

2.0 DEMOGRAPHICS AND LAND USE

Transit ridership levels are affected by population and employment densities, major generators such as shopping malls, schools and universities, as well as population groups sensitive to transit such as youth, seniors, and lower income households. This section of the report outlines the existing demographics in Metro Transit service area of Sector 8, describing each of these characteristics.

2.1 POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT DENSITY

Population and employment densities are two key factors influencing transit ridership. Where higher population and employment densities are found, transit routes should be conveniently located and provide frequent service, to meet higher transit demand.

Population Density

The highest concentration of population in the study area is located in north Minneapolis, south of Lowry Avenue and east of Penn Avenue, as shown in Exhibit 2.1. Nodes of above average population density are generally east of County Road 81 in Robbinsdale, Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park. Areas west of County Road 81 and north of 85th Avenue are generally low density, or comprise large tracts of undeveloped land, such as in South Champlin and around the developed part of Maple Grove.

Employment Density

The areas of high employment density are, not surprisingly, downtown Minneapolis, and areas northwest of the downtown adjacent to the Mississippi River. Other areas of higher density employment are generally found along the major highways, such as County Road 81 through Robbinsdale, along Highway 100 in Brooklyn Center, adjacent to Highway I-94 and Highway I-694, and on the southern part of Highway 169.

2.2 RETAIL CENTERS

Retail centers, like other major activity centers, are large trip generators that usually serve as focal points for transit service. Exhibit 2.2 shows the location of shopping centers larger than 26,000 sq. feet in the Sector 8 study area.

Most of the retail shopping centers in the study area are community and neighborhood retail centers. They are mainly located along major roadways, including I-94, County Road 81, Highway 100 and Highway 169. Brookdale, the only regional retail center in the study area, accommodates one of the prime transit centers in the sector.

2.3 YOUTH POPULATION

School-aged children are major contributors to transit ridership, mainly because their mobility needs are dependent on others.

Exhibit 2.3 presents the current school student enrolment numbers, as well as the percentage of the population in the school age category, 5 years to 17 years of age. The exhibit indicates the highest concentration of youth population is located in north Minneapolis and in Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove and Champlin areas. As expected, the school enrollment appears to closely match the youth population distribution.

2.4 SENIORS POPULATION

The seniors population group is another important market segment for public transportation, since many seniors do not drive or have below average household incomes and rely heavily on transit services.

Exhibit 2.4 shows the senior population distribution and locations of seniors' housing projects in the study area. Areas with high seniors population density are primarily in the central part of the study area including Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Center, as well as in the east Maple Grove area.

The seniors' housing projects are generally located in the predominantly seniors population areas, and along major roadways such as County Road 81 in Robbinsdale and Bass Lake Road in New Hope.

2.5 HOUSEHOLDS IN POVERTY

Low-income households typically have limited car availability and are therefore more transit dependent. Lack of affordable and convenient transportation connections to jobs remains one of the major causes of unemployment and therefore poverty. Public transit can play an important role in the improvement of job accessibility for people from low-income households.

As shown in Exhibit 2.5, households in poverty are generally concentrated in the north Minneapolis area. Outside of this area, there are small pockets with moderate density of households in poverty. These pockets correspond to some extent with the distribution of seniors. Again, the structure of transit services should consider the distribution of households in poverty in order to provide adequate levels of mobility and accessibility to this group.

2.6 MAJOR TRIP GENERATORS

As well as the activity centers and market segments described above, there are a number of other major traffic generators in the northwest sector with significant numbers of potential transit users, including hospitals, medical centers, retail centers, and post-secondary schools. These institutions generate large numbers of trips, many made by individuals who are transit-dependent such as post-secondary students, and support staff at hospitals and medical centers.

Most of these facilities are well served by transit currently, and will benefit by improved and enhanced transit services. Significant activity centers along the central part of the sector include the North Memorial Medical Center, Brookdale Mall, Hennepin Technical College and North Hennepin Community College.

2.7 SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHICS AND LAND USE

This review of land uses and special generators demonstrates that the north Minneapolis area has demographic characteristics that are consistent with high transit usage. In addition there are many high traffic activity centers within the Sector 8 area, most of which are located on prime transportation corridors. These activity centers are generally served by existing transit routes but the quality of service varies.