



# Community Conversations: Advancing Transportation Equity Through In-Depth Interviews

MPO Summer Workshop

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Minnesota Department of Transportation



# Presentation Purpose

- Review relationship between transportation and equity
- Learn about Community Conversations project and select findings
- Discuss project impact and how results are changing how we work

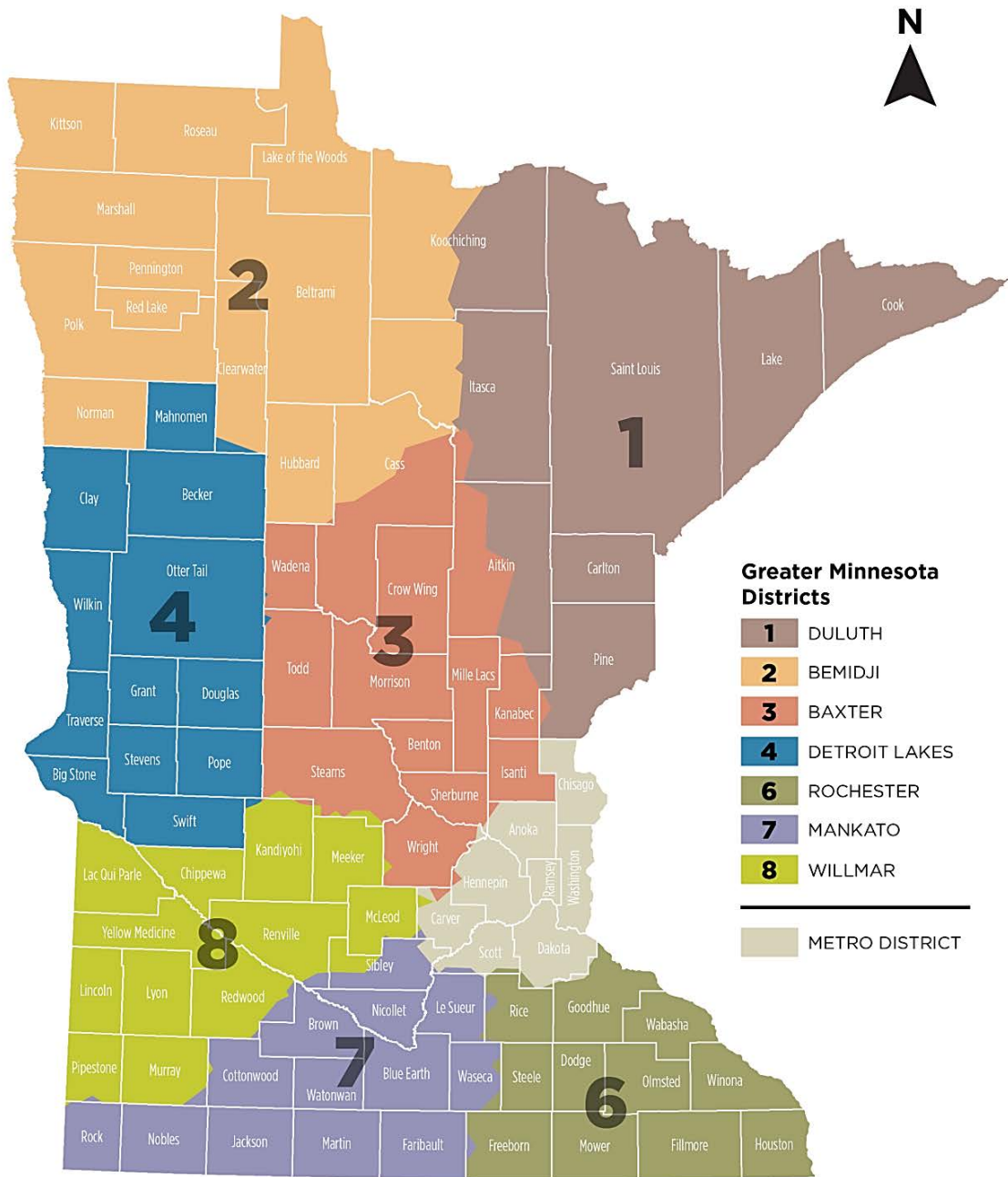
Submit your questions throughout the presentation or ask at the end

