TASK 5: TRAVEL DEMAND MANAGEMENT LANDSCAPE

The purpose of this report is to document the TDM measures that are currently in place in the Twin Cities, make recommendations to improve the region’s TDM efforts and examine whether the ABC Ramps can be leveraged to help improve TDM in the region. This process involved a review of employer TDM efforts near the ABC Ramps and of TDM policies and programs maintained by the Metropolitan Council and other local and regional actors. This involved a scan of official TDM efforts logged with the City of Minneapolis, including follow up surveys to those developers. This effort was complemented by a review of known efforts from organizations that had not formally registered plans with the City of Minneapolis through the use of a survey distributed to employees with the help of two downtown nonprofits.

This report was prepared by graduate research assistants with the supervision of Humphrey School of Public Affairs faculty Frank Douma and Jason Cao. Assistance was received from the City of Minneapolis, Move Minneapolis, the I-494 Corridor Commission and the Warehouse District Business Association.

TRAVEL DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Travel demand management (TDM) is a general term for strategies that increase overall transportation system efficiency, most often by either encouraging a shift from single-occupant vehicle (SOV) trips to non-SOV modes or out of peak periods. TDM programs are usually implemented by public agencies and executed through public-private partnerships. In the case of the Twin Cities, the Metropolitan Council is the de facto lead agency for TDM implementation due to its role in regional transportation planning and air quality management. Goals for regional TDM were outlined in the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP): ¹

- Reduce travel during peak periods and in congested areas
- Promote alternatives to driving alone such as carpooling, transit, and bicycling
- Promote flexible work schedules and telecommuting
- Work with local governments to link TDM strategies and supportive land use policies
- Market new transit services like the Northstar Line, METRO Green Line, and METRO Red Line
- Encourage bicycling by promoting expanded bicycle facilities and bikesharing.

¹ 2040 Transportation Policy Plan, Metropolitan Council (2015)
In addition to the Metropolitan Council, TDM is carried out by other public-sector entities in the region, such as the City of Minneapolis, as well as private employers.

**TDM ACTIVITIES LED BY THE METROPOLITAN COUNCIL, THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS, AND PRIVATE EMPLOYERS**

**Metropolitan Council**

The Metropolitan Council takes a multi-faceted approach to TDM. These efforts include but are not limited to:

- An online rideshare matching application, which is required by state statute. In the Ridematch tool, commuters make a profile that matches users based on their route, time constraints and personal preferences.
- The Guaranteed Ride Home program, which reimburses transit riders for travel expenses incurred due to unexpected overtime, illness or other eligible reasons (up to four reimbursements per year or $100 in value, whichever comes first).
- A “commuter choice awards” annual event that recognizes organizations in the metropolitan area that go above and beyond in implementing TDM strategies.
- Specialized discount transit passes for employees and students.

A vanpool program, Metro Vanpool that subsidizes a van leasing service for areas of the metro that are not served by fixed route bus service.

The region’s four transportation management organizations (TMOs)—Anoka Commuting Services, the I-494 Commission, St. Paul Smart Trips and Move Minneapolis—receive grant funding through Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding administered by the Metropolitan Council. TMOs are organizations, typically not-for-profit, that provide services to private and public employers and their employees to encourage travel behavior that reduces congestion compared SOV use. The Metropolitan Council is required to oversee the efforts of TMOs and report back to the Federal Transit Administration.

Move Minneapolis works with downtown Minneapolis employers to help commuters learn about different modal options, help employers offer subsidized transit passes to their employees and promotes carpooling (including through the use of carpool parking contracts in the ABC Ramps). Historically it has served as a conduit for information between regional efforts and downtown employers and building managers. The role of this TMO is largely as an advocate and educator, as Minneapolis has a relatively limited set of non-binding regulations regarding TDM in the downtown area.
The City of Minneapolis’ comprehensive plan, last updated in 2009, encourages the use of TDM to serve several objectives:

- “Manage the role and impact of automobiles in a multi-modal transportation system.”
- “Balance the demand for parking with objectives for improving the environment for transit, walking and bicycling, while supporting the city’s business community.”
- “Encourage growth and reinvestment by sustaining the development of a multi-modal transportation system.”

The comprehensive plan echoes the city’s 2007 Downtown Action Plan (a component of its Access Minneapolis Ten Year Transportation Action Plan), which describes city policies that support activities that reduce SOV dependency such as carsharing, carpooling and telecommuting.

