

4 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

This chapter explores the existing road, rail and transportation facility network to assess capacity and potential for new transportation services in District 3. It includes a discussion of key plans, networks and park-and-ride/park-and-pool facilities. Additional information is included in Appendices C and D.

ROAD NETWORK

The road network is the most important element of the regional transportation network for person trips, including commuter travel. I-94 serves as the primary spine through the most densely developed communities in the study area, running through Todd, Stearns and Wright County, but other highways, including US 10 and US 169, also have very high traffic volumes. This section focuses on the important commuting corridors to and from St. Cloud, the Brainerd-Baxter area, and the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

Descriptions of the primary commuter corridors and other major roadways in District 3 are included in Appendix C. The existing capacity/congestion levels, amenities, characteristics and future expansion plans are discussed for each of the major roadways as part of the effort to identify existing corridors and potential future commuter transportation corridors.

Figure 4-1 illustrates the roadways that pass through or are located within District 3. The major interstate, I-94, is shown in red, while the remaining highways are shown in blue.

In January of 2000, MnDOT adopted an Interregional Corridor (IRC) system. The emphasis of the IRC system is on providing efficient connections between and among regional trade centers, linking concentrations of jobs, manufacturers, retailers and recreational opportunities. MnDOT has developed specific performance-based standards for travel speeds on IRC roadways: 60+ miles per hour for High Priority IRCs (including I-94, US 10 between Little Falls and Clearwater, and US 169 south of Princeton) and 55+ miles per hour for Medium Priority IRCs. Several of the corridors presented are indicated as IRCs (noted in Appendix C).

Figure 4-2 shows traffic volumes on major roadways in the study area. The greatest traffic volumes are at the southern end of the study area, including MN 55, I-94, US 10, US 169, and MN 65. The highest traffic volumes on US 10 go north as far as Little Falls, and on US 169, as far north as Milaca. Minnesota Highways 210 and 371 in and around Brainerd and Baxter also have high traffic volumes, as is expected in the more urban areas. Stakeholders and participants in project focus groups commented about congestion/delays on I-94, MN 55 and US 10. Some also commented about Friday afternoon traffic heading north for recreational purposes on US 169 and US 10, as well as traffic at rush hour in St. Cloud and through Brainerd.

Most of the county roads and highways are two lanes, which provides sufficient capacity in much of District 3, although some of these roadways are constrained and programmed for expansion to four lanes, including MN 23 and MN55. US-10, I-94, US 169, and MN 371 are four-line highways, as is MN 65 through the Cambridge area and to the south.

It should be noted that in St. Cloud, the APO assessed highway capacity (as well as freight, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities) in the 2035 Transportation Plan, concluding, "It is clear that the St. Cloud Metropolitan area cannot build its way out of congestion." The plan dedicates 10% of future expenditures to transit, bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements; 50% to expansion of highway and bridge infrastructure; and 40% to preservation of existing facilities. The APO's planning recommendations appear to balance MnDOT's IRC program, where emphasis on level of service has traditionally been placed strictly on traffic throughput.

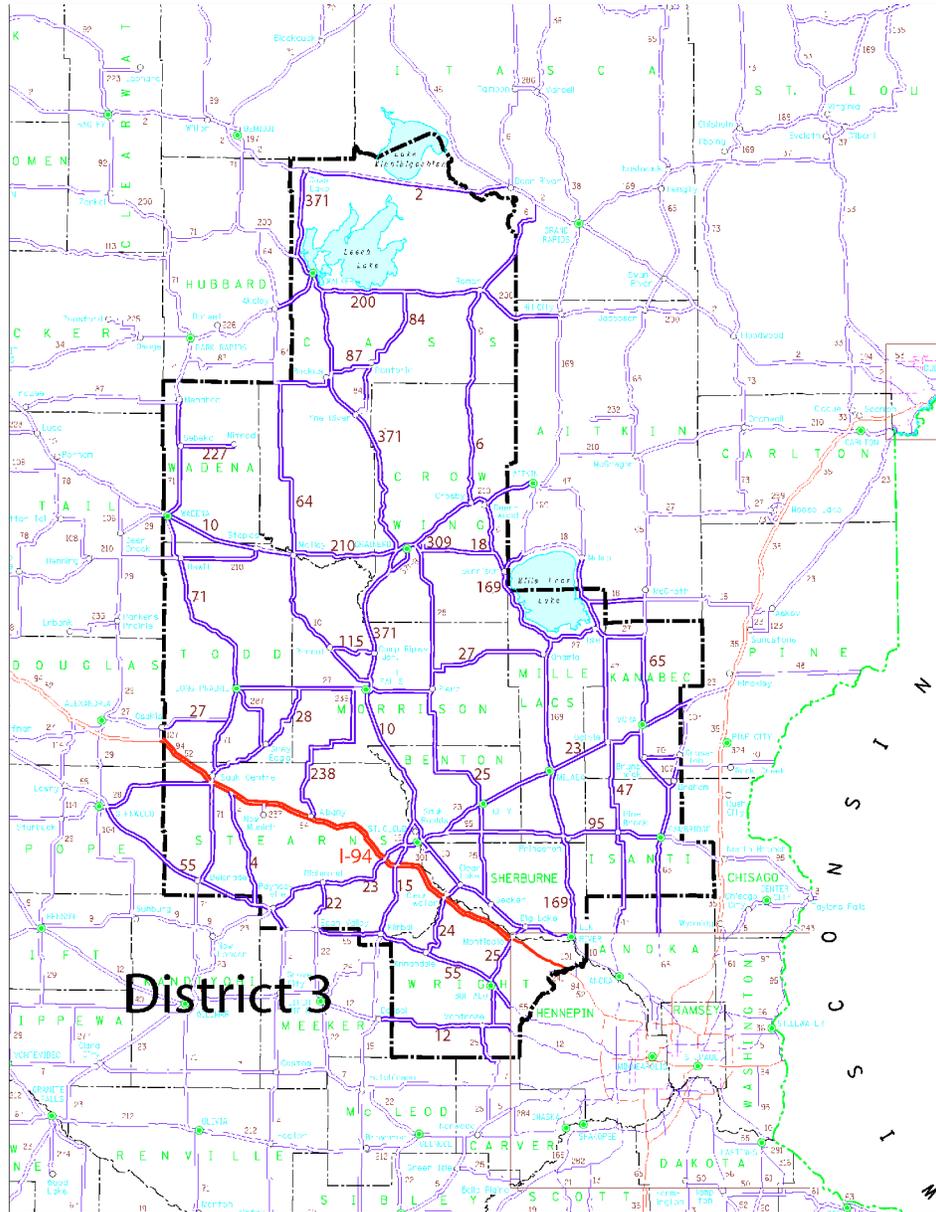
Obviously, one of MnDOT's priorities is to maintain levels of service (LOS) on existing roadways. Although in the past, the solution was almost universally to widen roadways to improve capacity, by investing in bicycle paths, ridesharing promotion, and park-and-rides, MnDOT has adopted a multimodal approach. This approach recognizes that implementing commuter options may also help mitigate some of the congestion on the region's highways, particularly during peak commuter periods where roadway capacity might be constrained for short periods of time.

A purpose of this study is to identify commuter service opportunities that can help alleviate some of the impacts on the roadway network by shifting commuters to other modes (such as transit) or to carpooling and vanpooling.