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# Greater Minnesota

0 50 100 Miles

Data Sources: MinDOT GIS (<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/maps/gdmo/gis-data.html>)

# Greater Minnesota



7 in 10 Minnesotans live in urban areas; 434,000+ live in remote rural areas



Rural diversity is increasing; most immigrants live in urban communities

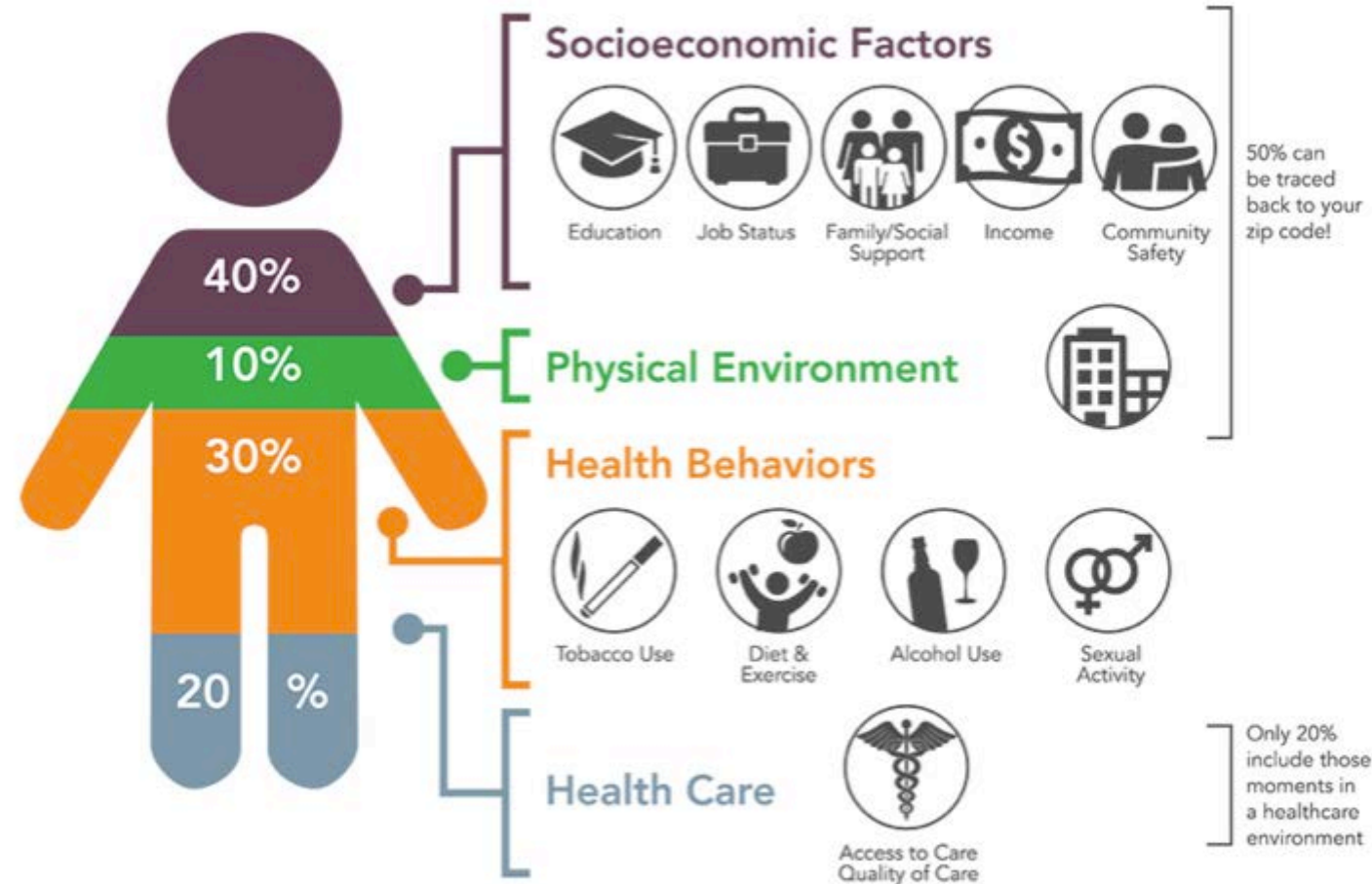


Rural and small town residents more than 2x likely to be age 80+



Rural and town residents who work full time more likely to live in poverty

# Social Factors Impacting Outcomes



What does  
transportation equity  
look like?



