



Community Engagement

CHAPTER 3

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Public participation is an integral part of the transportation planning process. The information and perspectives provided through public participation assist decision-makers and lead to a more meaningful and comprehensive planning process.

One of the primary objectives of the DMATS Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is to bring people together to identify and coordinate future projects that will expand and enhance the DMATS multimodal transportation system. To achieve this objective, DMATS implemented a transparent and inclusive planning process to provide the community with the opportunity to identify broad goals and future priorities.

This chapter describes the methods used for community and stakeholder engagement during the DMATS planning process for the LRTP. The timeline shown in Figure 3.1 highlights the primary tasks of this planning process.



FIGURE 3.1
Timeline for DMATS
LRTP Planning Process
Source: ECIA

Key Players in the Planning Process

The DMATS Policy Board serves as the primary decision-making and governing body. It acts as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that guides investment of federal and state transportation funds. The Policy Board adopts the 5-year LRTP and any subsequent amendments.

The DMATS Technical Committee is the advisory body that provides the research, data analysis, and technical expertise needed to manage the region's transportation network. They evaluate funding and infrastructure to make formal recommendations to the DMATS Policy Board re: funding, policies, and LRTP.

Federal Requirements for Public Participation

DMATS follows the federal requirements for public participation found in Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR) Section 450.324 for Development and Content of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan summarized below.

1. DMATS follows the participation process outlined in the agency's Public Participation Plan (PPP) for recommended methods to engage the public during the transportation planning and decision-making processes. The PPP's public involvement process shall provide the following:

- Complete and accurate information to the public,
- Timely notices of public hearings,
- Complete access to all key decisions made at public hearings, and
- Continuing involvement of the public.

TABLE 3.1

Interested Parties for LRTP

INDIVIDUALS	AFFECTED PUBLIC AGENCIES
Representatives of people with disabilities	Representatives of users of pedestrian and bicycle transportation facilities
Representatives of public transportation employees	Representatives of users of public transportation
Freight shippers and providers of freight transportation services	Private providers of transportation, including intercity bus operators and employer-based commuting programs
Public ports	Other interested parties

Source: 23 CFR Section 450.324 (j)

Key population groups specifically referenced for engagement include the Title VI population, persons with a disability, the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) specific population, low income and high minority zone populations, and other traditionally underserved groups.

2. DMATS provides interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan. Good public participation techniques allow planners to identify issues and understand aspects of the transportation system they may have missed when considering a project from a purely technical or political point of view. Effective transportation planning must include the participation of people affected by transportation in their everyday lives, in how they are able to get to work, home, school, stores, and services.
3. DMATS makes draft and final plans readily available for public review in both physical copies and electronically accessible formats.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Engagement involves contacting representatives of the relevant stakeholders to confirm the status of existing and planned transportation facilities, changes in projects and plans, and completion of projects that DMATS can add to the existing facilities map.

DMATS staff contacted stakeholders to confirm the status of planned transportation projects, changes in projects and plans, and completion of projects to be added to the existing facilities map. DMATS staff shared the draft and final plans with a range of federal, state, regional and local stakeholders. Most stakeholders have representatives on the DMATS Policy Board and Tech Committee (see Table 3.2).

Community Engagement

Community Engagement is a coordinated effort of DMATS's regional outreach and local outreach by the regional planning agencies and the local governments with existing and planned transportation facilities. DMATS also coordinated regional outreach efforts with community partners, non-profit organizations, and advocacy groups listed in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 is a list of community engagement partners and resources that follows the federal requirements to provide interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan (see Table 3.1). These partners and resources are in and/or provide services to the DMATS area. Most are in the City of Dubuque or Dubuque County, Iowa, unless noted otherwise.

TABLE 3.2

DMATS LRTP Stakeholders

FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (USDOT)	POLICY	TECH
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin Division Offices		
Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin Regional Offices		
STATE DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION		
Iowa: IA DOT	X	X
Illinois: IL DOT	X	X
Wisconsin: WI DOT	X	X
REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES		
Iowa: East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA)	X	X
Illinois: Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC)		
Wisconsin: Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWWRPC)	X	X
COUNTY GOVERNMENTS		
Iowa: Dubuque County	X	X
Illinois: Jo Daviess County	X	X
Wisconsin: Grant County	X	X
CITY + TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENTS		
Iowa: City of Asbury	X	X
Iowa: City of Dubuque	X	X
Iowa: Small Cities (Centralia, Durango, Peosta, Sageville)	X	
Illinois: City of East Dubuque	X	X
Wisconsin: Jamestown Township		
PUBLIC TRANSIT AGENCIES		
Jule Public Transit	X	X
Regional Transit Authority (RTA)	X	X
Source: ECIA		

