MINNESOTA GO

STATEWIDE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN STAKEHOLDER FORUMS SUMMARY

February 2022

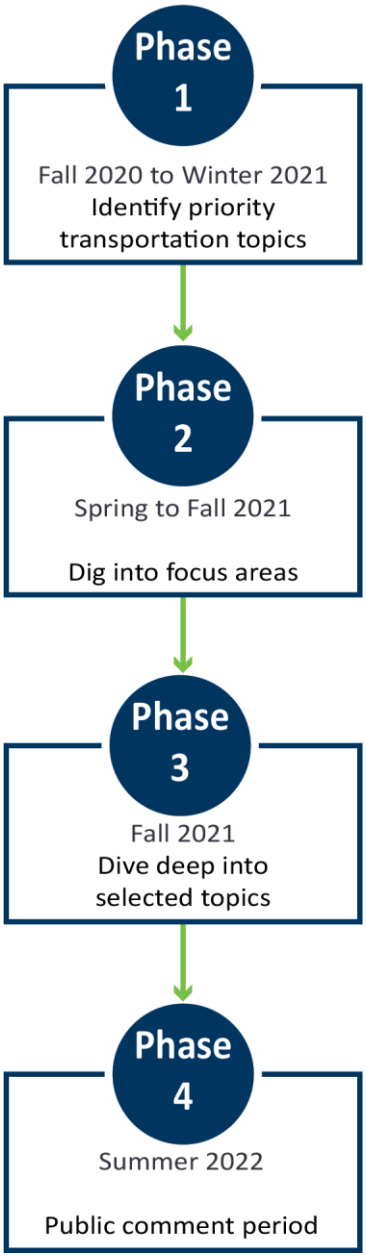


FIGURE 1: FOUR PHASES OF SMTP ENGAGEMENT

PURPOSE

This document summarizes feedback from two stakeholder forums—part of Phase 3 of public engagement for the 2022 Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP) update. The SMTP had a four-phased engagement approach. Figure 1 highlights the four phases of engagement and the focus of each phase.

MnDOT hosted two virtual stakeholder forums on December 2, 2021 and December 7, 2021 as an opportunity for transportation stakeholders to discuss specific changes to the SMTP policy objectives, performance measures, strategies and actions. Invitees included a broad set of people around Minnesota including partners, stakeholders and MnDOT staff. A total of 125 people participated in the two forums. This summary describes the stakeholder forums and what people said.

WHAT IS THE STATEWIDE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN?

The SMTP is Minnesota's highest level policy plan for transportation. The SMTP explains how to move toward the Minnesota GO Vision of a multimodal transportation system that maximizes the health of people, the environment and our economy. The SMTP is about more than just Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the state's highways. It has information and recommendations for everyone who is involved in moving people and goods in Minnesota—by cars, trucks, bicycles, buses, trains, planes, walking and rolling.

The SMTP looks 20 years into the future and is updated every five years with new information and public input about the transportation system. It looks at how important changes occurring in other parts of society and the economy may influence transportation. It also recommends how the transportation system should respond to and prepare for those changes.

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES AND TAKEAWAYS

- Sixty-one percent of stakeholder forum participants (not counting MnDOT staff participants) supported setting a greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target consistent with either the Paris Agreement or the Next Generation Energy Act, with the Paris Agreement receiving stronger support.
- Fifty-eight percent of stakeholder forum participants (not counting MnDOT staff participants) supported setting a target to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- Some participants preferred stronger action verbs for climate action and transportation equity to elevate the urgency of the work.
- Many participants stressed the need to consider different geographies for each of the topics. Several people commented the need to be flexible in the approaches based on the context.
- Participants noted that land use is an essential component to planning for connected and automated vehicles, reducing vehicle miles traveled and advancing transportation equity.

