

Section VI. Public Involvement

It [Year 2000 Plan] encouraged sustainability by acknowledging that growth is contingent upon both demands of the private marketplace and fiscal resources of the community.

Sioux Falls 2015 I-1

A. Market Research and Analysis Project Results

During the summer of 1999, the MPO hired a consultant to complete a transportation needs analysis of urban residents, rural residents, and businesses throughout the transportation planning area. This statistically valid, random survey provides a reliable future analysis of the needs of the citizens within the MPO area. When making decisions on transportation improvements, a review of the survey results and the overall objectives must be considered.

◆ Resident Survey Summary

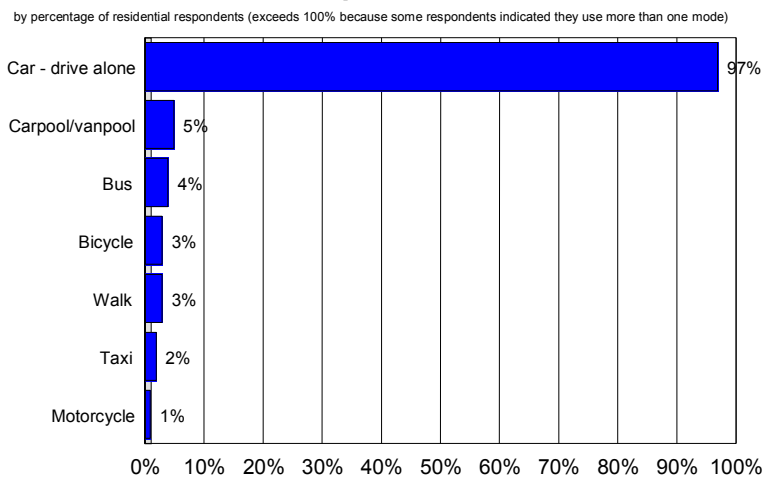
A total of 803 residents were selected at random from Minnehaha and Lincoln Counties to participate in the survey by phone: 569 lived in the city of Sioux Falls; 234 lived outside the city of Sioux Falls. The overall results have a 95 percent level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-3.5 percent.

Major Findings of the Resident Survey

- Residents in the Sioux Falls area are willing to consider a slight increase in taxes to pay for transportation improvements in the region. Two-thirds (66 percent) of those surveyed were either “very” or “somewhat supportive” of a slight increase in taxes to fund transportation improvements; 14 percent were “not supportive.” The remaining 20 percent did not have an opinion. The low percentage (10 percent) of “very supportive” responses indicates that it will not be easy to pass a tax increase without a significant public education campaign.
- Nearly half (47 percent) of those surveyed indicated that they would like to see a greater percentage of their current tax dollars spent on transportation. Another 43 percent thought the current level of spending on transportation should stay about the same. Only 4 percent thought it should be reduced, and 6 percent did not have an opinion.
- Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of those surveyed think the current level of traffic congestion in the Sioux Falls area is a minor problem. Less than one-third (28 percent) rated traffic congestion as a major problem, 6 percent thought it was not a problem, and 2 percent did not have an opinion.
- Eighty-seven percent (87%) of those surveyed supported the development of transportation corridors in future growth areas around the city of Sioux Falls that will allow traffic to flow 45-50 miles per hour; 10 percent were not supportive; 3 percent did not have an opinion.

- Eighty-nine percent (89%) of those surveyed support transportation investments in technologies that will help maximize the flow of traffic in the region; 9 percent were not supportive; 2 percent did not have an opinion.
- Seventy-five percent (75%) of those surveyed expressed support for limiting the number of access driveways to retail locations in order to improve traffic flow along major roads; 20 percent were not supportive; 5 percent did not have an opinion.
- The majority of the residents travel by themselves.

Modes of Transportation Residents Most Frequently Use to Travel to/from Work, School and Other Frequent Destinations



- The three transportation issues residents think are currently the most serious problem in the Sioux Falls area are:
 1. 63 percent—Congestion on east-west roads in the city of Sioux Falls.
 2. 26 percent—Congestion on north-south roads in the city of Sioux Falls.
 3. 17 percent—Congestion on interstates around the city of Sioux Falls.
- The three transportation issues that were rated as emerging problems in the Sioux Falls area by the greatest percentage of respondents are:
 1. 48 percent—Congestion on north-south roads in the city of Sioux Falls.
 2. 40 percent—Congestion on interstates around the city of Sioux Falls.
 3. 32 percent—Congestion on roads and highways linking Sioux Falls with other townships in Lincoln and Minnehaha Counties.