TABLE 3.3

DMATS LRTP Community Engagement Partners and Resources

ACCESSIBILITY/PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ADVISORY GROUPS	
Dubuque County Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)	
Dubuque County Disabilities Council	
Grant County Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC), WI	
The HOPE Foundation of Jo Daviess County, IL	
AIR TRANSPORTATION	
City of Dubuque Airport Commission	
Dubuque Regional Airport	
BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY GROUPS	
ARK Advocates	
Dubuque Bike Coop	
Dubuque Forward - Mobility Passion Team	
Dubuque Safe Routes to School (SRTS)	
Green Dubuque	
Tri-State Trail Vision	
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES	
Clarke University	
Loras College	
Northeast Iowa Community College, Dubuque and Peosta, IA	
University of Dubuque	
COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES	
Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP), IA	
Northwestern Illinois Community Action Agency (NICAA)	
Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program (SWCAP)	
COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS	
Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque	
Community Foundation of Jo Daviess County, IL	
Community Foundation of Southwest Wisconsin/Grant County, WI	
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS	
Café Latino Dubuque	
City of Dubuque Neighborhood Associations	
Dubuque Black Men Coalition	
Dubuque LGBTQ+ Resource Network	
Indian Association of Dubuque	
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Council #307	
LGBTQ+ Support Groups (Youth & Adult)	
Monsoon Asians & Pacific Islanders in Solidarity	

Multicultural Family Center (MFC)
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS
Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce
Dubuque Main Street LTD
Grant County Economic Development Corporation, WI
Greater Dubuque Development Corporation (GDDC)
Peosta Economic Development Corporation (PEDC)
Prosperity Eastern Iowa
Northwest Illinois Economic Development
EMPLOYER-BASED COMMUTING PROGRAMS
City of Dubuque: Downtown Business Shuttle (park and ride)
ECIA: RTA 8/Enterprise Vanpool Program
Jo Daviess County: Pace/RTA Tax-Free Commuter Benefits
PRIVATE INTERCITY BUS OPERATORS – DUBUQUE INTERMODAL CENTER
Megabus - Coach USA/Van Galder
Burlington Trailways
Greyhound
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS
Dubuque Community School District, Dubuque, IA
East Dubuque Unified School District, IL
Holy Family Catholic Schools, Dubuque, IA
Seton Catholic School, Peosta, IA
Southwestern Wisconsin School District
PUBLIC LIBRARIES
Brickl Memorial Library, Dickeyville, WI
Carnegie-Stout Public Library, Dubuque, IA
Dubuque County District Library, Asbury, IA
Dubuque County District Library in NICC, Peosta, IA
East Dubuque District Library, East Dubuque, IL
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION & TRANSIT ADVISORY GROUPS
Amtrak (National Railroad Passenger Corporation)
City of Dubuque: The Jule Public Transit
City of Dubuque Transit Advisory Board
DuRide, Dubuque, IA
ECIA: Regional Transit Authority 8 (RTA 8)
ECIA: RTA Corporate Policy Board
Jo Daviess Transit, IL

Ride the Rail (representing passenger rail system)
Southwest Transit Team (SWTT), WI
REGIONAL ADVISORY GROUPS
Dubuque Multi-Disciplinary Safety Team (MDST)
Ports of Eastern Iowa Authority (PEIA)
Providers of freight transportation services
Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission
REPRESENTATIVES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION EMPLOYEES
Teamsters Local 120 - Iowa Office
Dubuque Area Labor-Management Council
Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)
REPRESENTATIVES OF USERS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
City of Dubuque Transit Advisory Board
Dubuque Forward - Mobility Passion Team
ECIA: Community Solutions of Eastern Iowa (CSEI)
ECIA: RTA 8 Transit Action Group
TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS
Galena Country Tourism, IL
Grant County Tourism Council, WI
Grant Wood Mississippi River Region/Grant Wood Loop, IA
Travel Dubuque
VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS
Veteran's Café
Veterans Freedom Center
Veterans Assistance Program, Jo Daviess County, IL
Veterans Service Office, Grant County, WI
Veterans Services, Dubuque County, IA

Source: ECIA

Engagement Techniques

Utilizing various techniques to solicit public involvement has proven to be the most effective means by which to attract public input. DMATS staff coordinated specific opportunities for meaningful community engagement such as:

- Share information at community outreach events.
- Provide presentations to community groups.
- Offer in-person, virtual and hybrid engagement options.
- Share information on websites and social media.
- Offer online input via project webpage on DMATS website.
- Solicit online input through a regional community survey.
- Offer online and in-person input at public meetings on draft plan.
- Offer online and in-person input at public hearings on final plan.