# Community Conversations

Heather Lukes | District 6



# Community Conversations

**What:** one-on-one conversations

**Goal:** Learn about experiences and struggles with transportation and engagement preferences for people

- Underrepresented in transportation processes
- Experience known inequities in access or outcomes
- Face unique transportation needs not well served by our business-as-usual approach



# Why Conversations?

- **Collect a wide variety** of feedback
- **Ask follow-up questions** to better understand the feedback
  - What, Where, When, Why?
  - Why is that important?
  - Can you tell me more about that?
  - What impact does that have?
- **Listen to and document stories** that illustrate the importance of transportation to specific communities
- Face-to-face conversations help **build relationships** for future two-way interactions between MnDOT and communities

# Selecting Key Communities

- Conduct demographic analysis
- Identify organizations working with or representing these communities
- Complete one-on-one conversations
- Compile notes and summarize themes
- Develop recommendations
- Plan action steps
- Implement action plan



## District Findings and Next Steps



# Select Findings: Services are Centralized

- Services and activities are centralized in regional hubs
  - Examples include Rochester, Owatonna, and Winona
- Access to employment, health care, affordable housing, child care, etc. more time consuming and costly for rural residents
- Housing unaffordability drives people further away from central cities
- Reliable transportation sought by people seeking health services

# District Takeaways

- Transportation is central to what we do in everyday life
  - Quality of transportation can have unintended consequences to “everyday” life
- Transit functionality is a major concern
- Participation in Community Conversations
  - Helped to open doors to folks traditionally not reached out to as part of engagement
  - Fostered new relationships
  - Broadened public engagement opportunities with different ideas and ways to contact communities
  - District 6 is looking for ways to continue community conversations into the future

# District Next Steps

- Complete or update district-wide engagement plans
- Continue to work with partners on bike plans and ADA work
- Work with transit providers to increase involvement of underserved communities in transit policy and decisions
- Improve transit service in collaboration with Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils
- Improve communications to address disruptions during maintenance and construction



## Statewide Takeaways



# Statewide Takeaways

- Context is important and varies by district
- Transit a necessary but not sufficient safety net
- Barriers to private vehicles and other modes are similar across districts
- Public engagement principles are the same
- Need for unified agency-wide definition for transportation equity
- Address broader transportation challenges by developing interdisciplinary solutions to advance equity
- Move beyond research to implementation

# Moving Equity Forward

- Commit to trust, collaboration, and transparency
  - Example: Be clear how input will inform a decision
- Support inclusive workplaces
  - Example: Provide training, spaces to explore equity concepts
- Improve opportunities for people underserved by our systems
  - Example: Work to understand how process excludes people
- Challenge complex social factors influencing well being
  - Example: Partner with health, housing, etc. colleagues on related projects



## Discussion



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“**Transportation is one of the main obstacles holding people back in many ways.** Better transportation would allow more people to have access to our services. They’d also have an easier time getting to work, to doctor’s appointments, to get food, and to access county social services.”

Transportation as a Barrier

“ For the clients we serve, they’re probably not involved at all. [Staff] try to get involved, through the organization. But the clients we serve, this is probably the last thing on their mind. **They’re more concerned with [questions like] where am I going to sleep tonight?** Where is my next meal coming from?”

Engaging with our Communities

“ Equity means meeting every learner with what they need to be successful. It’s not the same as equality. **We have to get to know people better to understand their needs**, so we can address them ... Equity also means **helping people navigate systems.**”

What does  
transportation equity  
look like to you?

# Thank you!

[https://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/  
advancing-transportation-equity/](https://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/advancing-transportation-equity/)