

Transit Needs Study: Existing Conditions



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Introduction

The 2025-2026 Transit Needs Study is an update of the Transit Needs Study completed by Washington County in 2018.¹ At that time, the study examined the challenges Washington County faced in providing transportation services and prioritized a series of strategies that could be implemented within the short term.

This existing conditions report takes a similar approach to the earlier study; however, care is taken to examine a new transit market that reflects changes in transportation dynamics brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Content includes a review of recent or ongoing planning efforts that inform the County's goals, along with an overview of county demographics, population density, and job distribution, all of which indicate where transit demand is likely to be found. Finally, the document includes a summary of existing transit services with demand for transit and identifies key geographic gaps.

Review of Existing Documents

Since the last Transit Needs Study, several planning efforts have given shape to the region's future goals. In addition to Washington County, organizations with a strong influence on local planning include:

- The Metropolitan Council, which is the regional policy and planning agency for the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area. The Metropolitan Council is responsible for overseeing housing, parks, transportation, wastewater and water, community development, and general planning activities within the Twin Cities region. It is also a federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and thus is responsible for managing transportation funding from many state and federal sources.
- Metro Transit, a division of the Metropolitan Council and the regional transit provider for the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area.

Imagine 2050 and the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan

Imagine 2050 is the Metropolitan Council's regional development guide created by and for local officials, advocates, and technical experts across the seven-county metro area including Washington County. The guide was developed around four regional core values – Equity, Leadership, Accountability, and Stewardship – and five regional goals:

- Our region is equitable and inclusive,
- Our communities are healthy and safe,
- Our region is dynamic and resilient,
- We lead on addressing climate change, and
- We protect and restore natural systems.

¹ Washington County Transit Needs Study (February 2018). https://gowashingtonmn.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Washington-County-Final-Report-2-7_FINAL.pdf

These values play a role in each of the policy plans that make up the guide, which include the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) and the Transit Investment Plan.

Network Now

Network Now establishes Metro Transit's service planning priorities through 2027. This plan documents the changes to the region's transit network that have occurred since 2019, builds on the success of rail and bus rapid transit investments, and guides how Metro Transit will invest in transit service to expand service and improve mobility. Through Network Now, Metro Transit will:

- Expand transit service by more than 40 percent to help attract more riders
- Improve access by providing new bus routes and microtransit (Metro micro) service
- Modify commuter and express service to meet today's travel patterns
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging transit use

Metro Transit will implement Network Now in phases as it continues hiring more operators, mechanics, and other support staff through 2027. Metro Transit will prioritize service improvements based on community feedback, resource availability, and operational needs.

Network Now is a collection of changes to the Metro Transit service network within the Metropolitan Council service area, also referred to as the Twin Cities region. The plan includes routes operated directly by Metro Transit, as well as routes operated by private providers under contract with the Metropolitan Council. The plan does not include the service operated by the region's other suburban transit agencies: Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA), Maple Grove Transit, Plymouth Metrolink, or SouthWest Transit.

Network Now proposes several changes to routes operating in Washington County. These changes are detailed in the inventory of current and planned transportation services (page 38.)

Washington County Strategic Plan (2024)

Washington County's 2024-2019 Strategic Plan was adopted in August 2024. It is a living document that provides a framework for decision making using four identified strategic priorities: organizational excellence, safe communities and thriving people, strong and sustainable environment, and financial health and capacity. Each of the four priorities has associated goals and performance measures to use to track progress toward the County's goals.

The goal of the Safe Communities and Thriving People priority is to ensure that everyone in Washington County has access to services that address inequities, foster well-being, and promote safety. There are two performance measures that directly relate to transit planning and needs for this goal. The first is to seek County Board direction on increasing availability of locally sponsored, affordable transit options by 2029 and the second is to get board direction on conducting a transit needs assessment (this current study) by 2027.

The third priority for Strong and Sustainable Environment also has a transit-related measure. The goal for this priority is to enhance and maintain investments in the built and natural environment to encourage growth, accessibility, and resilient communities. One of the time-bound measures of performance is to seek Board direction on approach to increasing transit access by 2026.

Washington County Public Works Long Range Transportation Plan

Washington County is preparing its first Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), a visioning document capturing goals, needs, and priorities for a transportation network. It will review and refine transportation goals, capture network performance and demands, assess and identify needs, and develop performance measures to evaluate progress and support transportation investments. The project began in December 2023 and is expected to conclude in 2025.

An interactive map produced during the public involvement phase collected three comments relevant to transit service:

- “We need public transit for those who can't drive. Ideally this is a north-south route throughout the county. That requires some study to determine the needs. However, somehow we need access to groceries, basic items, doctors, etc.”
- “Would be great to have a bus stops in Mahtomedi again. People who use the public library often require services that are only accessible at the County Government center in Stillwater or in Ramsey County/White Bear Lake.”
- Another commenter wrote that Highway 15 is becoming congested and expressed a desire to find solutions that do not involve expanding the roadway.

The full plan is unlikely to make strong recommendations on public transit, as the LRTP and Transit Needs Study were designed to complement each other.

Corridor Plans

In 2020-2021, Washington County defined a long-term transit vision for the corridor connecting Minneapolis, Oak Park Heights, Bayport, and Stillwater via Minnesota State Highway 36.² Its near-term recommendations included developing a 10-15 minute limited frequency limited stop service between downtown Minneapolis and Maplewood Mall Transit Center via University of Minnesota; developing a 30-minute limited stop service between Maplewood Mall and Stillwater/Oak Park Heights/Bayport; monitoring the need for commuter express service between Stillwater and downtown Minneapolis; and forming a corridor commission to identify funding sources, develop multi-jurisdictional agreements, and scope projects. These recommendations have not been implemented.

In 2024, the Red Rock Corridor Commission updated its vision for the transportation corridor connecting Saint Paul, Newport, St. Paul Park, Cottage Grove, and Hastings along Minnesota Highway 61.³ During outreach for this update, residents and employers overwhelmingly said that the corridor needs transit. The 2024 update found that microtransit would be needed to support the diverse destinations of corridor residents. It emphasized a) the need to connect people across the highway and the parallel Canadian Pacific railroad tracks and b) the need to connect people inside and outside the corridor, as a majority of jobs are not within walking distance from Highway 61. The update recommends that

² Highway 36 Transit Feasibility Study (2021).

<https://www.washingtoncountymn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/48989/Highway-36-Transit-Feasibility-Study-Final-Report>

³ A Vision for Serving and Connecting the Red Rock Corridor. https://redrockcorridor.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/A-Vision-for-Serving-and-Connecting-the-Red-Rock-Corridor_Vision-Refresh-Final-Report-01312024.pdf

stakeholders – including employers – create a transportation management organization to provide intermediate transportation solutions.

The Rush Line Corridor, consisting of 23 communities along the 80 miles between Saint Paul and Hinckley, has been evaluated for transit potential since 1999. A 15-mile BRT route departing from downtown Saint Paul is proposed by the Metropolitan Council and Ramsey County. Several possible alignments and endpoints have been evaluated, with the most recent proposal following White Bear Avenue and terminating at Maplewood Mall Transit Center. The project is on pause following Maplewood City Council’s withdrawal of support.⁴

Community Overview

Reviewing concentrations of individuals and jobs is one way to identify which services may do best in a certain market; another way is to look specifically at demographic groups most likely to use transit.

While this review provides a good indication of where transit is best supported, it is not prescriptive of demand and transit services are not one-size-fits-all. Figure 1 illustrates the combinations of population density, employment density, and land use that generally support different types of transit.

⁴ Purple Line BRT Project. <https://www.metrotransit.org/purple-line-project>

Figure 1. Land Use and Transit

LAND USE			TRANSIT	
Land Use Type	Residents per Acre	Jobs per Acre	Appropriate Types of Transit	Frequency of Service
 Downtowns & High Density Corridors	>45	>25	   	 10 mins or better
 Urban Mixed-Use	30-45	15-25	  	 10-15 minutes
 Neighborhood & Suburban Mixed-Use	15-30	10-15		 15-30 minutes
 Mixed Neighborhoods	10-15	5-10	 	 30-60 minutes
 Low Density & Rural	<10	<5	  	 60 mins or less or On Demand

Population Density

Where people live within the service area, especially where people are concentrated, tells us where potential riders live and which transit service types can be supported in which locations. As of 2024, around 284,000 people live in Washington County.⁵ The densest areas of the county include its western edge from Saint Paul Park to Mahtomedi, central and northwest Cottage Grove, Stillwater, and western Forest Lake (Figure 2). As Figure 1 suggests, these areas could potentially support local fixed-route services; elsewhere in the county, population densities are suggestive of on-demand transit.

Growth is expected to continue in Washington County over the coming years and decades. It is expected that approximately 297,000 people will live in the county by 2030 and 314,000 by 2040.⁶ The municipalities forecast to add the most residents between 2020 and 2050 include Woodbury (about 19,000 people); Cottage Grove (more than 13,000 people); and Forest Lake, Hugo, Lake Elmo, and Oakdale (all between 6,000 and 8,000 people, at percentage growth rates ranging from 22 to 67). These communities vary in their population density.

⁵ [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Washington County, Minnesota](#)

⁶ [Imagine 2050 Local Forecasts](#), Metropolitan Council

Employment Density

Because work trips are regular and predictable, employment density is generally considered one of the best indicators of where transit can be supported. However, concentrations of jobs, and types of jobs, must also be considered as transit services are varied and adaptable to different conditions. Evaluating employment density is also important because it shows where people travel for services and shopping in the community.

There are approximately 92,400 jobs in Washington County, which is a significant growth rate (21 percent) compared to 2020. Jobs are expected to grow to 98,000 in 2030 and 106,300 in 2040.

In Washington County, the concentration of jobs is more evenly distributed across the county when compared to population (Figure 3). Most areas of high population concentration also have high job concentration, but northeast and south Denmark Township, West Lakeland Township, east Lakeland, west Dellwood, south Scandia, and west Hugo have high job concentration relative to their population concentration.

It is notable that in 2022, Washington County had a high people-to-jobs ratio (3.0) compared to the seven-county region (2.1), indicating that many residents commute outside of the county for work.⁶ This observation is borne out in more detailed commute flow data, which will be discussed in a later section.

Figure 2. Population Density

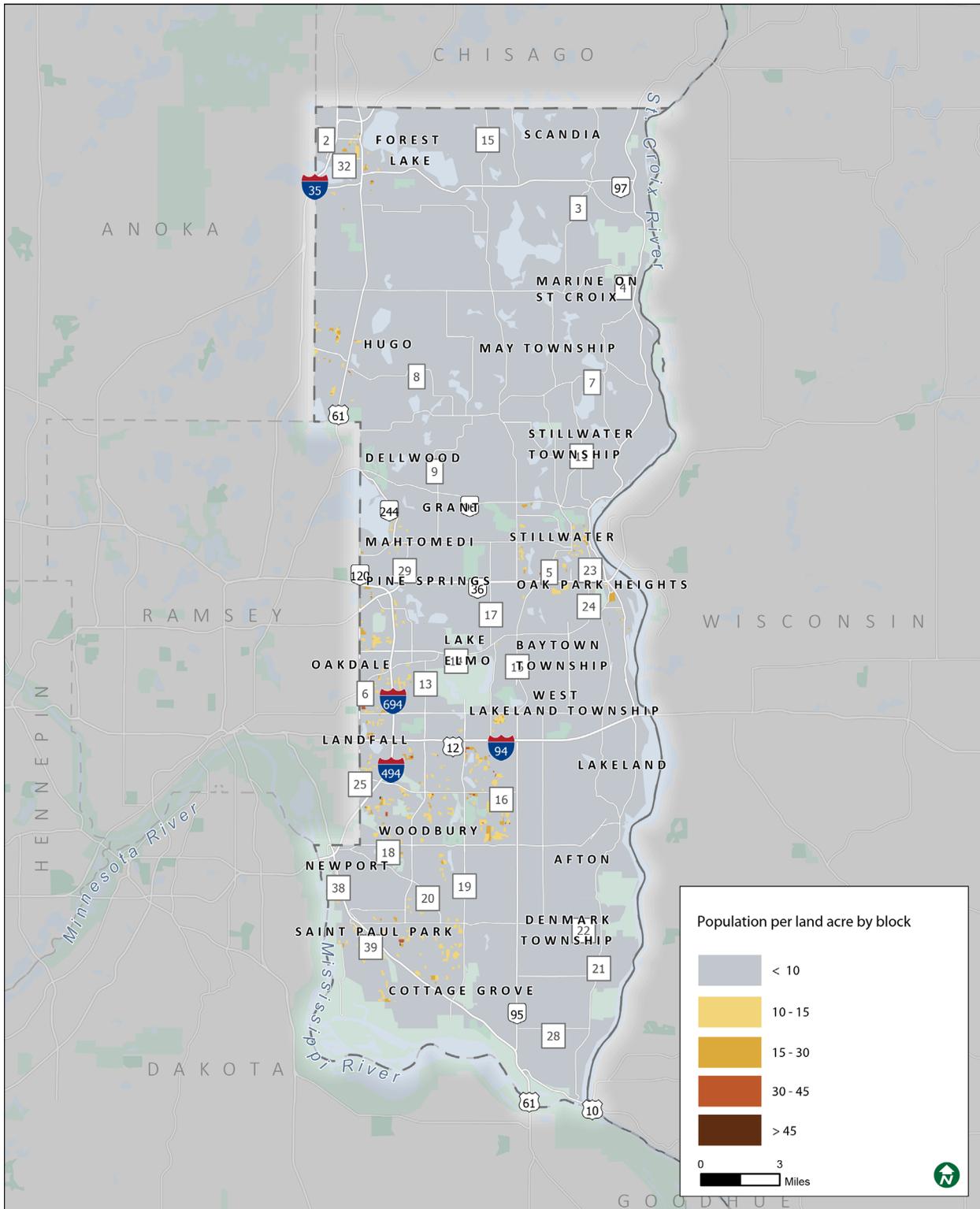
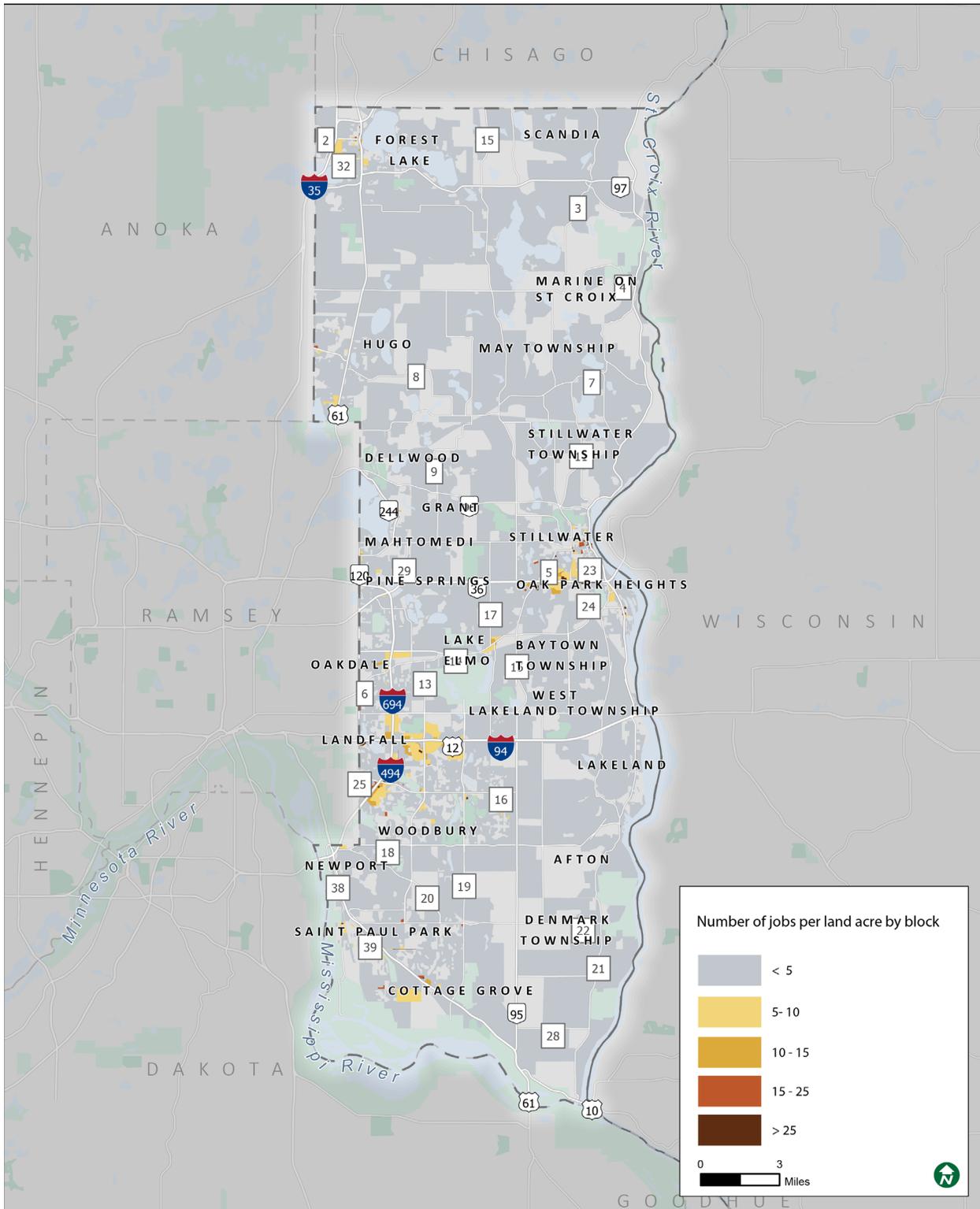