Project Webpage

The Project Webpage for the 2055 DMATS LRTP serves as a dedicated digital hub to inform and engage stakeholders and community members. It is available at https://eciatrans.org/dmats_lrtp_2055/index.php. It provides an online opportunity for the public to learn more about DMATS, the plan development process, complete a survey, and use the comment form to provide feedback on the draft chapters.

Facebook Posts

The ECIA Facebook page serves as a social media resource to inform and engage stakeholders and community members about opportunities for public input, such as the project webpage, the online survey and project events (see Figure 3.2).

DMATS LRTP Marketing Materials

DMATS staff created marketing materials to facilitate information sharing about and community engagement in the 2025 DMATS LRTP planning process, the community survey, and at events. DMATS distributed marketing materials with media releases and group emails, provided at meeting and events, and posted on websites, social media, and locations in the region. See Figure 3.3 for examples of these marketing materials.



FIGURE 3.2

Facebook Post
Source: ECIA

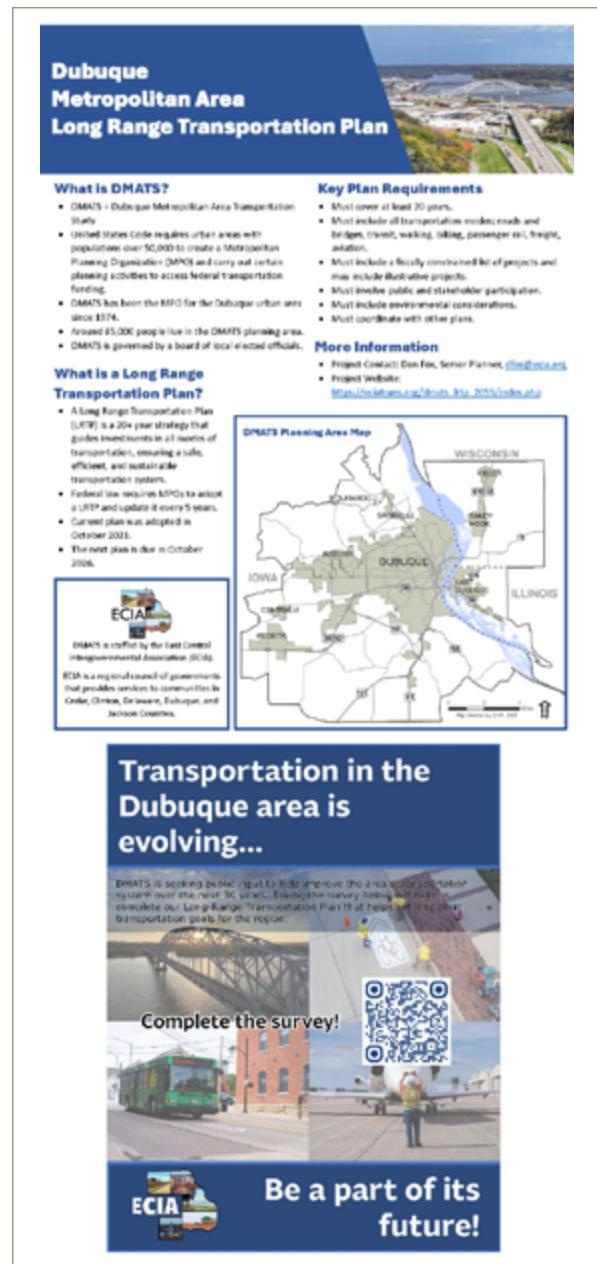


FIGURE 3.3

Examples of DMATS LRTP Marketing Materials
Source: ECIA

Community Meetings and Events

DMATS staff encouraged public involvement at scheduled meetings with community partners and organizations, such as presentations to Ride the Rail, Dubuque Safe Routes to School, North End Neighborhood Association, and Tri-State Trail Vision. DMATS staff also engaged the public at scheduled community events such as local farmers markets.