See the What We Learned section for more themes and takeaways. See the Who Participated section for more information on who attended.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The following sections summarize key takeaways by each of the six policy areas that were the focus of the stakeholder forums:

- Connected and automated vehicle readiness
- Climate change
- Vehicle miles traveled reduction
- Freight and economic competitiveness
- Safe System approach to transportation safety
- Transportation equity implementation

CONNECTED AND AUTOMATED VEHICLE READINESS

MnDOT in collaboration with transportation partners have completed a number of studies and developed processes since 2017 to advance readiness for connected and automated vehicles (CAV) in Minnesota. However, the future expansion of these technologies – including when they will be available to the public – remains unclear. MnDOT included questions in the Online Policy Panel and Discussion Board[1] and completed a state of practice review to get clarity on current opportunities to advance CAV in long range planning.

[1] MnDOT commissioned a statewide virtual market research panel with a representative sample of Minnesotans to aid decision-making about policies, strategies and targets and related messaging. The panel was followed by a multi-day online discussion board to dig deeper into select topics. A report is available at www.MinnesotaGO.org.

Currently, the draft SMTP policy direction includes a strategy and related actions to promote the development and deployment of connected and automate transportation technologies by:

- Piloting technologies and business models
- Designing roads to support current and new technology
- Using CAV to improve equity and accessibility
- Improving work zone safety
- Advancing CAV research and data collection

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Small group discussions focused on what CAV readiness could look like in Minnesota and what performance measures could be used to track progress. Common themes for CAV readiness included understanding year-round operations and ensuring safety for all people traveling including people walking, rolling and bicycling.

> "What types of designs are considering when you worked through these strategies? Considering: wider edge markings—benefits machines and human drivers. Other scenarios consider more separation of modes…reduces the complexity of the operating environment."

Several participants asked what CAV readiness could look like in rural areas. Themes included implications for local units of government, fiscal constraints and lack of understanding or capacity. People noted there is a lot of opportunity for CAV to serve rural communities. One person shared, "[There is] lots of opportunity and potential in small towns – thinking transit: dealing with driver shortage, hours of operation, etc. CAV could address this and make accessibility so much better." However, implementation will need to keep in mind the opportunity and challenges of CAV operations in small and rural communities.

Several participants noted that CAV operations could have safety and equity benefits and impacts. One participant shared, ""Ah-ha moment – CAV if an equity tool that can be used for transit and help in serving the underserved populations – it's not just for the upper middle class, tesla cars, etc." Other comments included:

- "The future technology of CAV is continuing to develop but as it does, will anticipate that we are going to be having conversations about it in all aspects of what we have been discussing today as it relates to equity, safety, etc."
- "Transportation equity across modes of transportation is a challenge, very complex. A lot of moving pieces."
- "Fits the times; likes the focus on equity; should include specific call outs on bikers/walkers/'the most vulnerable'."

Forum participants noted the need to be flexible given the uncertainty for CAV in the future.

- "New vehicles have things like lane assist, collision alerts – seems to be beneficial for me; practical use of these vehicles are being seen now in simple advances in tech incremental/"baby" steps to introduce the ideas of tech to people without having to make government or legislative changes yet."

- "Set a goal but don't have too many specifics as this technology will continue to evolve, we have no idea what it will look like in the future."

Several participants commented on the need for more communication and education especially for the public. Demonstrations, for example, could help introduce people to the technology and get them comfortable with CAV. Other participants shared:

- "Cities will probably be leading what MnDOT does. So MnDOT keeping other jurisdictions informed would be essential. Particularly engage with the city engineers association… this would be a good group to engage."
- "MnDOT needs to be a leader in communicating on CAV deployment and planning."
- "Education is beneficial – MnDOT should be including how the technology is going to impact and be accessible on rural roads/areas; a lot of concerns in these areas and people see it as a big city/urban thing."
- "Education is super beneficial in how this technology can be used in rural areas, the opportunity for rural areas and addressing things like driver shortages; helping communities understand this as a tool for all not just urban areas."

Because near-term CAV implementation remains unclear, participants were not able to come to agreement on proposed performance measures. MnDOT staff will continue to research and collaborate on potential performance measures. However, it is unlikely any CAV-specific measures will be included in the 2022 SMTP.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The 2022 SMTP includes a new Climate Action objective. The focus is to: advance a sustainable and resilient transportation system, support transportation options and technology to reduce pollution and adapt Minnesota's transportation system to a changing climate. Forum participants shared feedback on the proposed greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and made recommendations for climate action policy direction.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION REDUCTION TARGET

Transportation is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions—the most significant driver of climate change—in the state. While GHG emissions from the transportation sector have been declining since 2005, Minnesota did not meet the statewide 2015 emissions goal.

