





3

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENT



3.1 INTRODUCTION

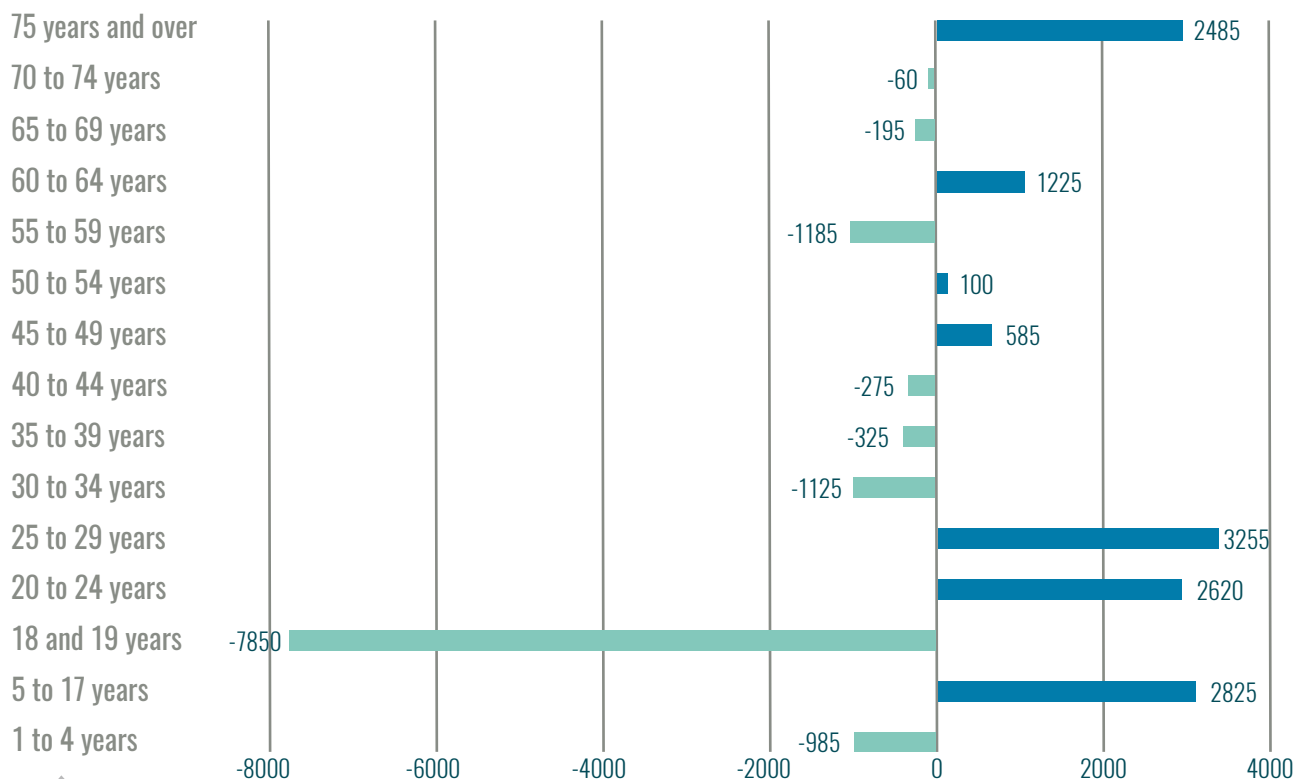
Millennials are known for “voting with their feet,” meaning they frequently choose an attractive place to live before finding a job. Driving is less popular among millennials than previous generations. Other transportation options, such as walking, biking and transit are popular with many young adults. The Talent and Inclusion Study by the Greater Omaha Chamber in 2017 found that only 17.6% of surveyed young professionals were satisfied with the availability of public transit in greater Omaha. Therefore, a significant thrust of the 2050 LRTP focuses on creating better options for non-vehicular modes of transportation, in addition to maintaining mobility for motorists.

The Omaha metro area is experiencing a “brain drain” -- that is, a net loss of residents with college degrees each year. Between 2006 and 2010 the State of Ne-

braska Data Center estimates that the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) lost more than 4,000 people with college degrees. According to the Nebraska State Data Center that rate is estimated to have grown by as much as double between 2011 and 2015.

For the Greater Omaha region to reach its potential, increased efforts to attract and retain young people should be made to increase the region’s desirability and opportunities. A key part of this strategy includes developing and expanding vibrant areas with entertainment and shopping options near residential and commercial development. Companies face increased competition to attract young talent, and often are choosing locations with a high quality of life for their facilities.

Domestic Net Migration 2010 - 2015



3.2 CLOSE THE GAP: A CLEAR PLAN FOR A MORE WALKABLE, LIVABLE REGION

Heartland 2050 lays out a vision of vibrant, walkable, and compact neighborhoods within the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area. Strong neighborhoods create a strong and vibrant economy, and enhance a low-cost quality of living, not dependent upon automobile usage for every trip. This vision of vibrant nodes centered around educational institutions and

activity centers, connected by transportation corridors is a key strategy to fostering the quality of life that residents in the region have prioritized. MAPA's Close the Gap initiative has incorporated these elements of the Heartland 2050 Vision and brought them to the forefront of policy discussions in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region.



**A clear plan
for a more
walkable,
livable region**

Without a clear plan, we're growing by outward expansion and the gaps between neighborhoods widen. We're slowing down and spreading out. We'll end up walking less and driving more. We'll sit in bumper to bumper traffic and wait longer for the bus. We'll also face a serious budget shortfall to pay for the infrastructure needs in our sprawling metro area. Meanwhile, poverty rates will continue to climb and areas of the urban core will continue to lose population unless we close the opportunity gap.

By 2050 We'll Have:

500K

more people in the region

ANOTHER
OMAHA

in developed land area

\$1.3B

projected budget shortfall

Residents of the metro area place high value on the strong sense of community, and they want the region to be an inclusive place where there are more opportunities for residents to be involved actively in work and community life. It will be our challenge to grow the region in ways that reverse these trends and make meaningful strides towards eliminating poverty

and ensuring residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods enjoy the quality of life found in many other areas across our metro.

In order to maintain and grow its population base, the region will need to attract substantially more people to the area. To accomplish this, the region needs to



act strategically and make the kinds of investments in infrastructure, services, and amenities that support people and businesses, and serve to make the region more attractive to those who are considering relocating to the region. In addition to quality jobs, young people are attracted increasingly to more walkable, vibrant, and affordable neighborhoods. They also make choices to live in neighborhoods served by convenient transportation options, including transit, where they are close to work and opportunities for recreation, culture, and entertainment. Other amenities include walking and biking trails, along with mixed-use developments in areas that are auto-oriented traditionally, including Legacy, Heartwood Preserve, and Avenue One.

Communities with vibrant, walkable neighborhoods with transportation options beyond the automobile are popular throughout the country, especially among young adults and empty nesters. Recent developments show the market for pedestrian-oriented

places is strong, and that these areas will continue to drive our region's growth in the future. Blackstone and Midtown Crossing in Midtown Omaha, River's Edge in Council Bluffs, City Centre in La Vista, and the Bungalows at Prairie Queen in Papillion all illustrate the potential for fostering these kinds of walkable environments. Recent planning activities and discussions along corridors such as the 1st Avenue in Council Bluffs, a former railroad corridor adjacent to a major arterial road, Fort Crook Road in Bellevue, and 24th Street in Omaha are laying the groundwork for future development to support these walkable lifestyles as well. More information about Close the Gap can be found at h2050.org and heartland2050.org

In 2018, the first sign of a paradigm shift in metro-wide development patterns changed as the City of Omaha administered more building permits (per unit) inside of Interstate 680 instead of outside the interstate loop.

Building a Transit System for Regional Growth

MAPA, Metro Transit, and other local partners have undertaken several planning efforts in recent years to understand the potential for an expanded network of frequent transit corridors in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region. Some of these studies—Heartland Connections Regional Transit Vision, the Central Omaha Alternatives Analysis, the Close the Gap White Paper, and Metro Transit's Transit Development Plan—have focused on the regional impact of corridors and understanding priorities for an expanded network of high-capacity corridors such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The region's first Bus Rapid Transit Corridor—ORBT—is scheduled to open in late 2020 and is being operated by Metro Transit along the Dodge Street Corridor from Westroads Mall to Downtown Omaha. The ORBT service is characterized by several key features that set it apart from traditional fixed-route bus service:

- Frequent transit service, with buses arriving every 10 minutes in the peak-periods
- Dedicated stations along the route, with level boarding for passengers and bikes
- Longer-articulated buses that provide additional capacity
- Transit signal priority that helps the reliability of the transit service
- Dedicated lanes east of Turner Park
- Off-board ticketing