Dubuque Farmers Market

The Dubuque Farmers Market is open every Saturday morning from the first weekend in May through the last weekend in October in downtown Dubuque.

DMATS staff set up a DMATS LRTP booth at the Dubuque Farmers Market on September 13, 2025. They talked with market shoppers, distributed survey flyers, and collected 156 votes on how to improve transportation in the Dubuque area (see Figure 3.5).

The highest-rated improvement method was More safe walking and biking options with 42 votes. Comments received were for More bike lanes, and 32nd + Carter safety issues.

Top-rated methods to improve transportation were:

- Better public transit service -- 28 votes. Comments recommended Paratransit service for people with disabilities and seniors.
- Fixing and improving roads and bridges -- 27 votes.
- Support jobs and local businesses -- 22 votes.
- Other -- 20 votes. Comments: No more red left turn arrows at lights, PAT RR, Wildlife overpasses to reduce deer impacts, and Train overpass for 16th and/or 9th/11th Street crossing,

Other lower-rated methods were: Fewer crashes and safer travel -- 9 votes, and Less traffic and faster travel -- 8 votes.



FIGURE 9.4

Community Engagement Event at the Dubuque Farmer's Market
Source: ECIA

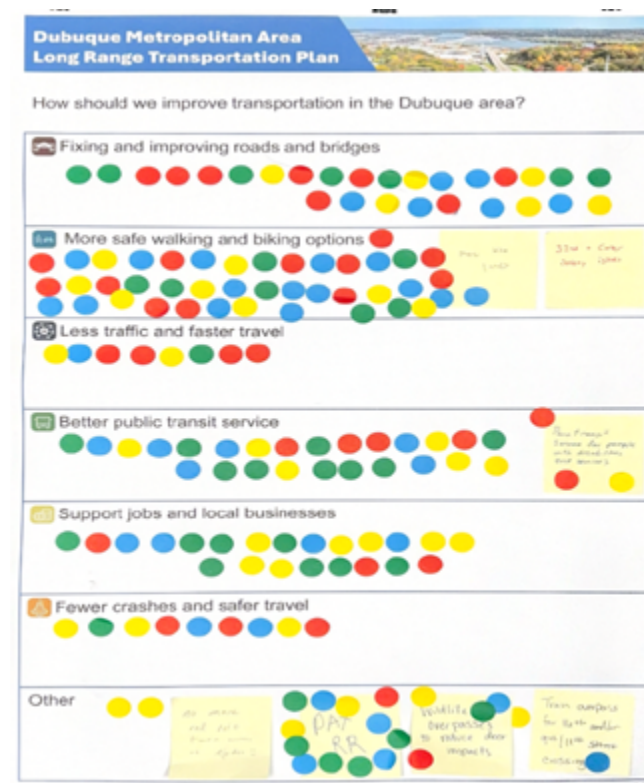


FIGURE 3.5

DMATS LRTP Dot Voting
Source: ECIA

DMATS Public Meetings and Public Hearings

The DMATS Policy Board and Technical Committee hold periodic public meetings on the draft LRTP throughout the transportation planning and decision-making processes. They also hold required public hearings for the final LRTP in accordance with federal requirements. Following the plan's adoption, DMATS Policy will hold public hearings prior to adopting any amendments. Meetings and hearings are open to the public via in-person and virtual attendance. Agendas and minutes are available in physical copies and electronic formats on the DMATS website. DMATS publishes notices of public meetings and hearings in local newspapers and posts them on the DMATS website.

DMATS LRTP Community Survey

To create a plan that accurately reflects the needs of the region, DMATS sought input from the people that live, work, or travel in the region with a survey. DMATS staff launched the DMATS LRTP Community Survey online via the project webpage on May 28, 2025. DMATS sent a media release and a project flyer with a QR code (see Figure 3.6) to area media, DMATS board and committee members, stakeholders, community partners, and the public. DMATS also marketed the survey and LRTP through emails and posting on the project webpage and Facebook page.

The survey's purpose was to gather public input to inform the 2055 DMATS LRTP.



FIGURE 3.6

DMATS LRTP Community Survey Flyer

Source: ECIA

Overall Takeaways

Overall takeaways of the DMATS LRTP community survey results are below.