Ordinance 535.140 of the city’s municipal code requires that, “All non-residential development containing one hundred thousand (100,000) square feet or more of new or additional gross floor area shall include a travel demand management plan (TDM) that addresses the transportation impacts of the development on air quality, parking and roadway infrastructure.” TDM plans (TDMPs) are submitted to planning staff with the City of Minneapolis and recorded by the Transportation and Parking Services Division. Each TDMP must follow a certain format, outlining the goals of the plan and its relation to city transportation policy, with a description of how the development may impact parking and use of local roadways, overall number of trips generated and their modal split. TDMPs must include a description of measures designed to minimize transportation impacts.

TDMPs are completed by either the developer or on their behalf by a consultant. Prior to project completion, TDMPs must be submitted to the Minneapolis Department of Public Works. Plans are approved on the basis of whether they address the city’s TDM policy goals and involve required elements describing traffic impacts and traffic mitigation strategies. Only upon submission and approval are developments granted a certificate of occupancy. Once a TDMP is approved, the city does not typically verify that the building occupant implements the plan. While there have been various monitoring efforts for TDM implementation since the establishment of this requirement in the 1990’s,

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2 The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth (2009)


5 Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Chapter 535, Article I (2013)
city ordinance has never created a framework for evaluating and enforcing plans past their certification by the City Engineer.

**Employers**

Between 2005 and 2016, there were 34 different developments in downtown Minneapolis that required a TDMP. Most of these plans were for mixed residential and commercial developments, as well as a stadium, an addition to a downtown hospital complex, a church and Metro Transit’s headquarters expansion (Appendix 1). The plans were completed between nine consulting companies and 21 developers. By examining these plans, it is possible to understand the goals and priorities of developers and new businesses with respect to reducing SOV travel and ways the ABC ramps could be used to meet those goals.

![Figure 1 TDM Efforts by Development Type](image)

All properties that submitted TDMPs fell within a Downtown Parking Overlay District, which is a special zoning district designed to restrict the expansion of surface parking lots and to establish certain minimum and maximum off-street parking standards. With few exceptions, expansion of commercial parking lots and the conversion of accessory parking is forbidden within the overlay district. Of the 34 plans, 18 fell within the half mile boundary of the ABC Ramps and 8 within one block. Over half of those employers were connected to the ABC Ramps via the Minneapolis Skyway System (Figure 2).
Of the 34 plans reviewed, 25 involved specific modal split targets to their property. These targets ranged widely, from 25% non-SOV travel on the low end to 60% non-SOV travel on the high end. The average between those submitting modal split goals was about 50% by automobile (mixed between SOV and carpool travel), 35% via transit and 15% by biking or walking. With 26 applicants, the second most common goal among any strategies in these plans was to have a designated staff member to oversee employee transportation management—effectively someone who would carry out a TDMP. Twenty of the plans mentioned that this designated person would use surveys to measure initial mode split or mode split over the course of several years of effort. Other popular management strategies involved providing new hires or tenants with an information packet regarding SOV alternatives (15 plans) or providing this information in a common area of the building (13 plans). Twelve plans made some kind of commitment to work regularly with Move Minneapolis to improve upon their target goals. Other less popular strategies involved commuter education fairs (4 plans), allowing for flexibility in work schedules (6 plans) or allowing telecommuting (5 plans).
This section provides an inventory of all TDM strategies contained in the 34 TDMPs reviewed for this report. The strategies are divided into five categories:

- Parking Specific Strategies
- Strategies Involving Vehicle Trips
- Transit Specific Strategies
- Bicycle Specific Strategies
- Pedestrian Specific Strategies
Parking Specific Strategies (Figure 3)

The parking specific strategies identified were:

- Separating rental/lease agreements for parking or a policy of no free parking (13 plans)
- Stipulating that parking will be built for tenants only and cannot be sold (9 plans)
- Restricting guest parking through signage and enforcement (9 plans)
- Providing valet services (4 plans)
- Providing preferential parking spaces for carpools and vanpools (3 plans)
- Leasing policy stating that no subsidy for driving will exceed other modes (3 plans)
- Maintaining a parking to unit ratio of under 1:1 (2 plans)
- Setting lot parking rates to downtown market rate (2 plans)
- Leasing parking spaces for market rate (2 plans)