MnDOT plans to set transportation emissions targets for 2030, 2035 and 2040 in the SMTP. MnDOT was exploring two options for targets: following the targets implied by the Next Generation Energy Act (55% reduction by 2040) or the targets set by the Paris Agreement (80% reduction by 2040). The SMTP Climate Change Work Group and MnDOT Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council recommended targets consistent with Paris Agreement.

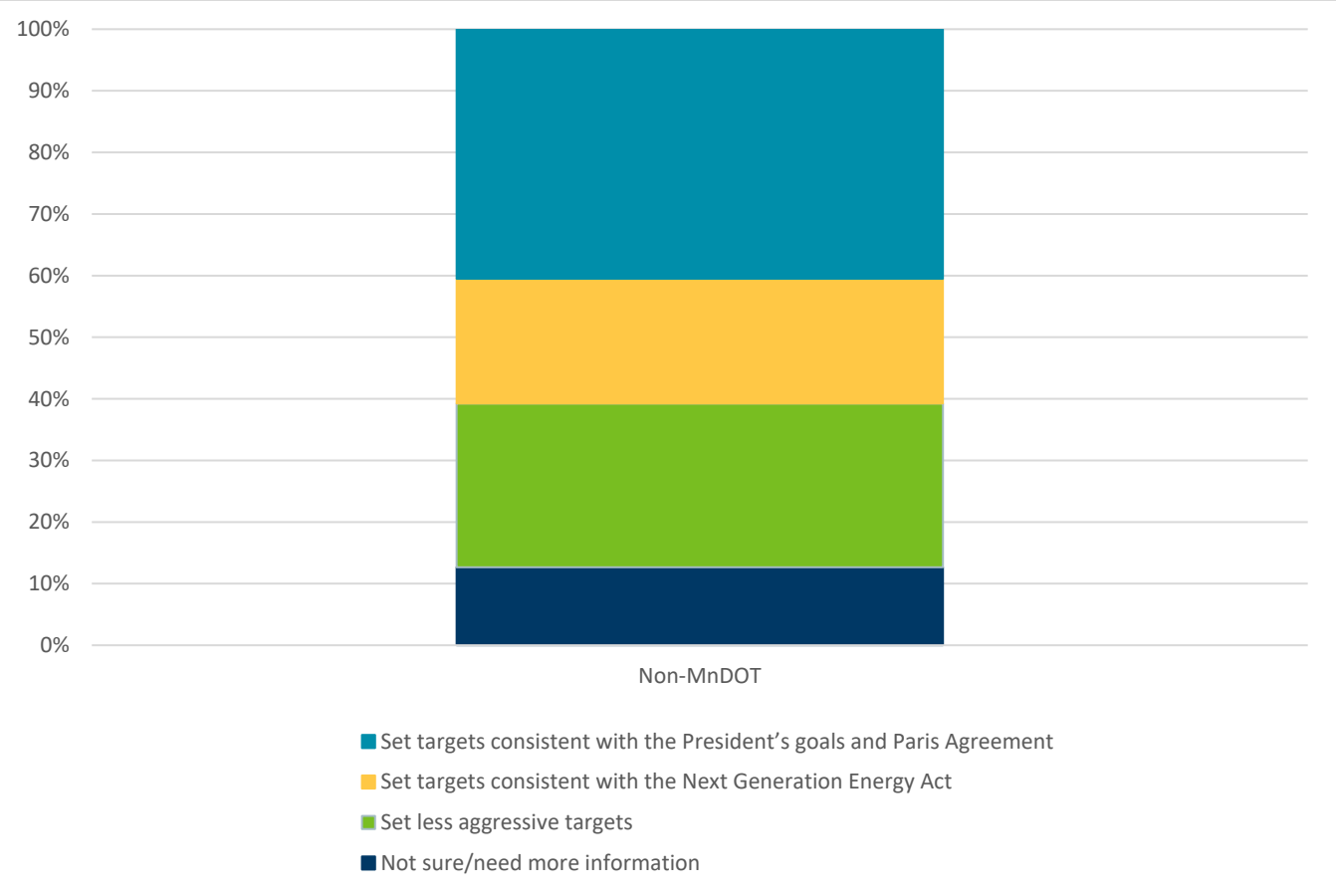
To determine their preference, forum participants were asked to select the statement they agreed with most.