- Residents feel safe and find road conditions acceptable, but see congestion, access, and multi-modal gaps as growing concerns.
- Strong interest in passenger rail and better walking/biking infrastructure, despite continued reliance on personal vehicles.
- Air service dissatisfaction stands out as one of the clearest weaknesses in the regional system.
- Future investments are expected to focus on maintaining existing infrastructure, improving safety, and reducing congestion, rather than expanding entirely new systems.

Existing Conditions

The survey asked respondents to relate their level of satisfaction with the operation and planning of the region's transportation system. Table 3.4 presents the key findings regarding satisfaction with existing conditions of the transportation network.

TABLE 3.4

DMATS LRTP Survey: Satisfaction with Existing Conditions

TOPIC	LEVEL OF SATISFACTION
Roads & Safety	A majority feel roads and highways are maintained adequately, and over 55% agree the system is safe.
Congestion	Over 58% agree congestion on major roadways is a problem.
Walking & Biking	More respondents disagree than agree that walking and biking infrastructure is adequate.
Public Transit	Opinions are mixed; many respondents are neutral or unsure if current bus service meets residents' needs.
Air Service	Strong dissatisfaction with commercial air service at Dubuque Regional Airport (over 60% disagree it meets regional needs).
Passenger Rail	Strong support for passenger rail connections to other cities, including Chicago.
Access to Resources	Many respondents are unsure or disagree that transportation resources are distributed fairly across the region.
Rail Impacts	Waiting at rail crossings and transportation noise negatively affect travel and quality of life for many respondents.

Source: ECIA

System Quality

The survey asked respondents to share their level of satisfaction with the quality of 10 elements of the regional transportation system across a range of travel modes.

The Highest-rated elements were:

- Travel time,
- Safety,
- Traffic signs and signals, and
- Walking and biking trails (more positive than on-road bike routes).

In comparison, the Lowest-rated elements were:

- Commercial air service (majority rated it “poor”),
- On-road bicycle routes, and
- Public Transportation (Bus service) received neutral to negative ratings, with a significant “not sure” response.

Figure 3.7 charts the system quality ratings for the regional transportation network.