◆ Employer Survey Summary

A total of 212 employers were selected at random to participate in the survey by mail: 162 were located in the city of Sioux Falls; 50 were located outside the city of Sioux Falls. The overall results have a 95 percent level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-7 percent.

Major Findings of the Employer Survey

- When asked about general types of transportation priorities for the region, employers selected the following items as their top three priorities:
 1. Maintaining existing roads and highways.
 2. Expanding/widening existing roads and highways.
 3. Building new roads and highways.

- When asked about *specific transportation improvements* for the region, employers selected the following items as their top three choices:
 1. Improving east-west traffic flow in the city of Sioux Falls.
 2. Improving the timing of traffic lights in the city of Sioux Falls.
 3. Adding interchanges to the interstates.

◆ Urban/Rural

Residents who live inside the city of Sioux Falls generally share the same perceptions and concerns about transportation issues as residents who live outside the city. Interagency cooperation is essential.

- Although residents who lived outside the city of Sioux Falls placed significantly more importance on improvements to township roads and rural highways than residents of the city of Sioux Falls, *the top three transportation priorities for both groups were the same:*
 1. Improving east-west traffic flow in the city of Sioux Falls.
 2. Improving the timing of traffic lights in the city of Sioux Falls.
 3. Improving north-south traffic flow in the city of Sioux Falls.

◆ Overall Ranking

- Residents generally think the region's transportation system is meeting their needs. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) rated the region's transportation system as "excellent" or "good." About one-fourth (27 percent) rated the system as "average," 5 percent rated the system as "poor," and 5 percent did not have an opinion. The small percentage of "excellent" ratings indicates that residents think the region's transportation system could be improved; however, the low percentage of "poor" ratings indicates that residents are not extremely dissatisfied with the current system.

- Employers generally think the region’s transportation system is meeting their needs. More than half (55 percent) rated the region’s transportation system as “excellent” or “good.” More than one-fourth (29 percent) rated the system as “average,” 4 percent rated the system as “poor,” and 12 percent did not have an opinion. The small percentage of “excellent” ratings indicates that employers think the region’s transportation system could be improved; however, the low percentage of “poor” ratings indicates that employers are not extremely dissatisfied with the current system.

◆ Safety

- Overall ranking of traffic safety in the Sioux Falls area by residential respondents: 81 percent good or average versus 10 percent poor.
- When residents were asked the same question near schools, they responded: 70 percent good or average versus 7 percent poor.

◆ Transit

- Residents generally think the two most important objectives for a public transit system in the Sioux Falls area should be:

To provide transportation for the elderly and disabled—81 percent.
To provide transportation for low-income persons—40 percent.

- Residents show support for increasing funding for the current bus system:

71 percent are somewhat or strongly supportive of increasing funding, while only 6 percent are not supportive.

- Employers are generally supportive of the availability of public transit system in the Sioux Falls area:

43 percent are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied, while only 8 percent are dissatisfied.

- Employers are also supportive of increasing funding for the current bus system:

58 percent are somewhat supportive or strongly supportive, while 18 percent are not supportive.

◆ Airport

Residents rate reducing the cost of air travel as the most important concern of air service improvements (88 percent), while increasing passenger flights/destinations (75 percent) and improving access to/from the airport (73 percent) may be more within local control.

◆ **Bicycling**

The residents who responded to the survey have stated a satisfaction with the “Ease of Travel by Bicycle in the Region” (74 percent very satisfied and somewhat satisfied), and within these results the very satisfied was higher than the overall average.

At that point, we need to try and understand what we could do to improve this rating. The residents stated that “lack of bicycle trails” was not a “problem” (18 percent equals 7 percent current problem and 11 percent emerging problem). When listing the top priorities for transportation improvements in the Sioux Falls area, “improving existing walking/biking trails” received only 7 percent. They were supportive of “having dedicated bike lanes on some streets in the city of Sioux Falls” (very supportive 35 percent, not supportive 29 percent, somewhat supportive 30 percent, not sure 6 percent).

Sixty-five percent (65 percent) of those surveyed expressed support for having dedicated bike lanes on some streets in the city of Sioux Falls, 29 percent were not supportive, 6 percent did not have an opinion.

The businesses that responded were willing to pay taxes to support improving existing walking and biking trails (71 percent) and 63 percent were willing to support developing new trails. When they were asked to list their “top priorities for transportation improvements in the Sioux Falls area,” they put improving and developing new trails at the bottom of their list (6 percent and 10 percent, respectively). Therefore, they are supportive, but it’s not a priority.

◆ **Conclusions**

The consolidated report from ETC Institute reviewed the results from all the participants and made the following conclusions.

On Congestion

Most residents and employers think the current level of congestion is tolerable; they generally think the region should focus on transportation strategies that will prevent current levels of congestion from becoming worse.

