

YOUNG LEADER VISION PROJECT

FINAL REPORT AND FINDINGS

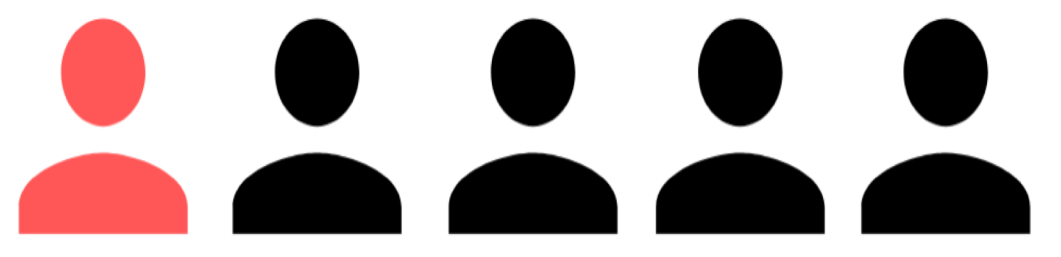
VISION

Minnesota’s seniors and residents with disabilities meaningfully contribute to the vibrancy of our communities. Too frequently, however, the institutions, industries, and environments within our communities are not structured to provide access to full and equal participation. Such lack of access commonly leads to social isolation.

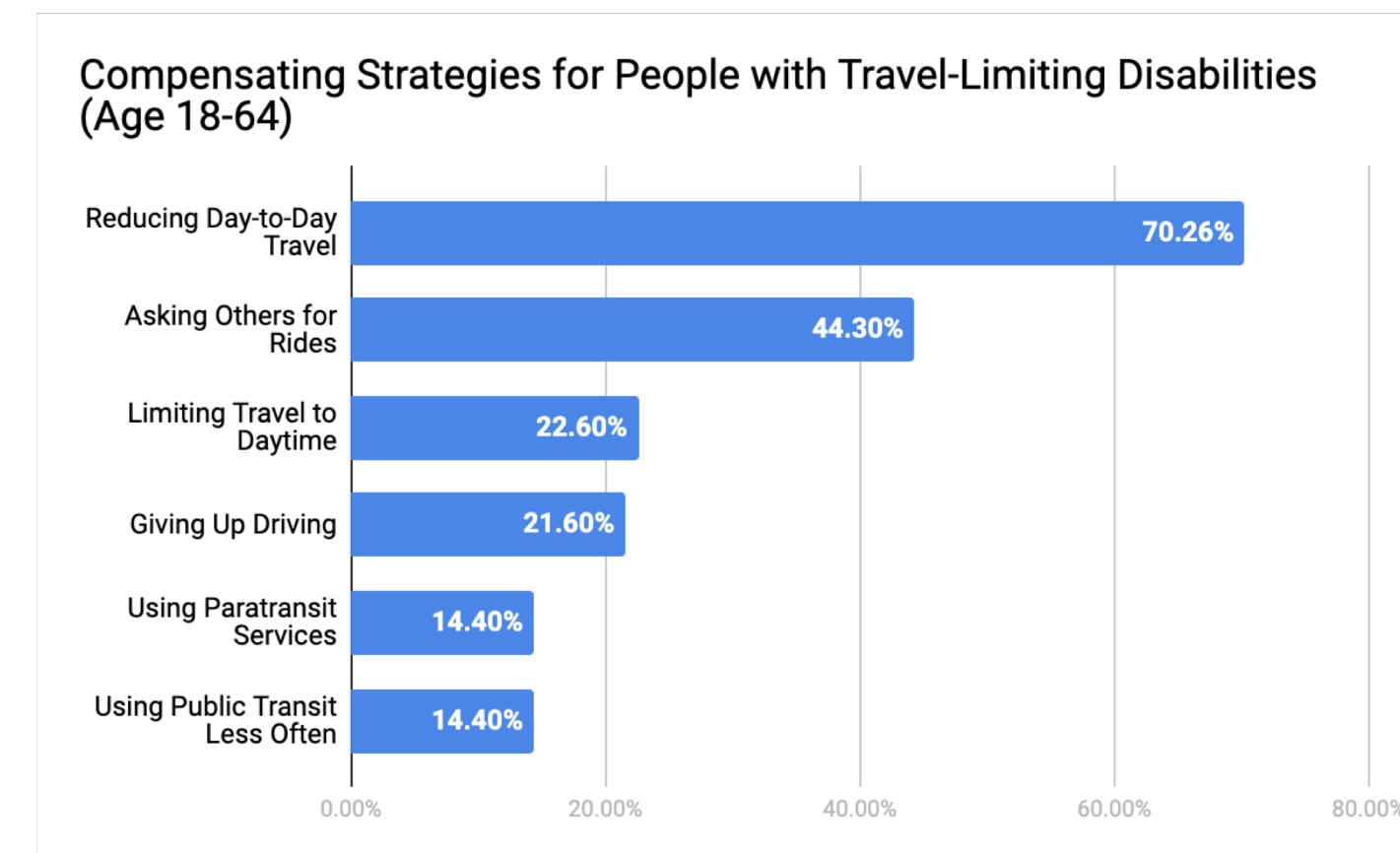
One significant barrier to community access is lack of suitable transportation options for seniors and people with disabilities (PWDs.) Many of these individuals need or desire transportation services that go above and beyond what typical public transportation is able to provide. Within limited areas of the Twin Cities metro, paratransit systems are available; however, many are afflicted by persistent service problems.