More information about ORBT can be found at rideorbit.com



FIGURE 3.1: Heartland 2050 Mixed-Use Nodes and Transit Corridors

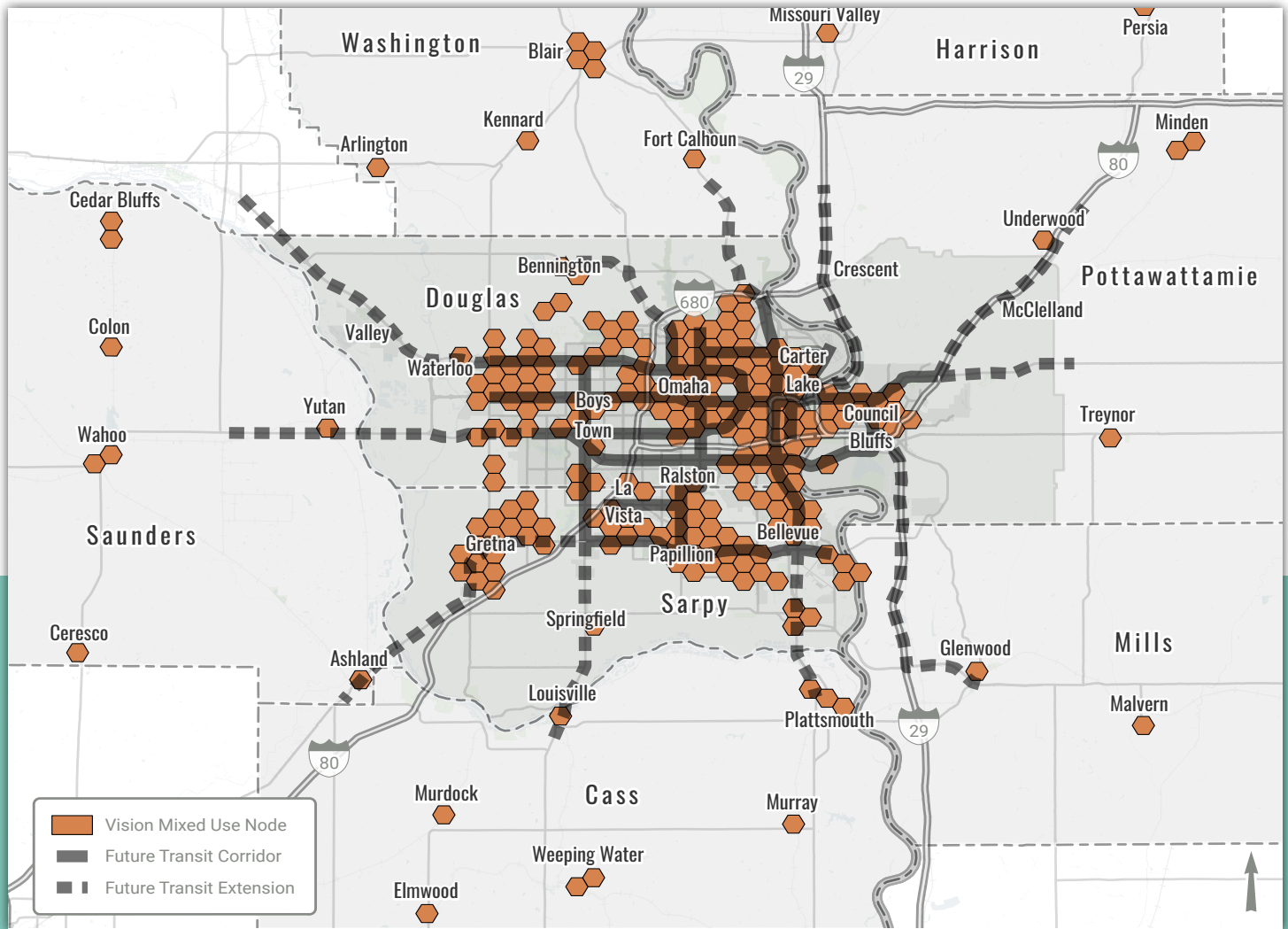
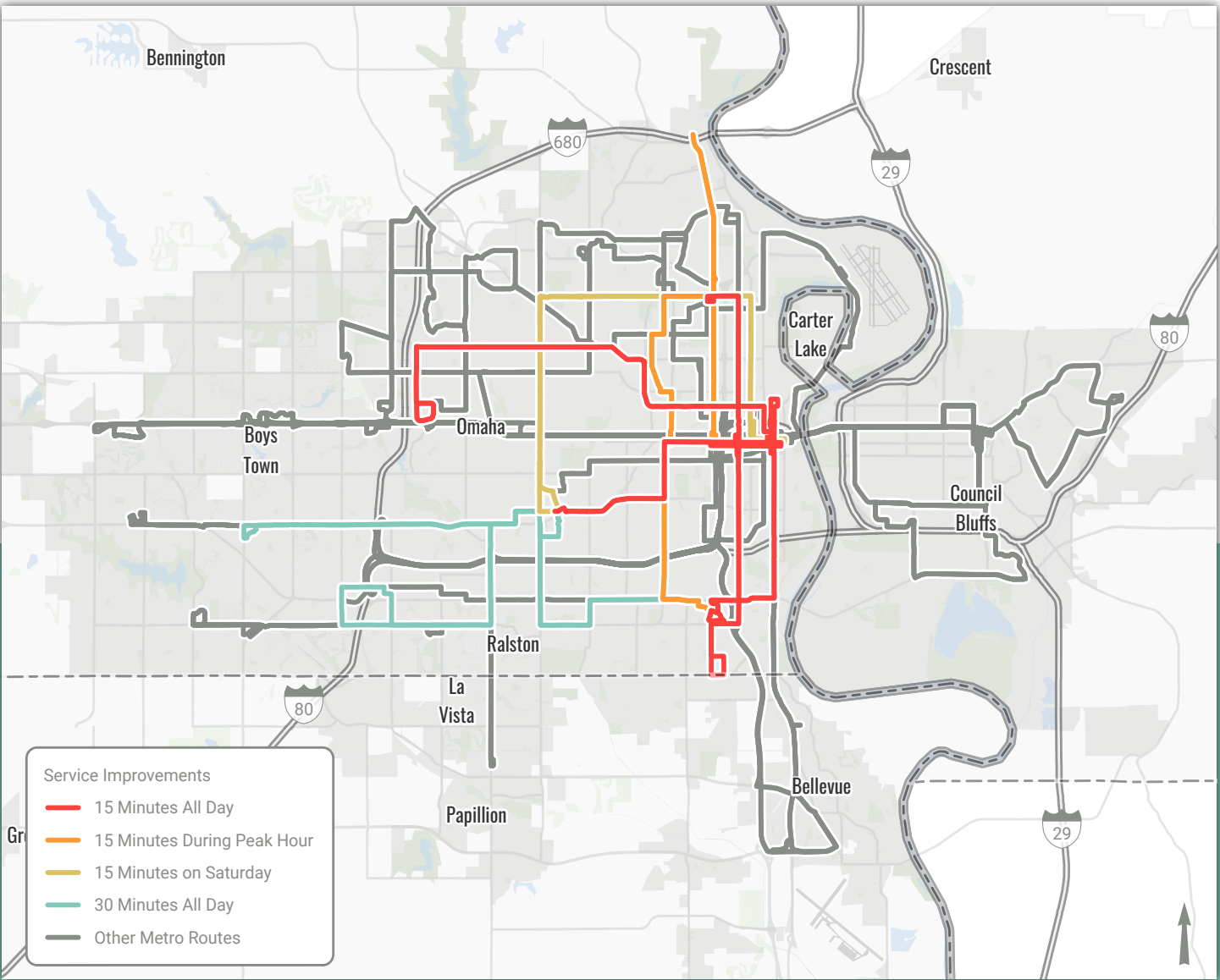


FIGURE 3.2: Transit Development Plan (TDP) Regional Growth Scenario



Several other planning processes have been undertaken to understand the potential for transit in communities around the region. Notably, MAPA led the Sarpy County Transit Plan in 2016 to lay out alternatives for future fixed-route and demand response transit service in Sarpy County communities. This plan incorporated the regional Bus Rapid Transit Corridors mentioned previously, and also recommended complementary fixed route service to support those corridors. Additionally, the City of Council Bluffs is currently undertaking an alternatives analysis of the

West Broadway/1st Avenue corridor to identify potential rapid transit service along that corridor. The planning process is evaluating future station locations and laying out priorities for maximizing the development potential of the corridor. In addition to these the improvements along the main corridor in Council Bluffs, the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce is leading a transit study to develop the network of supportive intra-city transit, such as demand response service, to support these efforts.

Development Along a Healthy BRT Spine

The Dodge corridor is the highest-traveled arterial roadway in the metro area and connects major employment centers, dense residential areas, universities, hospitals and other health care facilities, shopping, and more. It is considered to be Omaha's "Main Street," and has long been identified in the Omaha Master Plan as a transit corridor. Other corridors (24th/30th Street and 72nd Street, among others) also have been identified as potential BRT Corridors.

Development nodes and individual parcels along these major transportation corridors were reviewed for their redevelopment potential. Regional population and employment totals were held constant, and housing and employees were reallocated to infill along the

transportation corridors. This will be referred to in this white paper as the "High Transit-Oriented Development," or "2040 High-TOD" land use scenario. In the 2040 High-TOD scenario, approximately 30,000 housing units and nearly 11,000 jobs were shifted to locations along the transportation corridors, in addition to the population and employment allocated in the "Mod-TOD" scenario. Most of the additional population and employment was allocated in Downtown Omaha, Midtown Omaha, Aksarben/UNO Scott Campus area, and West Center Road from 72nd to 144th Street, which was selected for more intense development due to the presence of rail transit in the Center LRT scenario.



The tables below show the population and employment along the transportation corridors in the 2040-Mod TOD scenario, 2040 High-TOD, as well in 2010, which is the base year for the travel model, for each of the corridors within one-quarter mile and one-mile buffers. One-quarter mile is generally considered a distance that many residents are willing to walk to

access transit: a 5-minute walk. One-mile provides a broader idea of a more extended area that could be accessed with adequate “last-mile connections” through longer walks, bicycle, or other modes of transportation, including ridesharing or potentially new mobility options through emerging technologies.