For a significant mode shift to occur, a major investment in transit will be required, as well as some strategies to incentivize transit by making it more attractive than driving. Increased speeds on transit can be one tool to do that, and some traffic engineering tools such as transit signal priority investments, queue jump lanes and HOV lanes have been put into place elsewhere to afford an advantage to transit. In the Twin Cities, bus-only shoulders can be used by transit agencies to speed service along congested roadways, essentially acting as an HOV or queue jump lane in some areas, allowing public buses to bypass slow or stopped traffic. This solution could be expanded into District 3; at this time, the closest bus-only shoulder service is allowed along Highway 10 in Anoka County.

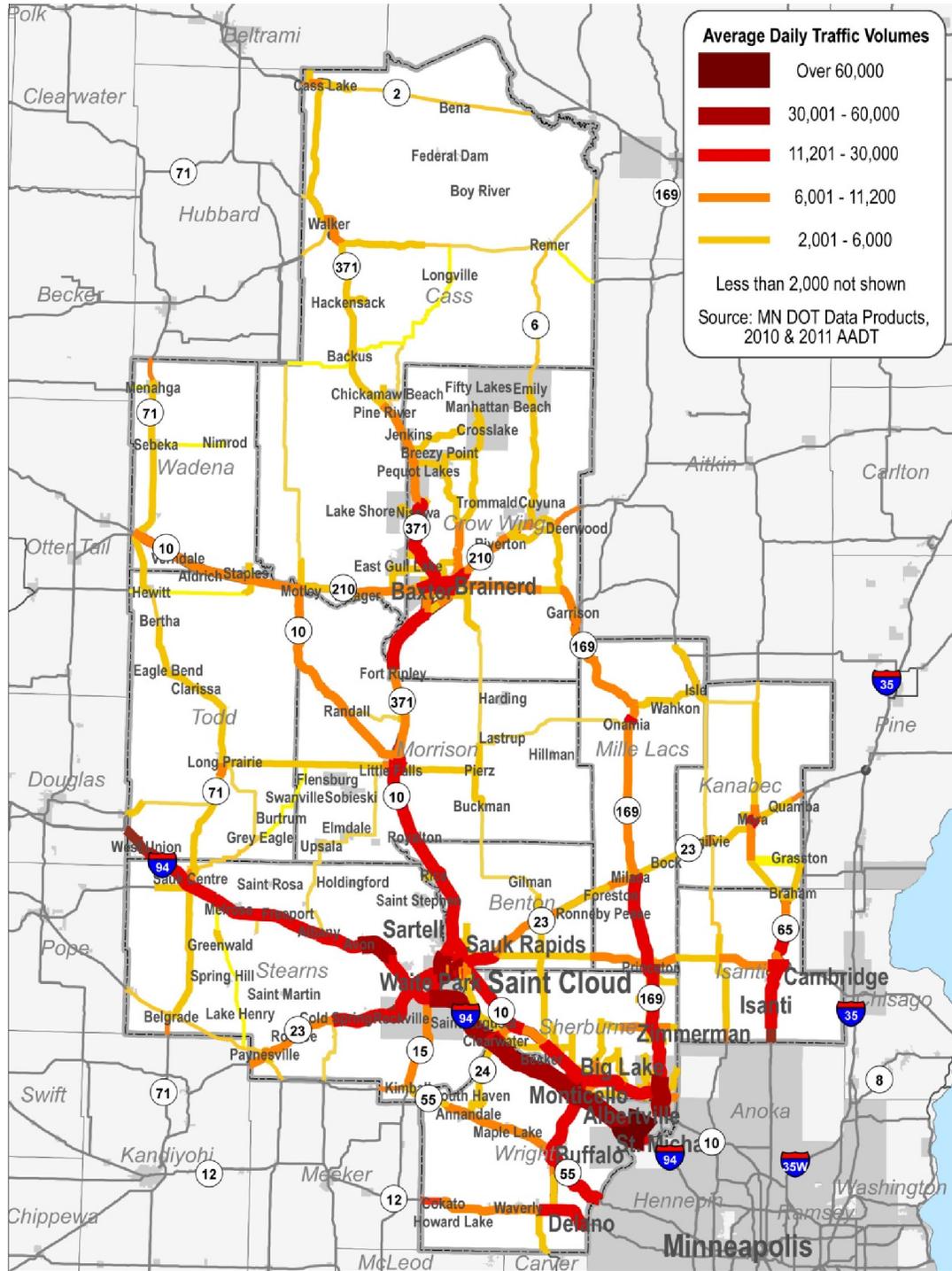
MnDOT provided information to the consulting team regarding traffic volumes by highway segment, which shows the highest numbers to be in the urban corridors, and the map in Figure 4-2 generally illustrates where the volumes are highest, but does not provide detail on roadway LOS which is not calculated by MnDOT.

Figure 4-1 MnDOT District 3 Highway Map



Source: MnDOT District 3

Figure 4-2 Traffic Volumes on Major Roadways



Source: MnDOT

Because commutes beyond District 3 are predominant at the southern end of the study area, the consulting team reviewed the Metropolitan Council Regional 2030 Transportation Policy Plan. The plan does not discuss counties in District 3, but identifies several important District 3 corridors as principal arterials in the metropolitan area: I-94 and US 10 to the northwest of the Twin Cities, highways 12 and 55 to the west, and MN 65 to the north. Of these, only I-94 and US 10 are predicted to be highly congested principal arterials in 2030, assuming the existing system stays in place and programmed projects are carried forward.

Figure 4-3 shows planned future construction projects.

Figure 4-3 MnDOT District 3 Future Construction Projects



Source: MnDOT District 3

PARK-AND-RIDE FACILITIES

District 3 has several park-and-ride facilities supporting the transportation system, including a list of sites defined as "official" lots and others defined as "unofficial" lots.

MnDOT uses two different terms to describe these parking facilities, referring to a park-and-ride facility as a site that has transit service and a park-and-pool facility is a site without transit service. For purposes of this chapter, which inventories these lots and notes the differences between different types of facilities, these terms are used, but in general throughout this study, the term park-and-ride refers to all locations where an individual can leave a car to continue a trip.

The official park-and-ride/park-and-pool lots are those which MnDOT had developed (land, construction, lighting, signage), while those that are deemed unofficial by MnDOT are in fact a mix of city-operated (city or county facilities, without MnDOT involvement and therefore unofficial) and informal lots on public or private property. Some of the unofficial lots have local resources, which have resulted, in some cases, in amenities and informative signage that is not found at some the official MnDOT lots. In District 3, MnDOT does not perform any maintenance functions at any park-and-ride or park-and-pool lots, including official ones, so all maintenance is done by other jurisdictions.

In January 2011, Metro Transit completed the 2010 Annual Regional Park-and-Ride System Survey Report. The report represents the tenth annual survey of park-and-ride and park-and-pool lots in the seven-county metropolitan region of Minneapolis-St. Paul. The survey, summarized in the report, used license plate data and vehicle counts to document park-and-ride and park-and-pool utilization and growth. Since the 2009 survey, two new park-and-rides were established in District 3 – Big Lake Station (518 spaces) and the Northstar Link lot (146 spaces) in St. Cloud. Additional capacity was added to the Elk River Station lot, for a new total of 415. These three capacity increases were built to accommodate the Northstar line, which began service in 2009.

One park-and-pool lot in District 3 was closed: Clearwater with 28 spaces. No lots were among the largest usage increases or decreases since the 2009 survey. Also, no lots were among the 29 lots with existing capacity constraints (85% and higher utilization rates).