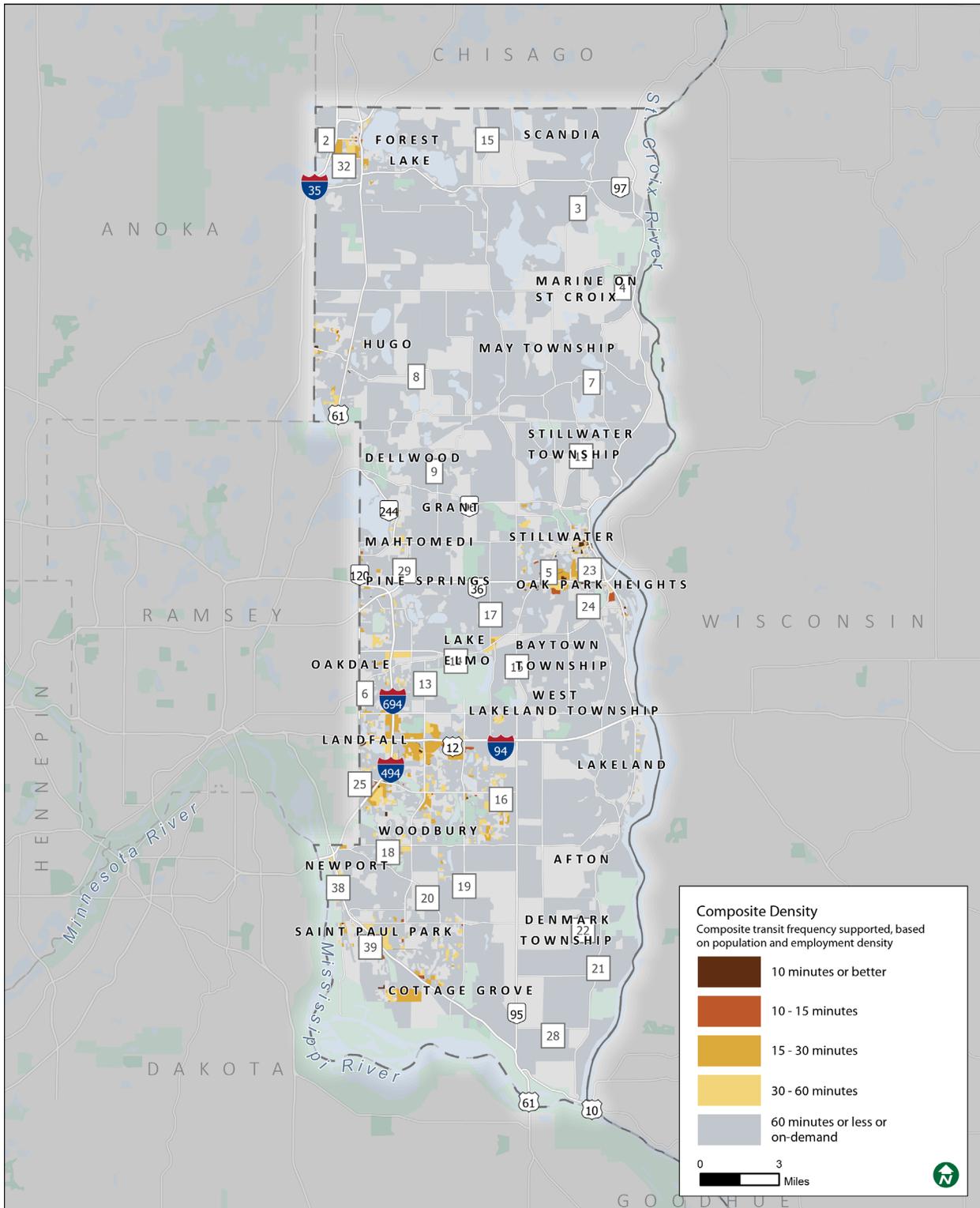
Figure 3. Employment Density



Composite Transit Demand

Figure 4 displays the levels of frequency that might be supported by Washington County's existing population and employment densities. The composite demand helps provide a baseline for where the land uses can support fixed-route service and the demand for transit in the service area. It is not intended to be prescriptive and is one of many things that need to be considered as part of the transit planning process.

Figure 4. Composite Transit Demand

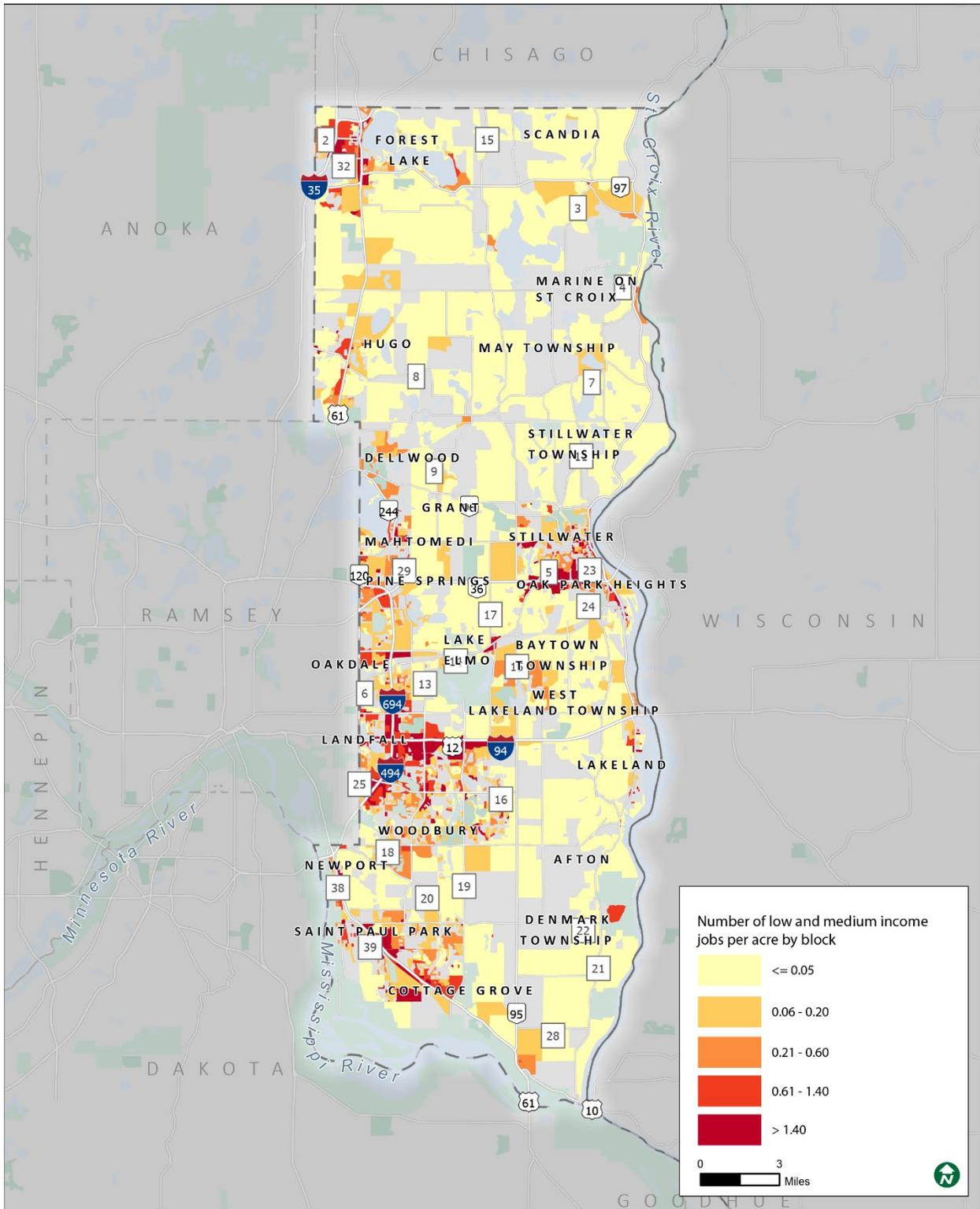


Low- and Medium-Wage Employment

Low-wage jobs are only a portion of total employment but are important to explore because people who fill these positions are more likely to be low-income and without access to a vehicle, and in turn more likely to benefit from taking transit to work.⁷ Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data was analyzed to determine the location of low- and medium-wage jobs, defined as jobs paying monthly wages \leq \$3,333. These jobs are less evenly distributed across the county compared to total jobs (Figure 5). They concentrate in north Woodbury, northwest Forest Lake, Oak Park Heights, Stillwater, Saint Paul Park, and Cottage Grove.

⁷ [Transportation Access as a Barrier to Work | District Digest | Richmond Fed](#)

Figure 5. Low- and Medium-Wage Job Distribution



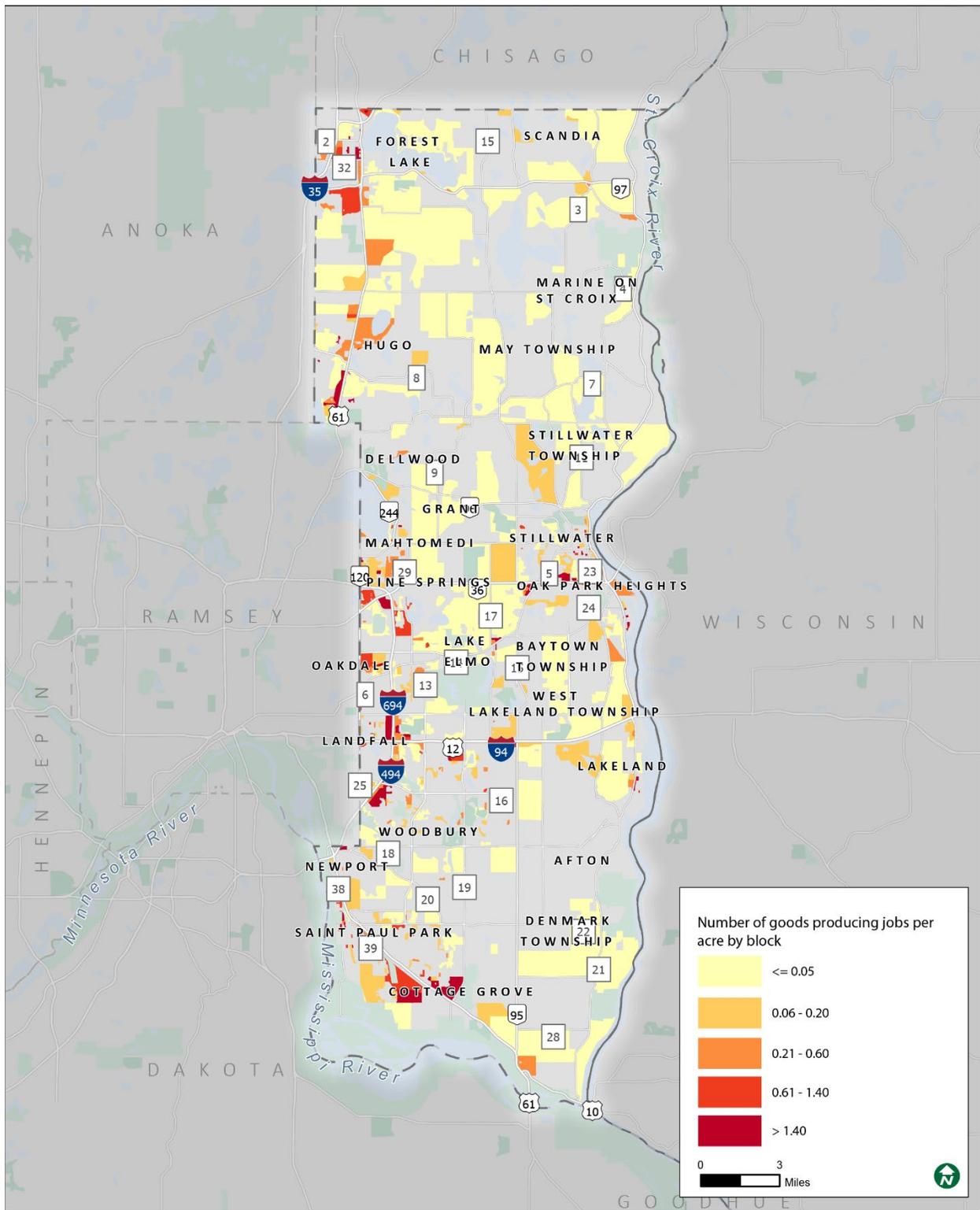
Goods-Producing Jobs

Goods-producing jobs, such as those in manufacturing, construction, and natural resources, often require early or irregular hours and are often located in industrial zones that are spread out and often poorly served by transit, making them difficult to serve with traditional transit. Research shows that workers in these sectors are more likely to face job access challenges, especially if they lack a personal vehicle.⁸

In Washington County, these jobs are highly concentrated in north and central Oakdale, northwest Woodbury, and central-west Cottage Grove (Figure 6). They also have small pockets of density in Oak Park Heights, Forest Lake, and Hugo. Their presence in Oak Park Heights and Saint Paul Park is very low compared to these cities' total job density.

⁸ Tomer, Adie. Where the Jobs Are: Employer Access to Labor by Transit (July 2012).
<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/11-transit-labor-tomer-full-paper.pdf>

Figure 6. Goods Producing Jobs by Census Block



Older Adults

Having access to transit can allow older adults, defined as people 65 years and older, to be mobile even if they no longer drive or no longer feel safe driving in all situations (night time, inclement weather, etc.). While they are not typically a stand-alone market for fixed-route service, older adults can represent potential riders for paratransit service, and this potential need grows exponentially as seniors become older.

In Washington County, there is a high concentration of older adults (65+) relative to total population in Stillwater, Oak Park Heights, northwest Cottage Grove, Lakeland, north Forest Lake, west Hugo, and the west edge of the county from Saint Paul Park through Mahtomedi (Figure 7).

There are also high concentrations of older adults over 80 relative to total population in southeast Stillwater, Oak Park Heights, northwest Cottage Grove, Landfall, and south Oakdale (Figure 8).

Youth

The youth population, defined as people below 18 years of age, includes children below the permissible age to obtain a driver's permit or license as well as children who are less likely to have a driver's license, such as high-school students. Transit can be critical for this group to get to/from school, employment, or recreational activities, especially in low- or zero-vehicle households.

In Washington County, youth population concentrations largely mirror total population concentrations. However, relative to total population, there are higher concentrations of youth in Cottage Grove, Woodbury, Newport, and parts of west Hugo and west Stillwater (Figure 9).

Households Including People with Disabilities

People with disabilities are less likely to be able to drive and in turn are more likely to use transit. Depending on a person's specific disability, they may be able to use fixed route service. Otherwise, they may qualify to use paratransit service. Having a disability is often an indicator of transit propensity.

In Washington County, relative to total population, there are high concentrations of people with disabilities in southeast Stillwater, Saint Paul Park, northwest Cottage Grove, northwest Woodbury, Landfall, and south Oakdale (Figure 10).

Low-Income Households

Household income is one of the strongest indicators of transit propensity, as low-income households are more likely to have difficulty paying for transportation costs and are in turn more likely to use transit. Income is also closely tied to the likelihood of a household having a vehicle available.

In Washington County, low-income households are more concentrated, relative to total population, in the west edge of the county (west Saint Paul Park through Mahtomedi, as well as west Forest Lake), east Oak Park Heights, east Lakeland, Stillwater, and Woodbury (Figure 11). In this context, a low-income household is defined as earning 200 percent or less of the federal poverty level, which is roughly an annual household income of \$30,000 or less.

