

# FARGO

## Transportation Plan

### FOUNDATIONS REPORT

PREPARED FOR **FARGO-MOORHEAD METROPOLITAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS AND CITY OF FARGO**

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# INTRODUCTION

The Fargo Transportation Plan builds on previous planning efforts to define a comprehensive transportation vision for the City of Fargo. While previous plans have provided limited transportation guidance, the city's rapid growth, accelerating development, and changing transportation needs have created a need for a more detailed plan.

The Fargo Transportation Plan will establish the framework that ensures every future transportation project builds a more sustainable, healthy, and economically vibrant community.

**The plan will provide the City of Fargo with the following tools:**

**A Roadway Master Plan to guide future street design and improvements throughout the city;**

**A Policy Modernization Package to simplify current processes, align policies with the community's goals, and integrate updated land use guidance; and**

**An Implementation Guidebook that will make the Plan's recommendations actionable.**

This Foundations Report is the first step of that process. This document reviews previous relevant planning processes that have shaped the City's transportation vision to this point, establishes a set of goals for the Transportation Plan, and identifies key policy challenges. The report also includes a multimodal needs assessment, which defines the key physical barriers and opportunities related to physical infrastructure.

The Fargo Transportation Plan is a joint effort of the City of Fargo and the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments (Metro COG) and is led by a coalition of staff from Metro COG and the City of Fargo Planning, Engineering, and Public Works Departments.

# FARGO AT-A-GLANCE

Understanding the existing demographic and travel patterns in Fargo is an essential input to guide recommendations for the future of Fargo's transportation network. The Transportation Plan needs to ensure that both the existing and future population, land development patterns, major employers and destinations needs are met through strategic long-term investments.

## CONTINUED GROWTH

Fargo is a growing city. As of 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Fargo had a population of 124,662, up from 105,600 in 2010. That's an 18% increase in just nine years.

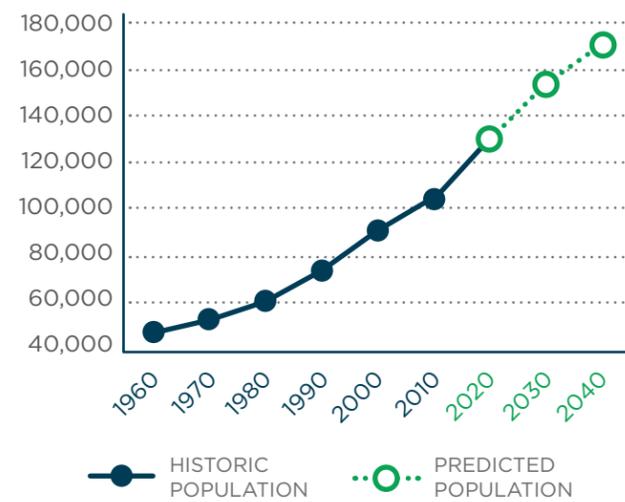
Metro COG develops demographic forecasts for the Fargo-Moorhead region and released its most recent Demographic Forecast Study in 2017. This report provides forecasts for the city from 2015 to 2045 (Figure 1). Since these forecasts were published, the Census Bureau has released observed data from 2018 and 2019.

Metro COG projects the following growth for Fargo between 2020 and 2045:

- +37% POPULATION**
- +28% HOUSEHOLDS**
- +27% EMPLOYMENT**

This level of growth will substantially increase transportation demand. The City is also heavily impacted by continued growth throughout the metro area, specifically in West Fargo and Moorhead. Since Fargo is a major employment center, growth in these areas will create increased commuting demand. The City must begin planning now to accommodate the needs of current and future residents and workers.

**HISTORIC AND PREDICTED POPULATION**



**Figure 1: Demographic Projections for Fargo;**  
Sources: Metro COG (Projected data),  
U.S. Census Bureau (Observed data)<sup>1</sup>

### DEMOGRAPHIC DASHBOARD <sup>2</sup>

**15.3 MINUTES**  
MEAN COMMUTE  
TIME FOR WORKERS

**97.7%**  
HOUSEHOLDS  
WITH ACCESS  
TO A VEHICLE

**6.5%**  
POPULATION  
IDENTIFYING AS  
HAVING A DISABILITY

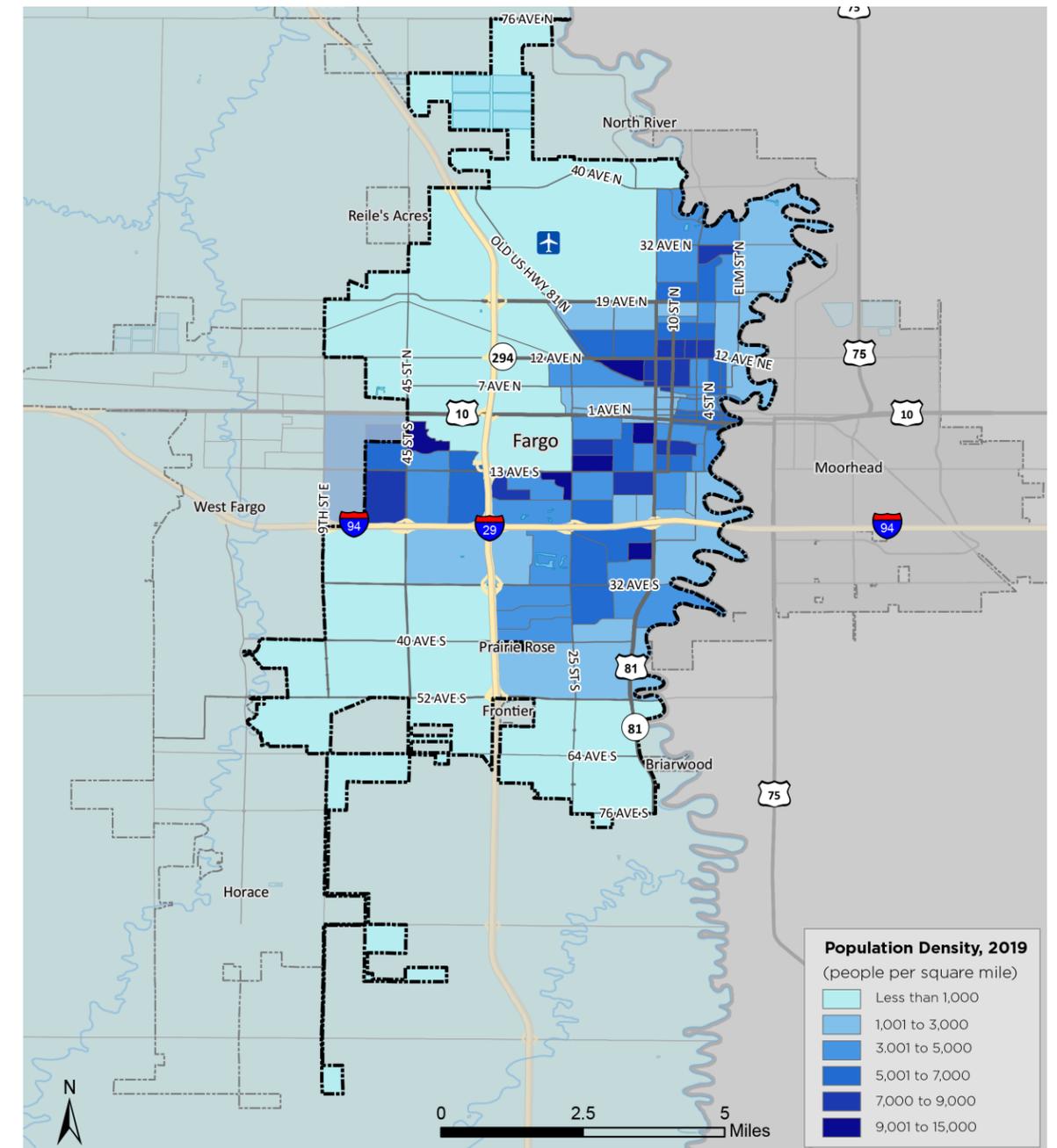
**\$55,551**  
MEDIAN  
HOUSEHOLD  
INCOME