Between 2009 and 2010, total park-and-ride and park-and-pool capacity in District 3 increased 121%, from 919 spaces to 2,027 spaces, due exclusively to the addition of space for the Northstar line. District-wide utilization dropped by 11.8%, from 44.6% to 38.8% due to this increase in capacity and requisite shift in commute patterns. Lot-by-lot data is available in Figure 4-4, which shows that Albany, Becker, and St. Joseph have consistently high utilization rates, while most other lots generally have extra capacity. (Note: The Becker Municipal Lot has merely six spaces, so high utilization rates are expected.) The study mentions that park-and-ride and park-and-pool utilization rates across the Minneapolis region are fairly volatile, a trend represented in the District 3 lots, as well.¹

¹ The 2030 Park-and-Ride Plan was published by the Metropolitan Council in 2009 to determine future park-and-ride needs for the greater Twin Cities region. The report analyzes data from Met Council's 2008 Park and Ride Plan as well as Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data to determine travel corridors with the highest future demand for park-and-ride facilities. Of the park-and-ride users analyzed, approximately 8.5% live in the "collar counties" around the seven-county metro region, an additional 1% live outside the 19-county metro area. The study does not distinguish between different regions outside of the metro region; therefore, the numbers of park-and-ride users from District 3 cannot be determined from the data. Demand was analyzed on a corridor-by-corridor basis, not by geography of origin. However, the two corridors determined to have the strongest future park-and-ride markets in the region are the I-94 West Corridor and the US 10/169 corridor, both of which serve District 3 counties. The plan only encompassed park-and-rides with transit connections in the greater metropolitan area. Big Lake Park-and-Ride is the only site in District 3 listed in the plan, and its existing 518 spaces are determined to be sufficient through the timeline of the plan, until 2030.

The University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies completed a report entitled *Understanding Transportation Impacts of Transitways: Demographic and Behavioral Differences between Transitway Riders and Other Transit Riders* (CTS Report 09-16, Cao and Jordan, 2009). The report looked at travel options in the Twin Cities and found that the distance from trip origin to a light rail station was the primary factor in determining the mode of access to fixed guideway transit stations. The report pointed to the importance of the access park-and-ride lots afford choice riders who would not consider using transit and/or live too far to walk. The report also noted the opportunities to enhance feeder bus services and improve the built environment with a better street network and mixed-use development to improve access.

Figure 4-4 Park-and-Ride and Park-and-Pool Lot Utilization 2008-2010, District 3

Park-and-Ride or Park-and-Pool Lot	2010			2009			2008		
	Capacity	Utilization	Utilization Rate	Capacity	Utilization	Utilization Rate	Capacity	Utilization	Utilization Rate
Official Park-and-Ride Lots									
BECKER MUNICIPAL LOT	6	11	183.3%	6	6	100.0%	6	6	100.0%
BIG LAKE - Hwy 10 & CO RD 43	90	4	4.4%	90	3	3.3%	90	7	7.8%
ELK RIVER - Hwy 10 & 171st	754	311	41.2%	339	245	72.3%	339	231	68.1%
St. Cloud - Hwy 10 & Lincoln Avenue NORTHSTAR LOT	146	24	16.4%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Official Park-and-Pool Lots									
ALBANY - I-94 & CO RD 10	28	23	82.1%	28	20	71.4%	26	26	100.0%
ALBERTVILLE - I-94 & CO RD 19	34	10	29.4%	34	6	17.6%	34	17	50.0%
BIG LAKE - Hwy 10 & CO RD 43 NORTHSTAR LOT	518	187	36.1%	-	-	-	-	-	-
CAMBRIDGE - Hwy 65 & 313th Lane NE	60	9	15.0%	60	11	18.3%	60	10	16.7%
COLD SPRING - Hwy 23	No data			No data			No data		
ELK RIVER - Hwy 169 & School Street NE	60	7	11.7%	60	13	21.7%	60	21	35.0%
MONTICELLO - Hwy 25 & School Blvd.	187	12	6.4%	187	13	7.0%	187	19	10.2%
PRINCETON - Hwy 169 & LaGrande	26	16	61.5%	26	26	100.0%	26	26	100.0%
WAVERLY - Hwy 12 (North 4th Street & Atlantic Avenue)	27	5	18.5%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unofficial Park-and-Pool Lots									
MAPLE LAKE VFW	21	7	33.3%	21	21	100.0%	21	21	100.0%
ROCKFORD - Hwy 55 & Walnut St	4	1	25.0%	4	4	100.0%	4	4	100.0%
ST. JOSEPH - I-94 & CO RD 2 (Exit 160)	36	35	97.2%	36	27	75.0%	36	36	100.0%
ZIMMERMAN - Hwy 169 & Main St. & 2nd St. E.	30	3	10.0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Informal Park-and-Pool Lots									

Park-and-Ride or Park-and-Pool Lot	2010			2009			2008		
	Capacity	Utilization	Utilization Rate	Capacity	Utilization	Utilization Rate	Capacity	Utilization	Utilization Rate
CAMP RIPLEY (unofficial lot)	No data			No data			No data		
CLEARWATER /CLEAR LAKE (closed)	-	-	-	28	15	53.6%	28	1	3.6%
ISANTI (unofficial lot)	No data			No data			No data		
TOTAL DISTRICT 3 CAPACITY & UTILIZATION	2,027	665	32.8%	919	410	44.6%	917	425	46.3%

Source: 2010 Annual Park and Ride System Survey Report

2011 DISTRICT 3 PARK-AND-RIDE/PARK-AND-POOL FACILITIES INVENTORY (INCLUDING TRANSIT CENTERS)

A total of 20 facilities were identified. Of these facilities, 18 were inventoried (the 2010 Annual Park-and-Ride System Survey Report lists Clear Lake as closed). The 20 facilities are designated as follows and shown in Figure 4-5.

Official park-and-ride (shown as dark green in the map)

- Becker
- Big Lake Station
- Elk River Station
- St. Cloud Station

Official park-and-pool (shown as light green on the map)

- Albertville
- Albany
- Big Lake
- Cambridge
- Cold Spring
- Elk River
- Monticello
- Princeton
- Waverly