Before this project began, I believed that many of the problems that Minnesota’s seniors and PWDs face could be solved primarily through governmental action. Throughout the course of this project, I came to the understanding that, in order to effectively offer alternative transportation options for the aforementioned groups, we must foster collaboration between public and private entities.

Through increased transportation options, seniors and people with disabilities in the Twin Cities region will have access to their communities. This access will serve to (1) improve quality of life for seniors and PWDs by decreasing social isolation and (2) increase community participation, lending to renewed community vibrancy.



One in five Americans has one or more disabilities
(more concentrated the older the age group)



ACTION

SYSTEMS

The MN Department of Human Services offers “Live Well at Home” grants each year to organizations who help seniors “maintain their health, independence, and community involvement.”

Governmental organizations - on both a legislative and departmental level - need to:

1. Approve additional grant funding for the development of accessible transportation options targeting both seniors and PWDs.
2. Promote equity by requiring a significant portion of the grant money mentioned above be used to subsidize transportation of low income seniors and PWDs.
3. Develop incentives for the creation of on-demand accessible transit options

COMMUNITY

Each community must (1) educate themselves on access needs and general disability etiquette, as dictated by disabled and/or elderly persons and (2) work to create both physical and nonphysical environments that are accessible to all.

I will work to create a coalition of individuals ranging from those who would benefit from this transportation to existing community leaders to potential accessible transportation providers. Together we will advocate for the aforementioned grant funding and educate others on the effect of social isolation on mental and physical health.

I will also continue to educate my community members on disability and aging-related topics.

BUSINESS

Businesses looking to work on this issue must consult with the seniors and people with disabilities within their communities who will be impacted by their services. Stakeholder input gathering should continue throughout the entire development and operation process.

Mobility4All, GBC is a Twin-Cities-based startup that is working to offer transportation options that increase the ability of seniors and PWDs to participate in their communities. They offer on-demand rides that are customizable based on an individual’s accessibility needs. Mobility4All’s CareDrivers™ are specially trained on how to effectively and respectfully serve seniors and PWDs. Mobility4All is a recipient of a 2019 Live Well at Home Grant.



INSIGHTS

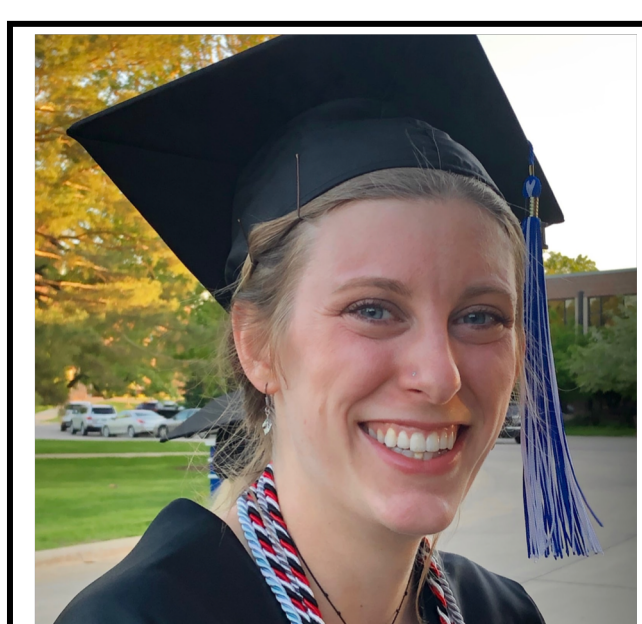
I was surprised to observe that, for several cities within my Metropolitan Council district, the comprehensive planning process did not include specific steps to document how their comprehensive plan took into account the unique needs of various marginalized populations (ie. seniors, people with disabilities, people of color, etc.) It appeared that the officials responsible for creating their community’s comprehensive plan had made efforts to reach out to and consider the needs of these populations, however no formal recognition or documentation of this process was available.

To me, this drove home the message that it is vital for people to be cognizant of the unique needs of various marginalized populations within their community. Even more importantly, these community members must act as allies in the fight to get the voices of marginalized communities heard in the comprehensive planning process.

Another interesting thing that I discovered throughout this process was how essential it is that a community feels invested in their strategic plan. The most successful plans seemed to be the ones that were created through extensive community input, thereby leading community members to feel as sense of ownership over the plan and be invested in its success.

Social isolation increases risk of:

- Heart disease
- Weakened immune system
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Alzheimer’s Disease
- Cognitive decline
- Etc.



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A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO.....

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