- Set targets consistent with the Next Generation Energy Act
- Set targets consistent with the President's goals and Paris Agreement
- Set less aggressive targets

- Not sure/need more information

Forty-one percent of stakeholder forum participants (not counting MnDOT staff participants) supported setting a GHG reduction target consistent with the Paris Agreement. Another 20% supported setting targets consistent with the Next Generation Energy Act. Greenhouse gas emissions reduction responses from forum participants are found in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION REDUCTION TARGET RESPONSES (DOES NOT INCLUDE MNDOT STAFF RESPSONSES)



POLICY DIRECTION AND SYSTEM RESILIENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Small group discussions focused on reactions to draft policy direction language and system resilience.

> *Proposed objective language: Advance a sustainable and resilient transportation system. Support transportation options and technology to reduce pollution. Adapt Minnesota's transportation system to a changing climate.*

Several participants noted that the objective language was succinct and included the key points to consider for climate change. Some preferred stronger action verbs to elevate the urgency of the work. In one instance, a participant said:

"Need to *prioritize* them, not just *support*. At a higher level, at the agency, we're still expanding infrastructure (more pavement, more lanes) which defeats the purpose of supporting more options since we are just accommodating the already preferred option."

Small group discussions also provided feedback on the proposed strategies and actions. Themes included:

- Prioritizing modal shifts not evident.
- Editing language to be stronger, more action oriented.
- Exploring energy life cycle in transportation and not just focus on tailpipe emissions.

The small group discussions also included focus on resilience. Participants shared the need to build in flexibility to enhance resiliency for transportation directly and other considerations like land use. People also shared the need to pilot solutions. Commenters noted that communities are experiencing the impacts of climate change now. Demonstrations and pilots could allow for quicker action. Examples include:

- "Allow for more pilot projects to speed up options...thinking bike/walk/transit infrastructure—If we are to be resilient, we need to be able to act quickly. How can we react more quickly (potentially more pilots?)? How can we make actions more available?"
- "During covid, parking areas were turned into cafes as well as other actions that showed how building in flexibility is possible and is an important part of responding to crises."

Participants stressed the need for transportation to view its role relative to other partners and industries. The interrelated nature of climate changes requires coordinated responses. One participant shared, "We're a part of the whole system—energy, land use planning—important to consider how we fit into the bigger picture."

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED REDUCTION

Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) provides a measure of total travel, travel changes over time and differences in travel among regions and state. It can measure both personal and commercial vehicle travel demand and is an important measure to monitor and forecast. In 2020, MnDOT adopted a preliminary target of a 20% reduction in VMT statewide by 2050. The final recommendation was expected to be finalized after SMTP engagement to allow opportunity for more people to weigh in on the decision.