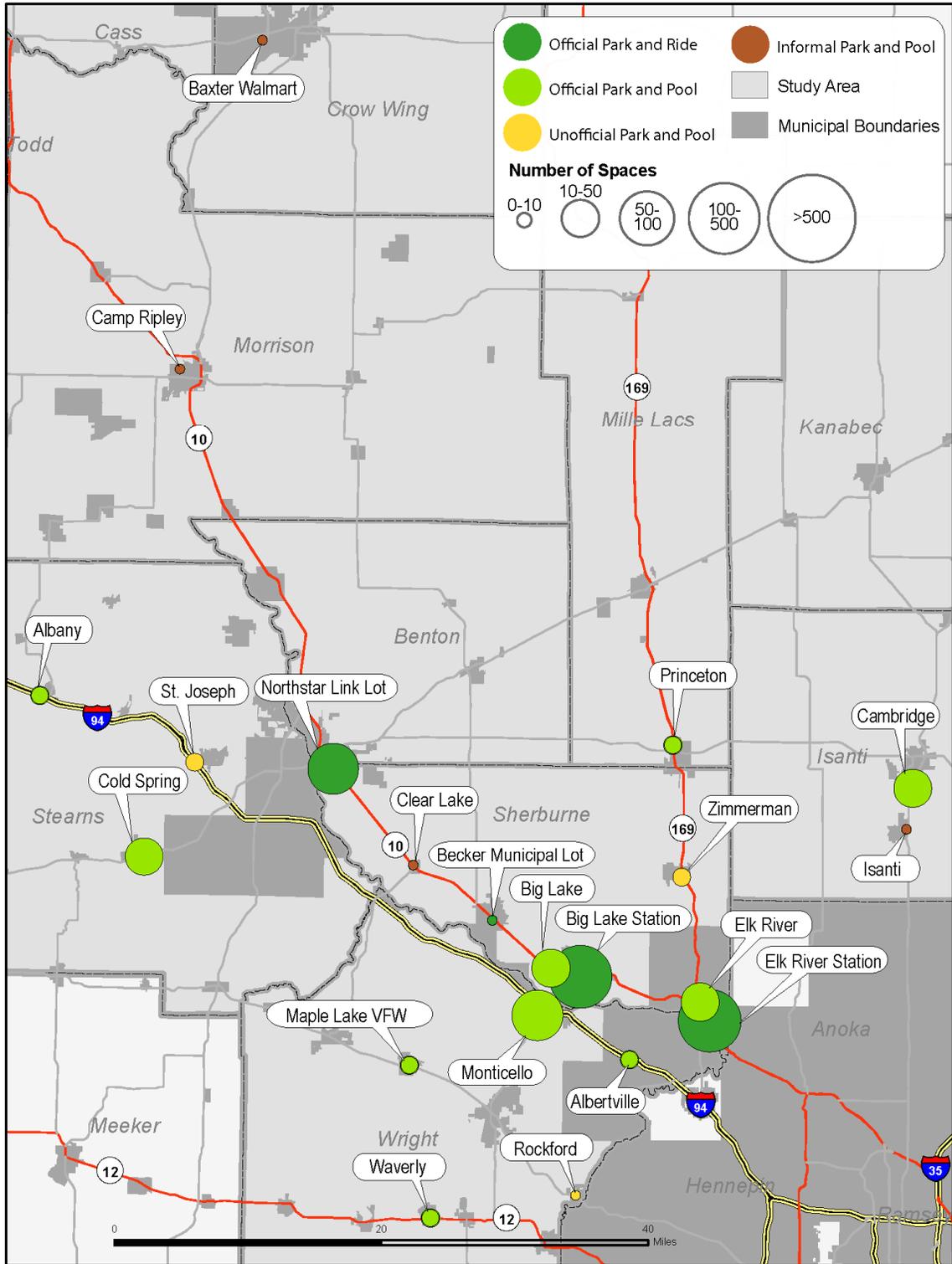
Unofficial park-and-pool (shown as gold on the map)

- Maple Lake
- Rockford
- St. Joseph
- Zimmerman

Informal park-and-pool (shown as brown on the map)

- Clear Lake (not inventoried: no longer designated park-and-pool lot, but still in use)
- Camp Ripley (not inventoried)
- Isanti

Figure 4-5 Park-and-Ride Lots (Shown as "Park-and-Ride" and "Park-and-Pool" Lots, District 3)



Source: MnDOT, Park and Ride Survey

The consulting team performed an inventory of the park-and-ride/park-and-pool facilities on October 5th and 6th, 2011, the same days that the Commuter Survey was distributed (see Chapter 5). The inventory included documenting the number of stalls available, usage, and condition at each site, as well as potential overall improvements. This inventory included the primary facilities identified by the client and consultant. Two sites were suggested which did not get inventoried due to location and inability to clearly define park-and-ride/pool use versus others at shared parking facilities. Usage of the facilities was observed on the day of the inventory.

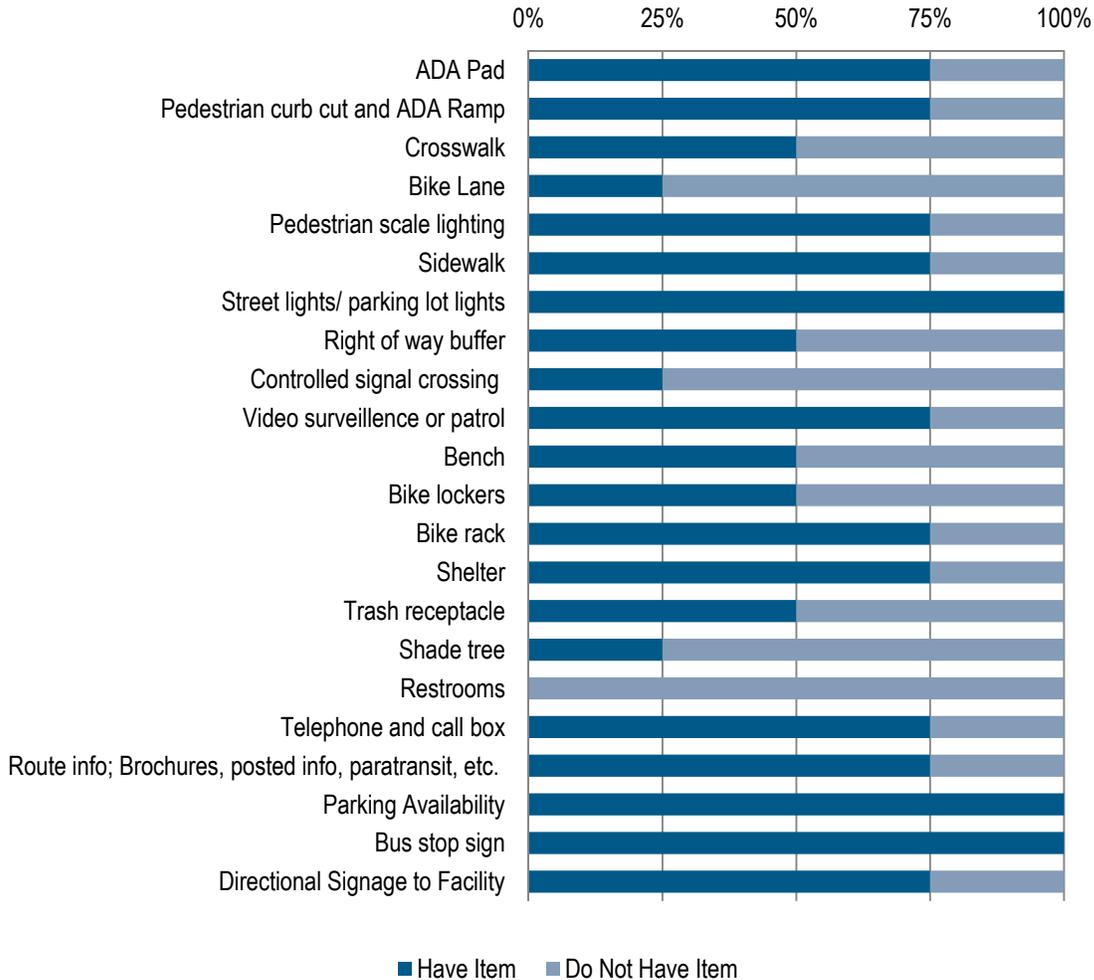
The park-and-ride sites were inventoried after the last morning bus/train left the site to obtain close to the maximum occupancy for the day. Information collected should be used as a snapshot and not as a comprehensive occupancy analysis: the Becker Park-and-Ride had five cars parked at the site, but comments from the commuter survey stated that sometimes it is difficult to find a parking space.

The following section provides a summary of the inventor, first by park-and-ride facilities and then by park-and-pool facilities. This is then followed by a more detailed analysis of the inventory components for each facility. The assessments of each lot are included in Appendix D.