Figure 7. Density of Population 65 and Over

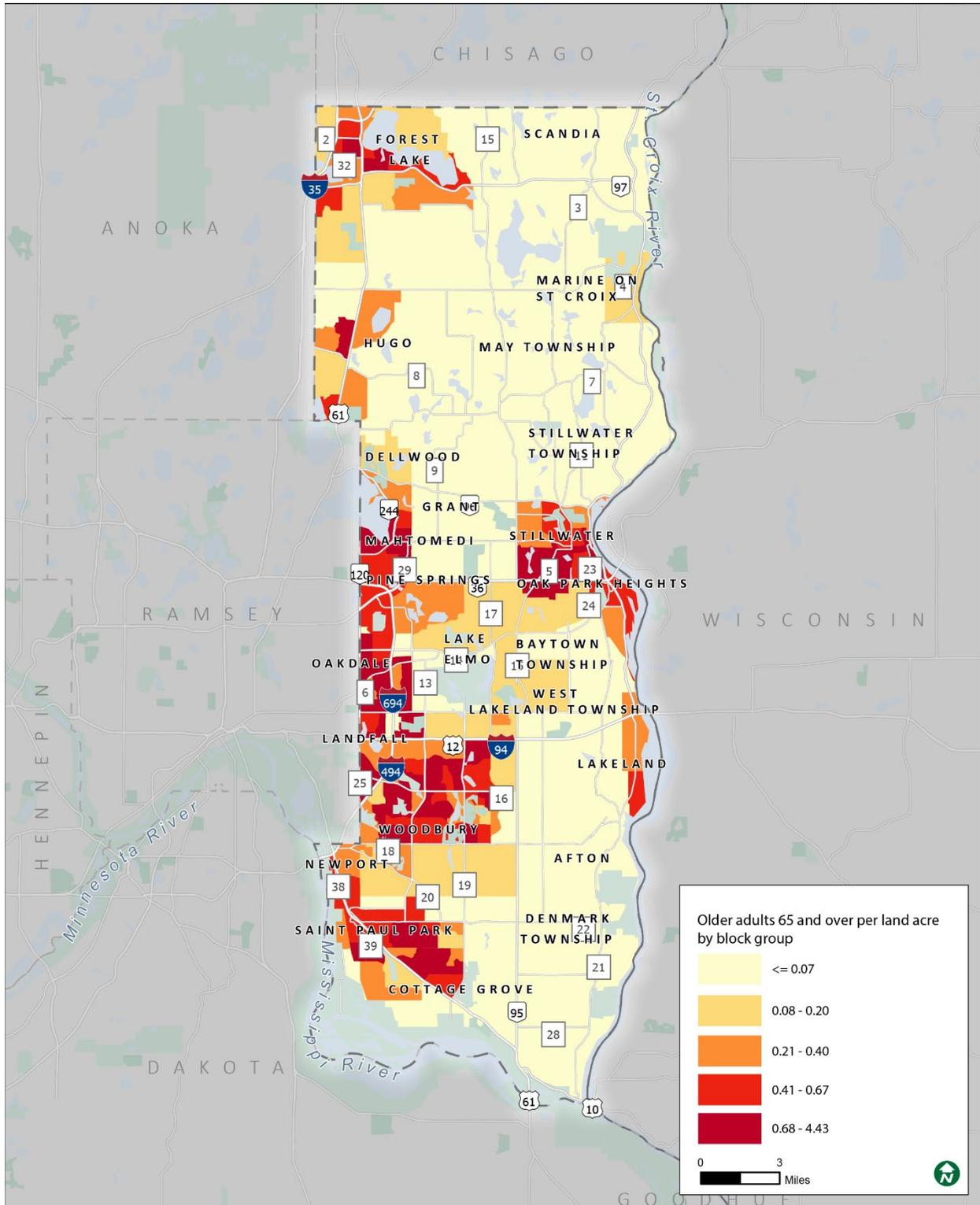


Figure 8. Density of Population 80 and Over

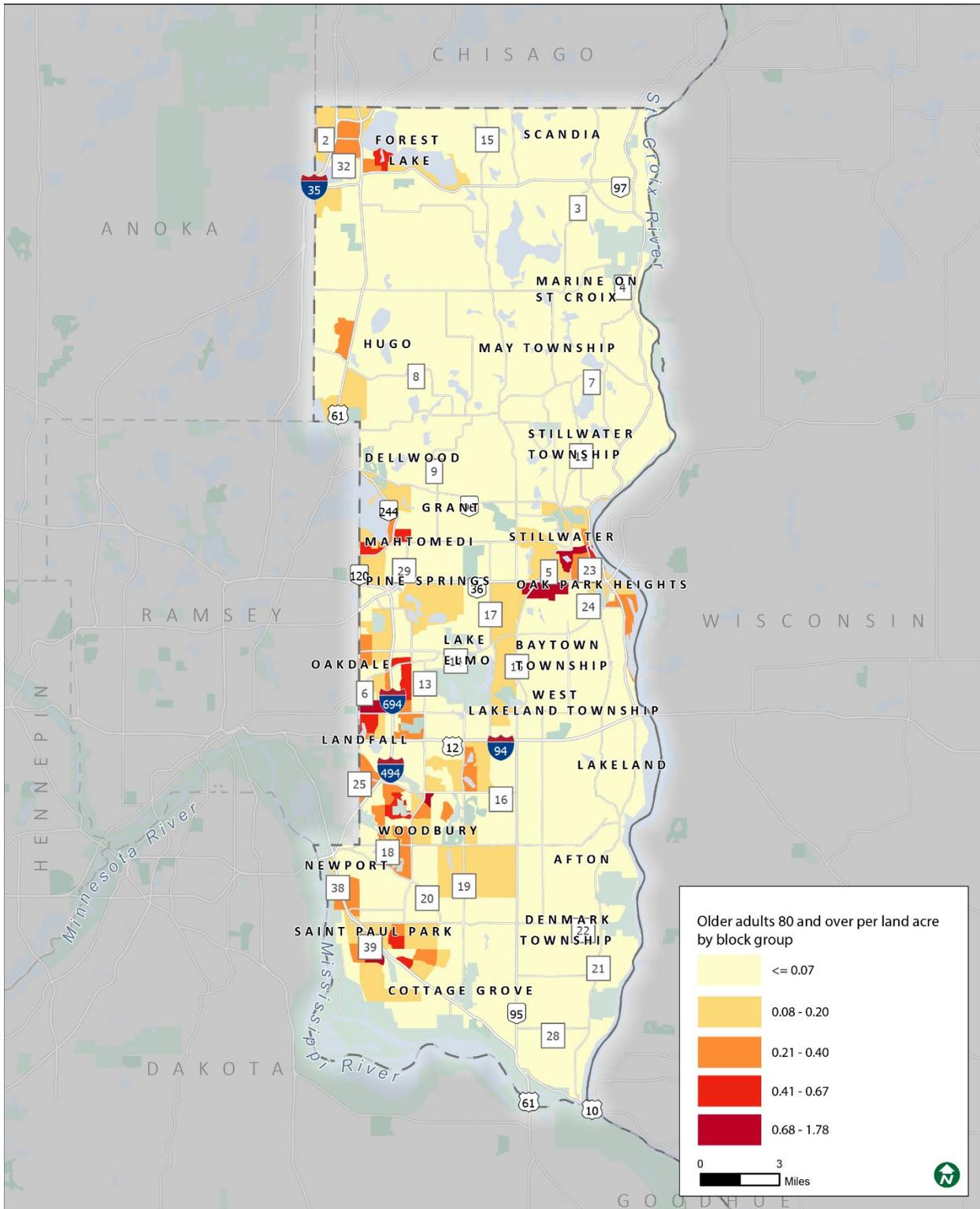


Figure 9. Youth Population Density

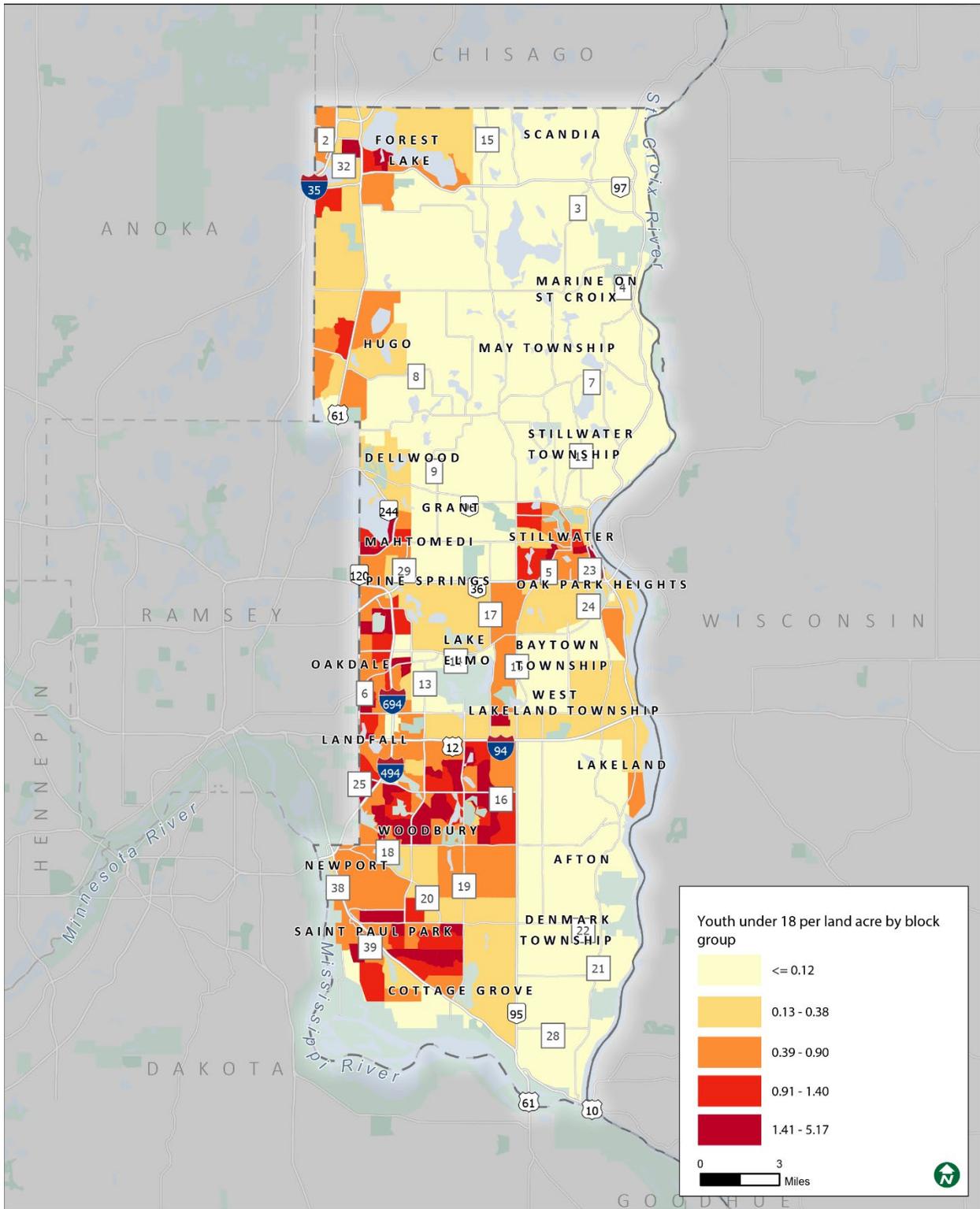
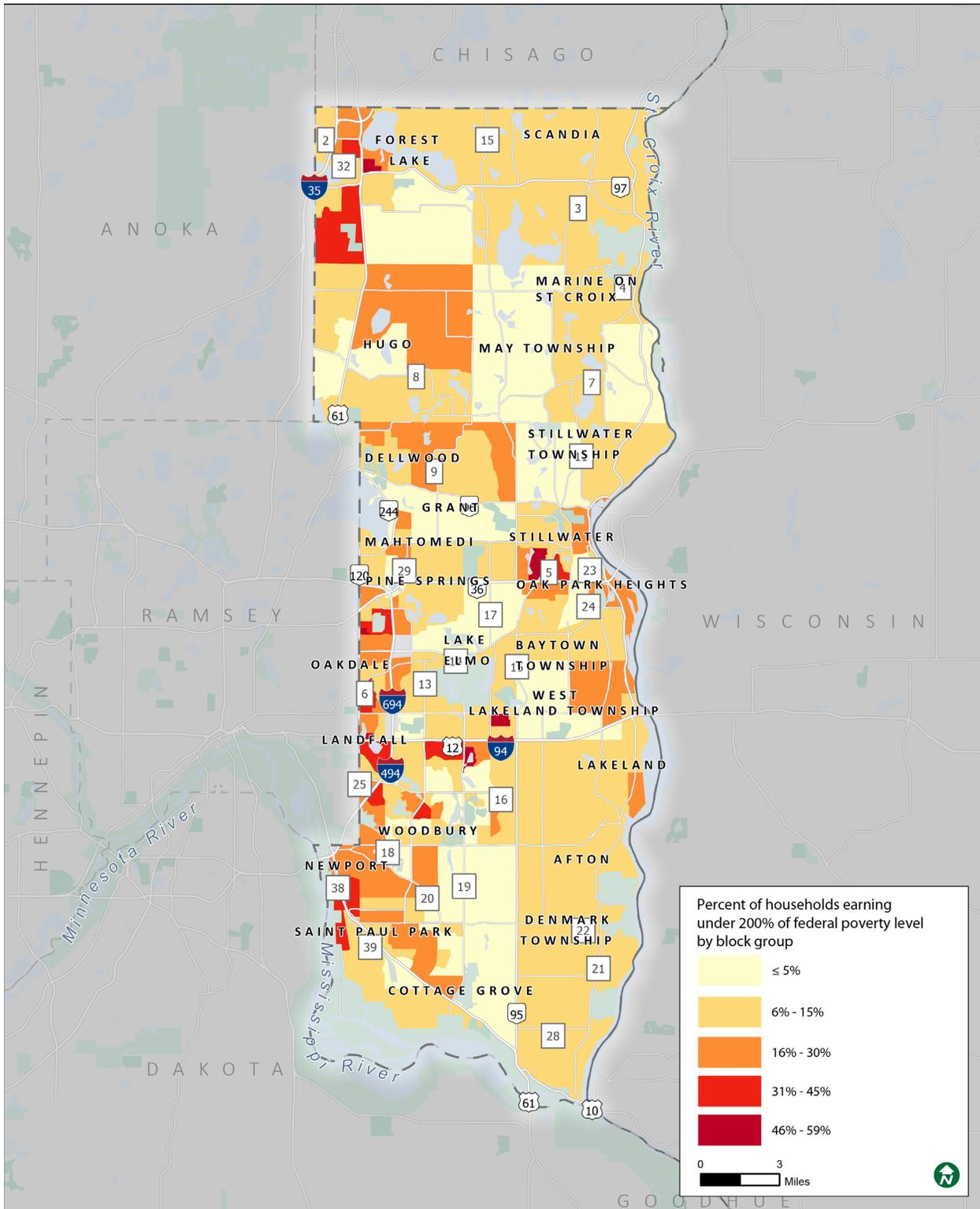


Figure 11. Low-Income Household Density



Zero-Vehicle Households

Households without a vehicle are far likelier to use transit than households with at least one vehicle. Although income and vehicle availability are closely related, zero-vehicle households independently indicate a high transit propensity. There are strong pockets of zero-vehicle households in central Washington County where there are not high concentrations of low-income households or high population density (Figure 2). These include southwest Scandia, northeast Lake Elmo, and northwest Grant (Figure 12). There is also a high zero-vehicle and low-income household presence in Woodbury, west Forest Lake, west Hugo, and on the west edge of the county that stretches from northwest Woodbury through Mahtomedi.

Limited English Proficiency Households

Research shows that households with limited English proficiency are more likely to be lower-income households with fewer assets.⁹ In turn this makes limited English proficiency households less likely to own a vehicle and more likely to depend on transit.

In Washington County, relative to total population, limited English proficiency households have high concentrations in northwest Forest Lake, parts of south Hugo, south Saint Paul Park, northwest Cottage Grove, north Oakdale, and south Stillwater (Figure 13).

Foreign-Born Populations

According to an article in the Journal of Public Transportation by Evelyn Blumenberg and Alexandra Elizabeth Evans, foreign-born populations have been found to be transit riders disproportionately in comparison to native-born commuters.¹⁰ In Washington County, foreign-born residents are most concentrated in Forest Lake, Woodbury, Stillwater, and Cottage Grove (Figure 14). Their distribution is broadly similar to the population as a whole (Figure 2).

Female Head of Household

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, households led by women are more likely to be households led by a single parent.¹¹ Single-parent households are more likely to be single-income households and in turn lower-income households, and this should also be considered with the fact that women are generally paid less by the hour than men.¹²

⁹ The Importance of English Proficiency in Financial Wellbeing. [https://www.ebri.org/docs/default-source/fast-facts-\(public\)/ff-495-englishproficiency1-14mar24.pdf?sfvrsn=7d62072f_3](https://www.ebri.org/docs/default-source/fast-facts-(public)/ff-495-englishproficiency1-14mar24.pdf?sfvrsn=7d62072f_3)

¹⁰ The Case of Immigrants and Public Transit. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1077291X22002235>

¹¹ Mothers Maintain 80% of Single-Parent Family Groups. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/americas-families-and-living-arrangements.html>.

¹² Pew Research Center, Gender pay gap in U.S. has narrowed slightly over 2 decades (2025). <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/03/04/gender-pay-gap-in-us-has-narrowed-slightly-over-2-decades/>

In Washington County, relative to total population, there is a high concentration of female householders in central and north Oakdale, west Hugo, northwest Forest Lake, south Stillwater, and Oak Park Heights (Figure 15).