Population and Employment Projections within 1/4 mile of Corridors

Corridor	2010 Pop.	2010 Emp.	2040 Mod-TOD Pop.	2040 Mod-TOD Emp.	2040 High-TOD Pop.	2040 High-TOD Emp.
Dodge/ Broadway	51,575	98,990	95,855	129,579	106,125	134,002
30th/24th/ Ft. Crook	32,313	33,782	68,596	47,516	70,268	49,013
72nd/84th	27,238	36,524	42,685	46,159	45,817	46,518
Center	29,017	60,985	41,169	69,015	54,952	73,368
Maple	42,106	22,457	53,398	27,562	54,525	27,826
Total	182,249	252,738	301,703	319,831	331,687	330,727

Population and Employment Projections within 1 mile of Corridors

Corridor	2010 Pop.	2010 Emp.	2040 Mod-TOD Pop.	2040 Mod-TOD Emp.	2040 High-TOD Pop.	2040 High-TOD Emp.
Dodge/ Broadway	171,016	184,253	268,482	235,436	282,914	240,927
30th/24th/ Ft. Crook	129,798	89,540	222,117	128,980	228,120	132,383
72nd/84th	102,363	69,391	138,802	93,135	143,285	93,857
Center	104,558	116,719	135,709	128,558	154,643	133,545
Maple	134,699	75,005	181,787	88,544	186,000	89,428
Total	642,434	534,908	946,897	674,653	994,962	690,140

FIGURE 3.3: Example Cross Section of the 1st Avenue Corridor in Council Bluffs



As communities outside the City of Omaha develop plans for future transit service, Metro Transit is evaluating the steps necessary to become a regional transit authority. LB492, passed by the Nebraska Legislature in 2019, allows local municipalities in Nebraska to “opt-in” to the transit authority with a vote of their governing body and contribute property tax revenue to support transit service in their communities and in the region. This regional framework for cooperation

and collaboration on transit service is a new opportunity that is still in the planning stages. However, should Metro Transit move forward with becoming a regional transit authority, it will have new tools and revenue to support the enhancement and expansion of the transit system in the region. As Council Bluffs refines its vision for transit service, conversations are underway about the right model to allow for bi-state support of the regional transit authority as well.

Equitable Access to Opportunity

The Omaha-Council Bluffs region faces significant racial and ethnic gaps in income, wages, education, and poverty. The Equitable Growth Profile conducted as part of the Heartland 2050 process showed that the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would have been nearly \$5 billion higher in 2015 if there were no racial disparities in income. This figure grew between 2012 and 2015 by nearly \$1 billion—illustrating the need to implement key strategies to close these gaps in income. Traditionally, increasing access to training and jobs serve as important components of fostering more inclusive growth. Transportation is known to be one of the primary obstacles to connecting potential employees to jobs. In 2010, only 32% of households and 45% of jobs were located within one-quarter mile of transit routes.

Addressing job inequality and attracting and retaining the next generation of skilled workers to the region is

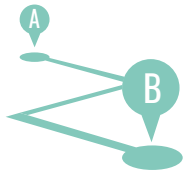
paramount to the long-term economic success of our region. To meet this goal, advancing equity should be a driving force to strengthen the region's economic growth and competitiveness. This includes prioritizing regional investments in quality education and workforce development, housing, transit, and revitalization in key neighborhoods. Local governments should support emerging business sectors including infrastructure, transportation, health care, medical research, agriculture and food processing, military, insurance, and finance.

More frequent and reliable transportation improves mobility and connects those seeking employment or job training better, so they can participate more fully in the local economy. Better connections reduce transportation costs for employers, enhancing their stability.

According to *Nebraska's Next Economy*, a report commissioned by the State of Nebraska, “The lack of an adequate system of public transport limits access for these groups, even as employers in the same city face constant workforce shortages. Omaha’s leaders understand the transportation challenge.”



Infill and “TOD”



Quality of connections



Mix of uses



Compact development



Pedestrian scale design

Focusing new development along planned transit corridors provides a key opportunity to improve the operations of the transit system through land use decisions. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) naturally generates more riders—increasing financial support for the transit system and helping make it more successful. TOD is also associated with increased private investment, property values, and property tax revenues, which means it provides additional returns for the city and the economy. It also provides a mix of housing and transportation choices for city residents that are scarce in many markets—allowing people who want to, and people who must live more walkable, less car-dependent lifestyles. When done with intention and foresight, TOD can also increase access to opportunity for lower income households. As a result, TOD is competitive and desirable in the marketplace, with cities across the country seeking to attract talent and businesses into walkable centers and neighborhoods.

Development in greenfield areas generally includes large, single-family lots that consume more space and more resources. From the post WWII era until recent years, development in the region has expanded outward primarily as it followed the national trend of

lower-density suburbanization aimed at households with children. Greenfield suburban growth is likely to continue as residents are drawn to the benefits of good schools, low crime, newer housing stock, more square footage per dollar, and the desire to be near family and friends. Land use decisions that encourage compact development will utilize the greenfield area that is developed in a more efficient manner that provides greater transportation options.

The Heartland 2050 Vision called for increased compact growth and redevelopment as priorities for our future land consumption. This scenario includes substantial infill and TOD as well as a modest amount of continued outward growth. A future land use scenario that includes these assumptions found that locating one fifth of future development in redevelopment areas will achieve these goals. Another scenario with Targeted Transit Oriented Development (TOD), focused on areas that have high density and access to frequent transit service, and allocated even more of future development to infill and TOD locations. To achieve the goals in this scenario one third of future development would need to be in redevelopment areas.

¹An article illustrating these issues in the Omaha region is “Where there’s a will, is there a wage?” in the *Washington Post* by Robert Samuels (July 22, 2018). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/omaha-job-training/>

At the local level zoning changes are laying the groundwork to make progress towards these goals. Currently, the City of Omaha is updating its zoning ordinances to implement TOD along the ORBT corridor. These zoning changes targeted density and compatible uses at ORBT station locations, and provided new flexibility in the development process. Additionally, the City of Council Bluffs has implemented a Mixed

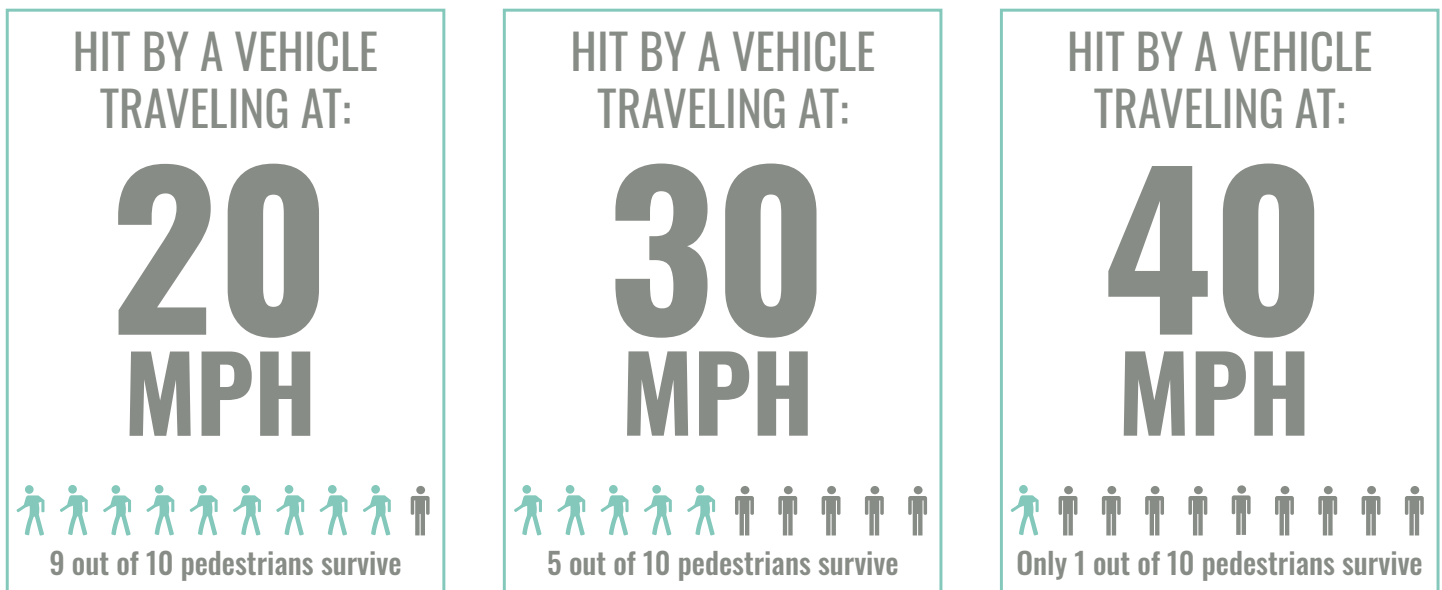
Commercial Residential District along the 1st Avenue Corridor to guide development to future station locations for transit service. Finally, the draft of Papillion's Comprehensive Plan includes a Transit Corridor overlay focused on guiding higher-density to nodes along Capehart—a key area of growth in Papillion and a proposed transit corridor in the Sarpy County Transit Plan.