**13.2%**  
POVERTY  
RATE

<sup>1</sup> Projection data represents the "Most Likely" scenarios  
<sup>2</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates

## Population Density

As of 2019, Fargo's overall population density was 2,612 people per square mile. The map in Figure 2 represents Fargo's population density as of 2019 by Census Block Groups. Population density is highest on the eastern side of Fargo, with the densest clusters near downtown. Density is also relatively higher along the Interstate 94 corridor across the city. The north and south sides of the city have the lowest population densities. Higher population density typically correlates with increased transportation demand and congestion.



**Figure 2 Population Density by Block Group, 2019;** Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Population Shifts**

The map in Figure 3 represents changes to Fargo's population density between 2010 and 2019 at the block group level. Despite having some of the highest population densities in the city as of 2019, many block groups in eastern Fargo experienced a decline in population density over the decade. Many other block groups in this area maintained a consistent density during this period.

The southwestern portion of the city experienced the most growth in population density during this period. The farthest southwestern areas of the city continue to have very low population densities, despite the growth between 2010 and 2019. The growth along the Interstate 94 corridor is notable since that is one of the city's denser areas today.

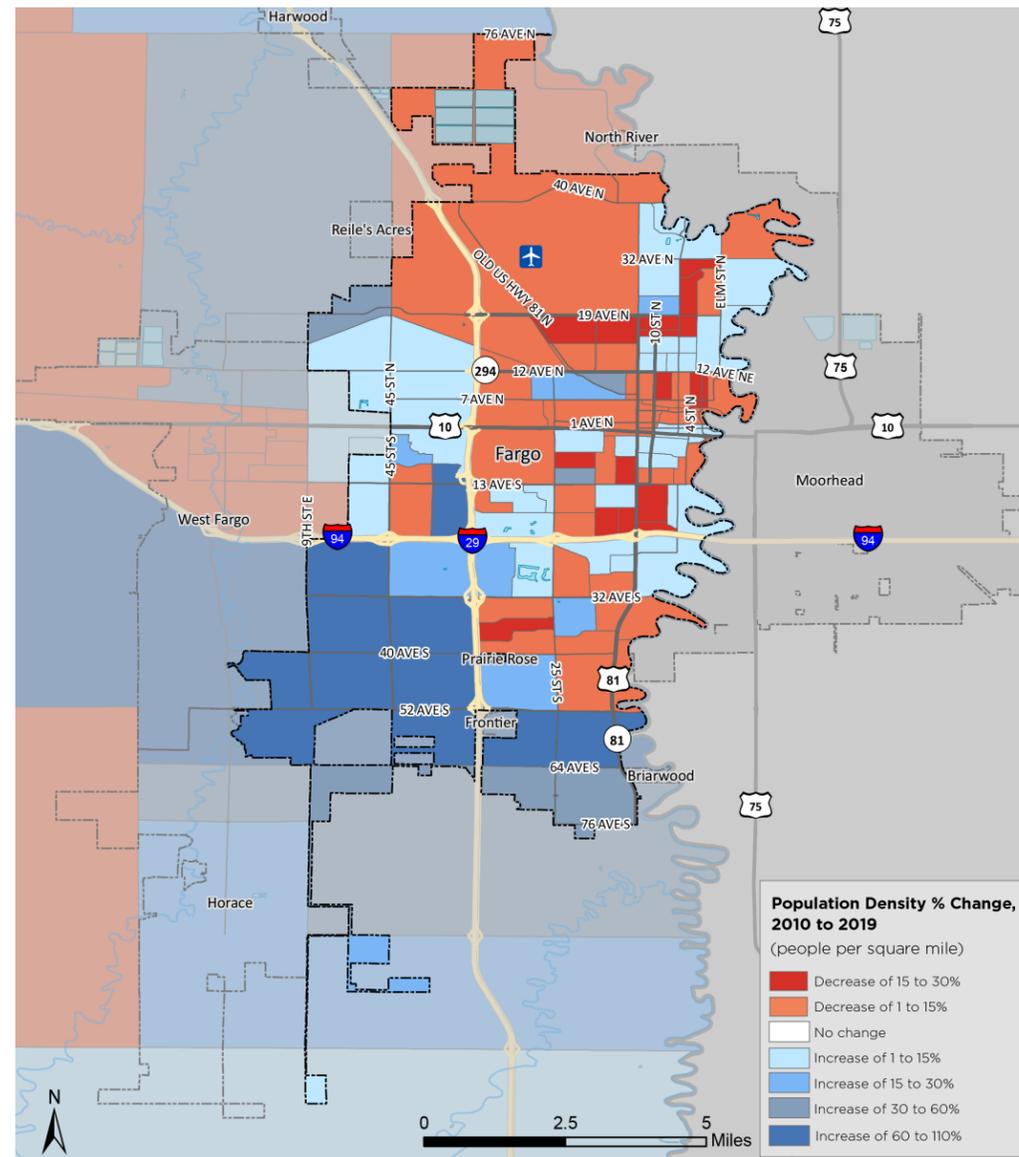


Figure 3 Change in Population Density by Block Group, 2010 to 2019; Source: U.S. Census Bureau