![Figure 3 Parking Specific Strategies](image-url)

Figure 3 Parking Specific Strategies
Strategies Involving Vehicle Trips (Figure 4)

The strategies involving vehicle trips identified were:

- Promoting off-peak deliveries (20 plans)
- Providing information specific to carpooling (16 plans)
- Providing information specific to car sharing (14 plans)
- Providing information related to guaranteed ride home programs (8 plans)
- Providing shared cars for tenants and residents (7 plans)
- Coordinate carpooling (1 plan)

Figure 4 Strategies Involving Vehicle Trips
Transit Specific Strategies (Figure 5)

The transit specific strategies identified were:

- Providing visual advertisements and schedules for transit in public place (25 plans)
- Facilitating the sale of Go-To Cards and transit passes (3 plans)
- Installing monitors to display real-time transit information (3 plans)
- Subsidizing transit passes (2 plans)
- Put transit stop in front of property (1 plan)

Figure 5 Transit Specific Strategies
Pedestrian Specific Strategies (Figure 6)

The pedestrian specific strategies identified were:

- Maintaining clear, well-lit sidewalks around property (15 plans)
- Rebuilding sidewalks according to ADA standards (13 plans)
- Providing building escorts off the property (2 plans)
- Planting trees outside building (1 plan)

Figure 6 Pedestrian Specific Strategies
Bicycle Specific Strategies (Figure 7)

The bicycle specific strategies identified were:

- Providing secure and accessible bike storage (31 plans)
- Posting maps of local bike/pedestrian infrastructure (18 plans)
- Promoting the use of Nice Ride (8 plans)
- Providing on-site showers and personal locker facilities for employees (7 plans)
- Providing bike repair stations (3 plans)
- Providing bikes for rental and check out (2 plans)

![Figure 7 Bicycle Specific Strategies](image-url)
As discussed above, city enforcement of TDMPs is lacking, and as such we cannot verify the degree to which the TDMPs examined in this report have been implemented. Further complicating any evaluation of the implementation of TDMPs in Minneapolis is that the contact listed for each TDMP is typically the development, not the current building occupant or owner.

DOWNTOWN EMPLOYER TDM SURVEY

To determine the TDM activities of downtown employers, a survey was distributed to businesses belonging to the Warehouse District Business Association, which covers parts of downtown Minneapolis and the North Loop. The survey was also distributed to subscribers to the email list of Move Minneapolis, the TMO for downtown Minneapolis. The survey was active from February to July of 2017. Over the course of this outreach effort, 115 surveys were completed by representatives of 56 different organizations. These were primarily mid-size employers with a median number of 55.5 employees. Employers ranged from public and private downtown anchors to small businesses (Appendix 2). Respondents at each organization ranged from mid-level employees to executives. The most common self-identification was “manager.” Over half the businesses represented were reachable through the Minneapolis skyway system, which connects to the ABC Ramps (Figure 8).

Figure 8 TDM Surveyed Businesses
Driving alone was the most common (60.7%) mode of transportation estimated by employees at each workplace. Taking transit (27.4%) was the closest runner up, followed by much lower rates for biking, walking and carpooling (Figure 9).

![Average Reported Employee Transportation Mode of Choice](image)

**Figure 9 Employee Mode of Commute**

About 47% of respondents reported that their organization provided some kind of parking subsidy for employees (Figure 10).
About 15% of respondents reported knowledge of transportation goals at their organization while about 37% indicated that transportation assistance was provided (Figure 11).
The employers that had transportation goals focused on having anywhere from 25% to 100% of employees arrive at work through non-automobile means. In several cases these goals were reported as simply “more” use of biking, walking and transit. For the majority of respondents that elaborated on this, that incentive was most commonly a free or subsidized transit pass, with the next most popular being transit stipends and bike reimbursement. About 32% of respondents reported that their organization had a dedicated staff person to handle employee transportation questions and 50% reported providing information to employees and visitors about non-SOV travel. The most common method of providing this information seemed to be through the employee onboarding process. About 78% of respondents reported that their employer allowed flexible scheduling options (Figure 12).
Figure 12 Employee-Reported Workplace Flexibility

Of the 53 that chose to leave feedback, nearly 28 cited ramp safety as their main concern, with several noting that expanded hours of escort service would be appreciated. Other comments included frustration that Ramp C was commonly full and that the ramps were hard to enter and exit during sporting events. Not surprisingly, a number of respondents were also upset about the preferential treatment of commuters coming from I-394 and I-94. One more detailed response noted the challenge of carpooling and parenting. One finding of the survey, however, was an overall willingness to engage with the project further. Nearly one-third of all respondents indicated a willingness to participate in follow up discussions regarding the study and future programming at the ABC Ramps.