Figure 12. Zero-Vehicle Household Density

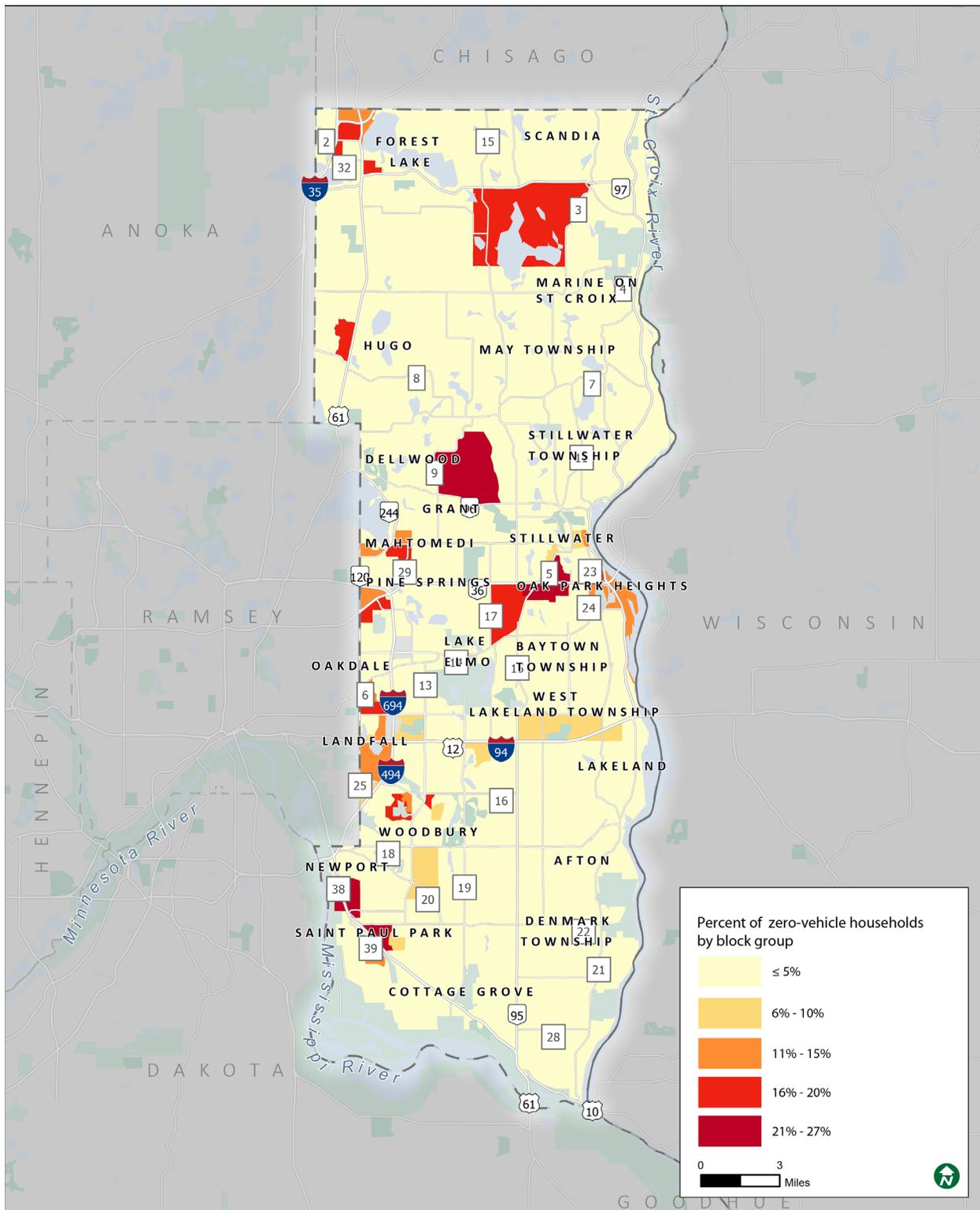


Figure 13. Limited English Proficiency Household Density

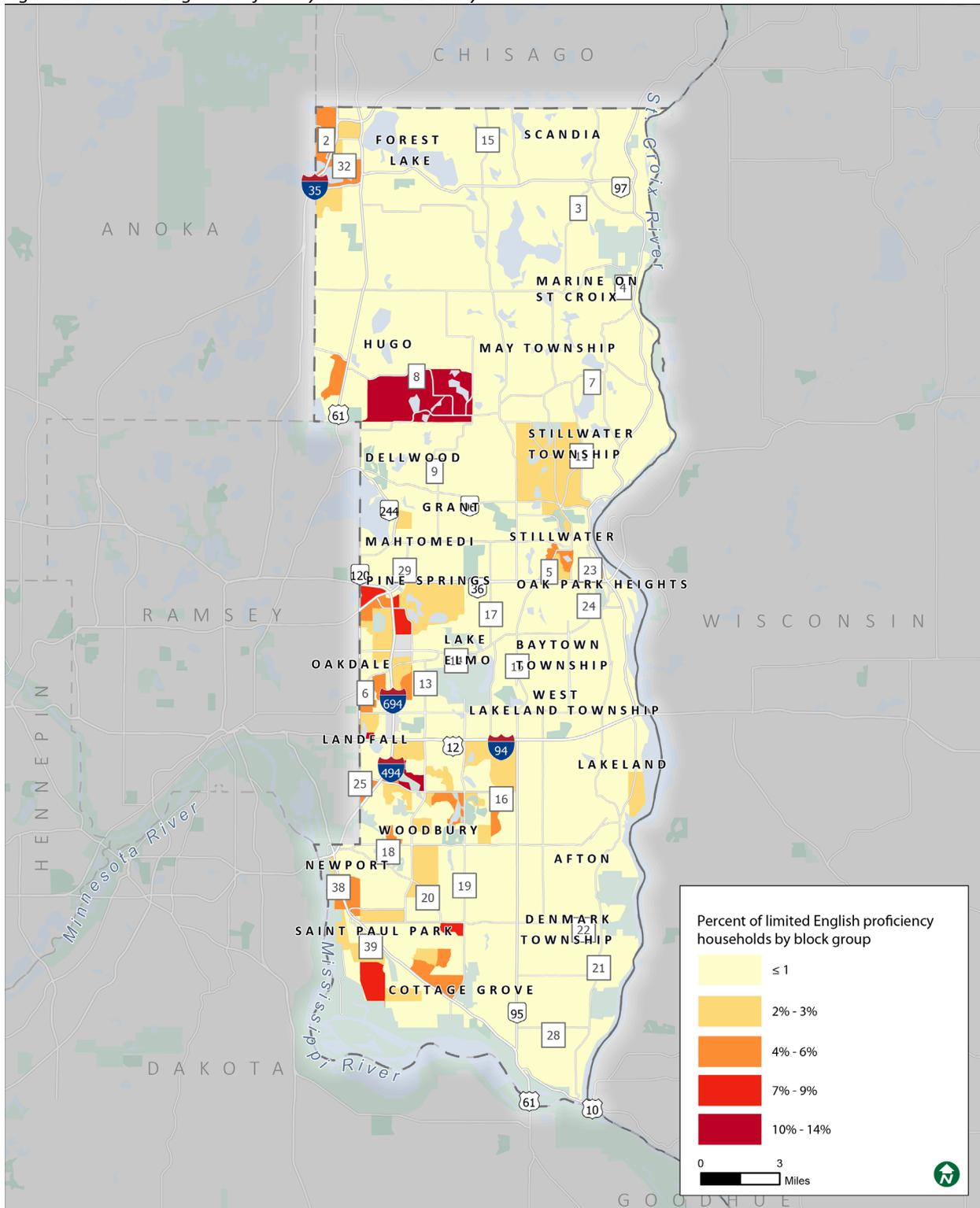
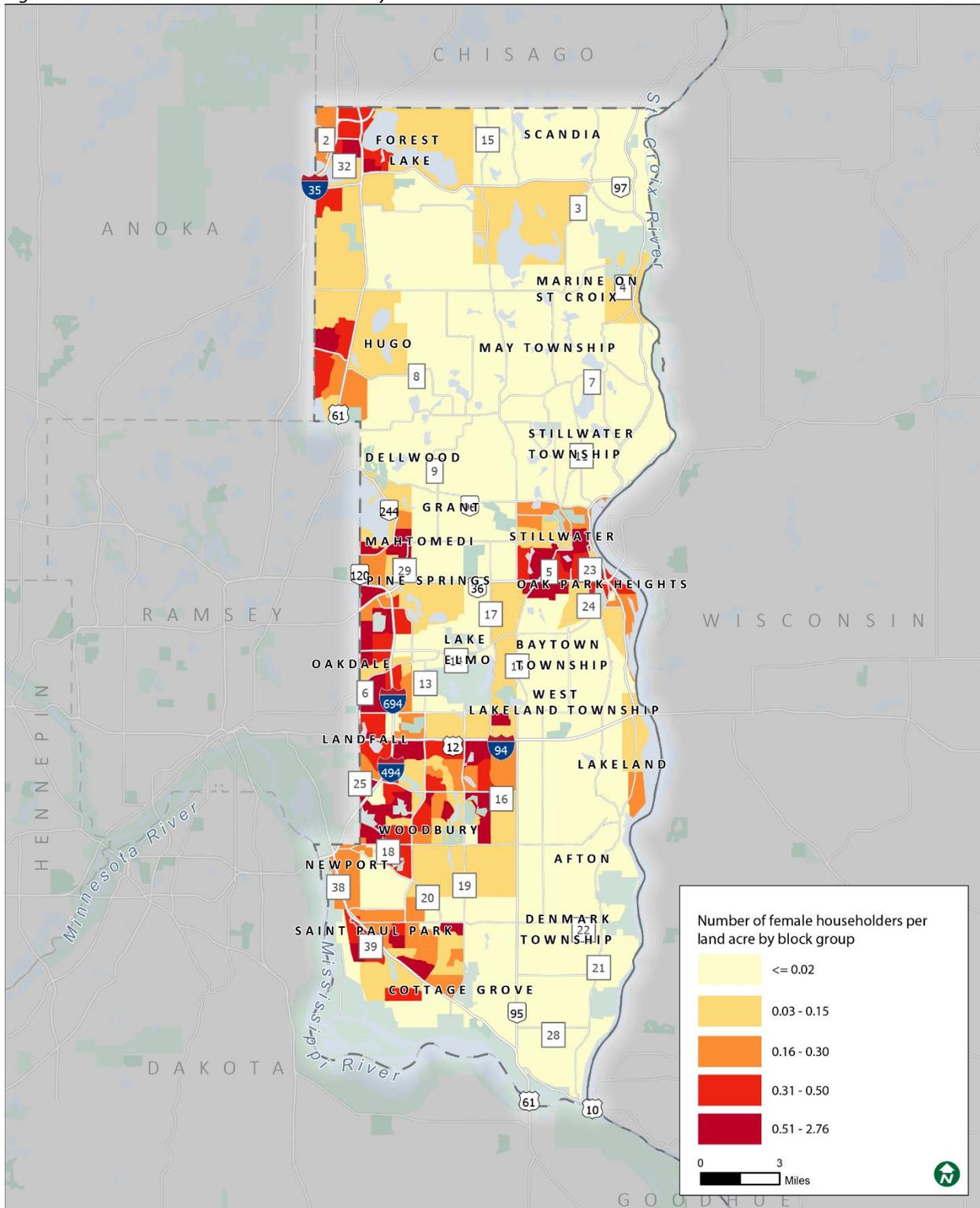


Figure 15. Female-Headed Household Density



Population of Color

According to the Pew Research Center, people of color living in urban areas have a higher likelihood of using transit compared to white people living in urban areas.¹³ Race and ethnicity are often indicators of transit propensity.

The geographic concentration of people of color throughout Washington County is similar to that of the total population. Nevertheless, there is a high proportion of people of color relative to total population in Cottage Grove, Oakdale, west Woodbury, and northwest Forest Lake (Figure 16).

Renter-Occupied Housing Units

In comparison to homeowners, renters are more likely to be lower-income and in turn are more likely to be transit-dependent.

In Washington County, there is a high population of renters relative to the total population in west Hugo, west Forest Lake, south and west Stillwater, Bayport, and the west edge of the county stretching from Saint Paul Park to Mahtomedi (Figure 17).

¹³ Anderson, Monica. "Who relies on public transit in the U.S." Pew Research Center. (2016)
<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/04/07/who-relies-on-public-transit-in-the-u-s/>

Figure 16. Density of Population of Color

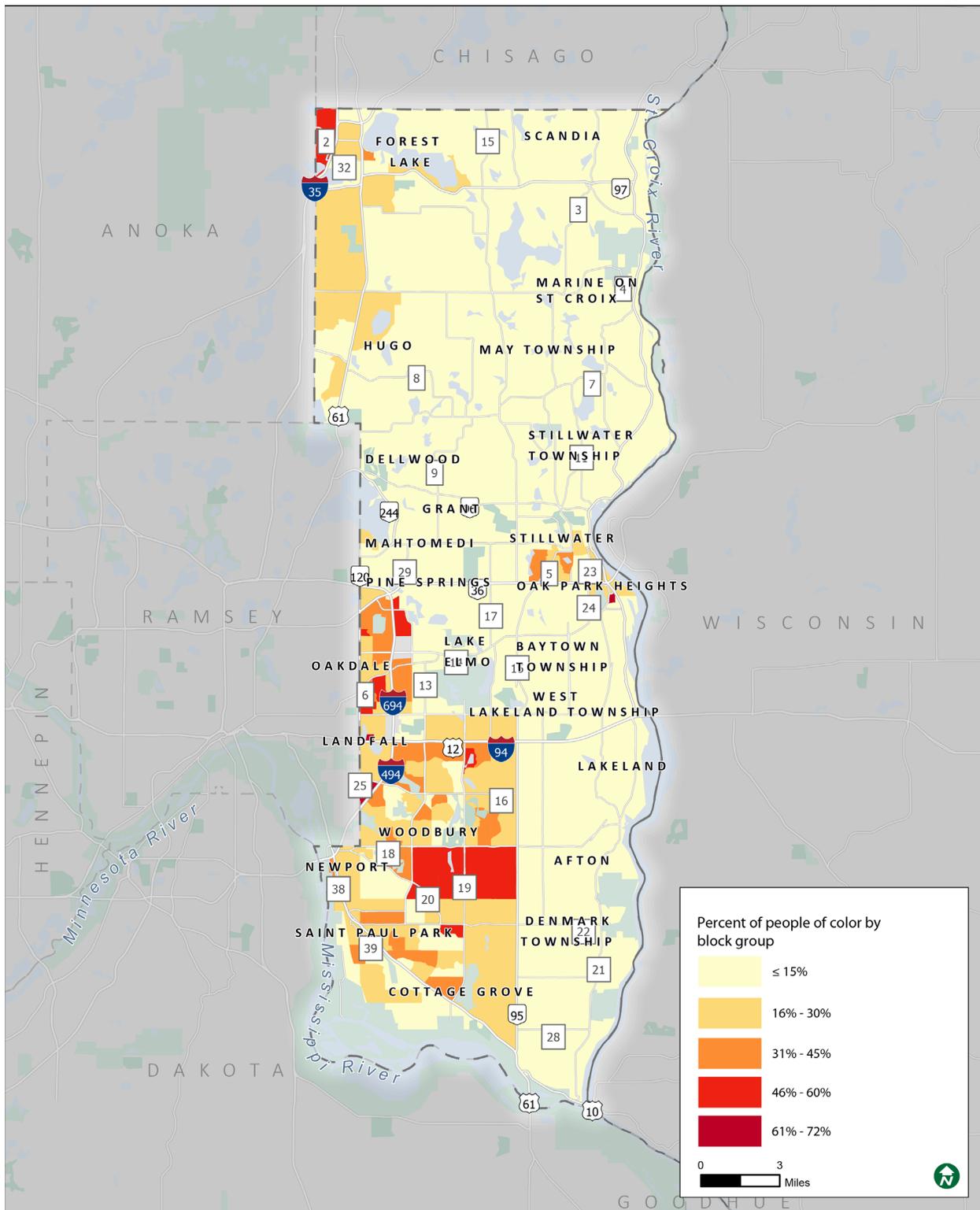
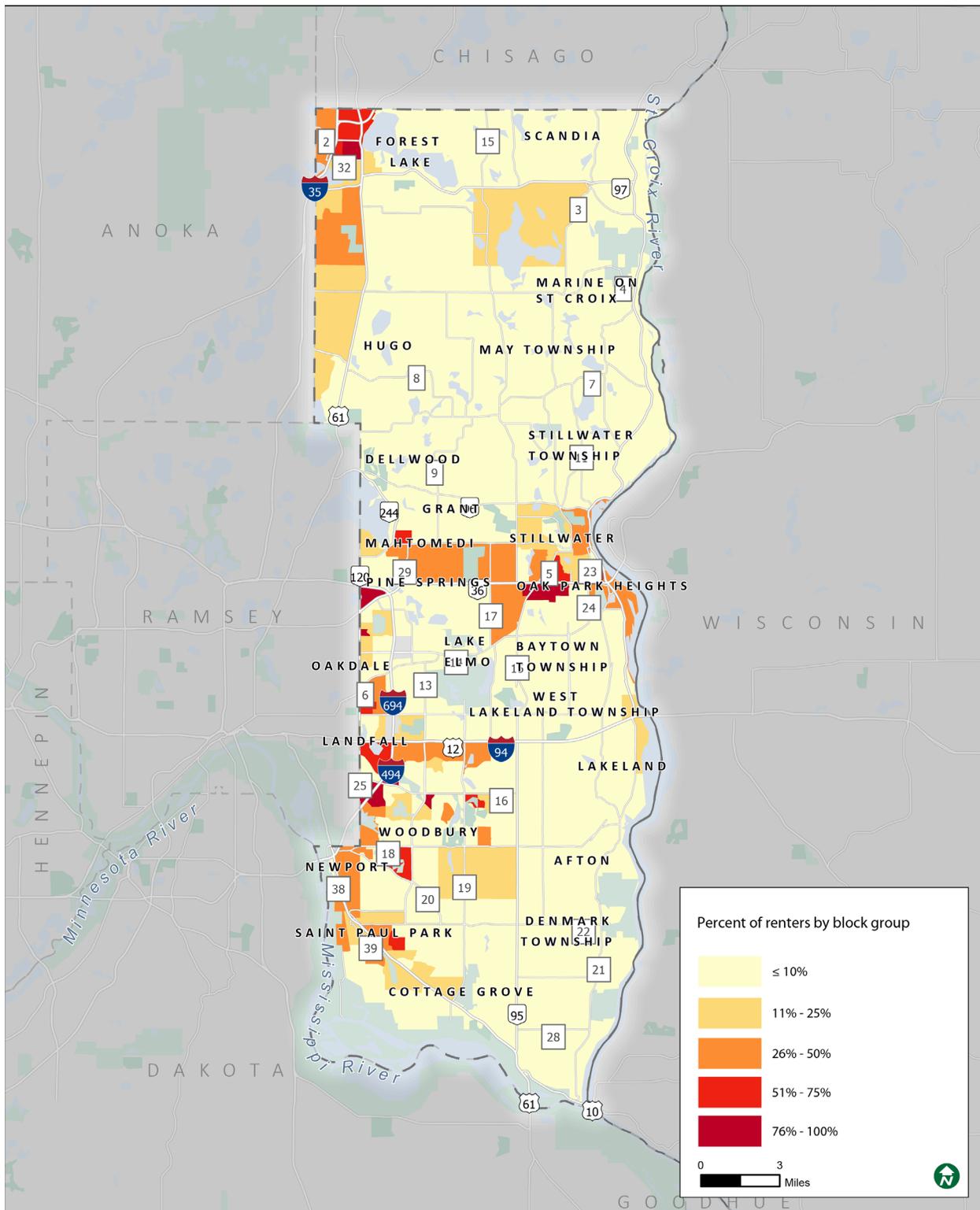


Figure 17. Renter Population Density



Trip Generators and Travel Patterns

Understanding the key trip generators in Washington County is essential for planning purposes. The following tables highlight major trip generators across the county, including large employers (Table 1), colleges and universities (Table 2), retail hubs (Table 3), and healthcare facilities (Table 4).