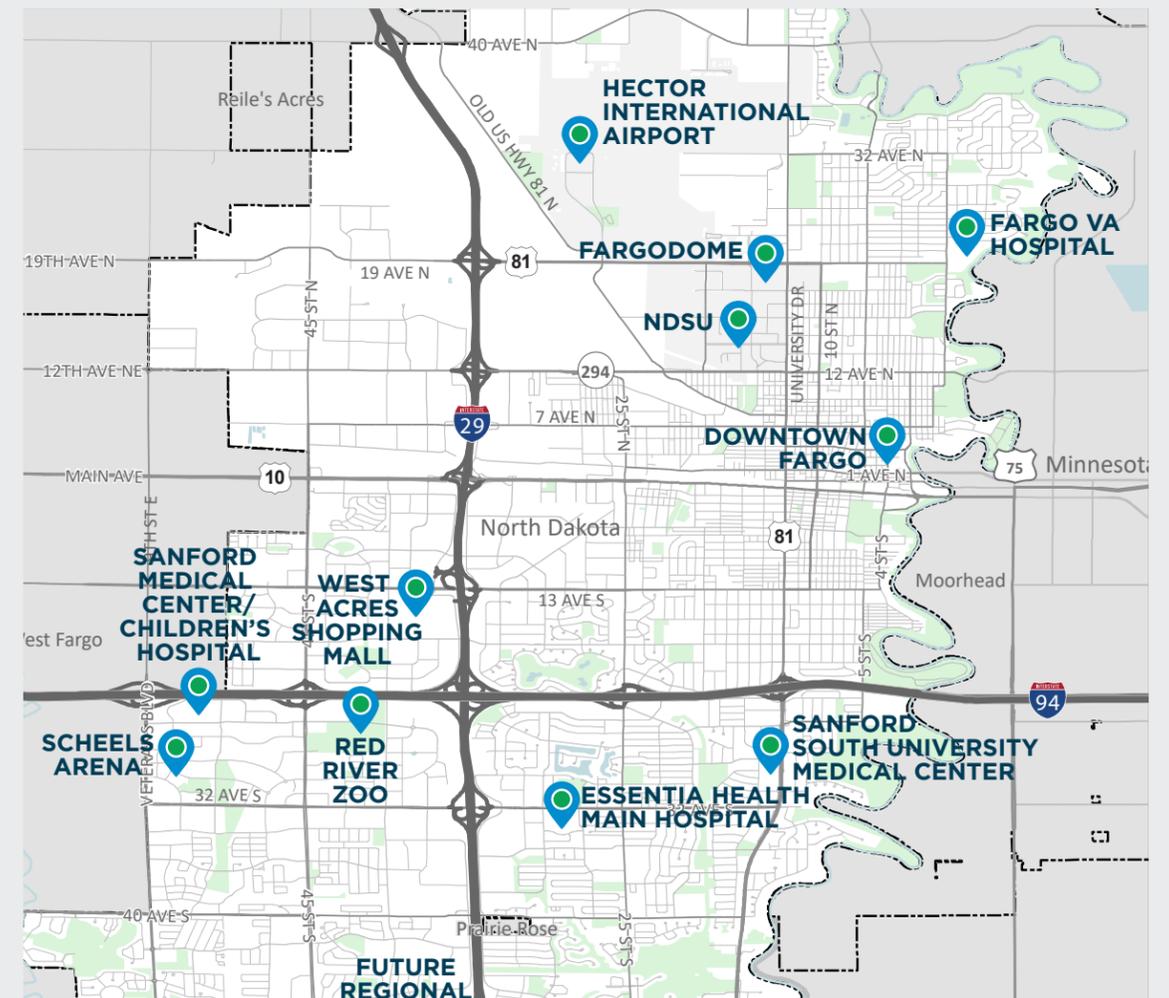
**KEY DESTINATIONS**

Key destinations in the city include North Dakota State University, downtown Fargo, FARGODOME (a stadium that hosts concerts, sporting events, and other events), and the Hector International Airport. Downtown Fargo serves as a major employment center and entertainment destination, and commercial development along 46th Street S and 13th Avenue S in western Fargo also serve as major daily destinations.

Table 1 Fargo-Moorhead Top 5 Fargo Employers

| EMPLOYER                             | # OF EMPLOYEES |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Sanford Health                       | 9,349          |
| North Dakota State University        | 4,159          |
| Essentia Health                      | 2,690          |
| Fargo Public Schools, District No. 1 | 1,860          |
| U.S. Bank                            | 1,213          |

Source: Fargo-Moorhead/West Fargo Chamber of Commerce



## COMMUTE PATTERNS

Fargo is a major employment center in the Fargo-Moorhead region. As of 2018, 98,554 people were employed in the City of Fargo. Commuting patterns in the region have been assessed to understand mode share, inflow/outflow patterns, and the destinations and directions traveled by commuters.

### Mode Share

Most Fargo residents commute alone by car, truck, or van (Figure 4). Between 2010 and 2019, the mode share for driving alone remained constant (around 84%), working from home increased notably, carpooling increased slightly, and use of public transit, walking, and other modes like taxis and biking decreased.