Pedestrians First in High Activity Regional Nodes

The mixed use development included in the Heartland 2050 Vision provides a crucial opportunity to orient the region's future growth in areas that can support walkable lifestyles and more transportation options. Prioritizing walking means more accessible areas for people of ages and abilities, more vibrant street life, and improved safety. In terms of infrastructure, these priorities mean wider sidewalks, amenities

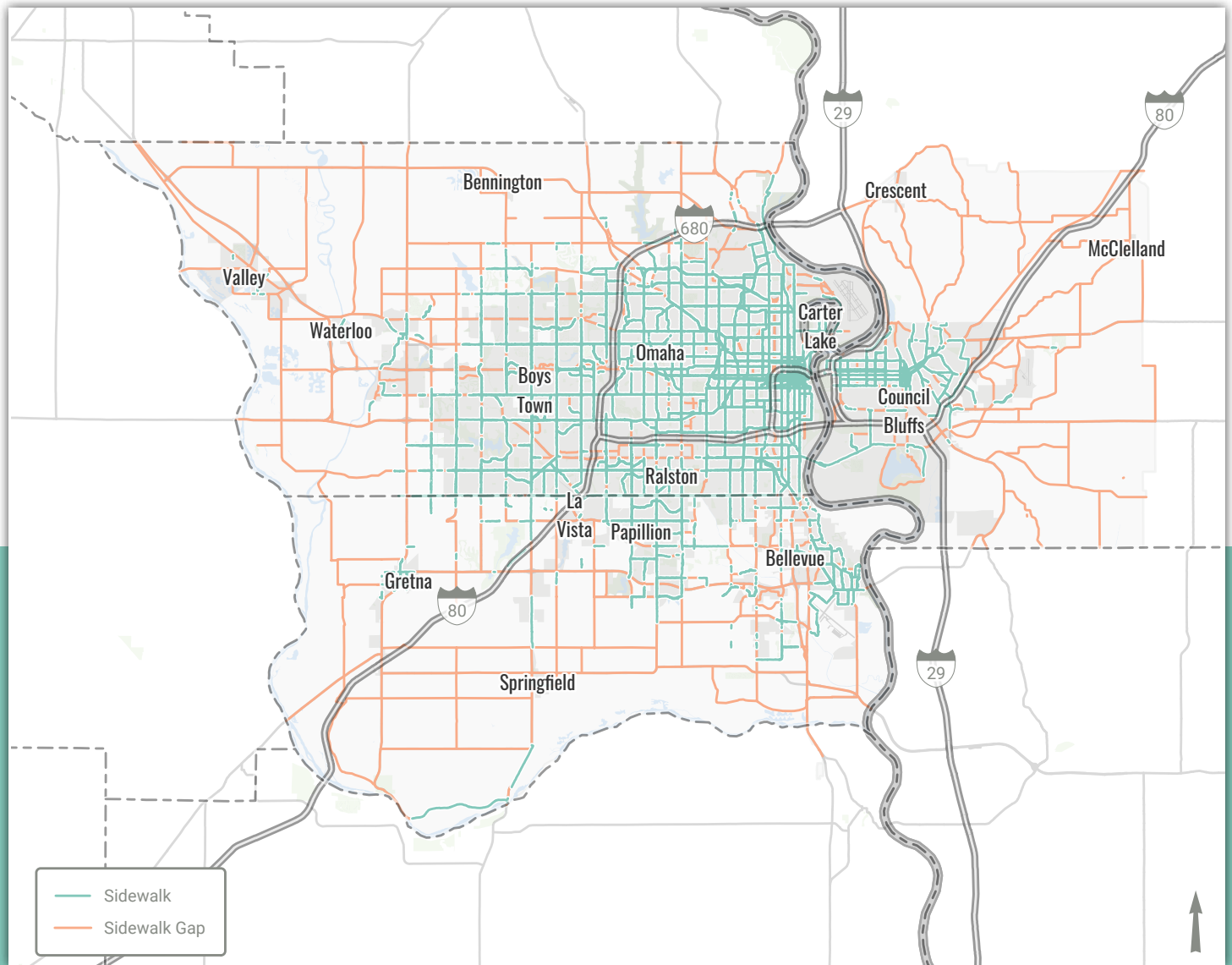
for transit riders, and improved crossing opportunities for pedestrians—including leading pedestrian intervals and mid-block crossings. In such nodes, motor vehicle speeds should be reduced, which enhances the safety and comfort of non-motorized users. In areas with high pedestrian activity, higher vehicle speeds are discouraged to ensure the safety of vulnerable roadway users like pedestrians and cyclists.



To better quantify regional sidewalk gaps through the Omaha-Council Bluffs region, MAPA identified the location of sidewalks on functionally classified roadways (collectors or above). Figure 3.4 illustrates the existing sidewalks along major roadways and known gaps in this network. These gaps are very important

to consider with regard to the types of facilities and attractions that drive pedestrian activity. Additionally, closing gaps in the sidewalk network is fundamental to making walking a viable option for people's daily lives.

FIGURE 3.4: Regional Sidewalk Network, Collectors and Arterials



Implementing Better Bikeways

While active transportation is included as a goal in many local plans, there are many areas of the region currently where getting around without a vehicle is difficult. MAPA created the Regional Bike-Ped Plan to take a comprehensive approach to identifying key active transportation corridors in the region. MAPA has identified a network of roadways that are good generally for cycling today. Improving these roads with traffic calming and destination signage (“wayfinding”) would create a substantial bikeway network off of major roadways.

As MAPA has worked with local stakeholders and leaders on the implementation of the Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan, three key strategies have emerged to guide the prioritization of future bikeway projects in the region:

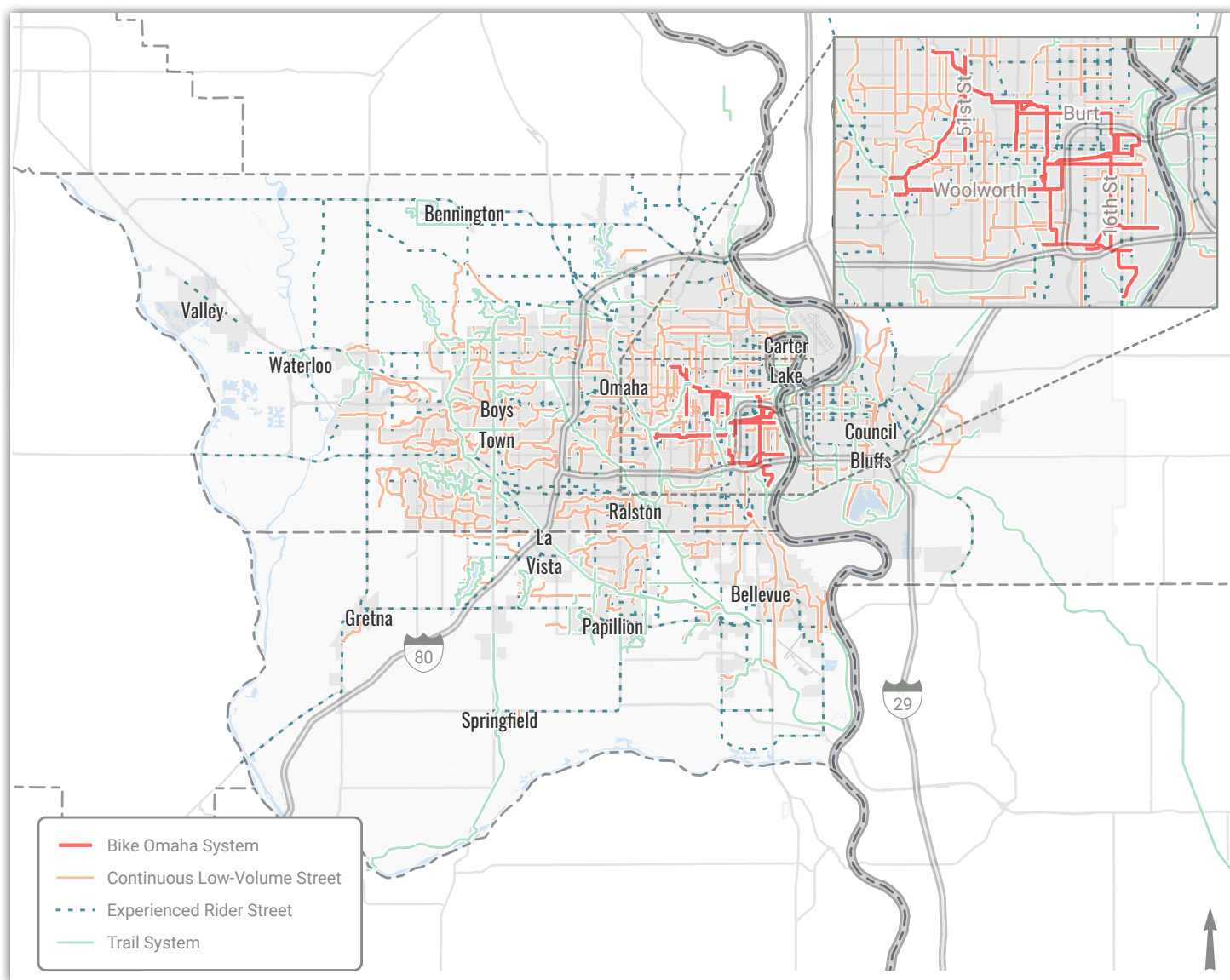
- **Break-Down Barriers in the Cycling Network:** Logical gaps in the cycling network need to be addressed, and east-west connectivity needs to be prioritized— particularly connections to the regional trail network.
- **Prioritize Safety and Comfort for Riders:** We need to be building “better bikeways” such as bike boulevards and separated facilities that are more attractive to less-experienced riders. This includes revisiting areas of the original Bike Omaha Network where improvements have been identified.
- **Connecting Neighborhoods Throughout the City:** Expanding the Bike Omaha network to connect new neighborhoods provides opportunities to cycle for more of the city’s residents. Heartland 2050’s Close the Gap Plan stresses the importance of “nodes and corridors”— the places people want to go and the connections between them.

Breaking Down Barriers in the Cycling Network

The Omaha region has an extensive network of recreational trails. These paths offer a quality cycling experience – near total separation from vehicular traffic, scenic surroundings, and relatively little topography thanks to their position adjacent to rivers and streams. However, because of their orientation to the region’s water features, their use for serving everyday travel needs is limited by their distance from important activity centers and a lack of lateral connections. MAPA, Live Well Omaha, and RDG Planning & Design coordinated to create a Metropolitan Area Bicycle Map that shows existing routes through the region based on their current suitability to different types of bicyclists. Figure 3.5 shows roads identified as part of regional bike map and their relationship to the region’s trails.