Figure 18 presents a broader overview of community destinations, encompassing retail centers, recreational sites, libraries, medical facilities, activity hubs, and institutions of higher education.¹⁴ Most of these destinations are concentrated in areas with higher population and job densities—particularly in the southwestern region of the county and in the cities of Stillwater, Oak Park Heights, and Forest Lake.

Table 1. Major Employers in Washington County, FY 2024

Company	Location	Employees	% of Total Countywide Employment
Andersen Corporation	Bayport, Cottage Grove	5,700	4.24%
Independent School District 833	Cottage Grove, Newport, St. Paul Park, Woodbury	2,513	1.87%
Bailey Nurseries, Inc	Newport	1,800	1.34%
Independent School District 622	North St. Paul, Maplewood, Oakdale	1,550	1.15%
Wal-Mart	Forest Lake, Oak Park Heights, Woodbury, and Cottage Grove	1,169	0.87%
Washington County, Government	Various	1,127	0.84%
Independent School District 831	Forest Lake	1,085	0.81%
Independent School District 834	Stillwater	1,029	0.77%
Target	Cottage Grove, Forest Lake, Stillwater, Woodbury, and Oakdale	883	0.66%
Total (among these employers)		15,856	13.67%

Source: Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for Washington County, 2024.

¹⁴ The job and activity center data was compiled by Met Council. It includes contiguous area where there are at least 1,000 jobs and the employment density is at least 10 jobs per acre. The data set was compiled in 2010.

Table 2. College and Universities in Washington County

Name	Location	Enrollment
Century College	White Bear Lake	8,203
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota—Oakdale Center	Oakdale	4,701 (total enrollment – limited activity in Oakdale)

Table 3. Major Retail Centers in Washington County

Name	Location	Retailers
TH 36 Commercial Strip	Oak Park Heights and Stillwater	~75 (combination of various shopping centers and freestanding stores)
Tamarack Village	Woodbury	60
Woodbury Lakes	Woodbury	52
Valley Creek Mall	Woodbury	25

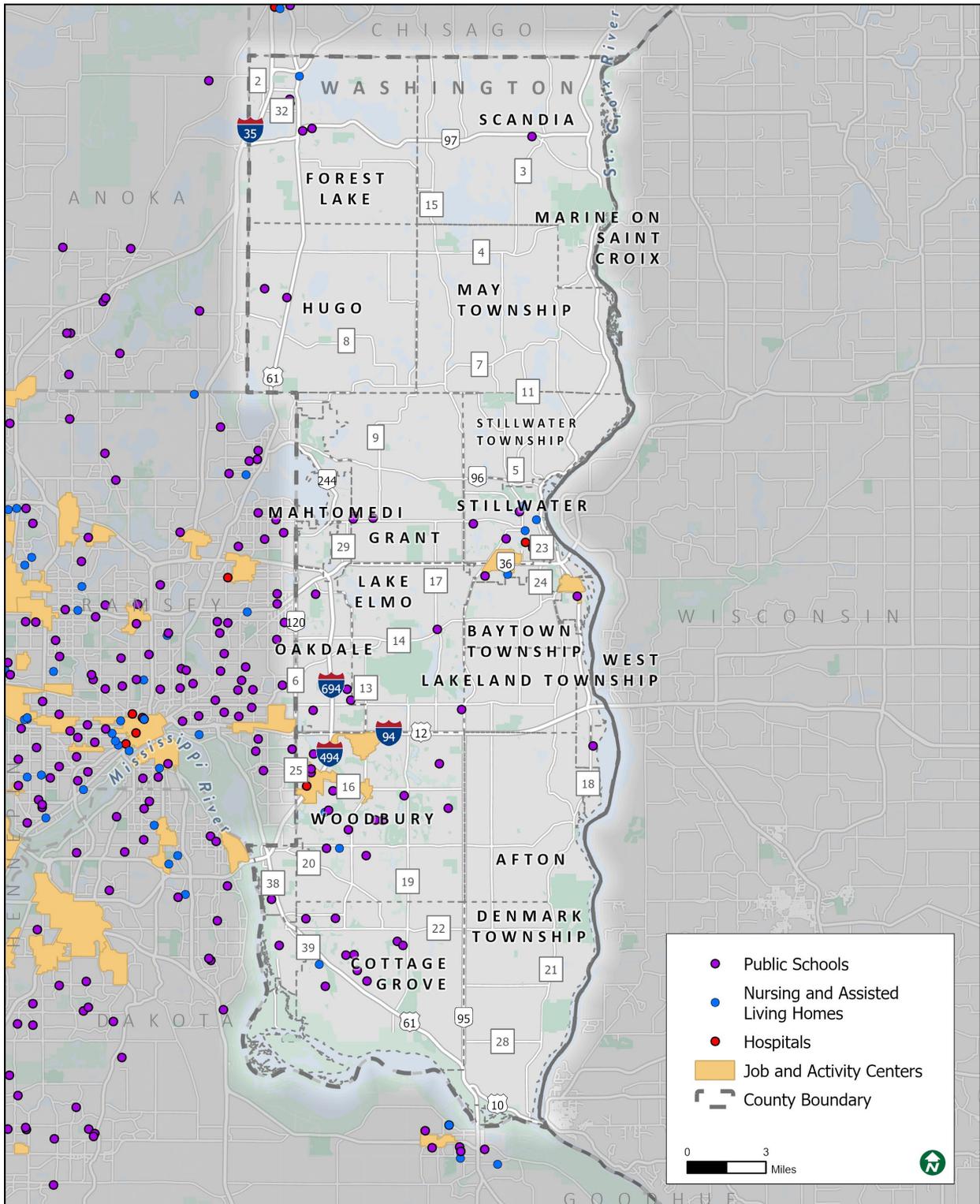
Table 4. Major Medical Centers Serving Washington County

Name	Location	Beds
United Hospital	Saint Paul	556
Regions Hospital	Saint Paul	510
Minneapolis VA Health Care System	Minneapolis	309
Woodwinds Health Campus	Woodbury	86
Lakeview Hospital	Stillwater	68
Fairview Lakes Medical Center	Wyoming	55
Maplewood VA clinic	Maplewood	N/A

Travel Behavior Inventory

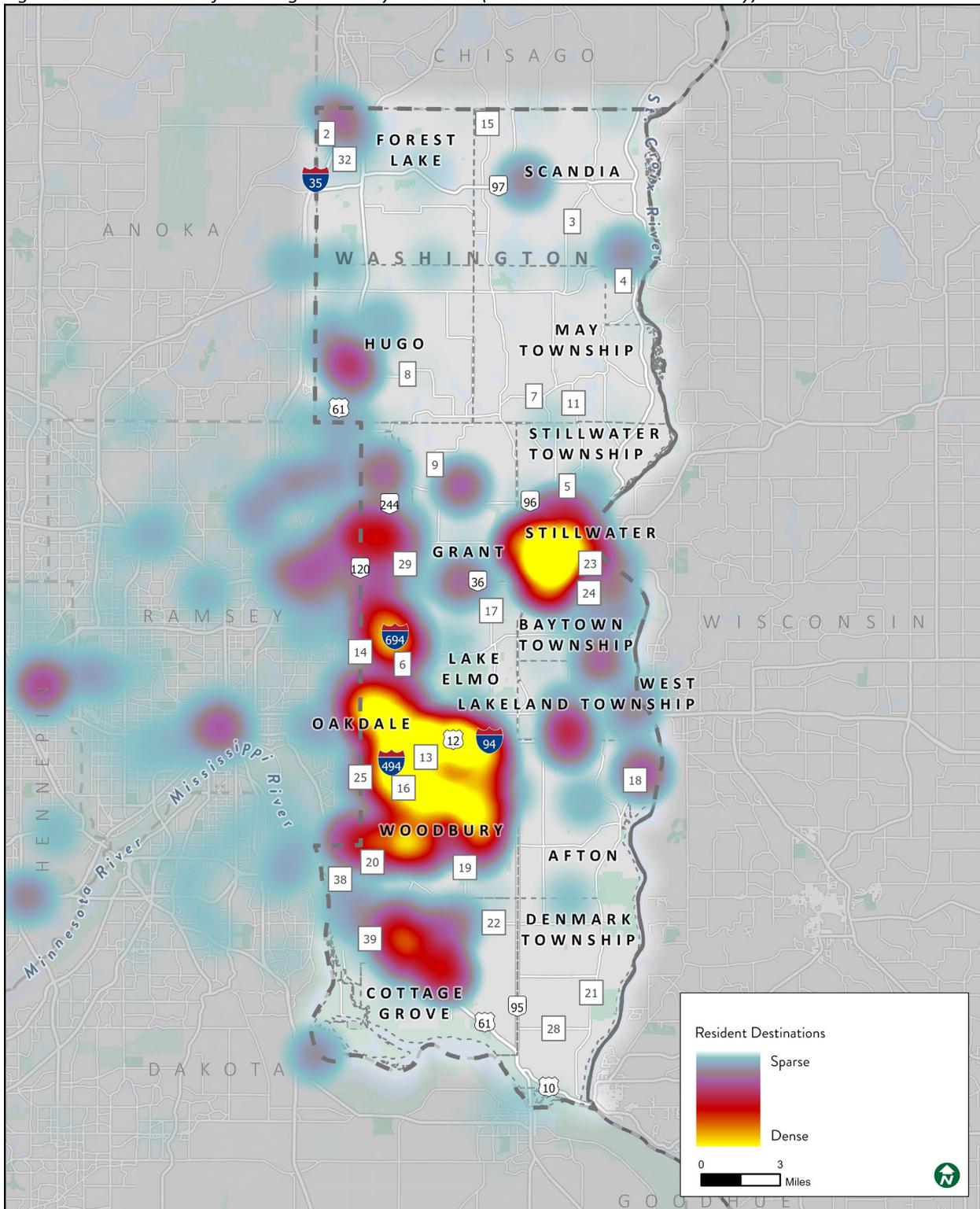
Data from the Metropolitan Council’s study of regional travel behavior offer some insight into actual travel patterns in Washington County. Among residents of Washington County, the top destinations are the population centers of Woodbury, Oakdale and Stillwater (Figure 19). Noticeable destination clusters also include Forest Lake, Hugo, Cottage Grove, Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and the Minneapolis-Saint Paul airport. These patterns are largely consistent with the trip generators identified in Figure 18. However, the patterns illustrated in Figure 19 should be read at a very high level. While the largest hotspots are meaningful, smaller hotspots may be the result of one or two households recording a large number of trips in their travel diaries. Altogether the map represents travel diaries by 415 individuals.

Figure 18. General Destinations for Washington County Residents



Sources: Metropolitan Council (Job and Activity Centers, 2010); Homeland Infrastructure Foundation-Level Data (2025)

Figure 19. Destinations of Washington County Residents (2022 Travel Behavior Inventory)



Source: 2022 Travel Behavior Inventory

Cross-Border Commute Flows

As mentioned earlier, the LEHD database offers data on where workers live in relation to where they work. The 2018 Transit Needs Study found that most commutes were cross-county; this continues to be the case in the most recently available LEHD data from 2022.

The previous Transit Needs Study identified the top seven destinations for workers living in Washington County. While the list of top seven counties has not changed since then, there appears to have been a rebalancing of work destinations between Ramsey and Hennepin counties: in 2014, the top work destination by far was Ramsey County, with one-third of job locations; however, in 2022 there was essentially a tie between Hennepin and Ramsey counties (Table 5). About a quarter of employees living in Washington County also work there.

Table 5. County of Destination for Commute Trips Starting in Washington County

County	2022 Number	2022 Share	2014 Share
Ramsey	36,202	30%	34%
Hennepin	36,212	29%	26%
Washington	29,653	24%	24%
Dakota	11,065	9%	9%
Anoka	5,685	5%	4%
St. Croix (WI)	2,158	2%	2%
Chisago	1,179	1%	1%

Similarly, the 2018 study identified the origin counties for workers employed in Washington County. Compared to the earlier study, the top 10 counties of origin (excluding Washington County) are broadly similar, but the proportions have changed. A relatively smaller proportion are commuting from Ramsey County, whereas a larger proportion are commuting from Hennepin, St. Croix, and Anoka counties (Table 6).

Table 6. County of Origin for Commute Trips Ending in Washington County

County	2022 Number	2022 Share	2014 Share
Ramsey	14,499	31%	45%
Dakota	7,381	16%	18%
Hennepin	6,722	15%	8%
St. Croix (WI)	5,829	13%	8%
Anoka	4,881	11%	6%
Chisago	3,000	7%	6%
Polk (WI)	1,418	3%	4%

County	2022 Number	2022 Share	2014 Share
Wright	829	2%	Not in top 10
Pierce (WI)	790	2%	2%
Sherburne	691	2%	Not in top 10

Note: In the 2014 data, Scott and Carver counties were in the top 10 origins with 1% each.

Transit Availability, Needs, and Gaps

Using the demographic information detailed in the community overview, this section identifies where transit is available, where it is most needed, and where there is a mismatch between the two. In order to do that, it first describes the transportation services currently available in Washington County. Following that, it introduces the concepts of a Transit Propensity Index and a Transit Supply Index. By combining the two, it is possible to identify the largest gaps between what is needed and what is available.

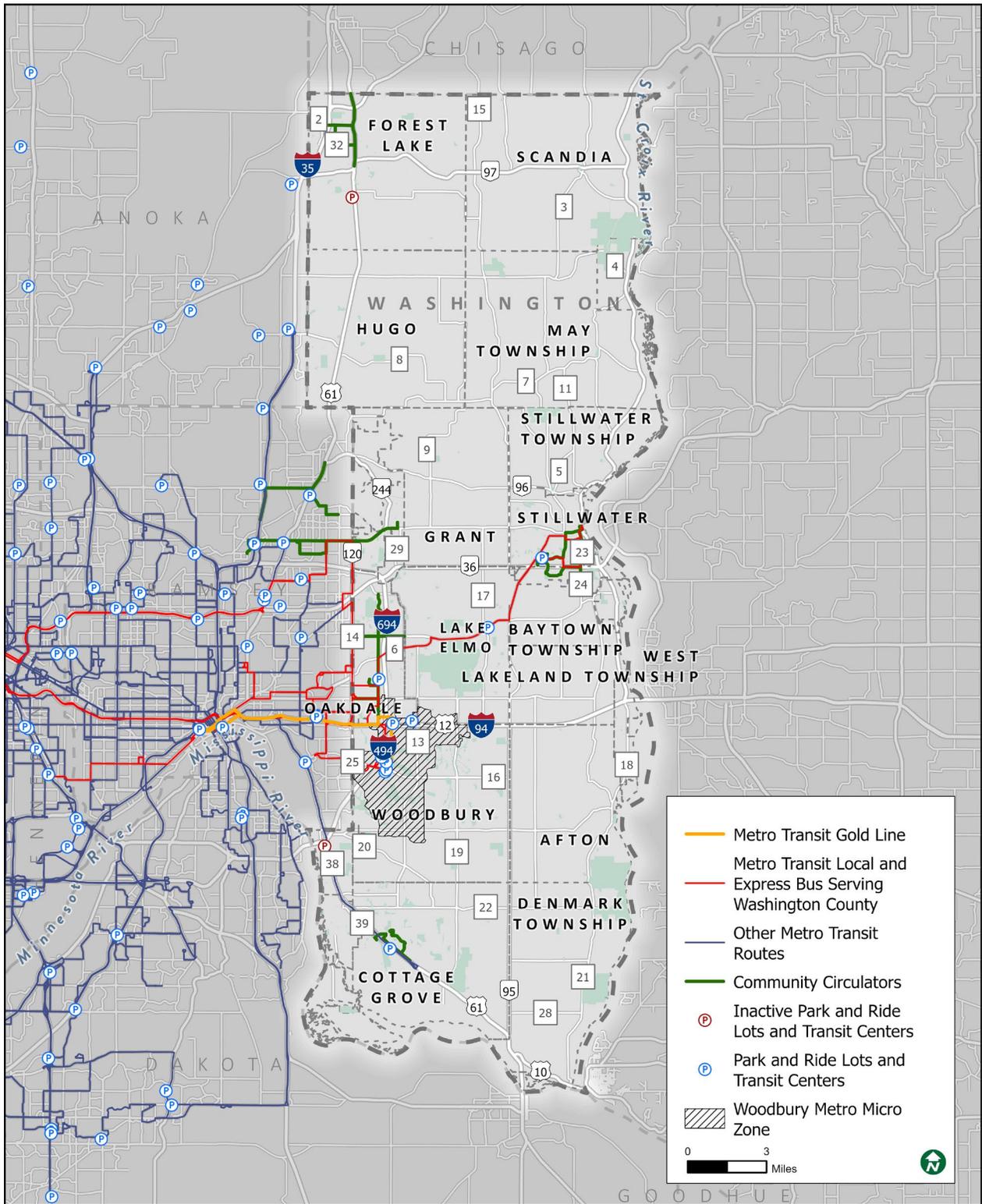
Inventory of Current and Planned Transportation Services

Public transportation in Washington County (and through much of the metro area) is administered by the Metropolitan Council. The Metropolitan Council's Transportation Division is divided into two bodies:

- **Metro Transit** operates fixed-route transit services in the Twin Cities area, including bus and passenger rail, and oversees Metro Vanpool and the new Metro micro microtransit program.
- **Metropolitan Transportation Services (MTS)** conducts long-range transportation planning, develops the short-range capital improvement program, and operates demand-responsive transportation services such as Metro Mobility and Transit Link.