EMPLOYER TDM CASE STUDIES

Michaud Cooley Erickson (MCE)

MCE is an engineering consulting firm located on South Seventh Street in downtown Minneapolis. MCE supports non-SOV commuting in several ways. Each of MCE’s 130 employees in downtown Minneapolis has the choice of accepting a pre-tax Metro Pass for $76 per month, or a credit of the same amount for on-site monthly parking fees. The company charges for parking, but has several shared spaces in the event that an employee who typically does not drive to work needs to drive into work. The company supplies bike and moped parking and provides priority to carpool vehicles. The company encourages employees to take transit to meetings outside of the office. When transit is not a feasible option, MCE
has a fleet of company cars available to employees. These vehicles are available for both personal and company use.\(^6\)

**Best Buy**

Best Buy’s corporate headquarters in Richfield offers a similar transit subsidy to MCE—up to $75 a month. The company operates a ride matching application on an intranet page that has facilitated upwards of 200 carpool and vanpools. Employees who use the vanpool pay $25 a month per person, and the company covers the rest of the cost. These carpools are given preferential parking spaces within the company’s parking complex. In addition to these efforts for drivers, the company provides on-site bike racks and a bike tune up station. The company keeps a kiosk with commuter resources such as bus schedules, as well as other services offered from local transit providers, such as information about Metro Transit’s Guaranteed Ride Home program.\(^7\)

**Spack Consulting Report**

In 2010, Spack Consulting issued a report on the effectiveness of TDMPs at six anonymous companies around the Twin Cities metropolitan area. In addition to suburban examples, the study included one 300-employee company near the Warehouse District and Target Field. The company owned two surface lots for use by employees and deliveries. In addition to bicycle facilities, the company provided discounted high occupancy vehicle (HOV) parking. Overall, the study showed a positive effect of TDMPs on traffic and parking demand at the sites compared to what their expected traffic volumes would be, with estimated reductions of 27 to 37% of traffic generation and 11 to 21% in those using parking. The study recommended 30% reduction of SOV travel demand and 10% reduction in parking as a baseline for TDMPs.\(^8\)

While explicit TDMPs and TDM-related employer incentives still remain uncommon, several companies in the Twin Cities stand out as potential models for those around the ABC Ramps and for the City of Minneapolis.

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\(^6\) Interview with company Human Resources office (2017)


**Employer Cash-out Program**

A study entitled “Parking Cash-out: Where ‘Smart growth’ and Effective Transit Intersect,” conducted by the Downtown Minneapolis Transportation Management Organization (the precursor to Move Minneapolis) examined the effect of parking cash-out programs among employers in the Twin Cities in 2001. A parking cash-out program is an employer subsidy that employees can put toward parking or accept as a monetary payout of equivalent value to the parking subsidy. Since no employer was willing to commit to a fully equivalent subsidy, this was meant to provide “greater equity between employer-provided transportation benefits for those that drive alone and for those who choose an alternative to driving alone and forego a parking space.” The study examined four organizations in downtown Minneapolis, two in downtown St. Paul and one in suburban Hopkins. Between the seven examples, there was an average mode shift of 11% from SOVs to another mode before and after cash-out programs were extended. The study noted that the organizations that were most reticent to offer those incentives were those where they owned parking spaces or parking spaces were bundled with the lease.9

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Metropolitan Council, the City of Minneapolis and some private employers in the region are currently undertaking worthwhile TDM efforts, including educating commuters about modal options, providing subsidized transit passes and offering amenities that facilitate bicycle use. However, there is significant room for improvement in the region’s TDM landscape. This report offers the following recommendations.

**Stronger City TDM Ordinances and Enforcement**

The City of Minneapolis’ ordinance requiring TDMPs for certain development should be broader and include more substantial enforcement mechanisms to ensure that TDMPs are implemented.