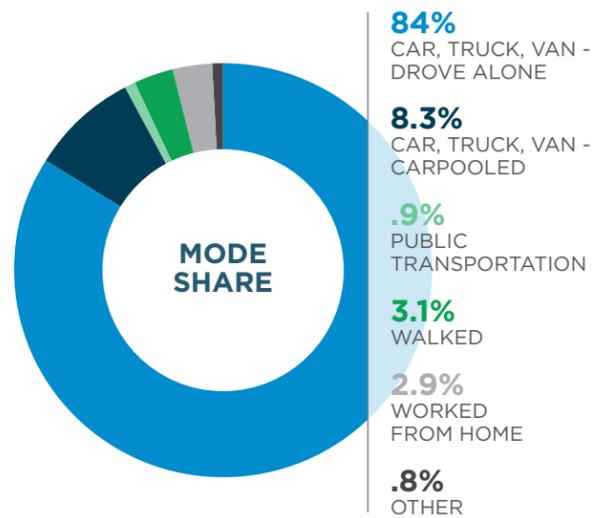


Figure 4 Fargo Mode Share (2019); Source: U.S Census Bureau

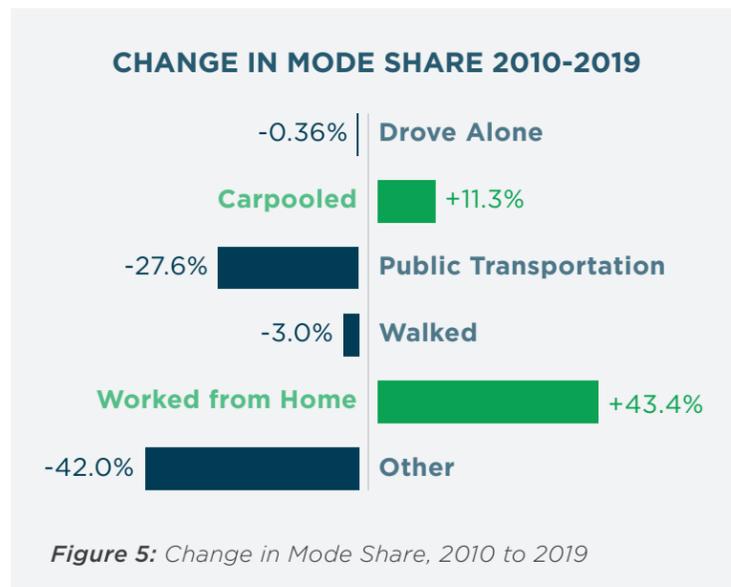


Figure 5: Change in Mode Share, 2010 to 2019

### Inflow and Outflow Patterns

Of the 98,554 people who were employed in Fargo as of 2018, 54.2% commuted in from outside of Fargo. Most Fargo residents work within the city, with only 29.2% of residents employed outside of Fargo. In the Fargo-Moorhead region overall, most commuters travel north from home to their work. Most commuters have less than a ten-mile commute.



Figure 6: Fargo Inflow and Outflow Commuting Patterns (2018); Source: On The Map

### Destination/Direction Analysis

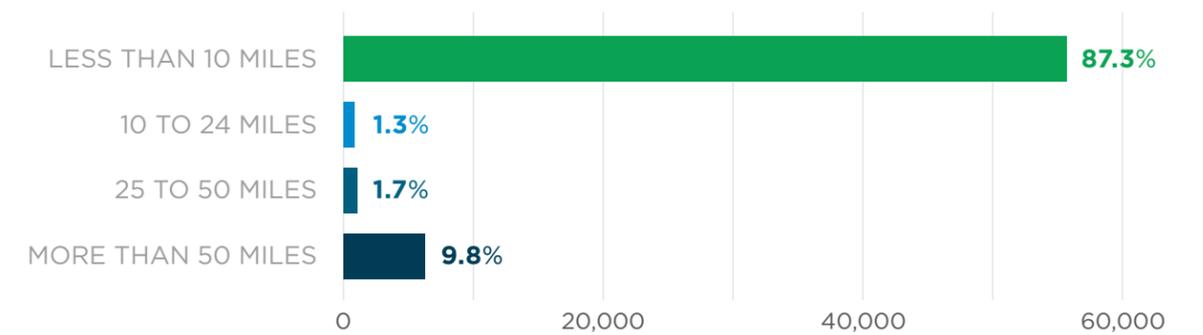


Figure 7 Fargo-Moorhead Region: Direction/Distance Traveled from Home to Work; Source: On The Map

The map in Figure 8 shows employment concentrations within the City of Fargo. Jobs are generally concentrated in downtown Fargo, on the NDSU campus, and in the commercial areas on the western side of Fargo along Interstates 94 and 29.

Figure 9 shows the home locations of commuters living and working in Fargo. Commuters' homes are spread across the residential areas of the city, with many of the highest nodes in southern and western Fargo. Very few commuters come from the northwestern area of the city, which is mostly industrial.

Because residents and jobs are often located within close proximity to one another, Fargo workers typically have short commutes, with 87% of workers commuting less than 10 miles. This means that alternate modes of transportation, such as biking and transit, may be especially attractive to a large portion of commuters.