Park-and-Ride Facilities

Three of the park-and-ride facilities are served by Northstar Link (St. Cloud, Becker and Big Lake) and two are served by Northstar rail (Big Lake and Elk River). Big Lake is the one facility with both Northstar Link and Northstar rail service. All of the park-and-ride facilities, with the exception of the Becker facility, provide a number of amenities. The Becker facility has not been upgraded and will eventually be relocated (adjacent to the Northstar Rail line) and improved based upon ridership and future commuter rail service to St. Cloud.

Figure 4-6 Park-and-Ride Inventory Summary



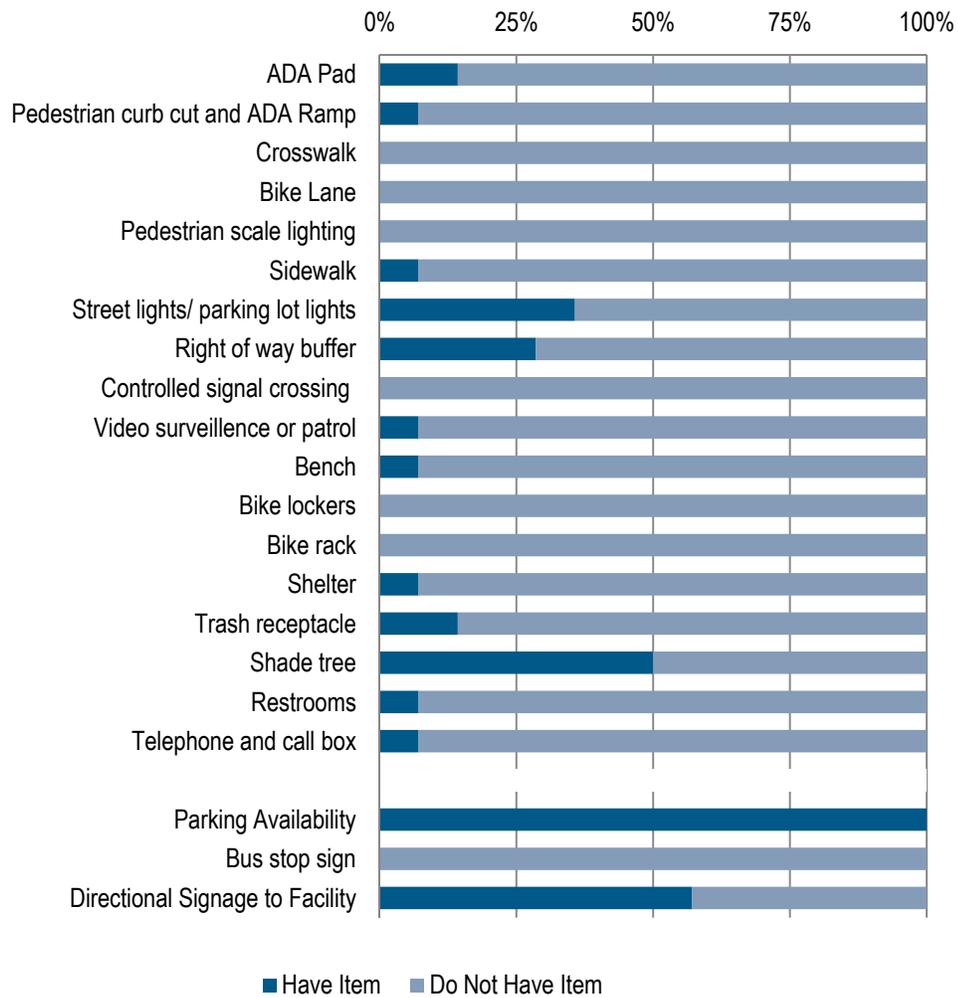
All of the park-and-ride facilities have street lights/parking lot lights, bus stop signage and parking capacity. Almost all have a pad/ramp, pedestrian-scale lighting, a sidewalk, video surveillance or a safety patrol, bike rack, shelter, telephone and call box, route information, and directional signage to the facility. None of the facilities provide restrooms, which was one of the requested improvements as part of the Commuter Survey responses (see Chapter 5). In addition to restrooms the following were also requested improvements to the park-and-ride facilities: shops and services, and improved pedestrian safety.

Park-and-Pool Facilities

Seven of the park-and-pool facilities are considered to be official sites, with four being unofficial and the final three being defined as informal facilities. None of the park-and-pool sites have fixed route service, although some are used as a pick up location, such as the Cold Spring site (Voigt Bus provides service to Mystic Lake Casino) and Clear Lake (River Rider transit provides services as a route deviation). The amenities at the park-and-pool facilities ranged from no directional signage or facilities (Maple Lake VFW) to good directional signage and fairly extensive amenities (Monticello).

In contrast to the park-and-ride facilities, the park-and-pool facilities generally had minimal improvements to the site. All sites had parking available and just over half had directional signage, but none had pedestrian/bicycle access, pedestrian-scale lighting, bike racks or information. Sites without directional signage or other clear markings were difficult to locate and would only be used by those who know of the site. One-third of them had street lights/parking lot lights, and the need for parking lot lighting was mentioned as a necessary amenity at these facilities by their users as part of the park-and-pool user survey. In addition to lighting, the following were mentioned as requested improvements: restrooms, waiting area or shelter, and an improved parking surface and lot maintenance.

Figure 4-7 Park-and-Pool Inventory Summary



Accessibility Items Inventory

The Becker site is the only park-and-ride facility without accessibility improvements. As noted above, the current Becker site is a temporary location which will be relocated in the future, and site improvements will be made then. Only Monticello has both accessibility improvements for the park-and-pool sites, and Waverly has an accessible pad. No other park-and-pool sites provide any accessibility features.

Figure 4-8 Accessibility Inventory

	Paved Pad	Pedestrian Curb Cut and Ramp
Becker		
Big Lake Station	YES	YES
Elk River Station	YES	YES
St. Cloud Station	YES	YES
Albertville		
Albany		
Big Lake		
Cambridge		
Cold Spring		
Elk River		
Monticello	YES	YES
Princeton		
Waverly		
Maple Lake	YES	
Rockford		
St. Joseph		
Zimmerman		
Isanti		

Safety Items Inventory

In general, all of the park-and-ride sites provide safety improvements. Survey comments for Elk River Station mentioned a lack of pedestrian safety for people crossing the tracks and entering the site. The park-and-pool sites had fewer safety features, with street lights being the most common. Users of the park-and-pool sites commented about the lack of lighting, especially needed during the winter months.

Figure 4-9 Safety Items Inventory

	Crosswalk	Bike Lane	Pedestrian scale lighting	Sidewalk	Street lights/parking lot lights	Controlled signal crossing	Telephone and Call Box
Becker			YES		YES		
Big Lake Station	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES
Elk River Station	YES		YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
St. Cloud Station				YES	YES		YES
Albertville							
Albany							
Big Lake					YES		
Cambridge					YES		
Cold Spring							
Elk River							
Monticello				YES	YES		YES
Princeton							
Waverly							
Maple Lake							
Rockford					YES		
St. Joseph							
Zimmerman							
Isanti					YES		

Facility Related Items Inventory

Big Lake Station and Elk River Station have the most complete facilities, followed by St. Cloud Station. Becker's temporary location has no amenities except for a bus stop sign. The park-and-pool facilities had few passenger amenities, with Monticello being the only one with a bench and shelter. None of the facilities have a restroom, which was mentioned in the passenger survey as a requested improvement.