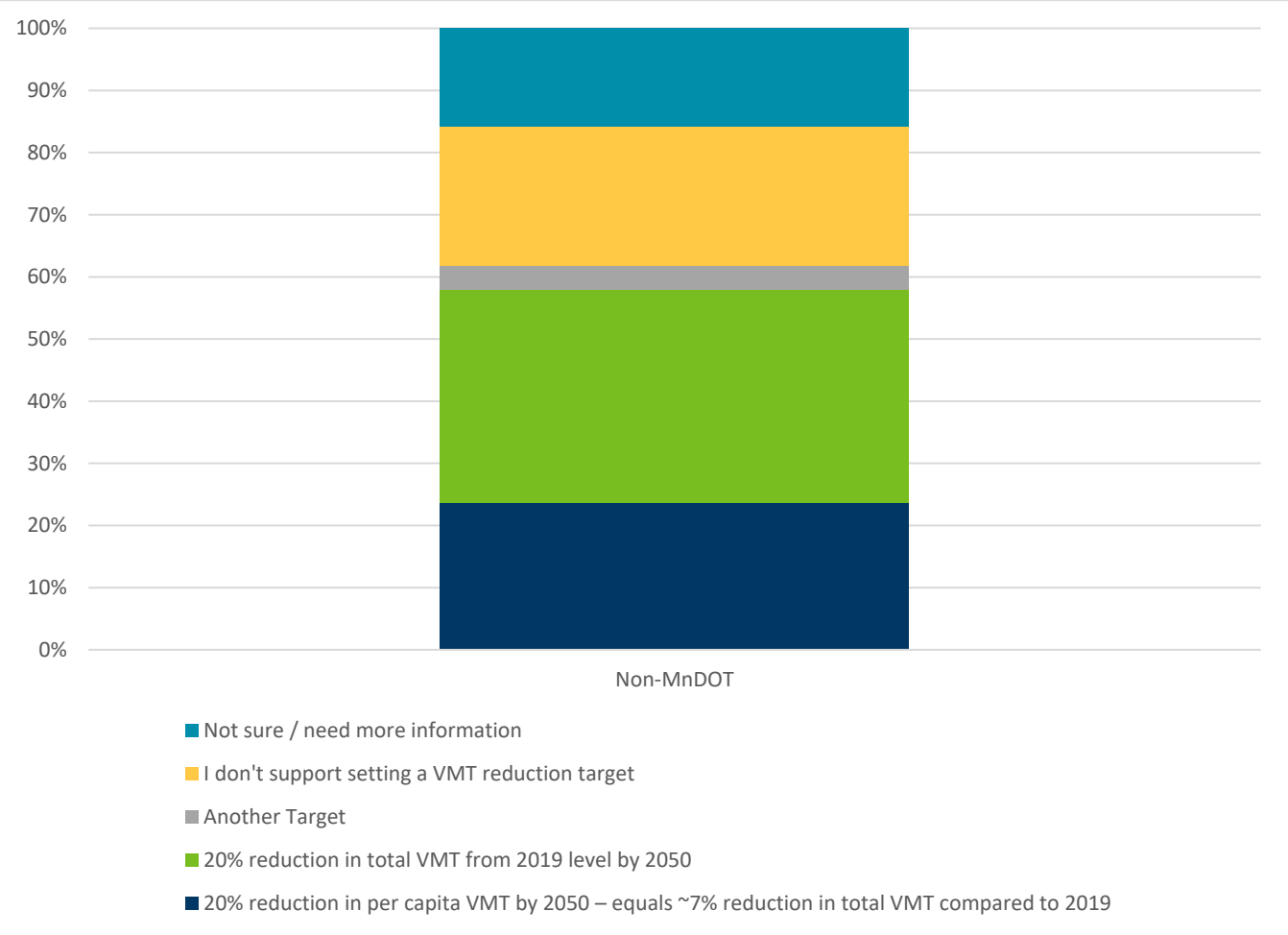
VMT REDUCTION TARGET

Forum participants were asked for reactions to two potential targets for VMT reduction with the following options:

- 20% reduction in total VMT from 2019 level by 2050
- 20% reduction in per capital VMT by 2050 (equals ~7% reduction in total VMT compared to 2019)
- Another target
- I don't support setting a VMT reduction target
- Not sure/need more information

Fifty-eight percent of stakeholder forum participants supported setting a target to reduce VMT. VMT reduction responses from forum participants are found in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3: VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED REDUCTION TARGET RESPONSES (DOES NOT INCLUDE MNDOT STAFF RESPSONSES)



POLICY DIRECTION AND SYSTEM RESILIENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Several participants noted that land use decisions impact VMT. One participant shared how new schools are being built outside of the core of communities, which makes it difficult for people to get to them. Another participant shared:

> "Agree that we need to look at land use, in these rural areas the sign of development is building new roads and infrastructure … If people are serious about reduction think about milage based tax that would tax for the amount of miles driven – this would incentivize people to not live far away from things."