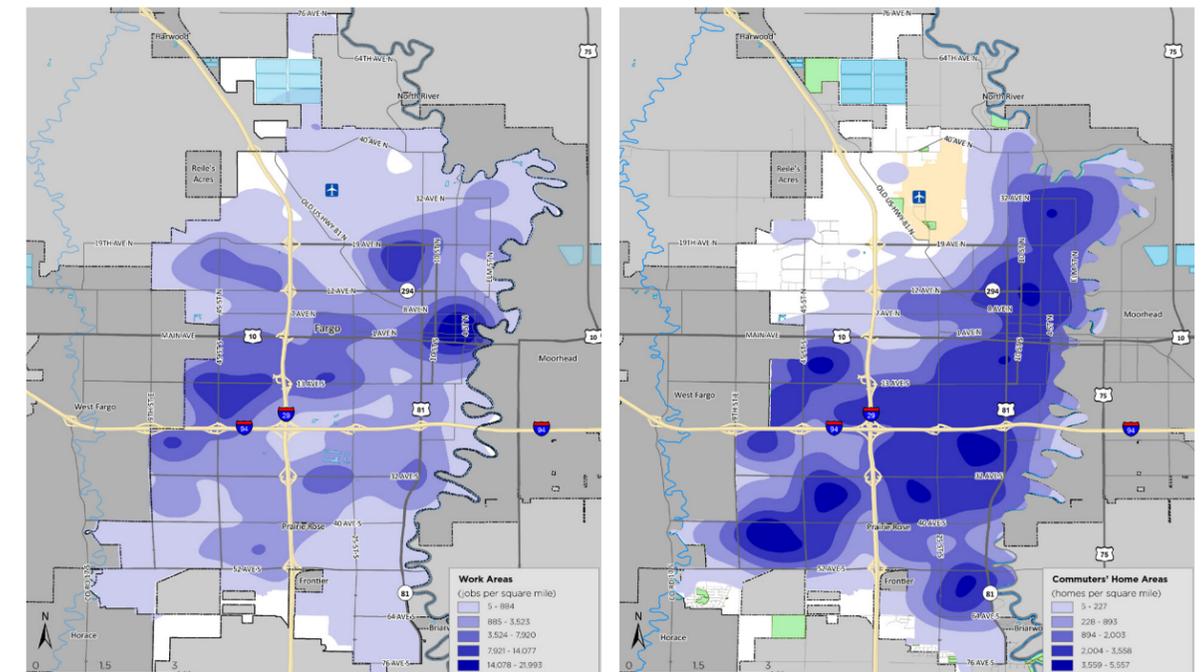


Figure 8 Concentrations of Employment in Fargo (2018); Source: On The Map

Figure 9 Concentrations of Commuters' Homes in Fargo (2018); Source: On The Map

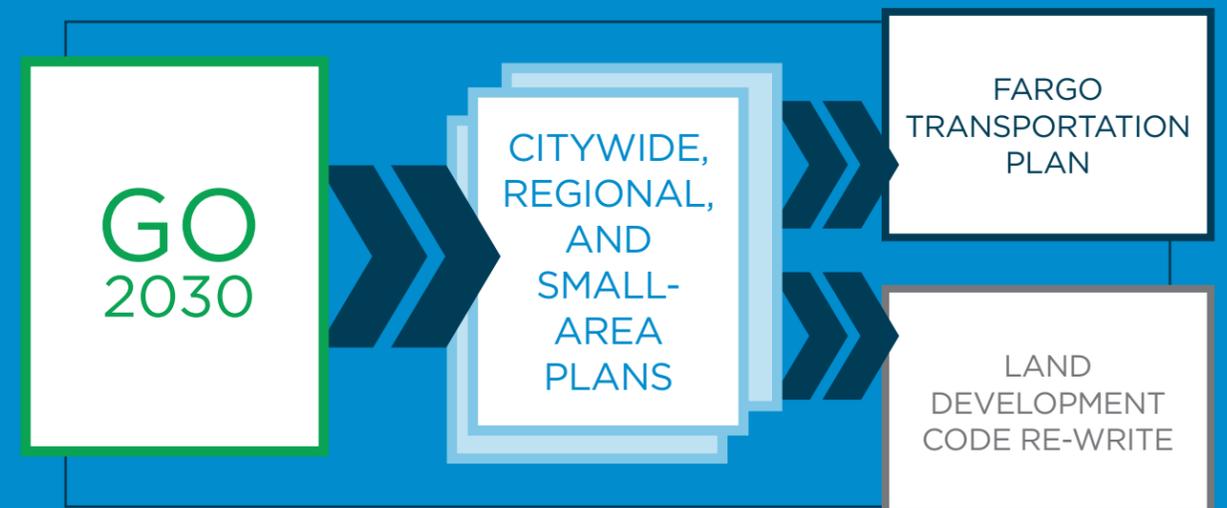


# PLANNING CONTEXT

In 2012, the City of Fargo adopted its most recent comprehensive plan, Go2030. That document established a high-level transportation vision for the City, including defining several key initiatives. That plan gained broad agreement and is generally regarded as defining the City’s vision for future development. While the transportation chapter highlighted several catalytic opportunities, the City could benefit from a more detailed plan of action that aligns expectations for growth and development with investments in transportation and mobility.

In 2020, the City also completed a Land Development Code diagnostic as part of the multi-year process to modernize the city’s land use practices. The Land Development Code rewrite will follow in 2022, creating a unique opportunity for the Transportation Plan to inform the city’s approach to land use.

In the interim, many citywide, regional, and small-area plans have expanded on the goals set forth in Go 2030. This plan seeks to compile and build on those recommendations, as well as establish a sustainable framework to link land use and transportation in the city in the coming decades.



## GO2030 (2012)

The City of Fargo adopted the Go2030 Fargo Comprehensive Plan in May 2012 as the City's official policy for the future growth and development through 2030. The plan's chapter on Transportation is a key input for the Fargo Transportation Plan.



### Vision & Goals

Go2030 articulates the following vision statement based on community input, "In 2030, Fargo will be a vibrant and sustainable city with a high quality of life, robust economy, and welcoming community atmosphere."

The guiding principle for the Transportation aspects of the plan is, "Fargo will transform its transportation system to encourage walking, biking, and transit. The City will coordinate infrastructure investments and land use policy in a supportive and synergistic way."

### Recommendations or Outcomes

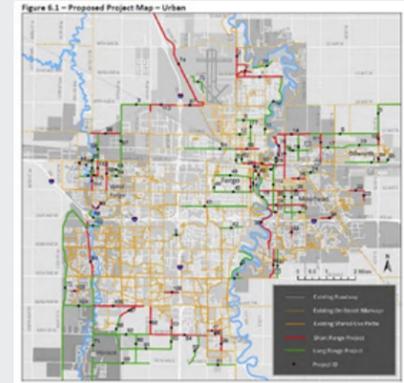
Go2030 defines eight catalysts for the City, with are ideas that have potential to accelerate development and enhance quality-of-life. Four of these eight catalysts are related to transportation. They include: Walkable Mixed-use Centers, Signature Streets, Active Living Streets, and All-Season City-Wide Trail Loop.

The plan also recommends various initiatives to advance its vision. Initiatives directly relevant to transportation include bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure, Complete Streets, transit improvements, clear and attractive access to downtown, transportation linkages across the Red River, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), and parking. Each initiative is accompanied by multiple recommendations. A few of these recommendations are:

- › **Bicycle/Pedestrian Infrastructure** - Continue to identify existing and future roadways for the placement of on-street bicycle lanes and share-the-road designations.
- › **Complete Streets** - Creatively apply engineering, planning, and urban design principles to transform Fargo's roadway network with a continuous and connected network of complete streets.
- › **Transit Improvements** - Ensure that walkable mixed-use centers are easily served by transit, that the physical form accommodates buses, and that pedestrian and bicycle routes lead to transit stops. Transit improvements are an integral part of redevelopment plans for walkable mixed-use centers.
- › **Clear and Attractive Access to Downtown** - Use the Main Ave corridor study to examine corridor land use patterns, redevelopment, corridor identify, signature street characteristics, and wayfinding opportunities that would improve this corridor as a gateway to downtown.
- › **Transportation Linkages Across the Red River** - Designate corridors for future river crossings and begin the process of acquiring right-of-way.
- › **ITS** - Incorporate ITS features into roadway improvements projects throughout the city to create a seamless system of monitoring and improving safety and efficiency through the transportation system.
- › **Parking** - Explore creative parking strategies such as shared parking between daytime and nighttime uses.