On Taxes

Residents and employers may be willing to consider paying slightly higher taxes to fund specific transportation improvements in the region.

Guiding Objectives

- Maintenance of the existing transportation system.
- Preservation of access across the city of Sioux Falls.
- Development of a cohesive transportation network that effectively links Minnehaha and Lincoln Counties.

Although more than 50 transportation objectives were addressed during the study, the results of the market research clearly identified that (1) maintenance of the existing

transportation system, (2) preservation of access across the city of Sioux Falls, and (3) the development of a cohesive transportation network that effectively links Minnehaha and Lincoln Counties are the three most important objectives for long-range transportation planning in the region.

Strategic Initiatives

- Maximize the capacity of existing corridors and interstates in the city of Sioux Falls.
- Maintain existing links between the city of Sioux Falls and surrounding counties and townships and upgrade the capacity of existing interstates and other highways.
- Pursue the acquisition of right-of-way and the development of new transportation corridors in future growth areas.
- Invest in Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).
- Review the way public transit services are deployed.

Recommended Seed Projects/Additional Study Areas

The market research identified several areas that should be considered as seed projects and/or as areas for further study.

- The MPO should study ways to **maximize the capacity of existing corridors and interstates in the city of Sioux Falls** to enhance east-west and north-south travel through the city. The emphasis should be on enhancing the capacity of existing corridors in the central part of the city rather than on the development of new corridors through the central part of the city.
- The MPO should **maintain existing links between the city of Sioux Falls and surrounding counties and townships** and upgrade the capacity of existing interstates and other highways that will connect the city of Sioux Falls with future growth areas outside the city.
- The MPO should **pursue the acquisition of right-of-way and the development of new transportation corridors in future growth areas** around the city. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the residents surveyed were supportive of this concept. Focus group participants generally thought that existing corridors in the central part of the city will become increasingly congested and that new corridors around the city were needed in order to preserve access from one side of the city to another.
- The MPO should **invest in Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)** that will help maximize traffic flow in the region. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the residents surveyed support this concept. Although most focus group participants were not familiar with specific ITS applications, the market research indicates that residents and employers believe that such systems can be used to enhance the region's transportation system.

- The MPO should **review the way public transit services are deployed**. The surveys and focus groups showed that most residents are not interested in using traditional fixed-route bus transportation as a means of getting to and from work. Despite the lack of interest in fixed-route service, there was interest in alternative forms of public transportation (i.e., van service, demand response, deviated fixed-route service, etc.). In addition, residents, employers, and transportation planners placed a high level of importance on providing transit service to the region's elderly and disabled populations. This suggests that the way paratransit and special services are deployed should be reviewed as well.

B. Public Meetings

In addition to the random surveys of the public, the MPO hosted numerous other public meetings. Between May 1999 and May 2000, updates on the Long-Range Plan were given to the three committees, including the Citizens' Advisory Committee. In May 2000, the Public Involvement Plan for the Long-Range Plan was presented to the committees at a public meeting.

On June 15, the MPO hosted an open house that was attended by approximately 80 people. Media coverage was substantial, as was the amount of information that was available on the Internet and Channel 61. Two public hearings were held during the TAC meetings prior to the approval of the plan.

C. SDDOT 1999 Customer Satisfaction Assessment

In the fall of 1999, the SDDOT randomly surveyed residents' opinions concerning the importance and quality of the DOT's key products and services. From this data, the report recommended actions the DOT can take to improve its performance and public perception of that performance. The results were significant enough to mention in this Long-Range Plan.

Residents think the most important service of the DOT is maintaining the highway surface.

- Safety or ease of driving was primary reasons why so much importance was placed on maintaining highway surfaces.

Customer Satisfaction p. 4

Most residents would like more information from the DOT. They would especially like information that helps them plan their trips.

- Virtually no one thinks the DOT provides too much information about future highway projects.

Customer Satisfaction p. 4

Statistically significant correlation exists between respondent ratings of satisfaction and perceived access to DOT information. Perceived proficiency at which the DOT disseminates transportation-related information influences assessment of overall performance. Three groupings for analysis were identified based on response consistency to three information-need questions asked of all survey respondents. The questions assessed:

- How easy residents felt obtaining needed information from the proper source would be.
- How residents rate the job DOT does in keeping citizens informed of current plans for highway construction and maintenance.
- How residents rate the job DOT does in alerting drivers of delays and alternate routes.

Customer Satisfaction p. 7

As perceptions of access to information become more positive, so do perceptions of overall DOT performance. The implication is that informed residents make for more satisfied consumers of DOT products and services.

Customer Satisfaction p. 8