Several participants commented on the need for more communication and education around VMT. People had questions to the ultimate goal for reducing VMT. One person asked, "What is our goal in reducing VMT – we're targeting GHG. Less about congestion." Others mentions about communications and education such as:

- "Communication PER INDIVIDUAL level. It's helps people understand what individuals need to do to change."
- "Framing the change is something that is beneficial and desirable for people – reduction of VMT is just an outcome in those different shifts than those people want to do – rather than an abstract end."
- "MnDOT has the opportunity to do demonstration projects and communicate (VMT reduction, etc.) out to a broad range of people, helpful to explain the tradeoff of in things like land use etc.; think for the future so that we don't look back 20 years from now and think 'we should have done it differently'."

Participants were asked to share ideas for policies, strategies or actions that could help reduce VMT. People shared a variety of options including:

- Implementing road pricing
- Encouraging remote work policies
- Increasing broadband access

Small groups discussions included several comments about the context for implementing strategies to reduce VMT. Some comments include:

- "Struggle when we look at the strategies and how we make these equitable in rural/urban areas? When transportation options vary widely."
- "It definitely needs to be approach[ed] differently between the urban/rural contexts."
- "Capitalize on different strategies in different regions/contexts will help make a greater impact."
- "Can't be a one size fits all."
- "Long distance travel – from rural into the metro, or multiple day trips – not having the car be the most convenient option. How do we make rail/transit even more appealing as an option."
- "There is going to be different strategies for different community types because there are different needs, one solution isn't going to work for everything; larger infrastructure is unsustainable in the long run – highway expansion doesn't reduce congestion or VMT; I wouldn't put "manage highway expansion" on a VMT reduction list because they aren't related."

There was a mix of support and disagreement for the target. A couple participants asked why MnDOT was backing away from the Sustainable Transportation Advisory Committee recommendation for 20% reduction of VMT from 2019 numbers by 2050. A per capita target resulting in a ~7% reduction by 2050 was viewed as a less aggressive commitment. One person shared, "We are not pushing hard enough; VMT per capita seems like a clever tactic to avoid the VMT reduction goals." Others commented that 20% overall was not feasible and a few people recommended the need to be realistic and to have mechanisms to meet the target.

FREIGHT AND ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

Freight networks in the transportation system are critically important to the function of the economy. Despite the diversity in freight modes, they share a number of overarching trends marked by rapid change. Forum participants shared that freight weights and sizes are increasing. With increasing freight sizes, system constraints (like bridge sizes) may be more of a problem. More freight moving through the transportation system means

there is greater need for multimodal ports and hubs. One participant shared, “Roadways leading to major hubs (ex MSP airport) are critical, and the freight network is considered in those major road projects.”

The increase in freight volume and variety of destinations is increasing the need for coordination. Several participants noted that cities are a key partner in freight planning. Small group discussions highlighted the following themes:

- More reliance on local roads requires better understand of the freight road network beyond trunk highways.
- Some cities are better equipped to handle first- and last-mile freight connections than others.
- Cities, in particular, must balance the needs for all users as freight uses the same facilities as other modes.

As a result, participants shared that the local system bears a bigger burden for freight. They added that transportation programs (e.g., municipal state aid, county state aid highways, etc.) provide opportunities to help local governments respond to freight needs and investments. One participant added that freight planning should include paying attention to local roads that are critical connections to the ten ton freight network.

Several participants commented on the relationships between asset management and freight describing them as “interrelated and codependent.” Participants added:

- “Keeping roadways, airports, etc. in a state of good condition. Start with maintaining what we have to an acceptable level.”
- “Roads and bridges aren’t built to handle weight limits proposed. Have to beef up infrastructure to support freight movement.”

When asked what was missing from the draft strategies and actions. Participants shared the following themes:

- Truck parking especially on major shipping corridors
- Rail safety and hazardous shipping
- Transfer facilities needs for movement between modes
- First- and last-mile connections to ports
- Emissions and noise along certain freight corridors
- New technologies for airports (e.g., electric, hydrogen, etc.)
- High cost of getting commercial driver’s license

SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH TO TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

The recent increase in traffic-related fatalities helps to illustrate the value of a Safe System approach to transportation. The Safe System approach aims to anticipate human error and accommodate human injury tolerances to reduce fatal and serious injuries. At the time of the forums, 2021 was on track to be the deadliest year on Minnesota’s roads in over a decade. Participants were asked what strategies and actions were needed to change this trend.