Most service provided by the Met Council in Washington County is dial-a-ride for the general public as demand cannot be served on regular-route transit in the county's more suburban and rural areas. Figure 20 shows where transit service is provided in Washington County.

Figure 20. Existing Public Transportation Services in Washington County (September 2025)



Metro Transit

Fixed Route Service

Metro Transit operates fixed-route bus services, park-and-ride facilities, and regional commuter rail. Table 1 lists the Metro Transit routes that serve Washington County. Additionally, the table has a column listing any changes to the existing service that are included in the agency’s Network Now Concept Plan (described in an earlier section). All changes included in the concept plan are scheduled to be implemented by 2027. All routes connect Washington County to Saint Paul or Minneapolis; Metro Transit does not currently provide any local circulator service exclusively within Washington County, though planned route 221 will serve exclusively within the county between Landfall and Oakdale.

Bus rapid transit (BRT) is a notable recent addition to the list of fixed-route services operating in the county. METRO Gold Line began operations in March 2025. It is a 10-mile BRT corridor operated by Metro Transit, connecting downtown St. Paul with Woodbury through Ramsey and Washington counties, primarily along I-94. Frequent service runs all day, every day: buses every 10 minutes during peak hours and 15 minutes off-peak, with full span service from early morning to late night. The Gold Line enhances regional mobility by linking major job centers, housing, education, and transit hubs. In Washington County, the Gold Line stops at Greenway Avenue and Helmo Avenue in Oakdale, as well as Tamarack Road, Queens Drive, and Woodlane Drive stations in Woodbury. Metro Transit plans to extend the Gold Line from St. Paul to Minneapolis by 2027.

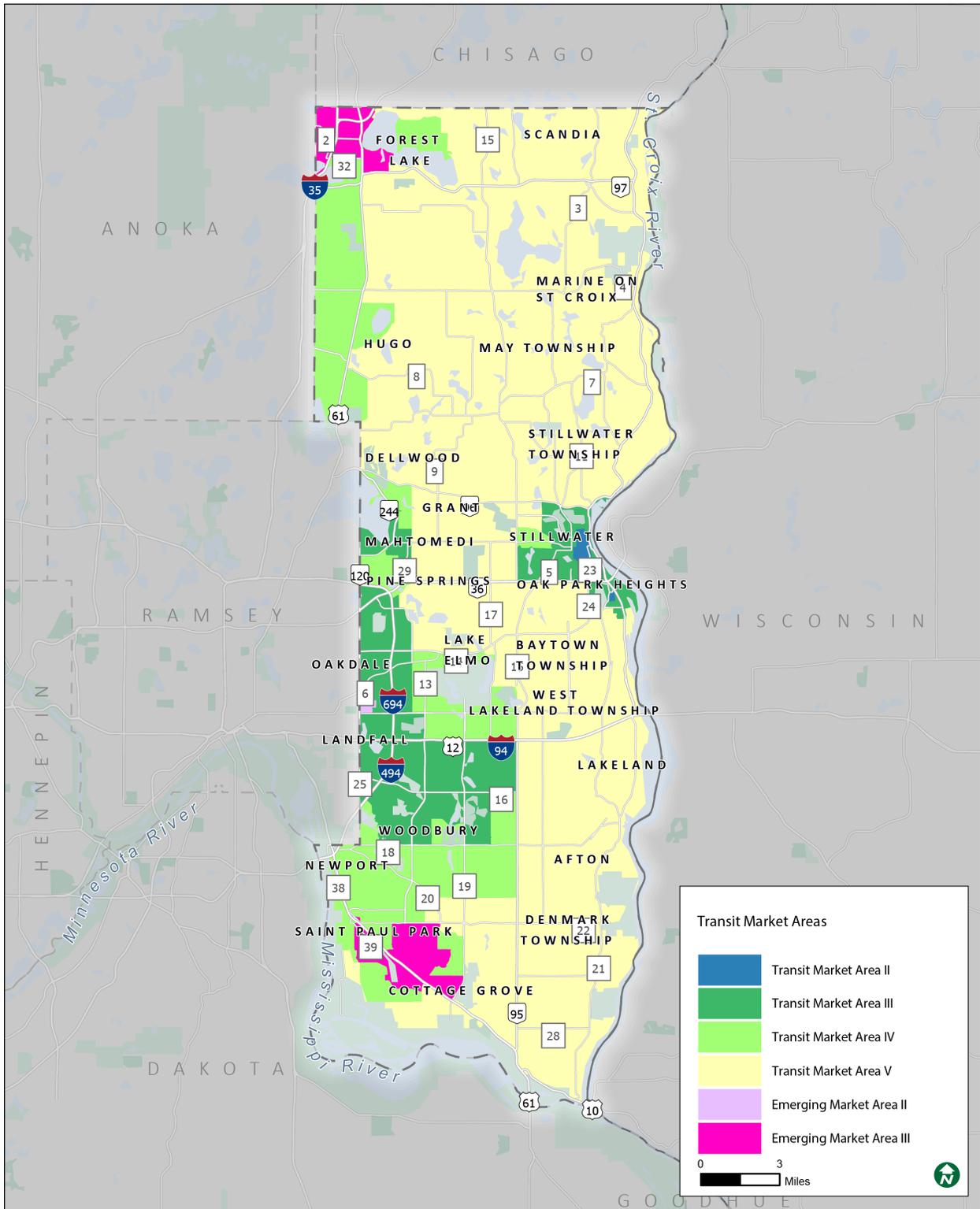
Table 2 shows the span and frequency of Metro Transit routes in Washington County. Due to the limited number of local routes, service is concentrated in the morning and evening commute periods, with limited service spans on express routes (typically 3-4 hours) and limited frequency (typically every 30 minutes). Only three routes — 70, 74, and 323 — provide all-day service on weekdays, as well as some weekend service. The remaining routes serving Washington County only provide peak-hour commuter service during weekdays and the 94 only provides one eastbound and one westbound run. Note the times listed in Table 2 are route averages and may not apply to Washington County portion of service. Refer to route schedules at metrotransit.org for details.

Metro Transit’s bus routes are classified by role and the Market Areas they serve (see Figure 21 and Table 7). Those that operate along the periphery of Washington County or within the county include the following classifications:

- Local
 - Local Bus: Core Local routes typically serve the denser urban areas of Market Areas I and II, usually providing access to a downtown or major activity center along important commercial corridors.
 - Supporting Local Bus: Supporting Local routes are typically designed to provide crosstown connections within Market Areas I and II. Typically, these routes do not serve a downtown but play an important role connecting to Core Local routes.
 - Suburban Local Bus: Suburban Local routes typically operate in Market Areas II and III in a suburban context and are often less productive than Core Local routes. These routes serve an important role in providing a basic-level of transit coverage throughout the region.

- Commuter and Express Bus: Commuter and Express Bus routes primarily operate during peak periods to serve commuters to downtown or a major employment center. These routes typically operate non-stop on highways for portions of the route between picking up passengers in residential areas or at park-and-ride facilities and dropping them off at a major destination.
- BRT: Guideway BRT operates at high frequency during the day and includes features such as widely spaced stops, offboard payment, level boarding, transit signal priority, and dedicated lanes. These features allow it to provide highly efficient bus service on major corridors.

Figure 21. Transit Market Areas



Source: Metropolitan Council

Table 7. Service Types and Peak-Hour Frequencies by Market Area

Route Type	Market Area I	Market Area II	Market Area III	Market Area IV	Market Area V
Core Local Bus	15"	30"	60"	-	-
Supporting Local Bus	30"	30"	60"	-	-
Suburban Local Bus	-	60"	60"	-	-
Arterial BRT	15"	15"	15"	-	-
Highway BRT	15"	15"	15"	-	-
Light Rail	15"	15"	15"	-	-
Commuter Express Bus	30"	30"	3 trips	3 trips	-
Commuter Rail	-	-	30"	30"	30"

Source: 2050 Transportation Policy Plan. Peak hour refers to weekdays 6-9 AM and 4-7 PM. Additional standards apply to other hours.

Table 8. List of Metro Transit Routes Serving Washington County

Route	From	To	Washington County Cities Served	Classification	Network Now Changes
74	Minneapolis	Oakdale (border)	Oakdale	Core local (limited stop in Washington County)	Route 74 will no longer serve Washington County.
219	Woodbury	White Bear Lake	White Bear Lake, Woodbury, Oakdale, Mahtomedi	Suburban local	Streamlined to operate along White Bear Ave. and Co. Rd. E and continue along Hwy. 120/Century Ave. with a new southern terminal in Woodbury. Connects to the Gold Line at the Maplewood and Queens Stations.
221*	Landfall	Oakdale	Oakdale, Landfall	Suburban local	New suburban local route in Landfall and Oakdale. Connection to the Gold Line is available at the Greenway Station.
270	Downtown Minneapolis	White Bear Lake	White Bear Lake, Mahtomedi, Willernie	Commuter	Route 270 will no longer serve Washington County.
291	Downtown Saint Paul	Stillwater	Stillwater	Commuter	New commuter route 291 will replace parts of 265 and 294. Local service in Stillwater and non-stop between Stillwater and Maplewood Mall. Route 291 connects to the Gold Line in Downtown Saint Paul, but not in Washington County.

Route	From	To	Washington County Cities Served	Classification	Network Now Changes
294	Downtown Saint Paul	Stillwater	Oakdale, Lake Elmo, Oak Park Heights, Stillwater	Commuter	Route 294 will be discontinued.
301*	Woodbury	Cottage Grove	Woodbury and Cottage Grove	Suburban Local	New suburban local route in Woodbury and Cottage Grove along Valley Creek Rd., Radio Dr./Hinton Ave., 80th St., E. Point Douglas Rd., 95th St., and Hadley Ave. between Woodlane Station (with a connection to the Gold Line) in Woodbury and Norris Square (retirement community) in Cottage Grove.
323	Saint Paul	Woodbury	Woodbury	Suburban local	No change. Direct connections to the Gold Line at the Maplewood Station in Washington County and the Sunray Station in Ramsey County.
354* ¹⁵	Mall of America	Woodbury	Newport, Woodbury	Express	New route 354 will connect Woodbury, Newport, South St. Paul, West St. Paul, and Inver Grove Heights with MSP. It will stop at Woodlane (providing a connection to the Gold Line) and Newport transit stations.
355	Downtown Minneapolis	Woodbury	Woodbury	Commuter	Frequency will be reduced to four trips during the morning and afternoon rush hours on weekdays. Connection to the Gold Line at Queens Station in Woodbury.
363	Downtown Minneapolis	Cottage Grove	Newport, Saint Paul Park, Cottage Grove	Commuter	One midday trip will be added between downtown Minneapolis, downtown St. Paul and Cottage Grove. Route 363 connects to the Gold Line in Downtown Saint Paul, but not in Washington County
Gold Line	Downtown Saint Paul	Woodbury	Oakdale, Woodbury	BRT	No change.

*Planned Route in Network Now

¹⁵ The plans for Route 354 were introduced by Metro Transit as Route 345 in the December 6, 2025 service change, <https://www.metrotransit.org/route-345>

Table 9. Existing Span* and Frequency (Weekday) of Metro Transit Routes Serving Washington County

Route	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Weekday Peak Frequency (min)	Weekday Midday Frequency (min)
74	5:03 AM – 12:42 AM	5:31 AM – 1:36 AM	5:31 AM - 1:36 AM	20	20
219	5:45 AM – 10:03PM	6:16 AM – 8:06 PM	-	30	30
270	3:17 PM – 5:53PM	-	-	30	-
294	4:08 PM – 5:19 PM (EB); 6:15 AM – 7:17 AM (WB)	-	-	1 trip	-
323	5:50 AM – 1:04 AM	6:24 AM – 1:03 AM	6:28 AM - 1:02 AM	30	30
355	3:17 PM – 5:59 PM (EB); 5:54 AM – 8:38 AM (WB)	-	-	15 – 30	-
363	6:15 AM – 8:15 AM (NB); 3:45 PM – 5:37 PM (SB)	-	-	30	-
Gold Line	5:11 AM – 12:45 AM	5:11 AM – 12:45 AM	5:11 AM - 12:45 AM	10	10

*Unless noted, spans are listed based on posted Eastbound or Northbound schedules.

While there are some minor changes proposed in Network Now, they do not substantially alter the availability of transit service in Washington County. Table 10 shows the proposed changes to the route frequencies proposed in Network Now. In some instances frequency is improved and in other instances, new service is added and some replaced altogether.

Table 10. Proposed Frequency of Metro Transit Routes Serving Washington County in Network Now

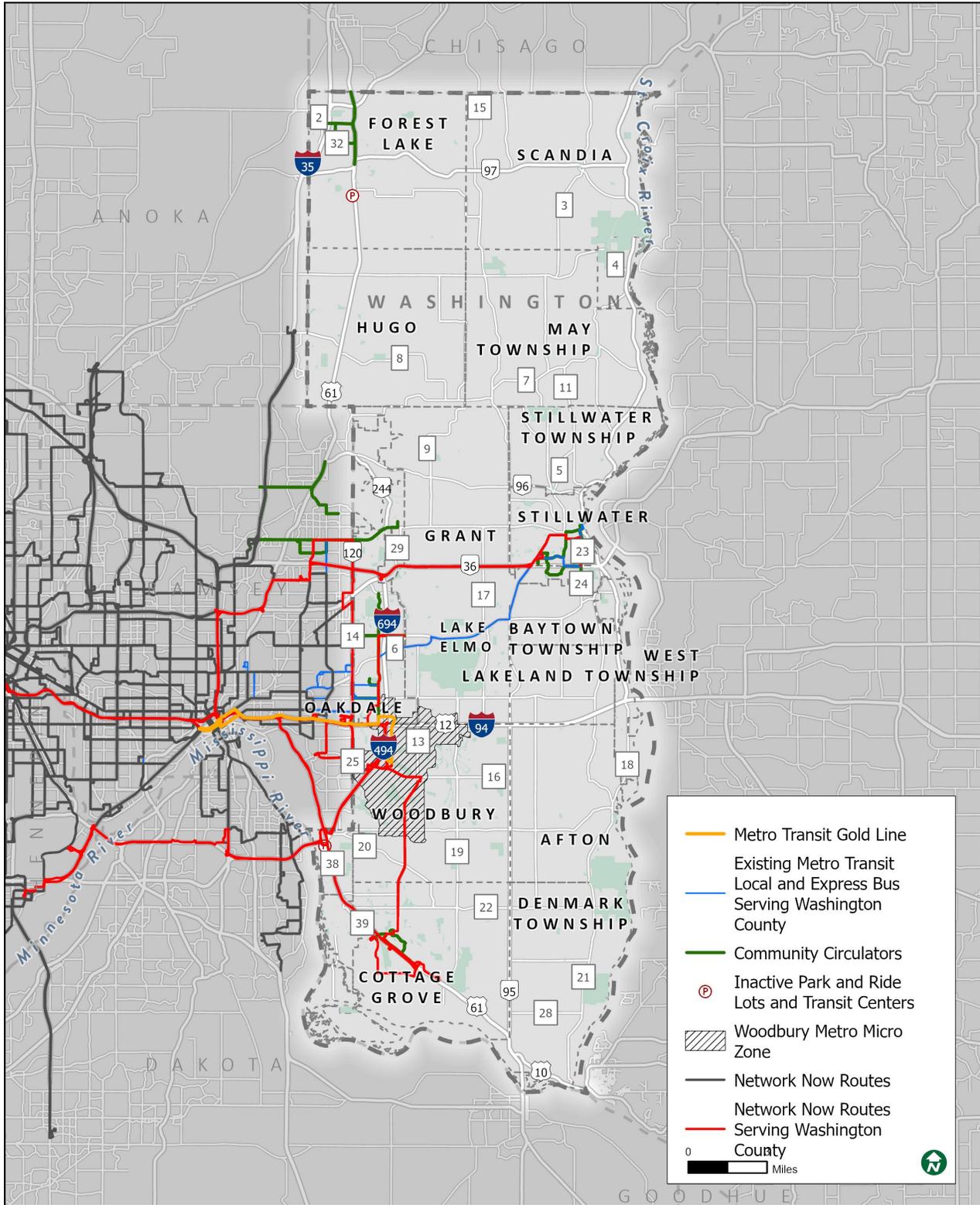
Route	Weekday Peak	Saturday Peak	Sunday Peak	Weekday Midday	Saturday Midday	Sunday Midday	Weekday Evening	Saturday Evening	Sunday Evening	Weekday Night	Saturday Night	Sunday Night
74	15	15 – 30	30	15	15	30	20 - 30	20 – 30	30	20 - 30	30	30
219	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	60	60	60	-	-
221	30	30	-	30	30	-	30	60	-	60	60	-
270	15	-	-	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
291	3 trips	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
294	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
301	60	-	-	60	-	-	60	-	-	-	-	-
323	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
354*	60	-	-	60	-	-	60	-	-	-	-	-
355	4 trips	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Route	Weekday Peak	Saturday Peak	Sunday Peak	Weekday Midday	Saturday Midday	Sunday Midday	Weekday Evening	Saturday Evening	Sunday Evening	Weekday Night	Saturday Night	Sunday Night
363	3 trips	-	-	1 trip	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gold	10	15	15	10	15	15	30	30	30	30	30	30

* The plans for Route 354 (planned in Network Now) were introduced by Metro Transit as Route 345 in the December 6, 2025 service change, <https://www.metrotransit.org/route-345>

Coverage changes are shown Metro Transit’s Network Now route updates in Washington County are also shown in Figure 22. With the exception of the discontinuation of Route 294 and addition of Routes 291 and 301, coverage changes within the county are minimal. All but two of the routes provide connections to the Gold Line in Washington County.