More information can be found at bikemap.mapacog.org



FIGURE 3.5: Metropolitan Area Bike Map

Yet the region's trails, like the water features they parallel, tend to serve north-south movements well but do not make connections from east to west through neighborhoods. Some on-street facilities exist in cities throughout the region, but they are sparse and do not yet form an interconnected network. Additionally, the Cities of Omaha, Council Bluffs, and Bellevue have designated bike routes with wayfinding signage. These routes utilize some existing facilities such as

bike lanes or shared lane markings in specific locations, but also make use of low-volume streets to make key connections.

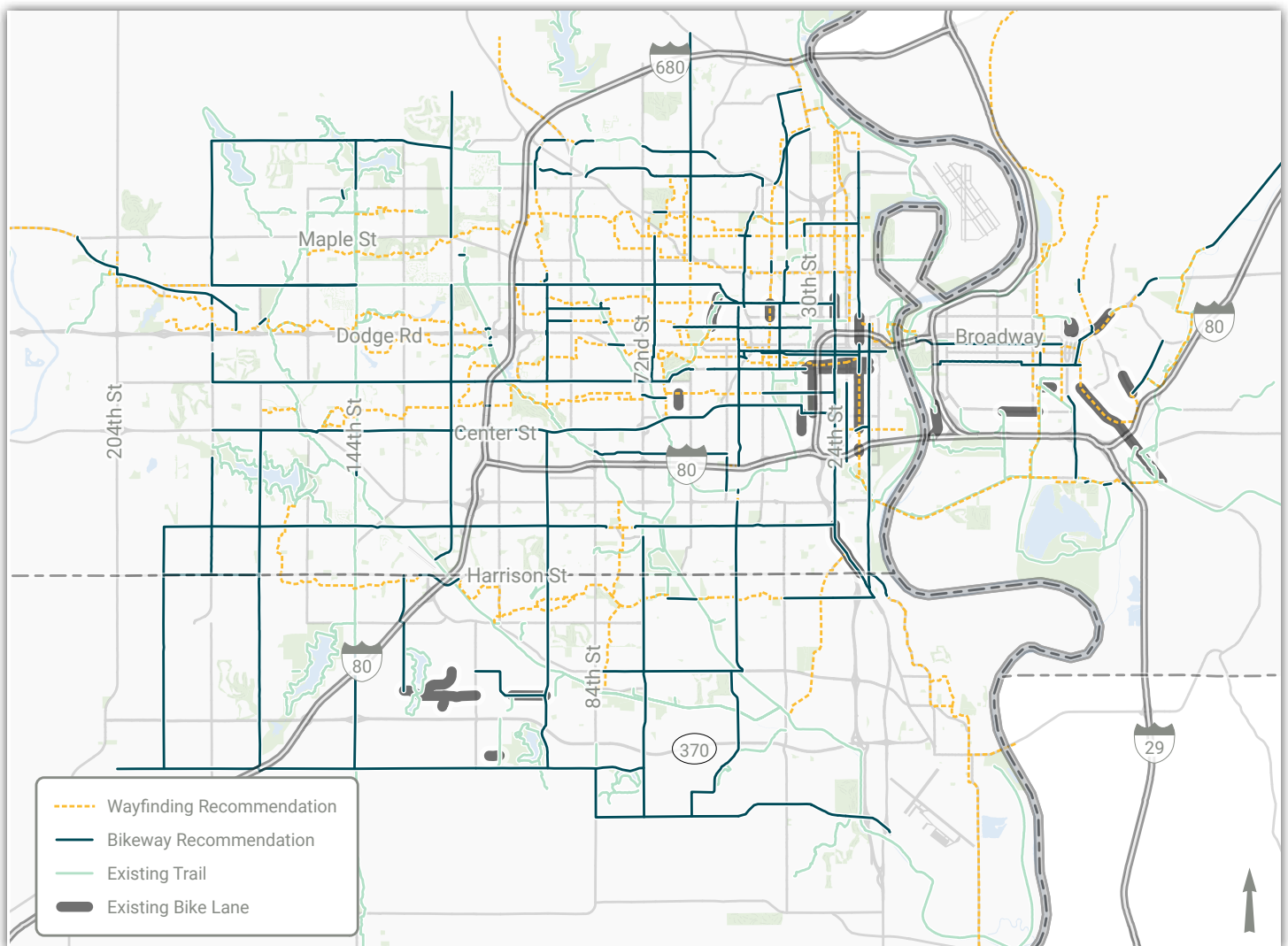
The Heartland Connections Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was the first comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan for the Omaha metropolitan area. The initiative involved a series of workshops with varied stakeholders representing local governments and

other key transportation partners. The plan had two distinct goals:

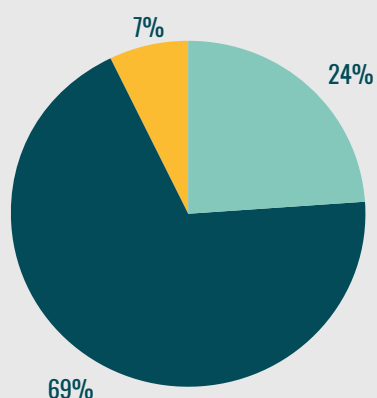
- Establish a series of recommendations for specified corridors that creates a system of bikeways and walkways that provide local and regional connectivity, and
- Develop a set of efforts focused on putting the plan into action.

When evaluating corridors bikeways are difficult to incorporate into many of the region's major roadways in the short-term due to high speeds and levels of traffic. MAPA recommends that bikeway facilities be considered when these roadways are reconstructed. MAPA has identified a network of roadways that are good generally for cycling today. Improving these roads with traffic calming and destination signage ("wayfinding") would create a substantial bikeway network removed from major roadways. Bikeway and wayfinding recommendations are included below.

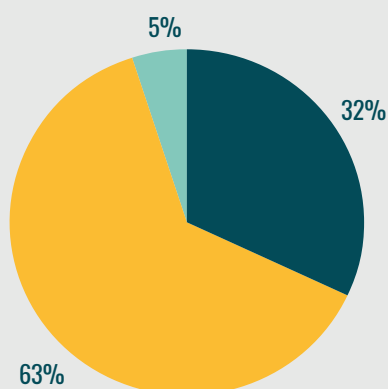
FIGURE 3.6: Bicycle Recommendations



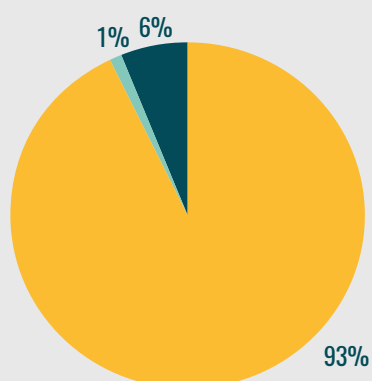
Multi-Use Trails



Bike Lanes



No Bike Lanes



Source: Travel Improvement Study () Survey

Prioritizing the Safety & Comfort of Cyclists

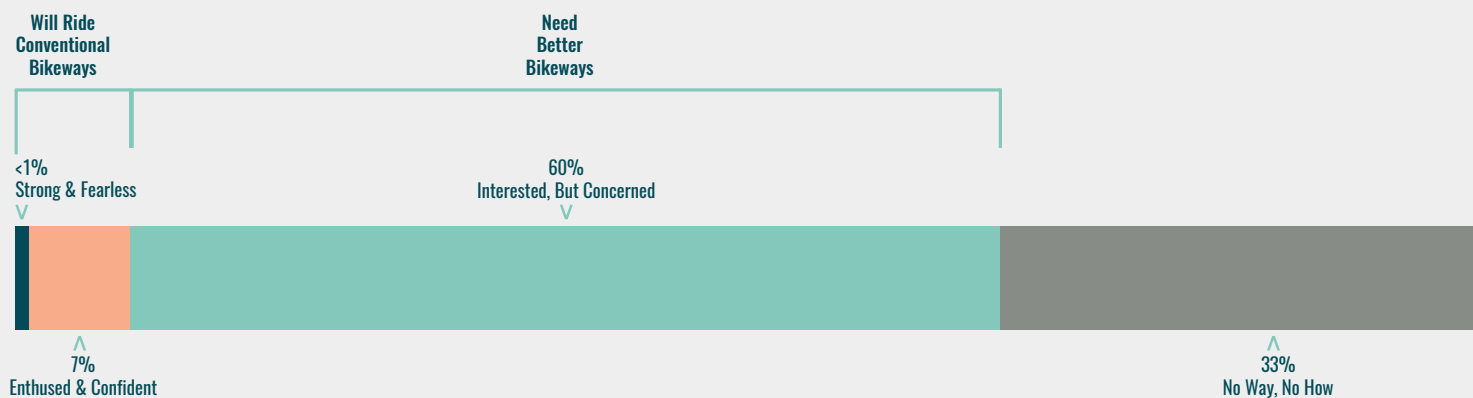
Safety is at the front of people's minds when they consider riding a bicycle for recreation or transportation. A survey of residents in the Omaha region found that people felt most comfortable on bikeways such as recreational trails. The "Four Types of Transportation Cyclists" helps describe different segments of the population.² Since this graph was first released, it has served as a useful tool for planners and engineers to consider the reasons why people do or don't like different bike facilities. A brief description of each "Type" of cyclist is included in the list below:

- **Strong & Fearless** – These cyclists will ride in their communities regardless of weather conditions or the availability of cycling infrastructure
- **Enthusied & Confident** – Enthusied & Confident riders are comfortable sharing the road with automobiles, but prefer riding in designated bikeway facilities
- **Interested, but Concerned** – These residents enjoy riding a bike, and are curious about using a bike for transportation. However, they have concerns about their own personal safety due (in large part) to conflicts with motorists. These riders are encouraged to ride if protected or separated facilities exist in their communities
- **No Way, No How** – Not interested in cycling as a transportation mode because of factors such as topography, inability, or lack of personal interest

The majority of people are likely to fall within the "Interested, but Concerned" category of cyclists. However, at present, few bikeways (other than recreational trails) are designed with this segment of the population in mind. In order to achieve the active transportation goals of our communities and our region, we should focus our resources on building facilities that encourage residents to take more trips by walking or biking. To make other facilities "more like trails," communities should incorporate physical separation between cyclists and other vehicles. Strategies such as protected bike lanes, the expansion of the regional trail network, and implementing "bicycle boulevards" on low-volume streets where auto traffic is discouraged are crucial to make progress towards these goals. More information about these strategies can be found in MAPA's Regional Bicycle Pedestrian Plan: <https://mapacog.org/reports/regional-bicycle-and-pedestrian-plan/>

² This system was developed by Roger Geller, Bicycle-Pedestrian Coordinator for the Portland Bureau of Transportation in 2006.