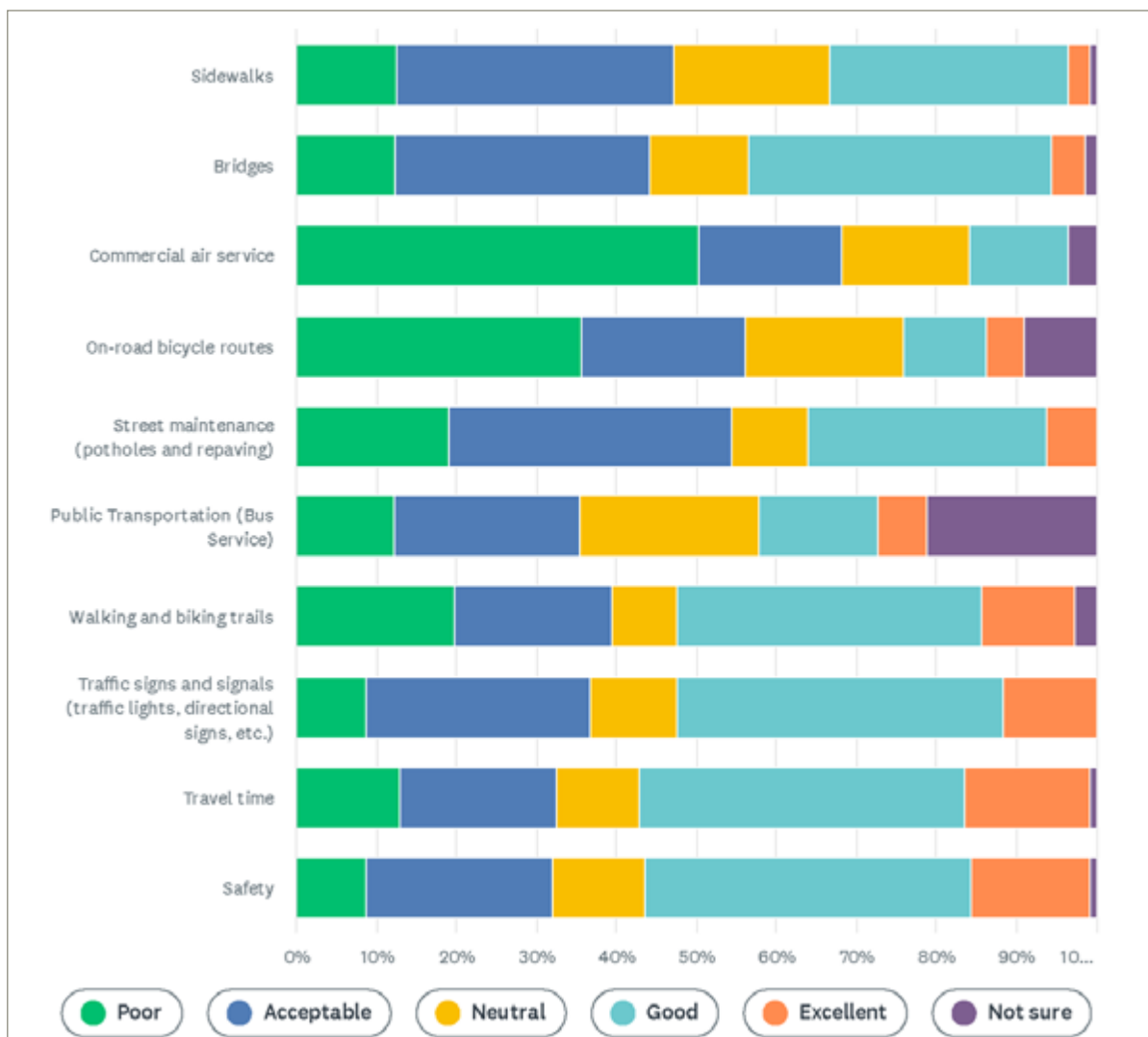


FIGURE 3.7

DMATS LRTP Survey: System Quality Ratings

Source: ECIA

Future Issues

The survey asked respondents: Which of the following considerations would you want your elected representatives to give most weight to when choosing transportation projects to fund? When ranking what should matter most in future transportation investments, respondents emphasized these Top priorities overall:

1. Rising cost of maintaining roads and infrastructure.
2. Transportation safety.
3. Traffic congestion, delays, and efficiency.
4. Promoting economic development.
5. Improving walkability and bike ability.

Passenger rail to Chicago ranked mid-level, indicating interest but not the top concern compared to core system needs.

Respondents identified Lower priorities (but still important) as:

- Freight efficiency,
- Cultural and historic preservation, and
- Increasing truck traffic impacts.

Travel Behavior

The primary mode of transportation was the personal vehicle at about 95%. Statistics for the past month's usage indicate respondents also engaged in a significant percentage of walking, bicycling, and public transit use (see Figure 3.7).

Top factors influencing mode choice were Availability, Location, and Reliability. Cost was the least-cited factor.

Who Responded?

DMATS received 154 surveys. Not all respondents answered every question.

- Age: Mostly ages 35–64
- Income: Heavily skewed toward \$75,000+ household income
- Race: Predominantly White/Caucasian (about 99%)
- Disability: About 11% report a disability personally or in their household.

The 2026 DMATS LRTP community survey results are included in Appendix A.

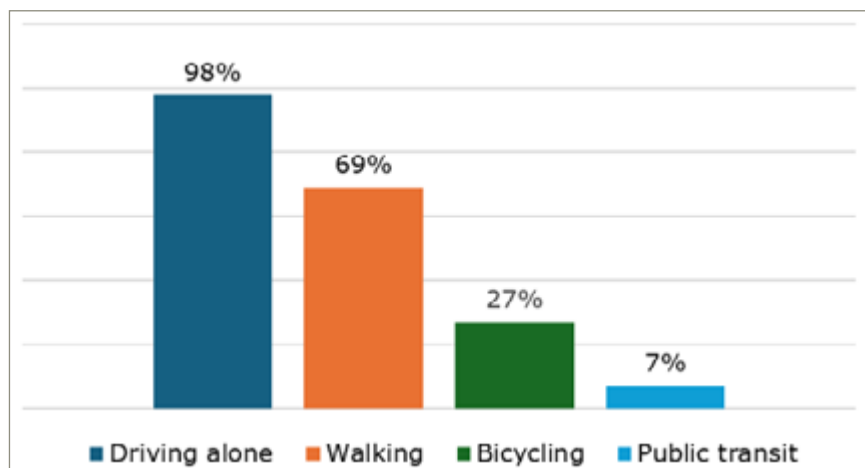


FIGURE 3.8

DMATS LRTP Survey: Travel Mode Usage for Past Month
Source: ECIA

Where Do They Live?