Figure 4-10 Facility-Related Items Inventory

	Bench	Bike lockers	Bike rack	Shelter	Trash can	Shade tree	Rest-rooms	Route info; Brochures, posted info, paratransit,	Parking Avail-ability	Bus stop sign	Directional Signage to Facility
Becker									YES	YES	
Big Lake Station	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES	YES
Elk River Station	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES	YES
St. Cloud Station	YES		YES	YES				YES	YES	YES	YES
Albertville									YES		
Albany						YES			YES		YES
Big Lake						YES			YES		YES
Cambridge									YES		YES
Cold Spring						YES			YES		YES
Elk River									YES		
Monticello	YES			YES	YES	YES			YES		YES
Princeton									YES		
Waverly						YES			YES		YES
Maple Lake						YES			YES		
Rockford									YES		YES
St. Joseph									YES		YES
Zimmerman						YES			YES		
Isanti					YES		YES		YES		

Parking Inventory

All of the facilities had parking available on the day of the inventory. The Becker lot is very small and is reported to often be at capacity.

Figure 4-11 Parking Inventory

	Capacity	Utilization	Utilization Rate
Becker	6	5	80%
Big Lake Station	518	250	48%
Elk River Station	754	350	46%
St. Cloud Station	146	26	18%
Albertville	34	13	38%
Albany	28	18	64%
Big Lake	90	6	7%
Cambridge	60	7	12%
Cold Spring	60	8	13%
Elk River	60	11	18%
Monticello	187	15	8%
Princeton	21	7	33%
Waverly	26	21	81%
Maple Lake	27	4	15%
Rockford	4	1	25%
St. Joseph	36	26	72%
Zimmerman	30	16	53%
Isanti	30	14	47%

Inventory Summaries by Lot

The following section provides a summary for each facility. A detailed inventory for each facility is provided in Appendix D.

Park-and-Ride Lots

Elk River Station



Elk River Station is a newer park-and-ride facility with 754 parking spaces, and is a stop on the Northstar rail line. On the day of the inventory, there were 350 cars parked at the facility (46% of capacity). The facility is owned and operated by Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit.

The facility is in good condition with all amenities provided, except for restrooms. The site has good lighting; both pedestrian- and parking lot-scale, and Metro Transit staff patrol the site for added safety. Elk River Station easy to see from US 169, but is not easy to find after exiting the highway. There is limited signage from US 10.

A retail area is nearby, although the site is surrounded by residential subdivisions. Elk River Station received an average to above-average score for user satisfaction, based on results from the user survey (94 responses). Ease of finding a parking space, cleanliness and location received the highest scores, while amenities were deemed just better than average.

Becker Municipal Lot



The Becker Municipal Park-and-Ride is serviced by Northstar Link. The small site is a temporary location with plans to relocate closer to the Northstar commuter rail line. Currently, the site is a gravel lot with only one street light fixture. Access to the site is provided via a curb cut on US 10 and from Willow Street.

The Northstar Link sign faces US 10 directly in front of the lot.

Big Lake Station



Big Lake Station is a newer park-and-ride facility with 518 parking stalls. On the day of the inventory there were 250 cars parked at the facility (48% of capacity). Big Lake Station is a stop on the Northstar line and is also served by Northstar Link bus service.

The facility is owned and operated by Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit, and is in good condition with several amenities provided, but no restrooms. The site has good lighting, both pedestrian- and parking lot-scale, and there is a Metro Transit security patrol on site for added safety.

Big Lake Station is south of US 10 with access from County Road 43. There is no turn lane into the lot from CR 43, although there is a turn lane and signal at US 10. The site has good directional signage and the City of Big Lake has made improvements to their sidewalk/trail system to provide pedestrian/bicycle connectivity to the station. In addition, the city has installed a sign that provides information and directions to key developments.

The facility is located adjacent to a large tract of undeveloped land that the city has designated for transit-oriented development (there are rental apartments approved for construction south of the park-and-ride facility). Big Lake Station scored very high with regard to user satisfaction, especially regarding ease of finding a parking space, location and safety/security.

St. Cloud Northstar Link Lot



The St. Cloud Northstar Link lot is a paved and signed parking facility with two unheated shelters. Access to the site is through a cut in the median on US 10 (with turning movement in/out of the site) and via Lincoln Avenue. There is directional signage from US 10 and on-site signage.

The facility is easily seen from US 10 and has surveillance camera and parking lot lighting for added security. The facility scored highly among users in terms of their satisfaction, especially for the ease of finding a parking space.

Park-and-Pool Lots

Albany



The Albany Park-and-Pool is an official park-and-pool lot with a parking capacity of about 28 spaces. At the time the inventory was taken, there were 18 cars parked there. A gravel parking lot with no striping, there is signage on CR 10 and at the entrance designating the lot. Other basic amenities include a right-of-way buffer, a shade tree, and additional available parking. Located in a rural setting, there is a lot of agricultural traffic along the highway. This park-and-pool lot is owned by MnDOT and is maintained by Stearns County. There are currently no transit routes servicing this lot.

Albertville

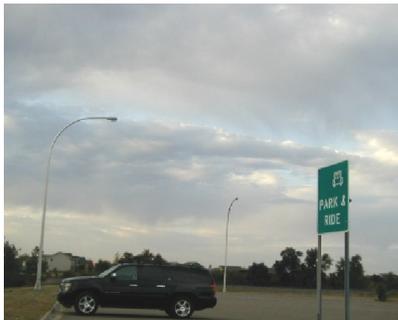


The Albertville Park-and-Pool lot is located on I-94 and County Road 19 and is owned by MnDOT. Although it is visible from CR 19, there is no direct access; the lot is accessible via a secondary street. There are several businesses nearby, including Verizon, Mobil Gas, and a fireplace/hot tub store located across the street. Although, there is no signage directing users to the lot, there is a park-and-ride sign at the entrance to the lot itself, making the lot seem like a well-kept secret.

The lot is paved, but there is no striping; cars tend to park around the perimeter. It is probable that striping would create greater capacity in the lot, where there are only 40 spaces available (two of these marked as accessible spaces), and at the time of inventory only 13 were occupied.

This facility is not pedestrian-oriented, and there is a lack of safety amenities (i.e., no lighting, no sidewalks or crosswalks). There is currently no transit connection at or near this lot.

Big Lake



The Big Lake Park-and-Pool lot can be accessed from County Road 43, via a frontage road. Aside from CR 43, the surrounding environment includes railroad tracks nearby, and vacant land, although there is a highway commercial area about 1/4 miles from this lot.

The lot is paved, but not well maintained. Owned and operated by Sherburne County, there are currently no transit connections available. The lot capacity is around 90 vehicles, which includes five accessible spaces. At the time inventory was taken, six parking spaces were occupied. Amenities include a right of way buffer, parking lot lights, a few shade trees, and directional signage to the facility.

Cambridge



The Cambridge Park-and-Pool lot is located along MN 65 and County Road 30. There is a park-and-ride sign southbound on Main St. and one at the lot entrance.

This large lot is paved, but there is no striping. Cars park along the perimeter but there is also a central parking bank. Capacity is about 80 vehicles, including two accessible spaces, but at the time of the inventory, only seven spaces were occupied.

The lot is owned and operated by MnDOT. There is a gas station across Main Street, however the rest of the surrounding environment consists of wide-open fields and adjacent roads. The only lighting at the facility is provided by two light poles at each end of the large lot, seemingly insufficient.

Camp Ripley

Camp Ripley has an informal park-and-pool lot. This site was not included as part of the inventory.