Small group discussions included comments on the expanding definition of safety. This would mean expanding from a tradition focus on physical safety to include psychological safety and perception of safety. Further, transportation historically focused on reducing fatalities and serious injuries from crashes. One person commented that there is a need for culture change to think of safety over mobility in the future.

Participants shared that promoting a culture of safety should extend to all modes. One person commented, "[We need to] continue to understand safety for the whole system and all the modes. We can learn from each mode how people perceive and how we can measure. Helps drive safety culture holistically." A couple people shared that the transportation system is built around travel by cars and that safety considerations follow accordingly. Another person noted, "[We need to] design for all modes, remove barriers and create a culture of change for safety in mind. Historically, we designed for cars. Need to support other modes. We can encourage walking, biking and transit as accepted modes if we better accommodate these users in the system."

The small group discussions included acknowledgment that everyone has a role in transportation safety including individual people using the system. Participants shared:

- "Driver behavior needs to change. Heard a lot in the media about people not abiding by speed limits, esp. with COVID. Hard for enforcement to keep up with that. This combines with distractions like cell phones, etc. Engineering and education both have a role."
- "I think the focus needs to be on individuals and individual behavior and less on just moving traffic. Looks at initiative to reduce local speeds. They need to start focusing on general behavior for all users. Lack of education between modes, for example. Need to move beyond fast travel between points A and B. Want to make sure that we getting home safely."
- "96% of crashes are attributed to individual behavior. Bur design and safety features could be contributing factors. Access management considerations would help. [Toward Zero Deaths] discourages left hand turns, but access management could help."

Comments on transportation safety roles emphasized that all solutions are needed to protect people using the transportation system. Comments included:

- "All above approach: engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency response, etc.. Can't just focus on highway improvements. We need education for all users, enforcement to modify behaviors. Important to all that, we need to be able to respond quickly to save a life."
- "Laws, enforcement and education also play a huge role for all modes. Not just design and policies matter."
- "We can't do this relying on only one of the Es of TZD. We need this to be a multidisciplinary effort. And these efforts need to be balanced. Enforcement/EMS fixes a situation in the moment, but education/engineering can start a more long-term systemic change (designing a system for all users)."

Participants shared a number of specific solutions to help promote a Safe System approach to transportation safety including:

- Promoting vehicle technology that improves safety (e.g., lane departure detection, GPS, automatic braking, etc.).

- Making roadways more friendly for people walking, rolling and bicycling.
- Focusing improvements where they are several modes interacting or intersecting.
- Redesigning infrastructure including roadways to reduce speeds and potential for crashes.
- Communicating safety messages.
- Promoting different solutions and approaches for different contexts.
- Taking a human-centered approach to curb serious injury and fatal crashes.

TRANSPORTATION EQUITY IMPLEMENTATION

SMTP engagement has included work to define transportation equity. MnDOT staff collaborated with the members of the SMTP Equity Work Group to draft a working definition of transportation equity. Internal and external stakeholders shared feedback on a working definition to ensure the final version would be grounded in the lived experiences of Minnesotans. Feedback from internal and external stakeholders resulted in the following definition for transportation equity.

> *Transportation equity ensures the benefits and burdens of transportation spending, services, and systems are fair and just, which historically has not been the case. Transportation equity also requires sharing power in decision-making with people, especially Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.*

This definition can and will likely change through ongoing SMTP engagement. This working definition was the basis for small group discussions during the stakeholder forums.

DRAFT STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FEEDBACK

Forum participants shared feedback on draft strategies and actions proposed for the SMTP. Commons themes included:

- Role of public transit in transportation equity
- Transportation and land use decision coordination
- Inclusive engagement practices
- Need to consider geography

Participants shared that public transportation is a necessary component of transportation equity. One person commented that greener public transportation options should be available to people living near highways and industrial land uses. Another person shared that people are sometimes willing to give up unsafe driving when other options like transit are available. A participant commented that marketing public transit options is necessary to ensure this work is successful.