Of the 154 surveys received, 133 (86%) included a zip code for the respondent. About 56% of the 133 respondents who provided a zip code were from Dubuque zip codes 52001 and 52003. About 24% were from zip code 52002 which includes Asbury and Dubuque.

Figure 3.9 maps the distribution of respondents by zip code within the DMATS boundary. Survey respondents from outside the DMATS boundary resided in communities in Dubuque and Jackson Counties in Iowa and Grant County, Wisconsin.

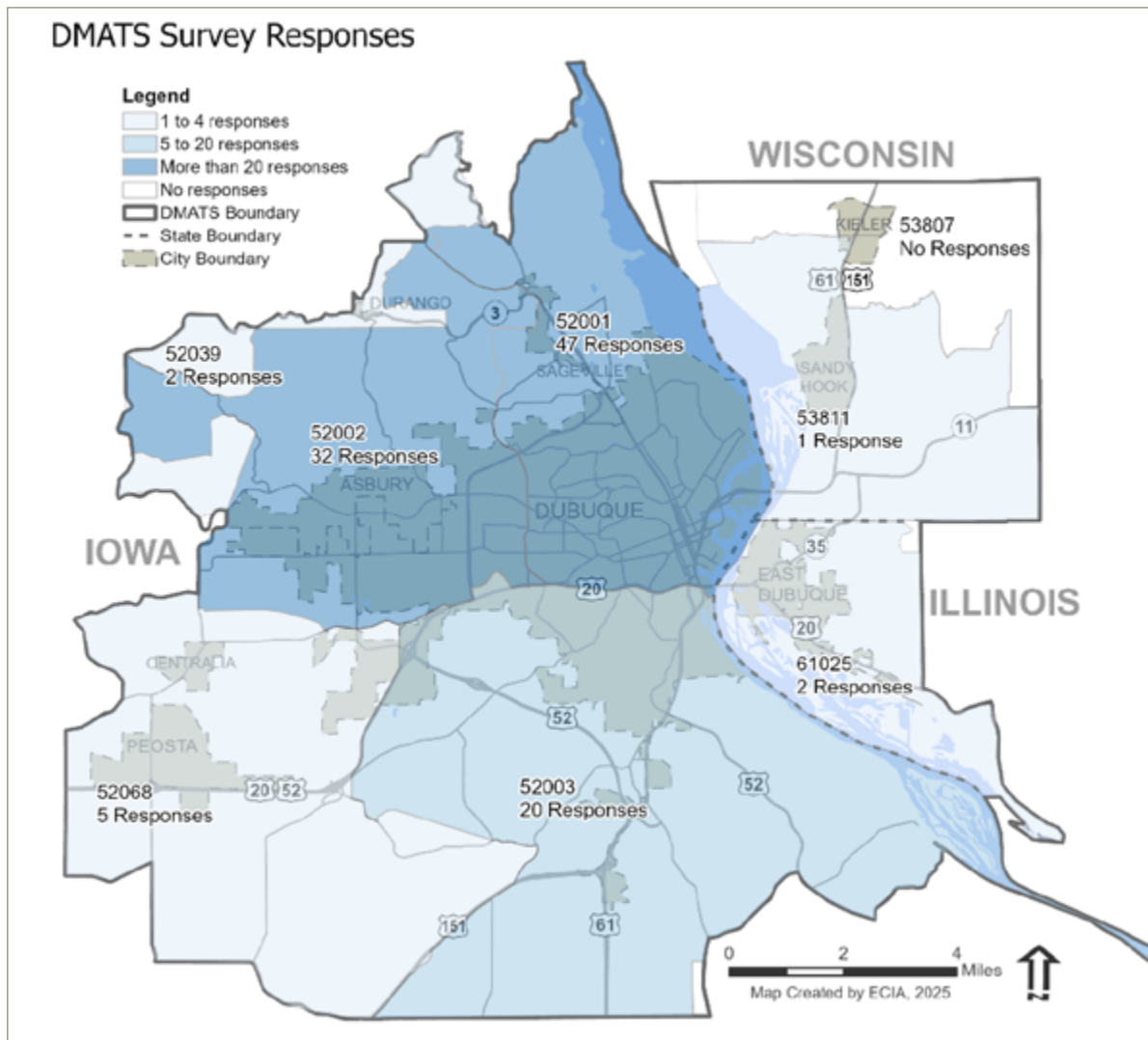


FIGURE 3.9

DMATS LRTP Survey Responses by Zip Code

Source: ECIA

Other Community Surveys

Other community surveys launched after the adoption of the 2045 DMATS LRTP in 2021 provide additional information about the transportation network for the 2055 DMATS LRTP.