In 2009, The City of Bloomington, Minnesota moved beyond using TDM strategies on a case-by-case basis for large developments and created a citywide TDM policy. The city devised a two-tier process, with policies required for non-residential developments with more than 350 parking spaces. While smaller non-residential developments complete a simple checklist, first tier properties require implementation and evaluation plans backed up by a deposit of $50 per parking space. If effort is made towards the implementation and evaluation, the deposit is refunded two years after the issuance of the certificate of occupancy.10 Using an escrow account as a TDM enforcement technique is an innovative

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10 Interview with I-494 Commission Executive Director (2017)
provision that may be a model for other cities interested in more robust enforcement of TDM. A common flaw of TDM ordinances is weak enforcement or verification of implementation.

A recent analysis carried out by the Federal Highway Administration and the Center for Smart Growth that examined the hypothetical impact of specific TDM ordinances in several US cities, mainly related to employer incentives to switch modes. The study found that if ordinances in those cities were adopted that required downtown employers to provide the option for employees to opt out of their parking space in favor of an equivalently valued stipend for another mode, on a monthly or especially daily basis, that annual commuter VMT could drop anywhere between 8 and 16%.¹¹

One recommendation, outlined by a recent national review of TDM policies by Smart Growth America, is to require TDM in the land development process.¹² The positive momentum from the new requirements in Bloomington, as well as the results of the Spack report in 2010, demonstrate the potential value of firm commitments to implementation of TDMPs. To this point, no audit had been completed by any city department or Move Minneapolis, so it is difficult to understand to what extent these efforts have been successful or what aspects have been attempted. Similarly, binding agreements for implementation and evaluation of TDM goals upfront for the life of the property, regardless of changes to the property manager or tenant, would undoubtedly be a step towards more effective efforts in existing and future plans. A recent action plan developed to promote mobility services by the Shared Use Mobility Center describes TDM initiatives in other major cities (Appendix 3).¹³

**TMO Improvements**

Another recommendation is for strong regional coordination of transportation demand management strategies and policies. The Twin Cities region may be better situated than other regions in this regard, with the presence of several long-standing TMOs, a strong regional planning authority and the ongoing evaluation of transportation projects like MnPASS and the ABC Ramps. The coordination of TDM strategies and mode shift benchmarks would help streamline communication, implementation and evaluation. In particular, there seems to be room to engage employers—often the closest point of contact for an individual’s personal transportation decisions—about setting and communicating transportation goals related to the transportation benefits offered to employees. This sentiment in favor of better regional cooperation was echoed by the Metropolitan Council’s evaluation of TDM efforts in 2010.

¹¹ Expected Impacts of City-Level Parking Cash Out and Transit Benefits Ordinances (2017)

¹² State of the Practice: Travel Demand Management (2013)

¹³ Twin Cities Shared Mobility Action Plan (2017)
Parking Policy Changes and Cash-Out?

Another general recommendation by Smart Growth America is for pricing incentives to discourage the demand for parking. While employer subsidization of employee parking is counterproductive, it is encouraging that the most popular TDM strategy among downtown plans was for unbundled parking contracts. It is also encouraging that the provision of separate transportation benefits was the most popular strategy among employers providing some sort of transportation assistance. Both recent review by the Federal Highway Administration and a study by the previous Minneapolis TMO support the premise that providing flexibility in parking contracts that encourage, rather than penalize, the use of non-automobile modes can encourage non-SOV commuting and save companies money.
## APPENDIX 1: MINNEAPOLIS TDM PLANS, 2005 TO 2016

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APPENDIX 2: ORGANIZATIONS IN EMPLOYEE SURVEY

APPENDIX 3: PEER CITY TDM POLICIES

Seattle, WA: Employers with at least 100 commuters must develop a TDM strategy, as well as a performance measurement plan.

Portland, OR: Employers with more than 100 workers must issue a TDMP, as well as issue employee surveys for the City.

Pasadena, CA: TDMPs are required for commercial developments greater than 25,000 square feet. Plans are also required for multifamily housing developments with over 100 units and mixed-use developments of over 50 residential units. These developments must issue annual modal split surveys for the life of the property.

San Diego, CA: The San Diego Regional Planning Agency requires TDMPs for developments and employers region-wide through their mobility management software.

Redmond, WA: Requires participation in Go Redmond, a resource guide to understand requirements and incentives for employers and commuters.