Figure 22. Metro Transit Network Now Service in Addition to Other Existing Public Transportation Services in Washington County (September 2025)



A summary of Metro Transit fares is shown in Table 11 below. It should be noted that weekday commuter express bus service, which is the predominant form of bus service in Washington County, is not discounted for youth or older adults; though it is discounted for Medicare cardholders and individuals with a state-issued disability ID.

Table 11. Summary of Metro Transit Fares as of June 2025

Classification	Local Bus / METRO	Express Bus		Downtown Zone	
		Non-Rush Hour	Rush Hour*	Nicollet Mall	Downtown Zone
Adults (13 – 64)	\$2.00	\$2.50	\$3.25	Free	\$0.50
Reduced Fare (Youth ages 6-12 / Seniors 65+ / Medicare card holders)	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$3.25	Free	\$0.50

*M-F, 6 – 9am & 3 – 6:30pm

Metro Micro

Metro micro is the Metropolitan Council’s shared ride, curb-to-curb microtransit service allowing customers to be picked up and dropped off at any location within a designated service area. Customers can request a trip by phone or using a smartphone app, like the experience of using private transportation services like Uber and Lyft. Trips are shared, which means that during any given ride, other individuals requesting service to or from nearby locations may also be picked up or dropped off. Metro micro uses ADA-accessible mini-buses to accommodate small groups. The program initially began as a 24-month pilot within a single north Minneapolis zone, and new pilot Metro micro zones in the Woodbury and Roseville areas opened in January 2025. Transfers between Metro micro and Metro Transit local buses are free and valid for 2.5 hours from the time of fare activation.

Metropolitan Transportation Service (MTS)

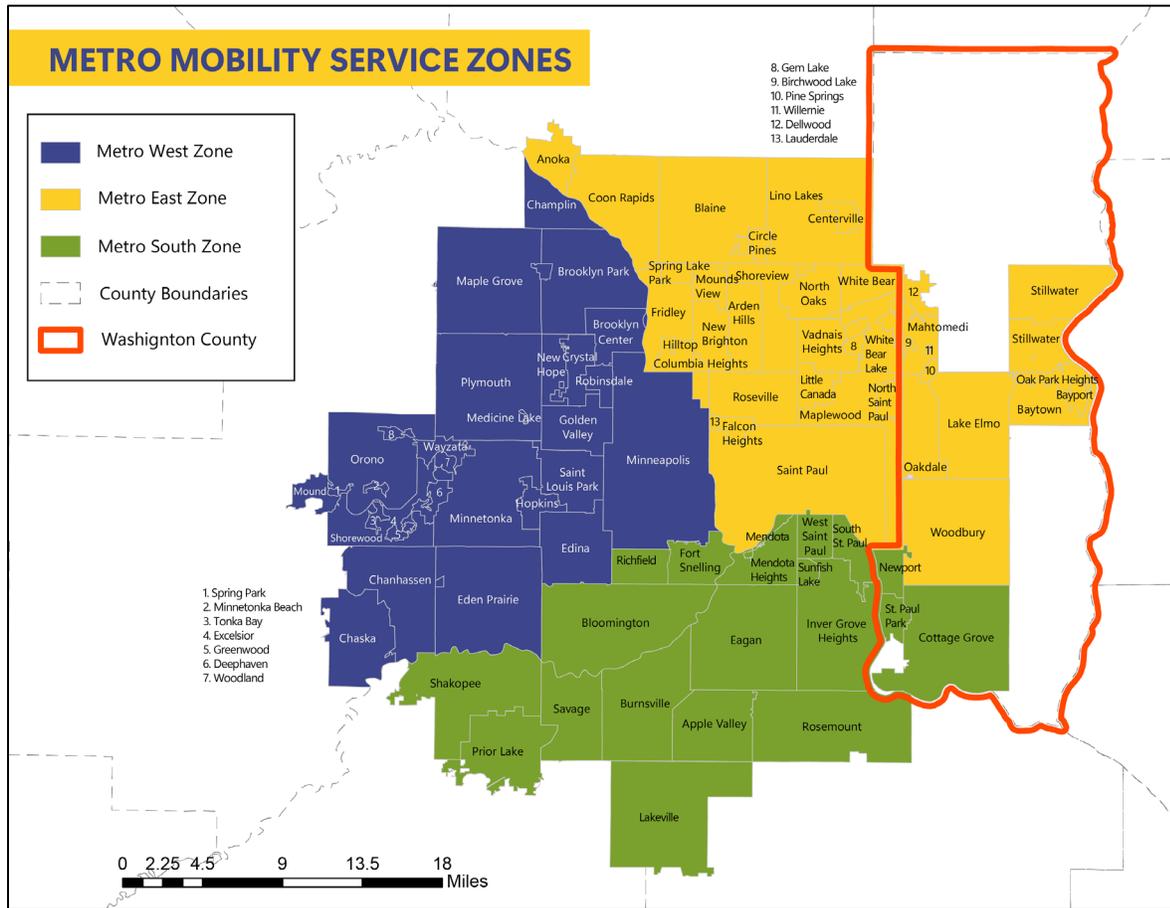
Metro Mobility

Metro Mobility offers demand-responsive transit services for eligible individuals within the Minneapolis–Saint Paul metro area. Eligibility is based on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and includes those who, due to a disability, are unable to use fixed-route public transportation. As shown in Figure 2, the Metro Mobility service area does not extend across all of Washington County; it is limited to cities within the 2006 transit-taxing district. This includes many of the county’s larger cities, such as Cottage Grove, Woodbury, Oakdale, and Stillwater.

However, some Washington County communities with significant populations of individuals with disabilities fall outside the service area. For example, Forest Lake (population 20,600) has a disability rate of 7.6 percent, and Afton (population 2,900) has a rate of 9.5 percent – and both are located outside of the service area.

Fares for a one-way ride are \$3.50 during off-peak hours and \$4.00 during peak times. Peak hours are defined as 6:30–9:30 a.m. and 2:00–5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Figure 23. Metro Mobility Service Area



Source: Metropolitan Council. (Zones Updated November 2020)

Transit Link

Transit Link is a dial-a-ride, demand-responsive transit service available to all residents in the metro area. It is intended for trips that cannot be completed using regular fixed-route transit, such as local or express buses. Riders can also use Transit Link to transfer to other transit services. Trips must be reserved in advance, and riders are encouraged to schedule their rides up to one week ahead.

The Transit Link service area includes all of Washington County, as well as several communities in Ramsey County: Gem Lake, Little Canada, Maplewood, North Oaks, North Saint Paul, Saint Paul, Vadnais Heights, White Bear Lake, and White Bear Township.

Service operates Monday through Friday, from 6:00 AM to 7:00 PM. To prevent overlap with fixed-route services, each ride request is screened for eligibility. Trips are not approved if both the pickup and drop-off locations are within a quarter mile of a transit stop in winter, or within a half mile in summer. Transit Link provides curb-to-curb service, though ADA-eligible riders may request door-to-door assistance. In addition, all riders may request help with carrying up to four grocery-sized bags. One-way peak fares are \$4.50 (6:00 to 9:00 AM and 3:00 to 6:00 PM) on weekdays, one-way off-peak fares are \$3.50, and a \$0.75 surcharge is assessed for rides longer than 15 minutes.

Metro Vanpool

Metropolitan Transportation Services manages a vanpool program open to residents of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties. This regional service is supported by the Metropolitan Council to expand transportation options for people who live outside the reach of Metro Transit's fixed-route network. Metro Vanpool offers vehicles that can seat 7, 9, 12, or 15 passengers, depending on the needs of each group.

Participants typically pay around \$110 per month, though exact costs vary based on travel distance, frequency, and the number of riders. Vanpools operating within the seven-county metro area benefit from a 55 percent rental subsidy. Each van is leased directly to a designated volunteer driver, who receives a free ride in return for handling driving duties and trip coordination. Some employers may also contribute to vanpool costs. All vans are provided through Commute with Enterprise and come with insurance, maintenance, repair services, and 24/7 roadside assistance.

Community Circulators

Washington County contains six examples of locally operated fixed routes. Known as community circulators, these services are low- to no-cost deviated fixed routes that typically operate one day a week and are geared to seniors doing shopping and other errands, although they are open to the general public. Each circulator is funded by a combination of passenger donations, municipal and state subsidies, and private contributions. Their routes are shown on the map in Figure 20.

Stillwater

The Community Thread Connector Loop runs every Monday from 10am – 3pm, with scheduled stops at housing complexes, area businesses, retail stores and other community destinations, serving the greater Stillwater and Oak Park Heights area. It is administered by the nonprofit Community Thread and operated by Newtrax, a nonprofit transportation provider that primarily serves older adults and individuals with disabilities in the northeastern Twin Cities metro area.¹⁶

Oakdale

The Oakdale Loop is operated by Newtrax and includes two bus runs on Thursday mornings, connecting senior living with key shopping destinations, the Oakdale Library, and the Oakdale Discovery Center.

Mahtomedi

Newtrax operates two community circulators in Mahtomedi; one of them connects to Vadnais Heights and South White Bear Lake, while the other connects to Vadnais Heights and North White Bear Lake. Both operate on Thursdays.

Forest Lake

The Forest Lake Area Loop, operated by Newtrax, serves major medical destinations as well as senior living and government services. It operates on Wednesday mornings.

¹⁶ In October 2025 Community Thread shared that it would be shifting its resources from the circulator to its volunteer driver program, leaving the future of the Stillwater circulator an open question.

Cottage Grove

The Cottage Grove community circulator runs Tuesdays between 10 AM and 3 PM. It is operated by DARTS, a nonprofit serving caregivers, older adults, and their families in the southeast metro.

NewTrax Shuttles

In addition to the community circulators, NewTrax provides shuttles between local retail and residential buildings funded by the Community Development Agency (CDA) of Washington County. The five residential buildings include Ann Bodlovick and Raymie Johnson in Stillwater (Tuesdays and Thursdays), Cobble Hill and The Glen in Woodbury (Wednesdays), and Picadilly Square in Mahtomedi (Fridays). This service is funded entirely by the CDA.

Volunteer Driver Programs

Several volunteer driver programs exist in the county. Drivers sign up with a specific program and are compensated for their mileage. Riders using volunteer driver programs typically pay a small, suggested donation or no fee at all.

Community Thread offers rides for any purpose with an area encompassing the Stillwater School District and the remainder of the county north of Highway 96. Clients are able to book up to seven trips per week

Other volunteer programs are run by the Disabled Veterans of America and the American Cancer Society; these offer rides to medical appointments. A number of organizations are interested in offering this type of service; however, the startup cost can be high.

The County's involvement in volunteer driver programs is limited to cooperation on outreach and promotional materials. Community Thread partners with the County on a small fee-for-service arrangement associated with one County program but otherwise operates independently from County funding and services.

Private Transportation Services

There are limited transportation options available to Washington County residents from private and national operators.

Amtrak does not operate any bus or rail stations within Washington County. The closest Amtrak train station is the Saint Paul Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul, which serves the Empire Builder from Chicago to Seattle and the Borealis from Saint Paul to Chicago.

Jefferson Lines has one stop in Washington County at the Holiday Station Store in Forest Lake. Direct service extends north to Duluth and south to St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Ride-hailing services operate in Washington County. These services are subject to driver availability. Services include HICH, Lyft, MyWeels, Uber, and Wridz. The County subsidizes some Lyft rides for clients of its community services. Ride-hailing is less affordable than local public transportation but fills gaps when there are no other service options.

Many taxicab companies operate in Washington County. Often they provide school transportation, wheelchair accessible vans, and non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) in addition to standard taxi trips. NEMT tends to be priced higher than standard taxi fares with the expectation that health insurance will cover it. Transportation network companies Uber and Lyft also operate in the county.

Transit Propensity and Transit Supply

Direct comparison between the availability of and the demand for public transportation is a critical part of identifying transit gaps. One way to do that in quantitative and visual terms is to develop indices for each.

Transit Propensity Index (TPI)

In addition to where people live and work, socioeconomic characteristics influence people's propensities toward using transit. Many population groups use transit more often than the overall population. Based on national research,¹⁷ as well as examining census data from Washington County, historically marginalized groups are more likely to use transit.

- **Car availability.** Not having a car available for use is often one of the strongest indicators of transit propensity. In Washington County, residents without a car are nearly four times as likely to use transit than the average resident.
- **Income level.** Household income is also a strong indicator of transit propensity. Households who live below the federal poverty line are much more likely to have difficulty paying for basic needs – especially transportation costs – and are thus more likely to use transit. In Washington County, however, households with an annual income over \$75,000 also had a higher propensity to use transit, likely related to commuting into major job centers like downtown St. Paul.
- **Race and Ethnicity.** Race and ethnicity are often indicators of transit propensity. In Washington County, Black residents are 2.0 times as likely to ride transit as the average resident. Asian residents are 1.3 times as likely to ride the bus. Hispanic or Latino residents, in contrast, are 0.7 times as likely to ride the bus, and White residents are 0.9 times as likely.
- **Disability Status.** People with a disability also face challenges with transportation and generally have a higher propensity to use transit.

When a significant number of people from the demographic groups described earlier live in clustered areas, the underlying demand for transit in these areas may be higher than is captured by just looking at population density. Conversely, in areas where populations that are likely to take transit have lower representation, the transit demand may be lower than what is captured purely by population density. To account for these factors, the project team calculated a measure called the Transit Propensity Index (TPI), which measures the relative *demand* for transit of different demographic groups compared to the average resident in Washington County. Table 12 shows the transit propensity indices among different groups. A factor greater than 1 means that the group is more likely to use transit than the average resident and indicates that the group is over-represented compared to their share of the population. It

¹⁷ [Marginalized Populations' Access to Transit: Journeys from Home and Work to Transit](#), National Institute for Transportation and Communities (NITC), August 2023.

should be noted that while the density of people with a disability was included in the analysis, a transit propensity index was not calculated due to data availability.

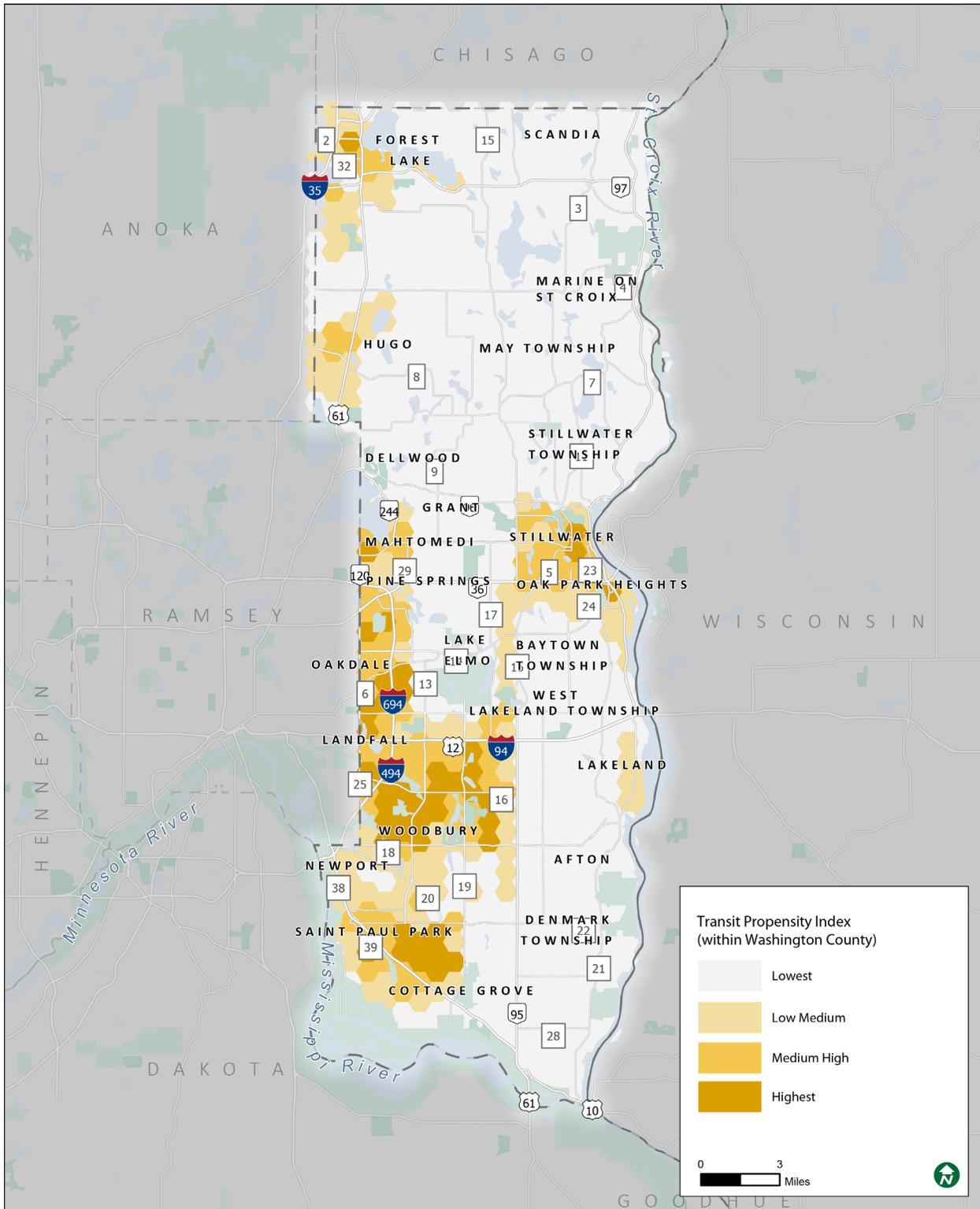
Figure 23 shows the relative transit propensity within a half-mile grid overlaid on the county. The areas with the highest transit propensity in Washington County include small parts of west Forest Lake, western Mahtomedi, eastern Stillwater, portions of Oak Park Heights, Landfall, and parts of Woodbury, Saint Paul Park, and Cottage Grove.