Clear Lake

Clear Lake Park-and-Pool is an informal park-and-ride/pool lot, located at a restaurant parking lot, and was designated as closed in the Metropolitan Council study. RiverRider uses this lot as one of its pick-up points. During the inventory, the consulting team was unable to determine which cars were those of park-and-pool users and which were those of restaurant patrons. The site visit was at the lunch hour and the parking lot was at capacity. If the site continues to be used as a designated park-and-ride stop for RiverRider, there may need to be a formal agreement between the transit agency and the owner, or a different lot location may be appropriate.

Cold Spring



The Cold Spring Park-and-Pool lot is an official lot owned and maintained by MnDOT. It is located along MN 23 and is served every Thursday by a Voigt bus that goes to Mystic Lake. Other than the nearby housing, there are no other buildings/stores/businesses nearby.

There is signage along the frontage road that provides access to the lot, with a right-turn lane at a median on MN 23, allowing access onto the frontage road. It is a busy street, and a left turn out would be difficult when busy.

The lot is paved and striped, but it is in poor condition. It is long and narrow in shape. Capacity is 60 vehicles, including two accessible spaces. There were eight vehicles occupying the lot at the time of inventory. There are some trees, but there is no lighting. The Voigt Transportation driver and rider commented that lights were needed after dark when users returned to the lot.

Elk River



The Elk River Lot is an official park-and-pool lot located along US 169. It is approximately 1/2 mile north of US 10. There is currently no transit connection at this paved lot, which has no striping, but capacity is estimated at 60 vehicles. At the time of inventory, there were 11 vehicles occupying the site.

There is directional signage located on the east side of the highway directly across from the lot, however this refers to the larger Elk River Park-and Ride-facility, not to this official park-and-pool lot that is visible. As a result, signage for this lot is confusing and the lot can be difficult to find, especially in late evening or early morning hours. There is a plaza located on the other side of the service drive containing Home Depot, Taco John's, Panera, and the Dollar Store, but there are no amenities at this facility.

Isanti



The Isanti Park-and-Pool is an informal lot owned by Millax Oil. It is located near a B.P. Gas station and a McDonald's, sharing the McDonald's parking lot. There is no data on the capacity for this park-and-pool, however there were about 14 cars parked along the perimeter of the lot and half of the south edge at the time of inventory. Because it is a shared lot, it is striped and paved, there are trash receptacles available, restrooms in the nearby businesses, and one large two-headed light pole.

There are no designated accessible stalls for the park-and-ride. No identification exists that there is a park-and-pool lot here, and there is no directional signage from the roads.

Maple Lake



The Maple Lake Park-and-Pool lot is an official park-and-pool lot owned by the VFW of Maple Lake. It is located in the back of a VFW along a side street off MN 55. It is a gravel lot without a sidewalk or turn lane, and it is in poor condition.

The lot accommodates approximately 21 vehicles, and only seven spaces were occupied at the time of inventory. Surrounding businesses include the VFW, a restaurant, and other various light manufacturing/industrial buildings. About ¼ mile down the highway, there is additional commercial activity.

Monticello



The Monticello Park-and-Pool is an official park-and-pool lot owned by the City of Monticello. It is a large paved and striped lot, with a capacity of 187, including four accessible spaces. At the time of the inventory, 15 of these spots were occupied.

There is currently no transit connection available at this lot, but there is the potential for city and RiverRider Service. There is a crosswalk at the end of the street, and signage on MN 25 in both directions that indicate a park-and-ride. There is also signage on School Blvd., but it could be improved.

Unlike many of the park-and-pool lots, this lot has some basic amenities including a paved pad and pedestrian curb cut, as well as an accessible ramp. There are parking lot lights, video surveillance/patrol and a right-of-way buffer. It is pedestrian oriented, with a bench, shelter, trash receptacle, shade tree and telephone. The surrounding environment includes a movie theatre parking lot, vacant lots, and power lines. Within 1/2 mile there are some stores and businesses.

Princeton



The Princeton Park-and-Pool is an official park-and-pool lot owned and operated by MnDOT. Capacity is at 55 spaces, of which 21 were occupied at the time of inventory. There is one sign from US 169. Once off the highway, there is a second sign directing drivers to turn left for the lot, however it is necessary to visually search for the lot which is close to the road.

The Princeton facility is a paved lot, but it is not striped. At the time of the inventory, the lot was being used by several trucks and SUVs, and some appeared to be construction related. The lot is ringed with shade trees, and surrounded by a gas station/fast food store across the street, Anderson Equipment Sales and a Subway sandwich shop, however access to these places is not easy for pedestrians who must cross a busy road.

Rockford



The Rockford lot is an unofficial park-and-pool owned and operated by Welsh Companies. It is a large parking lot for a shopping center called “City Center”. Even with retail on site, only 20 or so cars were parked, all near the businesses. A store owner confirmed this was the “carpool lot”

although there was no signage to indicate so. Capacity for the designated carpool area of the lot is only four cars, and only one was parked there at the time of inventory.

Northbound and southbound MN 55 have a very clear green park-and-ride sign located a good distance from the turn-off, but the lot is immediately visible once exiting the highway. Surrounding businesses that share the larger parking lot include Nortog Smoked Meats, the Post Office, a Tae Kwan Do studio, a childcare center, and Snap Fitness. There was also an apartment complex just up the road

St. Joseph



St. Joseph is an unofficial park-and-pool lot located along I-94 and County Road 2. The lot is paved, but it does not have striping and is in poor condition. There are about 40 parking spaces, 26 of which were occupied at the time of inventory.

There is no turn lane on CR 2, which is a relatively busy street. During the parking inventory, the parking lot was being used for temporary parking by one truck and a sheriff's vehicle. This lot is relatively isolated, with no amenities, transit connections, stores or other businesses nearby. This lot is owned by Stearns County.

Waverly



The official park-and-pool lot in Waverly is owned and operated by the City of Waverly. It is a paved, striped lot with a capacity of 27 parking spaces, including two accessible spaces marked with signs. At the time of the inventory, only four vehicles were parked here.

There is street lighting, which seems to be sufficient since it is in the middle of town, but there are no parking lot lights. There are a few medium shade trees at the perimeter of the lot, and a park-and-ride sign right next to the lot, but there is no directional signage from the main thoroughfare or MN 12. Businesses in the surrounding area include Kutz Collision, Village Hall, commercial storage garage sheds and residential homes.

Zimmerman



The Zimmerman lot is an unofficial park-and-pool lot with around 30 spaces, half of which were occupied during inventory. There is no transit connection to this lot at this time, and although the lot is paved, there is no striping. Signage includes a single red and white park-and-ride sign at the lot entrance, and a green park-and-ride sign at the intersection of US 169 and Fremont, and signage can be confusing to follow.

The lot is located at the dead end of a street without street lights, although there is a single light fixture at the end of the lot, which seems insufficient for the lot size. There is a park/wooded area bordering the lot.

EXISTING REGIONAL RAIL CORRIDORS

Several rail corridors exist within the study area. The map in Figure 4-12 illustrates tracks for freight and passenger rail. Services that operate along these corridors are described in the following sections.

