Progress in this strategy is measured in the increase of paid and volunteer drivers in the region.

Table 39: Strategy 8 Action Steps and Approach

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
8.1	Lobby for legislation that reduces barriers to entry for both paid and volunteer drivers, including allowing for online training components.	This action step is to be undertaken when the opportunities arise to lobby for legislative changes that make it easier to become either a paid transit driver or volunteer driver. Some progress has been noted with changes to the restrictions on Personal Care Providers, however, more can be done in the future.
8.2	Expand agency vehicle fleet that does not require CDLs and is wheelchair accessible to an increase of one in each county.	Although both of these action steps mention small to mid-size vehicle fleets (like is strategy 7), having increased access to these vehicles will help give routes to drivers who do not possess CDL (volunteer and paid).
8.3	Expand small-mid size vehicle fleet available to non-agency employees and volunteers.	

Strategy 9: **Research other regional transportation networks. User others as case studies to see how they can be applied to the region.**

This strategy includes actions that intend to find technological practices that can advance the utilization of transit resources. This strategy also is meant to address ways to connect available drivers to requested routes in real-time.

Progress in this Strategy is seen through Southwest RTCC is aware of the trends, research and effort being undertaken by similar groups.

Table 40: Strategy 9 Action Steps and Approach

Strategy	Action Steps	Approach
9.1	Invite people from other agencies such as Veteran Services, hospitals, human services etc. to serve on advisory boards and work out goals that can benefit the goals of their agencies along with the RTCC.	All of these action steps are meant to ensure that the Southwest Minnesota RTCC does not fall behind on trends, research and effort being undertaken by similar groups.
9.2	Continue to follow the trends and breakthroughs in software that allow for routes to be shared. Participate in focus groups and advisory councils as they become available to provide user-incorporated feedback.	
9.3	Create a research project that looks into template languages from other Regional transit networks with a similar context as the Southwest Minnesota Regional Transit Coordination Council.	