2022 Disabilities and Mental Health Survey

In 2022, the Dubuque County Disabilities Council conducted a Disabilities and Mental Health Survey. They received responses from 144 participants. The survey captured lived experiences of people with disabilities, mental health conditions, family members, caregivers, and service providers in Dubuque County. It examined access, services, community life, and priorities for improvement. Transportation, mental health care, housing, staffing shortages, and stigma were the most pressing barriers to full participation and quality of life.

Transportation: A Major Barrier

Transportation emerged as one of the most consistent, urgent, and widely shared concerns among survey respondents, cutting across disability types, ages, and geographic areas in Dubuque County (see Table 3.5).

Survey respondents clearly indicated that without reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation, they can make limited progress in employment, healthcare, housing, and community participation. Transportation is not a standalone issue, it is a foundational support that affects many aspects of life for people with disabilities in Dubuque County.

Who Responded?

- Primarily women
- Overwhelmingly White/Caucasian
- Spread across adult age groups, with strong representation of ages 25–64.
- Most respondents completed the survey for themselves (about 87%), with others assisting someone else.

The 2022 Disabilities and Mental Health Survey results are online at:

<https://www.dubuquecountyiowa.gov/303/Dubuque-County-Disabilities-Council>.

TABLE 3.5

Disabilities + Mental Health Survey: Transportation Concerns

TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS INCLUDED	TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS IMPACTED
Limited bus routes and schedules (especially evenings, weekends, and rural areas)	Employment
High cost of taxis or specialized transportation	Healthcare access
Long wait times	Social participation
Inaccessibility for people with mobility or seizure-related conditions.	Independence

Dubuque Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Survey

In 2022, the ECIA and the Project Steering Committee for the Dubuque Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Plan launched an online community survey. The survey helped identify the transportation issues that are important to people and community partners in the region. ECIA received a total of 309 valid surveys.

Existing Network

There were higher rates of dissatisfaction with network operation and funding. Satisfaction with network planning was more widespread.

- Adequate infrastructure for walking and biking: 78% disagree/strongly disagree.
- Adequate planning for future network expansion: 20% strongly agree/agree, 46% disagree/strongly disagree, and 34% neutral/don't know.
- Adequate funding for existing and planned network facilities: 61% disagree/strongly disagree.

Network Quality

The respondents rated the quality of Sidewalks as good or acceptable (60%), but remaining network elements often rated as poor (see Table 3.6).

Who Responded?

- Age: Mostly ages 35–64
- Income: Heavily skewed toward \$75,000+ household income
- Race: Predominantly White/Caucasian (about 94%)
- Disability: About 8% reported a disability personally or in their household

The 2022 Dubuque Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Plan Survey results are online at: <https://eciatrans.org/bikepedestrianplan.php>.

TABLE 3.6

Regional Bike + Ped Survey: Network Quality Ratings

NETWORK ELEMENT	GOOD/ACCEPTABLE	POOR
Sidewalks	60%	2%
Connections with public transit (Jule and RTA)	27%	24%
Connections to schools, work, shopping, services	20%	65%
Bike + pedestrian safety	29%	58%
Bike + pedestrian traffic signs, crosswalks, signals	39%	47%
On-road bicycle routes	14%	70%
Walking and biking trails	47%	36%

Engagement Outcomes

The community and stakeholder engagement efforts conducted for the DMATS 2055 Long Range Transportation Plan demonstrate a strong commitment to transparency, openness, and meaningful public participation in the planning process. Through a combination of stakeholder coordination, community partnerships, outreach events, public meetings, digital engagement tools, and surveys, DMATS has ensured that a wide range of perspectives informed the planning process. Input gathered through these efforts highlighted key priorities, including maintaining existing infrastructure, improving safety, addressing congestion, and expanding multimodal options.

Importantly, the engagement process reinforced the role of transportation as a critical factor in access to employment, healthcare, and overall quality of life. By integrating public input into plan development, DMATS is better positioned to deliver a transportation system that reflects the region's evolving needs and values. Continued engagement will remain essential as the LRTP is implemented, ensuring that future decisions remain responsive and grounded in the lived experiences of the communities served.