## FARGO-MOORHEAD METROPOLITAN BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN (2017)

Metro COG adopted the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in February 2017. This plan is a sub-element of Metro COG's Long-Range Transportation Plan, which is updated every five years and has a 20-year planning horizon. The purpose of this plan is to identify issues related to walking and biking and to develop goals, objectives, and recommendations to enhance bicycle and pedestrian facilities and safety for all users.



### Vision & Goals

The study's plan's Study Review Committee developed the following goals based on an in-depth study of existing system conditions and a public engagement process:

- › Improve connectivity of the regional bicycle and pedestrian network
- › Continue/increase maintenance efforts on regional bicycle and pedestrian network
- › Improve safety of the regional bike and pedestrian network
- › Educate motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists regarding rules of the road and safety
- › Promote bicycle and pedestrian modes of travel for both recreation and transportation purposes
- › Improve bikeability and walkability within region
- › Encourage on-going enforcement of motorists, bike users, and ped laws to create a safer transportation network
- › Promote safety throughout the region's bicycle and pedestrian network
- › Provide support for existing and proposed laws
- › Evaluate usage of regional bike and pedestrian network
- › Ensure equal bike and pedestrian opportunities for all

### Recommendations or Outcomes

The plan proposed a wide variety of initiatives and policies, along with specific project recommendations. Specific project recommendations included 21 short-range facilities and 31 long-range projects within the City of Fargo. The overall prioritized recommendations include:

|   |  |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <b>PRIORITY 1</b><br>Increased Bicycle and Motorist Education | <b>PRIORITY 2</b><br>Improve Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety | <b>PRIORITY 3</b><br>Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Improvements | <b>PRIORITY 4</b><br>Improved Maintenance | <b>PRIORITY 5</b><br>Encouragement Through Urban Planning and Design |
|---|--|---|---|--|

## FARGO/WEST FARGO PARKING & ACCESS STUDY (2018)

Metro COG published the Fargo/West Fargo Parking and Access Study in December 2018. The purpose of the study was to analyze the relationship between parking and site development, how street networks can be most efficient, and how parking and access regulations align with the broader goals of Metro COG, Fargo, and West Fargo.

This study included an existing conditions assessment that considered the Cities' zoning and variance procedures for parking, parking utilization throughout the city, relationships between development patterns and parking, and stakeholder interviews. Through this assessment, Metro COG defined issues and opportunities and articulated a framework for the future of parking in Fargo and West Fargo.

### Vision & Goals

The goals of this study were to:

- ▶ Develop guidelines that encourage safe traffic flow, as well as a comfortable walking and biking experience
- ▶ Develop access and roadway guidelines that complement land use form, as opposed to just functional classifications
- ▶ Reduce the need to build excess off-street parking
- ▶ Enable sustainable development patterns.

### Recommendations or Outcomes

This study defined seven distinct road typologies based on road functional classification and land use. It also established corresponding guidelines for parking and road design for each typology.

Additionally, the study articulated recommendations to right-size parking in Fargo and West Fargo. This included recommendations to:

- ▶ Deregulate off-street parking minimum requirements while simultaneously establishing parking maximums
- ▶ Change procedures for parking variances to give developers flexibility in how they develop parking.
- ▶ Establish a shared parking program that promotes shared parking between land uses
- ▶ Establish a fee-in-lieu of parking program that allows developers to pay a fee to opt out of providing minimum parking required

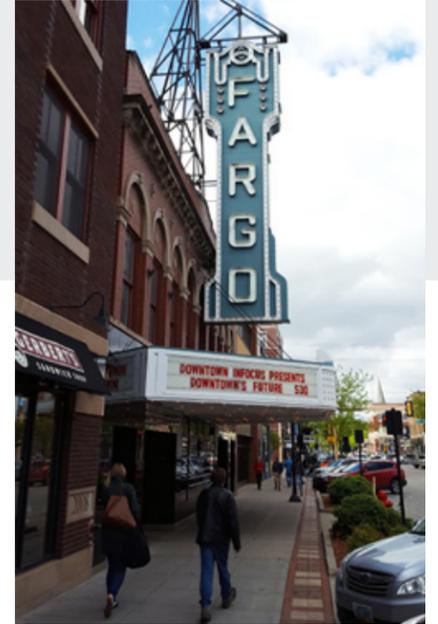


25 | Fargo/West Fargo Parking & Access Requirement Study



## DOWNTOWN INFOCUS (2018)

The City of Fargo published the Downtown InFocus plan in January 2018. Downtown InFocus is a comprehensive, action-oriented guidebook for the future of Fargo's historic downtown. The guidebook is accompanied by an implementation plan called the Downtown InFocus Playbook.



### Vision & Goals

As part of its vision statement, Downtown InFocus emphasized the importance of the transportation network by envisioning a future for Downtown Fargo in which, “...Our streets are walkable and vibrant, rich with color and texture and designed for a sustainable future. New multi-use trails connect downtown to the Red River and Beyond...”

The plan articulates seven goals for Downtown Fargo:

- |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| ✔ Grow as a neighborhood                          | ✔ Complete our streets |
| ✔ Prosper as a business center                    | ✔ Park smart           |
| ✔ Thrive as a destination                         | ✔ Pay with purpose     |
| ✔ Be a model for inclusive growth and development |                        |

### Recommendations or Outcomes

Downtown InFocus identified strategies to support each of these goals. Transportation strategies are mentioned under many of these goals, but the Complete our streets and Park smart goals are most relevant to the Fargo Transportation Plan. These goals included the following recommendations:

#### COMPLETE OUR STREETS

- ▶ Establish a street hierarchy downtown to inform reconstruction projects
- ▶ Develop a Fargo Street Playbook
- ▶ Improve pedestrian safety throughout downtown
- ▶ Ensure safe, connected spaces for bicycles
- ▶ Increase the visibility and improve the quality of bus stops

#### PARK SMART

- ▶ Change parking rates, time restrictions, and penalties according to distance from the core of downtown.
- ▶ Align parking supply with demand by evaluating parking utilization systemwide
- ▶ Lobby the State to eliminate the ban on metered parking
- ▶ Adopt strategies to increase turnover for high-demand spaces
- ▶ Develop clearer parking wayfinding
- ▶ Establish parking maximums in the core downtown area that allow for a more dense, walkable environment.