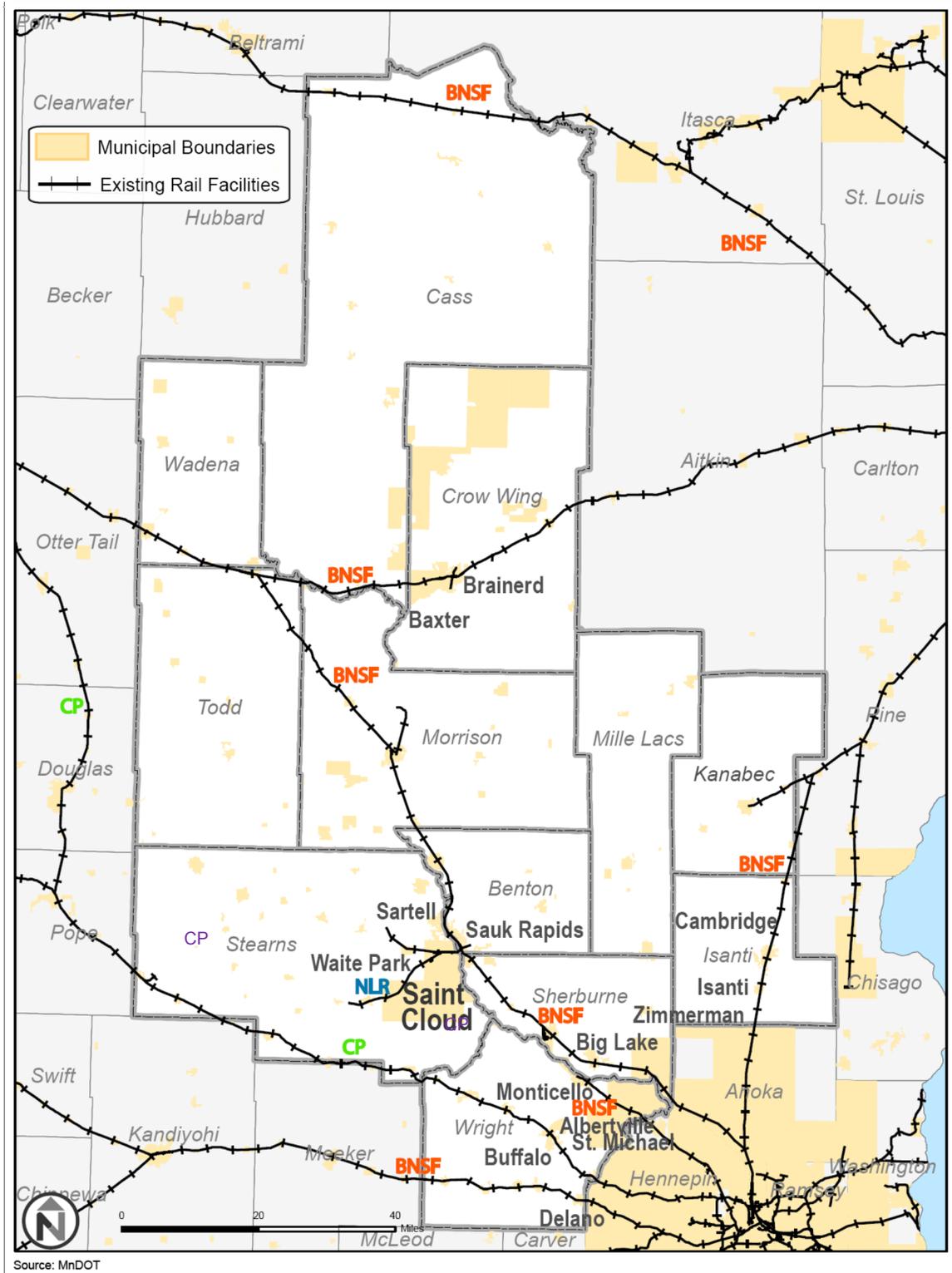
Intercity Passenger Rail

Amtrak

Amtrak is a long distance national passenger train network of 15 total train lines covering 46 states and three Canadian provinces. Seventy percent of miles traveled by Amtrak trains are on tracks owned by other railroads that also serve the passenger rail network. Amtrak's Empire Builder runs through District 3 via a BNSF-hosted railroad, and continues beyond Minnesota. It is a long-distance route of more than 2,200 miles, linking Chicago in the east with Spokane, Portland and Seattle in the west. Within District 3, the Empire Builder line stops in Staples and in St. Cloud.

In FY 2010 Amtrak's national network transported more than 28.7 million passengers, or an average of 78,000 passenger rides. Since 2000, ridership has grown by 36% nationally. Along the Empire Builder line, in FY 2005 ridership was at 387,014, up 8.9 percent from the previous year.

Figure 4-12 Railroad Lines within District 3



Freight Rail

BNSF

Overview

Today, BNSF Railway totals almost 400 different railroad lines that have been merged together over 160 years. Although it is a freight network, passenger rail service operates along many segments of the railway. BNSF is headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, and operates one of the largest railroad networks in North America. It primarily covers the country west of the Mississippi River.

Existing Freight use

In 2010, 4.3 million intermodal shipments were transported via BNSF railways. BNSF hauls 1.4 million carloads of industrial products, including construction materials, building products, petroleum products, chemicals/plastic products, and food and beverages. Coal makes up another 23% of BNSF's revenue (2008) primarily from the Powder River basin in Wyoming and Montana. The remaining revenue (20%) comes from the shipment of Agricultural Products. In FY 2010, BNSF hauled 1,058,000 carloads of agricultural commodities, including corn, soybeans, wheat and fertilizer.

Canadian Pacific (CP)

Overview

The Canadian Pacific Railroad has a network of approximately 15,300 miles, operating in 13 states and three Canadian Provinces. It has been operating for more than 125 years.

Existing Freight use

Through subsidiaries, Canadian Pacific transports bulk commodities including grain, coal, sulphur, and fertilizers. Merchandise freight makes up another portion of traffic, consisting of automotive parts and vehicles, as well as consumer, forest, and Industrial products.

Northern Lines (NLR)

Overview

Northern Lines is a smaller, privately owned railway that began operations in 2005. It is located in central Minnesota with 25 operated and maintained miles. It connects with BNSF just east of St. Cloud. Transload facilities are located in St. Cloud, Cold Spring, and Waite Park. It also stops in St. Joseph and Rockville.

Existing Freight use

Primary commodities handled include aggregates, building products, chemicals, coal, food products, lumber, manufactured goods, paper, scrap, steel and stone. Northern Lines has about 10,000 annual carloads.

CONCLUSION

I-94 is a major service corridor for commutes to St. Cloud and the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Several official park-and-pool lots are located along I-94, including Albany, Monticello and Albertville, as well as St. Joseph, an unofficial park-and-pool lot. For commutes to the St. Cloud area, in addition to I-94 providing a major arterial corridor, US 10, MN 23 and MN 95 all play significant roles in serving commuters traveling to and from the area. Commuters in the Brainerd-Baxter area are likely to use MN 210, MN 371 and MN 25.

In the review of existing conditions at park-and-ride facilities, and by examining relevant comments from the passenger surveys, it was found that with the exception of the Becker Park-and-Ride, the existing park-and-ride facilities in District 3 are all well maintained and provide adequate amenities. The park-and-rides without transit (park-and-pool facilities) received favorable comments from users, but amenities at the sites are generally minimal and some of the sites are not easily found by first-time users.

Previously, District 3 had a group consisting of the City of St. Cloud and County Engineers from the area, along with representatives from MnDOT District 3, the APO and Metro Bus. The goal of this group was to determine locations for park-and-rides/pools. MnDOT also provided funding for park-and-ride/pool development. As a result of this collaborative effort, the Albany Park-and-Pool was constructed (official lot, owned by MnDOT, maintained by Stearns County) and the St. Joseph site was continued as a park-and-pool facility (unofficial, owned by Stearns County).