Similar to the approach utilized to create MAPA's Metro Area Bike Map, Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) is a tool that MAPA and the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce have utilized to facilitate more robust conversations about bikeway planning in the region. This type of analysis helps identify which streets are comfortable for most people to ride along, including people that don't bike regularly. Streets with higher traffic speeds and volumes, and/or no dedicated bikeway are more stressful for less experienced rid-

ers. Similarly, streets with lower traffic volumes and/or dedicated facilities are more likely to be utilized by users of all ages and abilities. Using a particular length of trip, MAPA's Level of Traffic Stress analysis can illustrate how far cyclists can go from a particular location, but also which elements of the trip are lower stress. This is an essential tool for the planning process to identify barriers to cycling and prioritize projects.

FIGURE 3.7: Cycling Accessibility & Low Stress Network, 24th & Binney

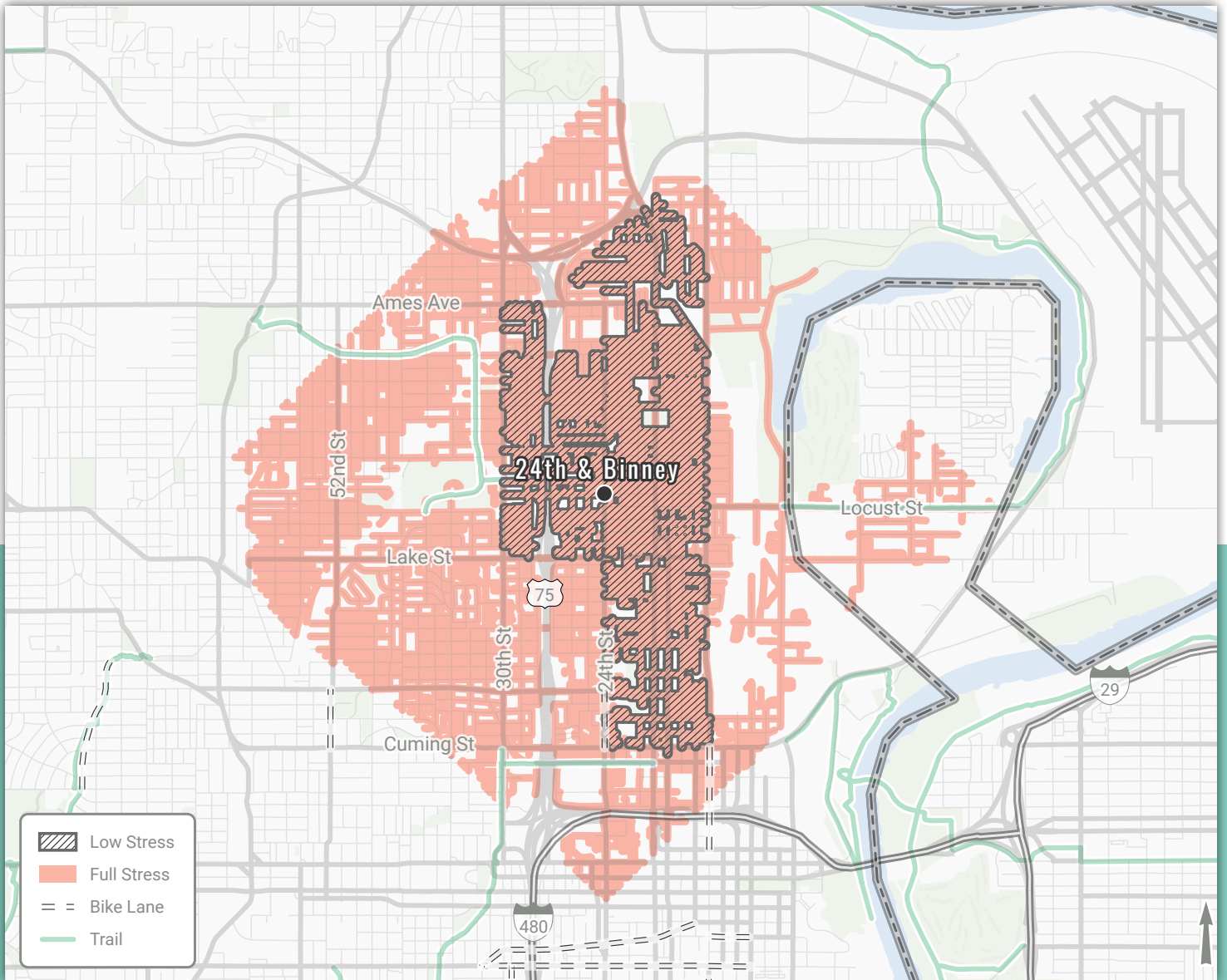
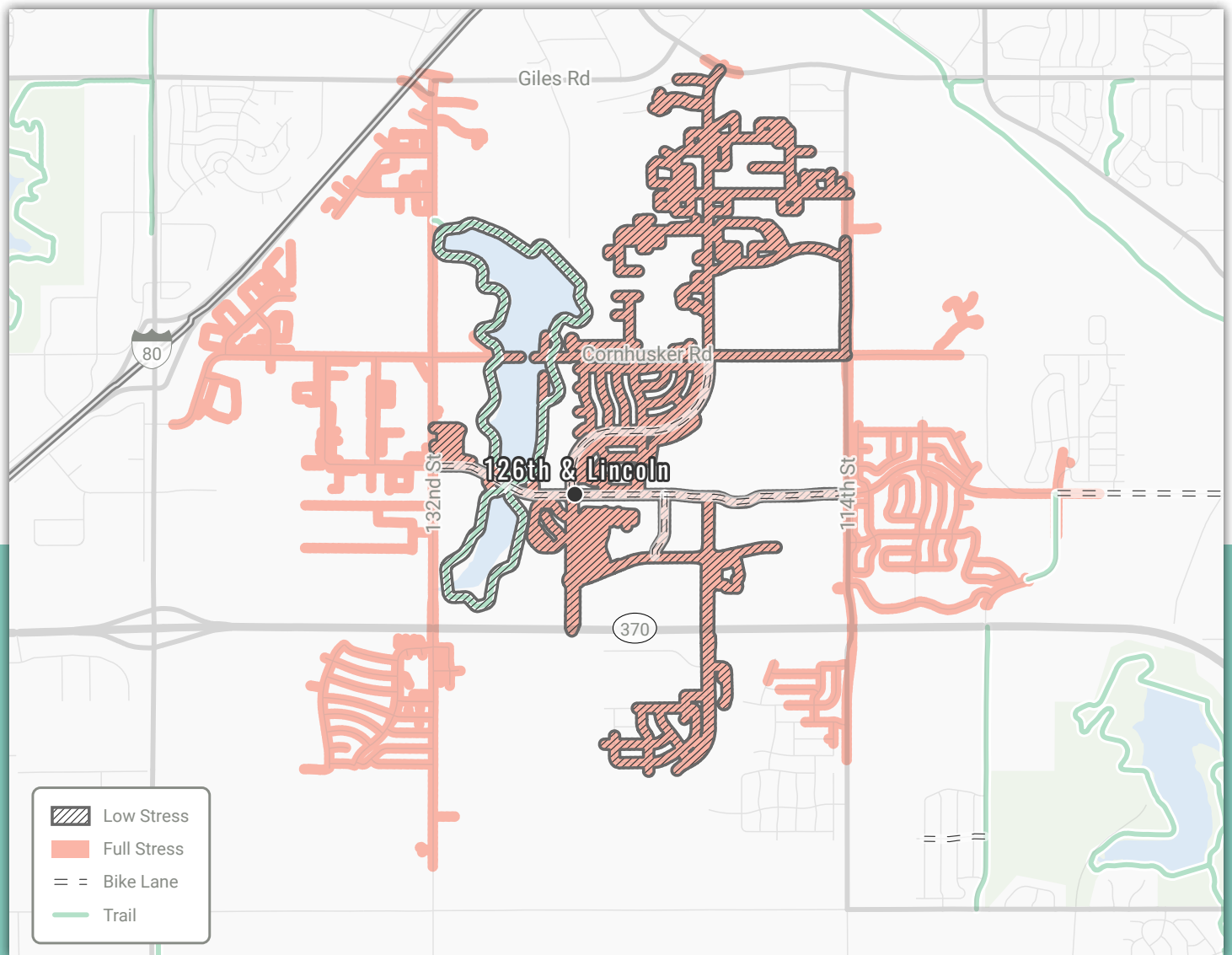