## 2045 FARGO-MOORHEAD METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN (MTP) (2019)

Metro COG adopted the 2045 MTP in November 2019. The MTP is a plan for the entire region and serves as a performance assessment of the Fargo-Moorhead multimodal transportation system. It is based on regional demographic trends, public engagement, and a performance-based planning approach to system performance that focuses on evaluating safety conditions, system pavement and bridge conditions, and system operations. The plan discusses the impacts of emerging transportation trends and technologies, as well as and congestion management processes. This plan addresses financial, safety, and environmental considerations for the transportation network, and strategies, priorities, and policies to advance the MTP's goals.



### Vision & Goals

The MTP defines the following goals for the Fargo-Moorhead region:

- › **Safety system & security** - Provide a transportation system that is safer for all users and is resilient to incidents
- › **Travel efficiency & reliability** - Improve regional mobility
- › **Walking & biking** - Increase walking and biking as a mode of transportation
- › **Transit access** - Support enhanced access to the existing and future MATBUS system
- › **Maintain transportation infrastructure** - Provide a financial plan that supports maintaining transportation infrastructure in a state of good repair
- › **Environmental sustainability** - Provide a transportation system that provides access equitably and limits impacts to the natural and built environment
- › **Economic development & transportation decisions** - Promote transportation projects that support regional economic goals, support freight movement, and promote projects that can be financially sustained for the long term
- › **Emerging transportation trends** - Incorporate transportation trends and new technologies in regional transportation plans

### Recommendations or Outcomes

The MTP articulates many objectives, strategies, and policies that support its goals. For each goal, the MTP defines various objectives are tied to prioritization metrics for potential transportation projects. The MTP defines the following strategies and priorities:

- › Complete critical connections in bicycle and pedestrian networks
- › Promote system management strategies in currently- developed corridors
- › Provide new street network and multimodal connections to future growth areas, and
- › Identify potential transit strategies for the next Transit Development Plan (TDP)

Finally, the MTP articulates policies that aim to develop a more efficient, equitable, and sustainable system that offers Fargo-Moorhead residents a range of options for safe and reliable mobility. These policies fall under the categories of: roadway congestion, travel behavior/travel demand management (TDM), system connectivity, growth areas/land use, walking and bicycling, transit, freight, emerging transportation trends, economic development, and complete streets.

## FARGO-MOORHEAD METRO BIKEWAYS GAP ANALYSIS (2019)

Metro COG conducted this analysis of bikeways gaps in the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area in 2019. The purpose of this study was to develop concept alternatives for closing 16 gaps in the existing Fargo-Moorhead bikeway network. Eight of these 16 gaps are in the City of Fargo's jurisdiction.

The project team conducted an analysis for each gap and proposed one or more alternatives to improve bikeway connections. These concepts were developed based on community engagement, input from the Study Review Committee, existing conditions analysis, and technical review from the project team.

### Vision & Goals

The goals of this study were:

- ✓ Provide a more connected and safer bikeway network within the metropolitan area
- ✓ Provide recommendations for concept alternatives to close bikeway gaps in FM metro area. This includes analyzing existing conditions, engaging community members, analyzing impacts of the proposed facilities on adjacent properties, ROW requirements, complying with national bikeway design standards, developing concept alternatives, and analyzing the pros and cons of various alternatives
- ✓ Develop planning-level cost estimates for each of the recommended bikeway concept alternatives.

### Recommendations or Outcomes

This study produced recommended concepts and planning-level cost estimates for each bikeway gap. Additionally, the study produced a set of recommendations for implementation strategies and funding opportunities for these projects.

## SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PLAN (2020)

The City of Fargo adopted the Metro COG’s City of Fargo Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Plan in February 2020 as an update to the City’s 2009 Safe Routes to Schools plan. This plan provides a framework for the implementation of SRTS projects, which seek to improve the health and wellbeing of children by enabling and encouraging them to bike and bicycle to school, during the school day, and around their communities. This plan reflects the outcomes of engagement with students, families, and schools, field observations, and a framework for SRTS of: Equity, Education, Encouragement, Engineering, Enforcement, and Evaluation.

The plan details specific existing conditions and proposed SRTS improvements for public and private elementary and middle schools in the City of Fargo. In addition to these site-specific recommendations, the plan summarizes citywide opportunities to improve walking and bicycling conditions for students. Finally, the plan provides examples of SRTS programs, relevant local policies and programs, best practices for campus and street design, funding opportunities for SRTS projects, and implementation recommendations for this plan.



### Vision & Goals

The goals for the Safe Routes to School Plan include:

- ✓ Increase the health and physical activity of students in the City of Fargo
- ✓ Provide SRTS educational resources for students, staff, parents, and guardians
- ✓ Increase the safety of students in the City of Fargo
- ✓ Increase the percentage of students that walk and/or bicycle to school

### Recommendations or Outcomes

The SRTS plan recommends site-specific improvements for each public and private school in the City of Fargo. Establishing SRTS route options for each school and a prioritized list of projects, policies, and educational programs that can be implemented at individual school were key deliverables of this plan. Additionally, the Plan recommends city-wide improvements that would support SRTS objectives. These include:

- › Implement pedestrian and bicycle-friendly design
- › Develop and implement an ADA Transition Plan
- › Increase connections between schools and neighborhoods
- › Update School Speed Zone signage
- › Review pedestrian signal timing and install lead pedestrian intervals
- › Increase education regarding new treatments, such as HAWK signals
- › Review winter maintenance and snow storage practices

## CORRIDOR STUDIES: VETERAN’S BOULEVARD, 17TH AVENUE, 76TH AVENUE

Metro COG and City of Fargo conducted corridor studies of Veterans Blvd (ongoing), 17th Ave S (2018), and 76th Ave S (2020). The purpose of these studies was to guide the development of alternatives for the future of the corridors by conducting technical analyses of existing and future conditions and integrating feedback from various stakeholders.

### Vision & Goals

The goals of the studies were to:

#### VETERANS BOULEVARD

Articulate a shared vision for the corridor’s extension.

#### 76TH AVENUE S

Develop a shared, multi-jurisdictional vision for the corridor and an accompanying implementation plan.