On the topic of land use, one person noted that transportation benefits and burdens can often be the result of land use decisions. Another person added that people living near facilities with high emissions experience the greatest impacts. Further, land use and zoning should "have the health of people and equity in mind." A person commented:

> "It really comes back to community design. Our transportation design really needs to be better embedded in local community. We continue to develop communities for cars, not people. We need to

shift perspective from cars to people. Be working with local community planning/zoning to design our small and large communities around people. Think of the end-users. We need to plan around people to reduce inequities."

A couple participants commented on the role of the engagement in advancing transportation equity. One person shared, "Folks of color need to see themselves in the planning. By being specific, by putting it into the text, then [MnDOT] can be held accountable." A person added that it can be difficult to ensure that people are able to participate. They commented, "How do you ensure community partners are being equitable about who they are inviting around the table?"

Several participants shared the need to think about equity from a geographic perspective in addition to or in replacement of race. Comments included:

- "From an extreme rural perspective, equity is about giving people an opportunity to live where they want. There are a lot people in some towns that don't even have reliable services or vehicle access. So I focus on providing opportunities for low income and people of color to also live-in rural areas."
- "In an urban setting, this is about creating more options for people. Where they don't need to drive to get around. On the flipside, unreliable transit doesn't guarantee the ability to get to places when they need to."
- "People in rural communities just have farther to drive for any kind of service (medical, grocery, social, etc.)."
- "It hasn't just been people of color who have been impacted by transportation decisions."
- "We aren't considering geographical equity here, and we are losing sight of this. Transportation infrastructure. The priority shouldn't just be race."

HOW FEEDBACK INFORMED THE SMTP

Staff recommended GHG emission targets in alignment with the Paris Agreement for inclusion in the SMTP following these stakeholder forums.

Feedback on the VMT target was shared with the internal work group that drafted a target recommendation for inclusion in the SMTP.

WHO PARTICIPATED

Save the Date information was posted at www.MinnesotaGO.org and was shared with people signed up for MnDOT's Statewide Transportation Planning newsletter. Invitees included:

- Advisory committees
    - Policy Advisory Committee
    - Technical Advisory Committee
    - Each of the six SMTP work groups
- Advocacy Council for Tribal Transportation

- Area transportation partnerships
- City and county engineers
- Metropolitan planning organizations
- Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee
- Regional development organizations
- Transit agencies

A total of 125 people participated in the two stakeholder forums. People in the "Other" organization category of included a mix of public health, area boards on aging, advocates, etc. See the percent of attendees by organization type (Figure 4) and community type (Figure 5).

FIGURE 4: PERCENT OF ATTENDEES BY ORGANIZATION TYPE

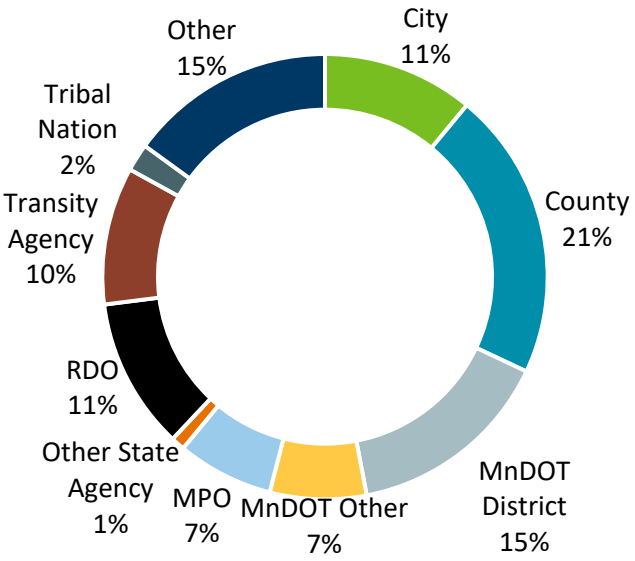


FIGURE 5: PERCENT OF ATTENDESS BY COMMUNITY TYPE