FIGURE 3.8: Cycling Accessibility & Low Stress Network, 126th & Lincoln



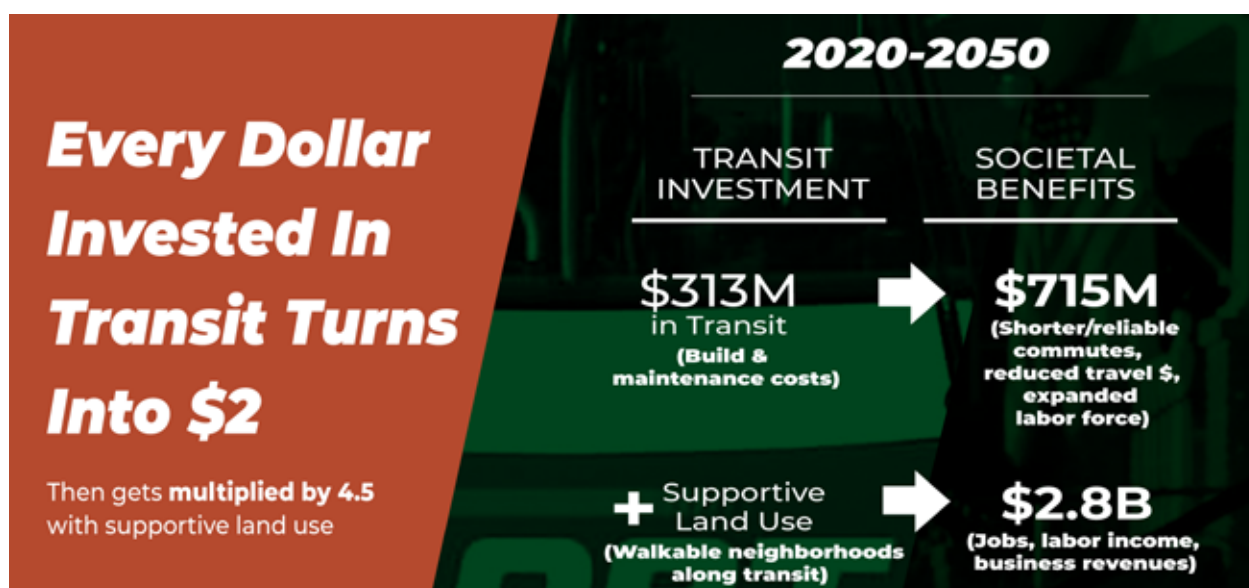
Transit Return on Investment Assessment:

Transit plays a key role in supporting the economy today. As the region grows, major investments in transit infrastructure and supportive land use policy realize significant economic benefits to the region and help mitigate many negative consequences of continued, low-density growth.

Beginning in 2018, MAPA embarked on this Transit Return on Investment (ROI) Study to evaluate the “business case” for expanding regional transit in the region. The study built on a foundation established by two prior studies: The Heartland 2050 Vision and the Close the Gap Analysis of Potential Transportation Corridors in the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metro Area. Additionally, the effort was designed to support ongoing conversations happening within the region as part of the Greater Omaha Chamber’s ConnectGO initiative. The study’s goal is to provide a framework to support decision making about transit over time in the context of an evolving economy and land use. To achieve this, the study develops practical ways of defining and measuring ROI (return on investment) that are reflective of regional values and expectations. The end results, presented in this report, address the key

question: *How can our decisions around transit and land use yield economic returns for the greater Omaha economy?*

The study encompassed both qualitative and quantitative research and analysis. A key aspect of the study process is stakeholder engagement—talking with business leaders, community planners, transportation officials, and public policy experts. Interviews and focus groups with regional economic development leaders and employers provided additional insight into the current value of transit and its strategic role in the future of the Omaha region. Finally, specific transit and land use scenarios were analyzed using the MAPA travel demand model and econometric modeling to understand the long-term economic value of coordinated transit and land use strategies. The quantitative analysis in this effort noted that if the Omaha region invests in an enhanced Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network and develops in transit-supportive ways along the route, the regional economy can add as many as 8,000 jobs and see an economic impact of \$1.8 billion in added annual business revenue by 2050.



To further document the business case for transit in the MAPA region, the project team conducted a series of interviews to focus groups to incorporate views of large and small employers. These conversations focused primarily on the recognition that continued growth in the Omaha region will require talent retention and attraction to be a top priority. Fast, frequent transit service and TOD provide choices and support urban living which is increasing in importance to

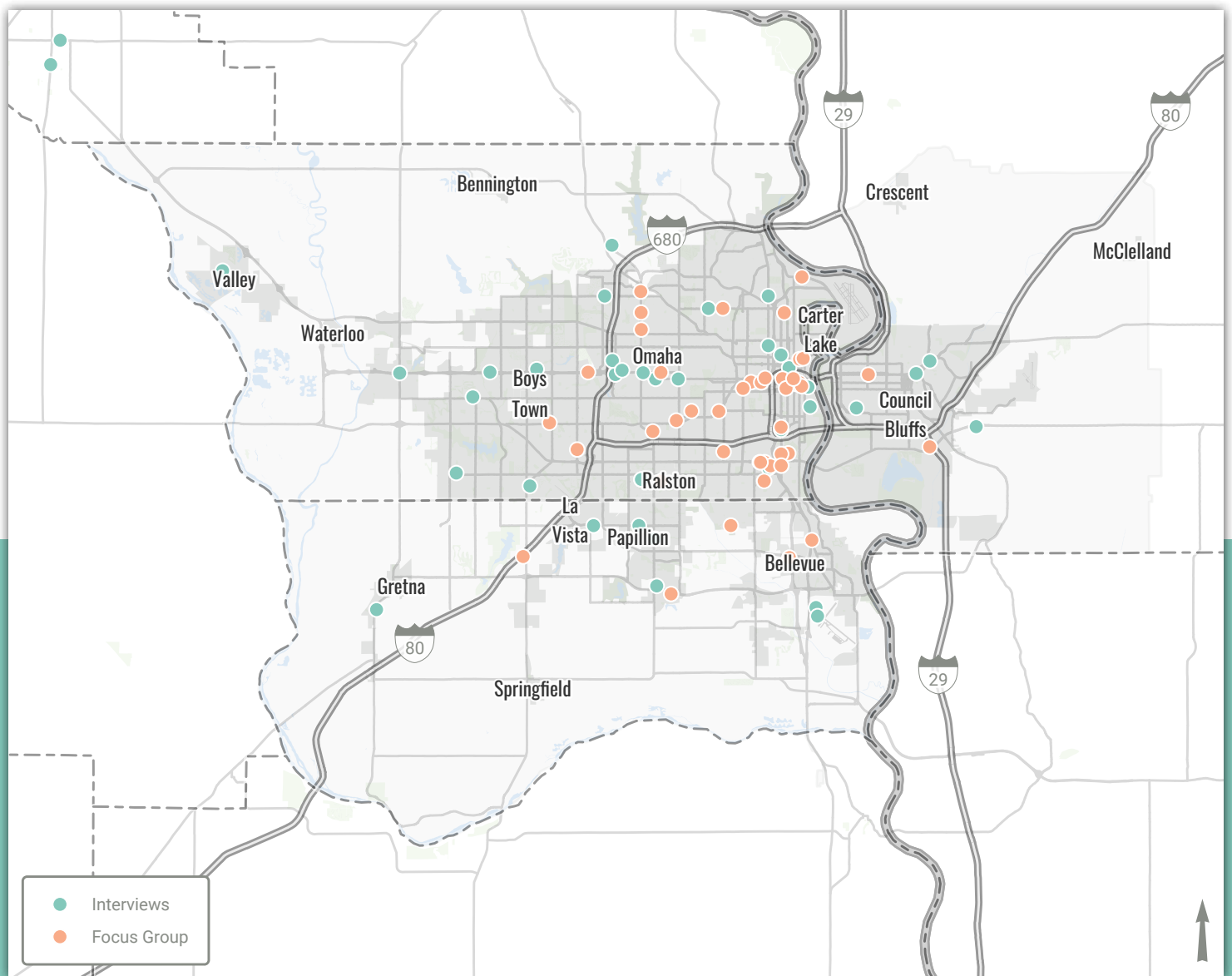
attract new workers and employers to the Omaha-Council Bluffs region. From these interviews and focus groups, a strong message was heard about three ways in which transit is important to area employers:

- **Transit Access for Workforce and Customers**
- **Workforce Recruitment and Retention**
- **Reducing Business Costs**

FIGURE 3.9: Interviews & Focus Groups, Transit Return on Investment (ROI) Study



FIGURE 3.10: Employer Interviews,
Transit Return on Investment Study



3.3 EMPLOYER-BASED TRAVEL DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Travel Demand Management (TDM) is a strategy that often is discussed as planners and transportation engineers look at the traffic growth. In many ways TDM is the opposite of infrastructure; it is a set of tools to understand how people make their transportation decisions and help people use the infrastructure in place already for transit, ridesharing, walking, biking, and telework. The main benefits of TDM are that it is cost-effective in driving use of existing transportation services and focusing on changing individual behaviors to benefit the system as a whole. Over the last ten years, Travel Demand Management has been an important strategy of MAPA's Little Steps, Big Impact ozone awareness campaign—an effort aimed at reducing transportation emissions that impact our region's air quality. There are several existing programs, such as the MetroRideshare carpooling platform (hosted by Iowa DOT), the Nebraska Department of Transportation's vanpool program, and the Omaha

Commuter Challenge—an effort to get residents to switch trips during the summer months when our ozone levels are highest.

However, coordination with community leaders in recent years has illustrated the important role that employers play in reducing the number of single occupancy vehicle trips, whether through employee parking policies, flexibility regarding workplace schedules, and transportation amenities in the workplace. The COVID-19 pandemic also has shifted perspectives about telework—a key strategy for reducing vehicle miles traveled in other regions. MAPA has partnered with the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce and Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce to conduct additional employer surveys in 2020 and 2021 to set the stage for Travel Demand Management policies at major employers as we reconsider how and where we work in the wake of the pandemic.

