



Washington County Transit Needs Assessment

Focus Group Meetings Round 2

November 2025



Support for Volunteer Drivers



Overview: Non-profit organizations in Washington County have volunteer driver programs. Drivers are community members who volunteer to drive people to appointments in exchange for mileage reimbursement.

- Existing service: Community Thread, American Cancer Society, Disabled American Veterans
- Who it helps: People who need direct rides but can't find/afford taxi service
- County role: Fund or coordinate the programs run by other organizations

What we heard:

There are gaps in the transportation network for those who lack regular access to a vehicle. A well-supported volunteer driver program can meet needs where these gaps exist.

Discussion

- Would volunteer driver services help you personally?
How?
- What days and times of day would you use this service type?
- Do you think the County should pursue this service type? Why?
- Where should this type of service be located?

Mobility Management Expansion



Overview: Washington County's mobility management program helps people find information about transportation and makes sure different nonprofit and county programs work together well.

■ Services that could be added

- Bilingual travel training and outreach
- Outreach in areas not served by Metro Transit
- Outreach to older adults and hard to reach populations
- Funding for the trusted messenger program to support community outreach and communication
- Investments in website (GoWashingtonMN.com)

What we heard:

- A successful transit system “includes **real people who can help them learn** how to use public transportation.”
- Barriers include information, human interaction and support, guidance in Spanish and other languages

Discussion

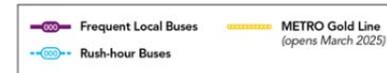
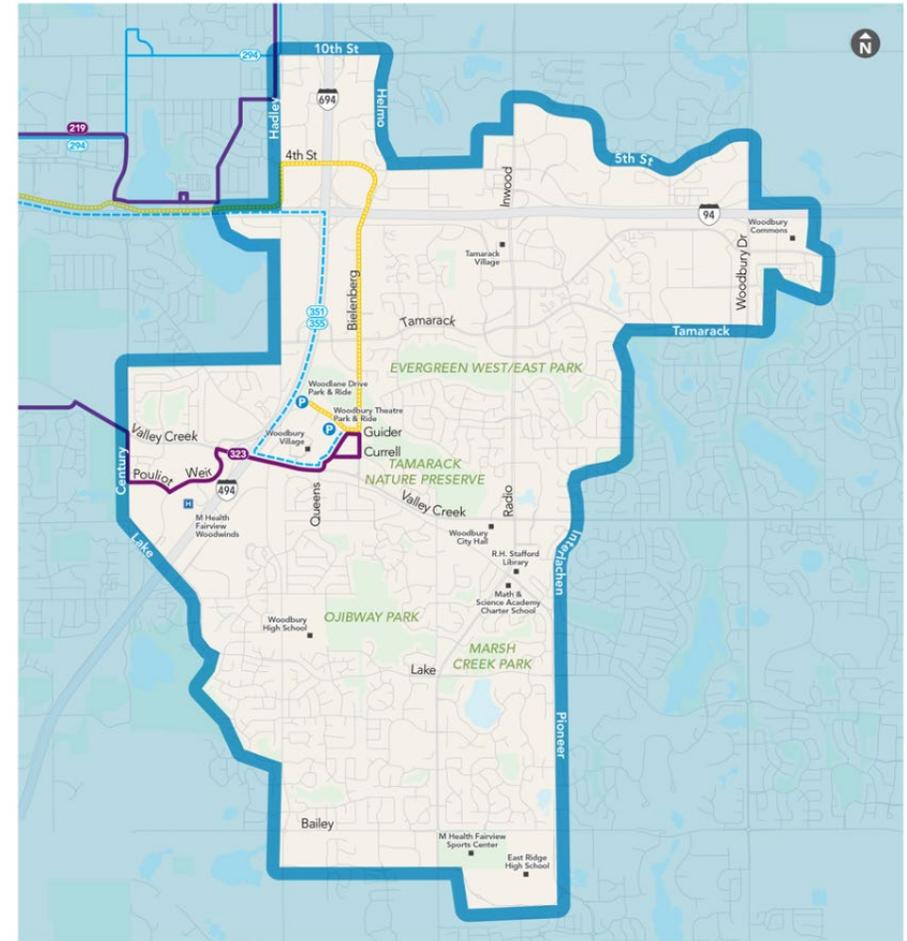
- Would expanded mobility management services help you personally? How?
- Do you think the County should pursue this service type? Why?
- Where should this type of service be located?

