

# 2022 STATEWIDE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

## VEHICLE MILES TARGET SUMMARY

The Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP) includes a target to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled across Minnesota per capita 14% by 2040. This summary outlines what it means to measure and track vehicle miles traveled (VMT), MnDOT's process to develop the target, what we heard during engagement and the next steps.

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### BACKGROUND

Reducing the need to drive alone is one of many opportunities to expand clean energy, create good jobs and give Minnesota a competitive advantage by building safer, healthier and thriving communities. Measuring vehicle miles traveled can help us understand how the system is serving all users in different communities across the state. This indicator informs progress towards agency goals around safety, accessibility, person throughput and reducing emissions that cause climate change.

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### THE PROCESS TO DEVELOP TARGET

The initial recommendation for a VMT target came from the Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council (STAC). The STAC was formed by MnDOT in February 2020 in response to a recommendation from the [2019 Pathways to Decarbonizing Transportation](#) project. The STAC is a type of long-form public engagement, drawing on input from community leaders and stakeholder organizations. The STAC includes a diverse group representing many state interests related to transportation and climate, such as academia, automotive industry, construction, electric vehicles, freight, government and public health.

In December 2020, the STAC recommended a preliminary target to reduce VMT 20% by 2050. To inform the recommendation, the STAC reviewed VMT targets in other states and within Minnesota. STAC members acknowledged that implementation would need to be coordinated with other strategies (like electrification) while considering the different needs of communities around Minnesota. MnDOT agreed to a preliminary target while reviewing and finalizing the target as part of the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan.

In the meantime, the MnDOT Office of Sustainability and Public Health and Office of Transportation System Management coordinated an internal work group to develop tools, guidance and strategies to understand VMT reduction implementation options. This included modeling the impact of various strategies MnDOT, local agencies and other transportation partners could theoretically implement to reduce vehicle miles traveled. This work group recommended amending the VMT target to a per capita VMT reduction of 20% by 2050, which translates to a 7% statewide reduction.

MnDOT proposed a per capita target to be able to track how VMT is changing in relation to population growth and in different community types. Measuring total VMT when the population is growing could obscure improvements to the transportation system to give people meaningful travel options. Measuring VMT per capita also allows for comparisons across regions and with other states. The target is also focused on single occupancy vehicle VMT.

Measuring VMT per capita and for single occupancy vehicles is in alignment with the percentage and the nature of VMT targets for other states such as Delaware, California and Washington State, and other Minnesota jurisdictions including Hennepin County, Saint Paul and Rochester. MnDOT established interim years to review progress (2025, 2030, 2035 and 2040), which will allow for reporting out and evaluation of adjustments.

After considering public and stakeholder feedback (discussed in the next section), MnDOT's Senior Leadership Team approved a target to reduce VMT per capita 20% by 2050 for inclusion in the draft SMTP. This included a commitment from MnDOT to work with transportation partners and users to identify and advance statewide strategies. As the SMTP is a 20-year plan, the plan included a target to reduce per capita VMT 14% by 2040 using 2019 as the baseline. This target, along with interim targets for 2025, 2030 and 2035 were selected to align with the 2050 target.

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## ENGAGEMENT & FEEDBACK

Engagement for the target was completed in several parts. Much of the work was iterative with some activities being completed simultaneously.

### INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FEEDBACK

Before bringing the proposed target and potential strategies to the MnDOT Senior Leadership Team, staff shared the proposed target with implementation strategy categories with the MnDOT Sustainable Transportation Steering Committee, operations leadership, district leadership, construction management staff, planning management staff and project management staff. Discussions focused on what this target would mean for MnDOT plans and projects, as well as highlighting a need for coordinated communication and internal technical assistance.

Externally, MnDOT staff engaged local transportation partners in advance of the SMTP public comment period to educate them about the target, inform them of the opportunity to provide comments and set the stage for MnDOT's plan to collaborate with partners on implementation strategies after the target adoption. This engagement took place from June 2021 through August 2022. Engagement included discussions with the MnDOT Freight Advisory Committee, each of the district Area Transportation Partnerships, the Metropolitan Planning Organization Directors, the Metropolitan Council, the Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils, the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and Regional Development Organizations. MnDOT also hosted two virtual meetings in May 2022 for the City Engineer Association of Minnesota, Minnesota County Engineer Association, League of Minnesota Cities and Minnesota Township representatives to discuss the draft VMT target.