Case Study-University of Nebraska Medical Center/Nebraska Medicine



Implementing an active transportation program was a no brainer for one of Omaha's largest employers. In the fall of 2014 UNMC/Nebraska Medicine was low on parking with an initial 88% of employees and students driving alone to work. Wanting to avoid building expensive and land-intensive parking garages, the medical center surveyed employees for the potential to create a shift to multiple modes of transportation. TravelSmart, an active commuting program, was implemented to engage employees and continue growth without adding parking. TravelSmart participants receive free transit passes, free parking for carpoolers, secure indoor bicycle parking, and access to a free emergency ride home. Participants who

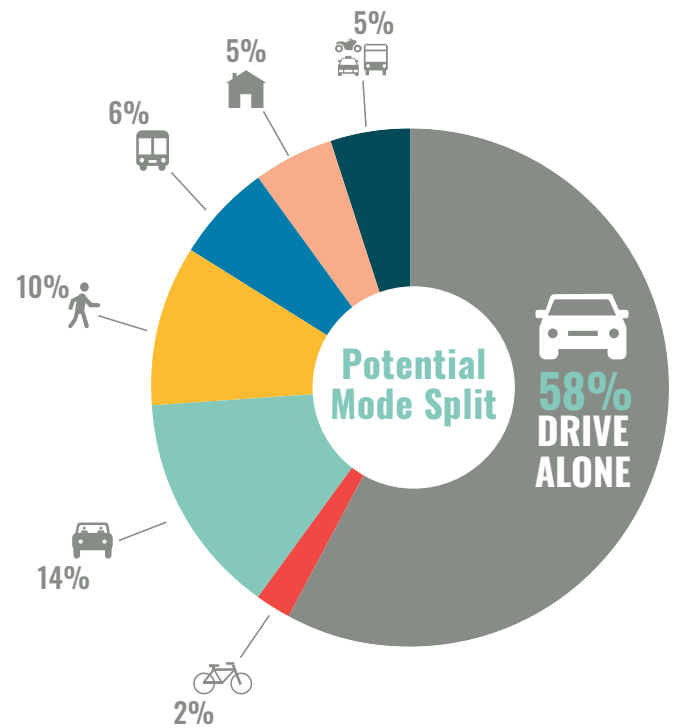
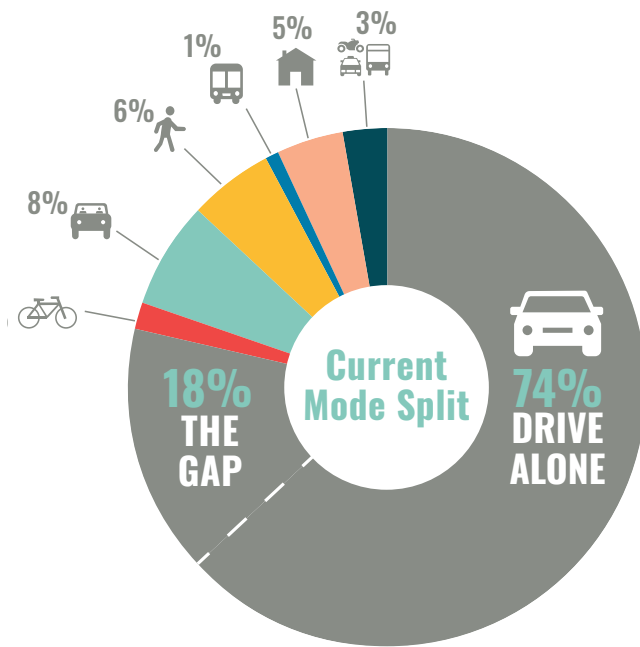
choose to give up their parking passes (typically those who use an alternative mode at least three days a week) have access to daily parking. From 2014 to 2017, the percentage of employees commuting by active transportation rose from 12% to 22%. Several hundred carpools have been set up and the hospitals are on pace to have more than 60,000 transit trips made this year. The transit program has been popular among employees, as they account for 89% of all transit commutes with the remaining 11% of transit trips from students. Importantly, the organization has been able to avoid adding parking, and along with a variety of other factors, the organization's engagement score continues to increase. In 2018 MAPA awarded Nebraska Medicine its Regional Service Award for the innovative TravelSmart Program.

Connecting Talent to Work - Local Survey Results

In partnership with Verdis Group, a local sustainability firm, MAPA developed the [Connecting Talent to Work White Paper](#) that discusses the potential for TDM programs at local employers. Eleven local employers were surveyed representing more than 57,000 employees and students to establish the current mode split, and seven of those institutions looked further, asking employees about how they

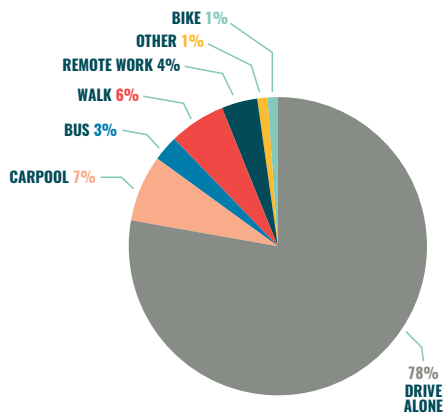
would prefer to commute. Participants were asked, if provided support systems such as subsidized transit passes, emergency rides home, and bicycle storage, would they commute to work the majority of time by an active mode of transportation.

Connecting Talent to Work White Paper (7,000 respondents)

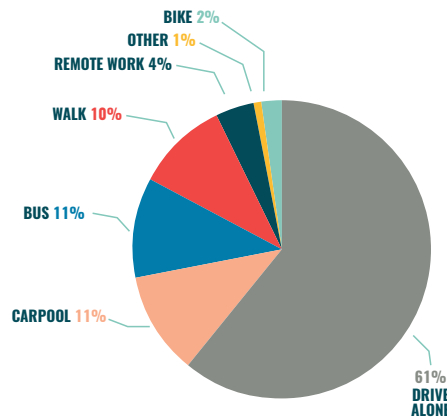


Downtown & Midtown Mobility Study Results (8,500 respondents)

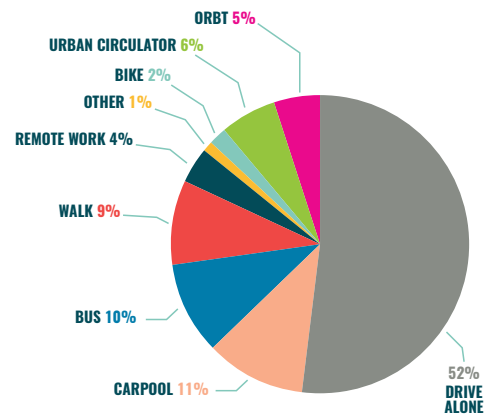
Current Mode Split



Potential Mode Split



ORBT + Urban Circulator Mode Split



Based on survey results, 18% of current one-way drive-alone car trips may be avoided by deploying support programs strategically at places of work in the metro area. Extrapolated to the entire employee population of all eleven organizations surveyed, this reduces 2.2 million one-way trips each year. On average, the population surveyed commutes 9.6 miles to work one way. By offsetting 18% of trips, 1.7 million gallons of gasoline would be saved each year. Offsetting 18% of trips would avoid more than 6,000 car trips on the road each day, and more than 3,000 parking stalls not being needed each day. [The Downtown & Midtown Mobility Study](#) was an additional survey conducted by Verdis Group to build on the work in the Connecting Talent White Paper and understand how these perspectives are impacted by infrastructure investments as well. According to those 8,500 survey respondents, with supportive employer policies and infrastructure investments, the potential mode split in central Omaha is up to 39% trips by means other than





driving alone. With crucial investments in the ORBT Bus Rapid Transit Corridor and in a proposed urban circulator (or streetcar), the potential for non-auto trips in the corridor increased to 48%.

Overall, the report demonstrated that people are interested in commuting by active transportation, but need structures and programs that both remove barriers and encourage them to do so. In addition to better understanding these perspectives, the survey provided data points about which barriers to each mode were the most important to survey respondents. The top four barriers mentioned by respondents are summarized in the table that follows. Several of these barriers (such as flexibility in scheduling guaranteed rides home) are areas in which employers can play a key role in reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips and how communities can target infrastructure investments to make these transportation options more attainable.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced numerous situations and alterations to the ways and means in which persons work and commute in the Omaha- Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area, and around the world. The pandemic led large numbers of workers to begin 'working from home' or finding alternatives from their

normal office circumstances. Some of these changes have been deemed positive, and likely could affect commuting and working patterns moving forward from the pandemic as virtual meetings and working from home continue to become more prevalent in the economy.

Table 3.1: Priority Travel Demand Management Strategies, Connecting Talent to Work White Paper

	Walk 	Bike 	Transit 	Carpool 
1	Distance. Individual lives too far.	Distance. Individual lives too far.	Scheduling. Car needed before or after work/class	Stranded. Fear of being left at work.
2	Time. Mode takes too long.	Scheduling. Car needed before or after work/class.	Time. Mode takes too long	Partner. Had a carpooling partner.
3	Emergencies. There was a way to get around during the day or when needed in case of an emergency.	Time. Mode takes too long.	Infrastructure. Service provided near home.	Emergencies. There was a way to get around during the day or when needed in case of an emergency.
4	Scheduling. Car needed before or after work/class.	Infrastructure. Service provided near home.	Emergencies. There was a way to get around during the day or when needed in case of an emergency.	Time. Mode takes too long.