Larger Metro micro Zone

Overview: An expansion of Metro Transit's microtransit service, branded as Metro micro, would provide demand-response service within a defined zone. Expanding the service area of the current Woodbury zone could include an extension east along I-94 to Manning Ave S.

What we heard:

Metro micro is loved by families for flexible rides to stores, schools, and errands. It consistently ranked high as a priority among those polled in focus groups and at pop-up events.



Discussion

- Would enlarging the Woodbury Metro micro zone help you personally? How?
- What days and times of day would you use this service type?
- Do you think the County should pursue this strategy? Why?
- Where would you like to see the existing zone extended?

New Metro micro Zone

Overview: The County could encourage Metro Transit to add new microtransit zones. New zones could be used to get around locally and to connect to regional service.

- **Potential locations**

- Stillwater, Cottage Grove, Oakdale (partially served already), Lake Elmo (partially served already)

- **Expected benefits**

- Same-day travel without advance reservations
- Serves local trips within a community
- Could provide connections to fixed routes

- **Potential obstacles**

- County would need to fund the service
- Metro Transit would have to agree to add zones
- There is a learning curve to using the app



Discussion

- Would a new microtransit zone help you personally?
How?
- What days and times of day would you use this service type?
- Do you think the County should pursue this service type? Why?
- Where should this type of service be located?

Community Circulator Expansion

Overview: Nonprofits in several cities offer community circulators. They run once a week and provide a basic level of transportation to address the most critical needs of older adults. While open to the public, they are geared to seniors' shopping and medical needs.



Ways to expand

- Add new circulators where they don't exist already
- Serve more people in places that already have circulators:
 - Cottage Grove
 - Forest Lake
 - Stillwater/Oak Park Heights
 - White Bear/Vadnais Heights/Mahtomedi
 - Oakdale

What we heard:

Circulators were cited in the list of important services to meet community needs at multiple engagement events, particularly to meet specific community needs and serve important community destinations efficiently.

Discussion

- Would community circulator service help you personally? How?
- What days and times of day would you use this service type?
- Do you think the County should pursue this service type? Why?
- Where should this type of service be located?

City-to-City Bus in Washington County

- **Overview:** A new bus route within Washington County would provide service on a regular schedule. It could be used to get around locally and to connect to regional service.



- **Potential locations**

- Cimarron and Woodbury, Oakdale, and Stillwater; Forest Lake and surrounding cities; Stillwater and Woodbury

- **Expected benefits**

- Provides regularly scheduled bus service within Washington County where it does not exist today.
- Same-day travel without advance reservations (except for deviations)
- Has potential to serve work trips
- Could provide connections to the Gold Line

- **Potential obstacles**

- County would need to fund the service
- Metro Transit would have to agree to operate the service
- May be challenging to provide a reliable and consistent schedule, especially with deviations
- Official bus stops would need to be planned and sited

What we heard:

Access to regional transportation connections and employment and services within the county is an existing need. Bus routes within the county could effectively serve some of the highest demand destinations.

Discussion

- Would city-to-city bus service help you personally?
How?
- What days and times of day would you use this service type?
- Do you think the County should pursue this service type? Why?
- Where should this type of service be located?

General Discussion

- Volunteer drivers
- Mobility management
- Larger Metro micro zone
- New Metro micro zone
- Community circulator
- City-to-city bus

Looking at the list as a whole...

If you were at the first focus group, do you feel that this list reflects the needs expressed in that meeting?

Are there any important recommendations not on the list?

Given that funding is limited, what is your #1 priority from the list? How do you picture using that service?