Through the engagement, MnDOT heard a wide range of feedback. Some felt unsure of the target, expressing reservations about how the target may resonate in rural areas and securing commitment from partners in implementation areas where MnDOT cannot lead. Others saw possibilities and were inspired by the target, noting that federal funding shifts may present the opportunity to rethink how we improve mode choice and that this is a chance for MnDOT to lead on an important environmental and human health issue.

## SMTP POLICY PANEL AND DISCUSSION FORUM FEEDBACK

MnDOT commissioned a statewide study with a representative sample of Minnesotans to aid policy decision-making and related messaging. The study was completed in November 2021 in two parts: a quantitative survey and a qualitative online discussion as a follow-up to the survey.

### ONLINE SURVEY

A sample of 655 Minnesotans completed the survey. The data was weighted to align the sample with the demographic and geographic characteristics of the state. Respondents received background information about VMT. Respondents were asked about this type of target and how it might be configured. The results from the survey showed:

- Nearly six in ten (58%) considered a 20% reduction in VMT by 2050 to be a reasonable goal. About 1 in 4 did not think the proposed target to be reasonable.
- About half of respondents (47%) felt a VMT reduction goal should vary throughout the state; within that group, the majority agree on implementing goals ‘more in larger urban areas.’

While most people supported a VMT goal in concept, there was less support for many of the strategies that could help meet the target. For example, 59% of respondents supported transportation policies that make it easier for most to drive versus 41% of respondents that said transportation policies should try to shift more trips toward public transit, walking and bicycling.

### ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM

Following the survey, a qualitative discussion using a bulletin board platform, which was completed by 42 of the 655 people who participated in the survey. Participants were able to comment on posts made by other people to allow for a deeper discussion on transportation topics.

When targets were vague and did not specify sacrifices that need to be made or how changes might impact individuals, it was easy for participants to agree with the statements and still want convenience. Many people initially assumed that there is little to nothing they can do if they live in an area that does not lend itself well to walking, bicycling or taking public transportation. Those who do have access often deferred to thinking about how they travel now, without considering how they could modify the quantity or quality of trips. Some (but not all) realized that it is not possible to reduce emissions without a meaningful shift away from driving (which may require a lifestyle change).

During the discussion, people started thinking about some small changes they could make such as:

- Planning and pooling trips better
- Making fewer trips
- Reducing the total miles traveled
- Looking for ways to share rides
- Shopping or living closer to places they go
- Thinking about new technology for vehicles they use and/or shared rides.

## SMTP STAKEHOLDER FORUM FEEDBACK

MnDOT hosted two virtual stakeholder forums on December 2 and 7, 2021, as an opportunity for transportation stakeholders to discuss specific changes to the SMTP. The VMT target was one of the topics available for discussion and feedback. A total of 125 people participated in the two forums. Fifty-eight percent of stakeholder forum participants (not counting MnDOT staff participants) supported setting a target to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

## SMTP PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FEEDBACK

The draft SMTP was available for public comment from July 25, 2022, to September 18, 2022. MnDOT received many conflicting comments about the VMT target. Some partners shared that we are not moving fast enough to meet the pressing need to respond to climate change and environmental impacts. Others shared concerns about the effect of the VMT target on agriculture, manufacturing and tourism.

The target to reduce VMT per capita by 14% by 2040 did not change. However, staff added text clarifying that implementation will look different based on context. The SMTP content was updated to reiterate that MnDOT will review the VMT target during the next SMTP update, which is expected to start in 2025.

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## TARGET IN ADOPTED 2022 SMTP

The 2022 SMTP was adopted in December 2022. The adopted plan includes the following targets for per capita VMT:

- 2025: 10,263 (-4%)
- 2030: 9,835 (-8%)
- 2035: 9,515 (-11%)
- 2040: 9,195 (-14%)

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## NEXT STEPS

The agency is engaging between MnDOT, cities, counties and other partners to listen, learn and work together on implementation, which could include different approaches based on population, geography, etc. MnDOT will also work with our partners to learn more about potential impacts on agriculture, manufacturing and tourism.