Table 12. Transit Propensity by Demographic Group

Demographic Group	Transit Propensity Index
RACE AND ETHNICITY	
White Alone (Not Hispanic or Latino)	0.92
Black or African-American (Not Hispanic or Latino)	2.01
Asian (Not Hispanic or Latino)	1.32
Other Race (Not Hispanic or Latino)	0.42
Hispanic or Latino	0.7
HOUSEHOLD VEHICLE OWNERSHIP	
No Car	3.97
One Car	1.50
Two Cars	0.95
Three or More Cars	0.71
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	
Less than \$10,000	1.46
\$10,000 - \$15,000	0.79
\$15,000 - \$25,000	0.58
\$25,000 - \$35,000	1.54
\$35,000 - \$50,000	0.96
\$50,000 - \$65,000	0.33
\$65,000 - \$75,000	1.02
More than \$75,000	1.12

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 24. Transit Propensity Index



Source: US. Census Bureau

Transit Supply Index

Next, the project team measured the *supply* of transit service in Washington County by developing a Transit Supply Index (TSI). The TSI is essentially a calculation of the daily weekday bus trips within a half-mile grid based on most recent Metro Transit schedules available in the county. Figure 24 shows the TSI across the county using Metro Transit services. Since the Metro micro service in Woodbury does not operate on a schedule like other fixed routes, it was assumed that a bus was available three times per hour. Early performance results suggest that a 20-minute response time is a conservative estimate.¹⁸

Gap Identification

Finally, the estimated demand for transit (the Transit Propensity Index) was combined with the supply of transit service (the Transit Supply Index) to identify areas where there was a mismatch between the demand and supply – identifying areas of potential transit need. The full range of combinations is shown in Figure 25, while Figure 26 highlights the areas with the largest mismatches.

Larger and contiguous clusters of high need are particularly important to focus on and can be found in eastern Oakdale, in central Cottage Grove, in western Forest Lake, in eastern Woodbury (east of the Metro Micro zone) and throughout Stillwater. The western edge of the county closest to Ramsey County and along the Gold Line is comparatively well served.

¹⁸ [Metro micro: Woodbury area](#)

Figure 25. Transit Supply Index

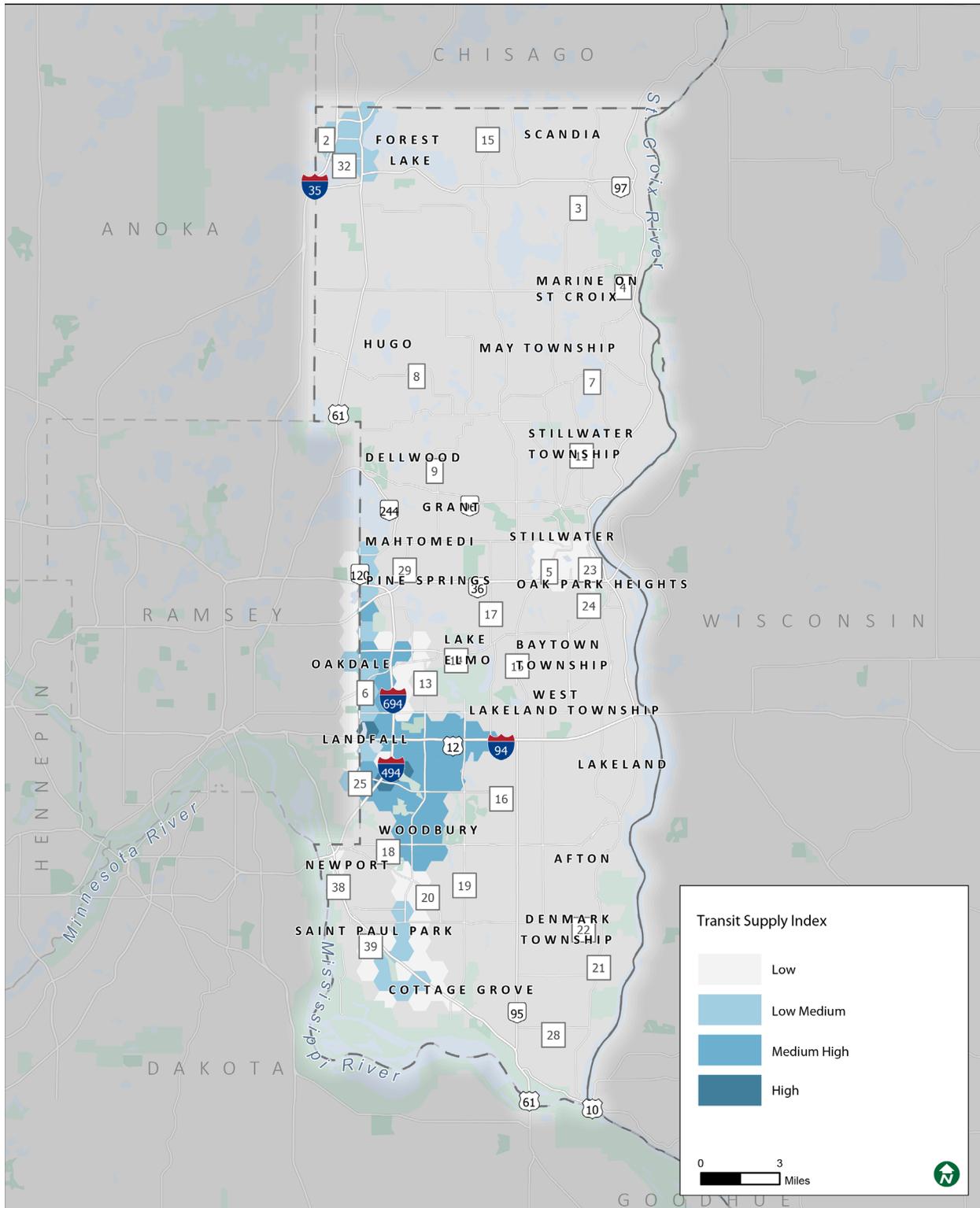


Figure 26. Combined Transit Propensity and Transit Supply

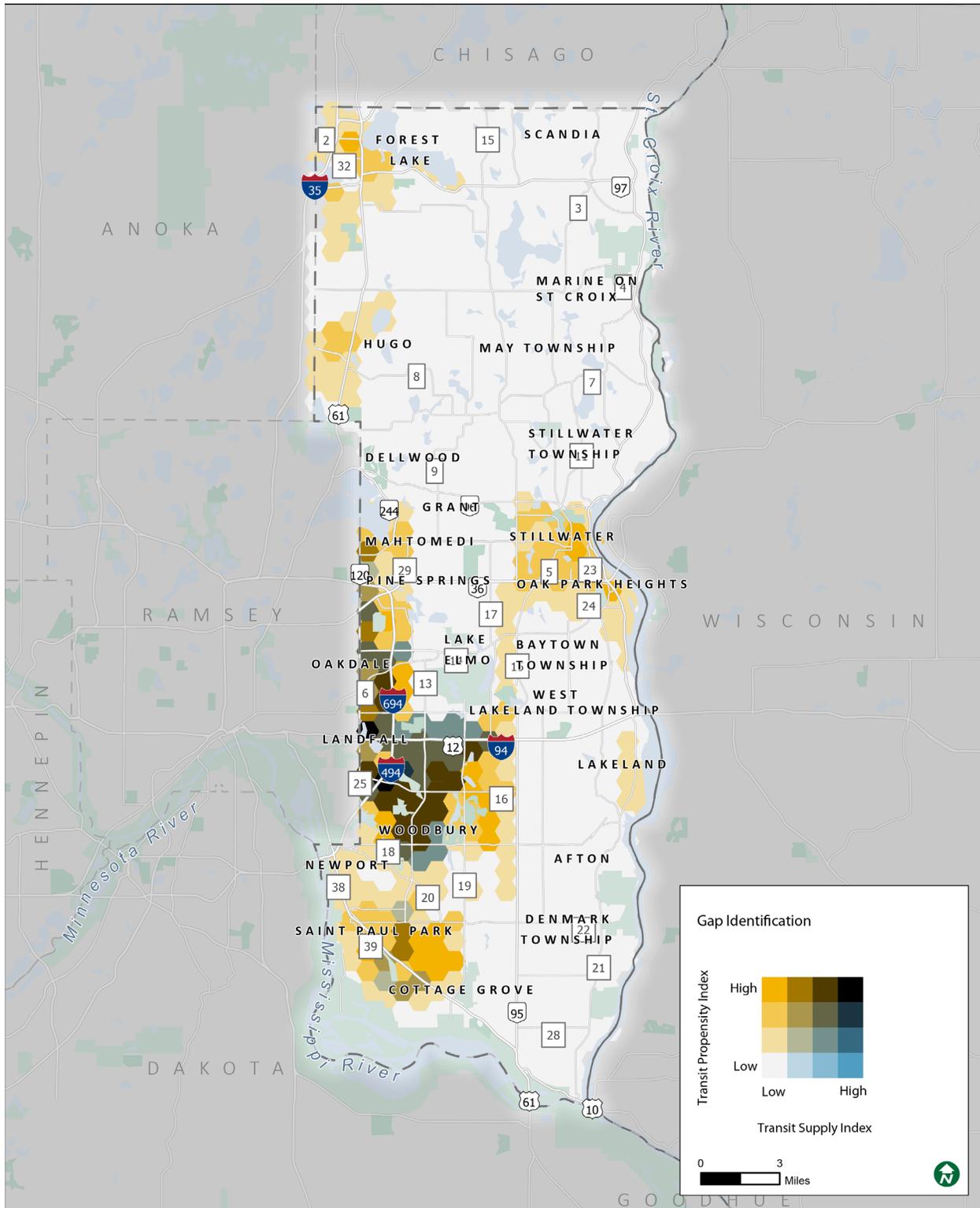
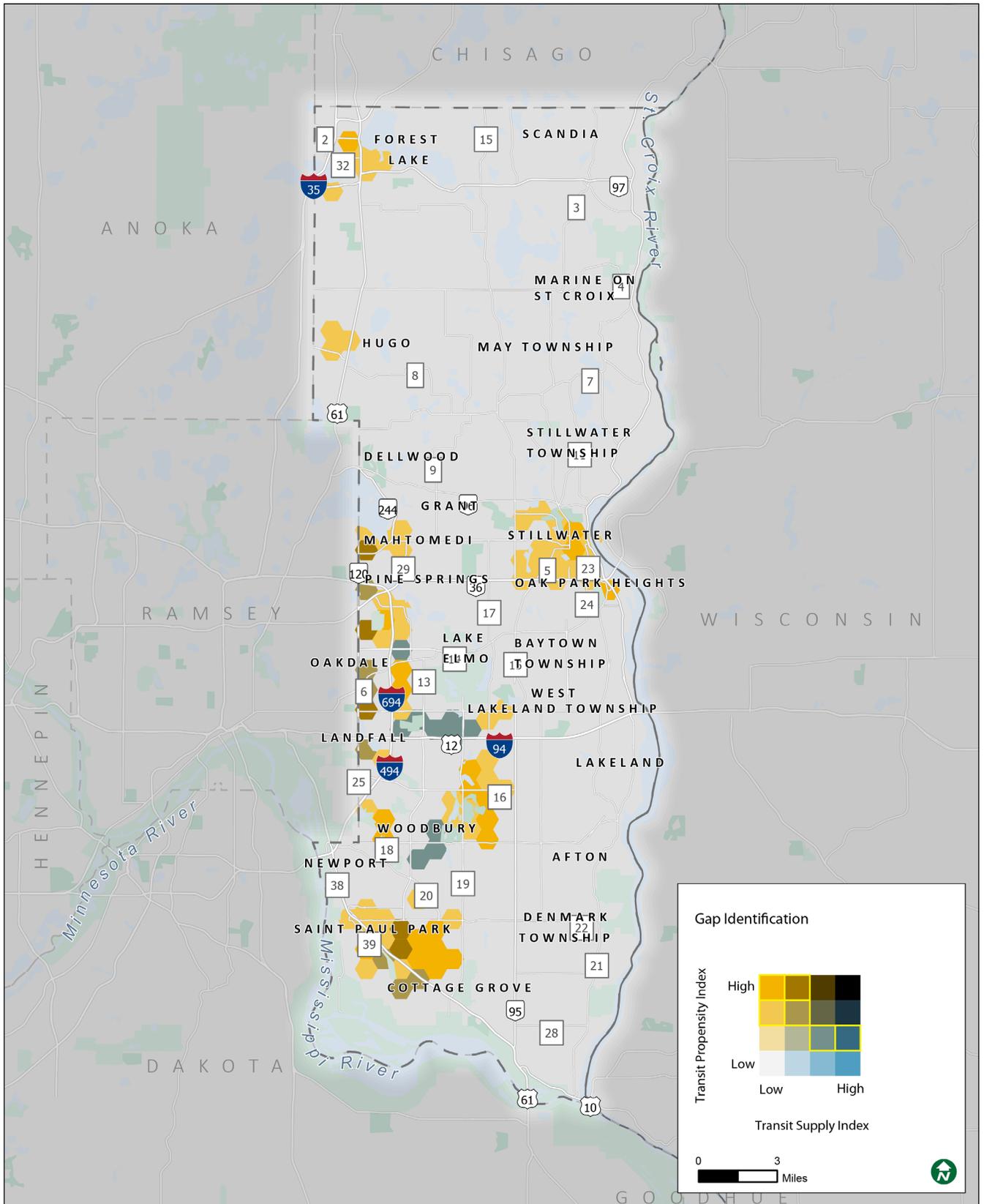


Figure 27. Combined Transit Propensity and Transit Supply (Filtered)



Conclusions

Washington County and its partner agencies have continued to make progress on planning for transit since the 2018 Transit Needs Study. One of the key recommendations in 2018 was the creation of a mobility management program. This was implemented successfully and has been a key source of information and support for transportation programs and their clients.

The 2025 opening of the Gold Line to Saint Paul created an important new cross-county connection, with first mile/last mile support from the Woodbury microtransit zone pilot. These services reach the strongest transit markets in Washington County, where population centers are concentrated at its western border. Also consistent with this pattern is Metro Transit's Network Now plan, which bolsters suburban local and express service in Woodbury, Landfall, and Oakdale while reducing service to Stillwater.

However, the community overview shows that there are other underserved transit markets. Underserved areas are most clearly illustrated by a comparison between transit propensity and transit supply. In this analysis, the largest gaps are found in Stillwater, Oak Park Heights, Saint Paul Park, Cottage Grove, and the eastern edge of Woodbury. Forest Lake, Hugo, and Mahtomedi also emerge as places where the underlying density and demographics are not matched by transit services.

The County has studied new transit service in the Red Rock, Rush Line, and Highway 36 corridors. While mentioned in the County's 2040 comprehensive plan, these corridors are not included in Network Now; instead, Metro Transit's proposed changes to service through 2027 are relatively minor.

Levels of density continue to present a challenge to developing efficient fixed-route services. Only in Woodbury, Stillwater, and Oak Park Heights do the population and employment density warrant considering 15-minute service. In places like Forest Lake, Mahtomedi, and Cottage Grove, demand-response service or fixed-route headways of 60 minutes or more are more likely to be realistic. Forecasted population growth in these areas, as well as population aging in other lower-density parts of the county, will increase demand for flexible transportation such as demand-response, volunteer drivers, and subsidized ride-hailing.

Extensive public engagement will be required to identify which trips are most appropriately served by which transit mode. Many seniors and people with disabilities prefer curb-to-curb service even when fixed-route transit service is available. With the introduction of Metro micro, Washington County now has more than one service model to look to. Given the diversity of environments and needs within the county, an equal diversity of strategies will likely be required.