#### 17TH AVENUE S

Develop a vision for the corridor that addresses declining operational conditions and identified multimodal needs.

### Recommendations or Outcomes

#### VETERANS BOULEVARD

This study articulated a shared vision for the corridor to:

- › Enhance livability and serve the whole community;
- › Serve all modes; and
- › Improve connectivity and remain flexible for future growth.

#### 76TH AVENUE S

This study evaluated two potential classifications for the corridor: 1) a Regional Arterial with a focus on free-flowing traffic, or 2) Commercial Arterial similar to other Fargo-Moorhead roads with more traffic signals and a greater emphasis on the relationship between the street and adjacent development.

#### 17TH AVENUE S

This study recommended creating a cycle track along the corridor as a specific multimodal infrastructure improvement and recommended a prioritization and phasing schedule for various other improvements along the corridor.

## LAND USE PLANNING

Land use and transportation are inextricably linked. Compact, connected development encourages walking, biking, and transit use because destinations are close together. Sprawling development patterns often require users to rely on personal vehicles because destinations are far apart. While this plan specifically focuses on transportation, one of the major challenges in Fargo has been the disconnect between transportation and land use. This often creates street designs that are not suited to the surrounding neighborhood, or intense development patterns not well served by the transportation network.

It is important to acknowledge the link between the supply (transportation infrastructure) and demand (land use patterns) to fully take advantage of the opportunities to advance the City's vision.

### Core Neighborhoods Master Plan (2020)

The City of Fargo Core Neighborhoods Master Plan defines a vision for the nine neighborhoods surrounding downtown. The plan included a Core Neighborhoods Toolkit, which acknowledged the importance of Public Infrastructure Investment and recommended that the Transportation Plan identify a process for implementing complete streets principles along major corridors.

### Land Development Code Diagnostic Report

Development patterns in the City of Fargo are governed by a Land Development Code, which was last comprehensively updated over 20 years ago. The City is currently in the process of revising the Land Development Code, marking an opportunity for the Transportation Plan and Land Use Code to work together to define the need for sustainable land use and transportation patterns. The Diagnostic Report, finalized in 2020 identifies several challenges with the current code that create barriers to walkable, compact development, including the City's reliance on Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), permissive parking regulations, and built-form standards that are not conducive to creating walkable neighborhoods.

### Future Land Use Map

Many cities have an official Future Land Use map that defines the long-term development vision for the entire planning boundary. In Fargo, land use planning is completed through small-area plans processes. This creates a patchwork of areas with a long-term vision.

## LAND USE INTEGRATION

The Fargo Transportation Plan will provide context-sensitive recommendations that respond to the specific transportation needs and challenges in different areas of town. The plan will also make policy recommendations on how to further integration transportation and land use planning in the city in future years.

The benefits of transportation-land use integration include:

- › **Reduced Emissions:** Compact, connected development patterns bring destinations closer together, creating shorter trip distances. This means an overall reduction of vehicle miles traveled throughout the city.
- › **Reduced Transportation Costs:** Cars are expensive to own, maintain, and operate. By reducing reliance on vehicles, more households can reduce fuel costs and maintenance, and some may choose to forgo owning a vehicle altogether.
- › **Fiscal Sustainability:** A grid-based road network increases the density of taxpayers per mile of roadway, making the system more sustainable to build and maintain for the long-term future.
- › **Improved Access to Opportunities:** Many households lack reliable transportation. Compact development patterns allow more households to live within close distance of schools, employers, health care, and shopping, reducing disparities.
- › **Enhanced Quality of Life:** A fully integrated land use and transportation strategy improves community walkability, supports local businesses, and enhances amenities such as street trees, landscaping, and bicycle facilities.



# VISION AND GOALS

Since the Fargo Transportation Plan builds upon a series of robust planning efforts, the plan’s vision and goals align with what the community has repeatedly identified as important. Over the past decade, the community has continued to affirm an emphasis on improving safety, access to active transportation, sustainability, and an emphasis on complete streets.

MAJOR THEMES

|                                   | SAFETY | INNOVATION | MULTIMODAL ACCESS | PROMOTE CONNECTIVITY | EMPHASIZE MAINTENANCE | LAND USE COORDINATION | EQUITABLE ACCESS |
|-----------------------------------|--------|------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| GO 2030                           |        | ✓          | ✓                 | ✓                    |                       | ✓                     |                  |
| FM BIKE PLAN                      | ✓      |            | ✓                 | ✓                    | ✓                     |                       | ✓                |
| FARGO/WEST FARGO PARKING & ACCESS |        |            |                   |                      |                       | ✓                     |                  |
| DOWNTOWN INFOCUS                  | ✓      | ✓          | ✓                 |                      |                       | ✓                     | ✓                |
| 2045 MTP                          | ✓      |            | ✓                 |                      | ✓                     |                       |                  |
| FM BIKEWAYS GAP ANALYSIS          | ✓      |            |                   | ✓                    |                       |                       |                  |
| SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL             | ✓      |            | ✓                 |                      |                       |                       | ✓                |
| CORRIDOR STUDIES                  |        |            | ✓                 | ✓                    |                       | ✓                     |                  |

The Vision and Goals outlined on the following page are foundational to the Transportation Plan. All recommendations, policies, and strategies will be analyzed based on their alignment with the community’s goals, and the vision statement will guide the overall plan strategy.



## VISION

The Vision Statement guides the plan's overall direction and strategy. The Transportation Plan's Vision Statement is:



“The City of Fargo will provide a multimodal transportation system that supports the community's livability, sustainability, and economic development goals. Traveling in Fargo will be safe and comfortable for users of all ages and abilities, no matter their mode of travel.”

## GOALS

To align with the goals and themes identified in previously, a single set of consolidated goals has been developed for the Transportation Plan, as shown below.



### SAFETY

Improve safety for all roadway users through data-driven design.



### INNOVATION

Embrace national best-practices for transportation management, maintenance, and design.



### COMPLETE STREETS

Develop a transportation network that provides opportunities for multiple modes of travel and users of all ages and abilities.



### CONNECTIVITY

Promote a compact, connected street grid to enhance walkability and traditional neighborhood design.



### LIFE CYCLE SUSTAINABILITY

Align transportation design and land use policy to promote fiscally sustainable development patterns.



### ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

Provide multimodal connections to jobs, services, education, housing and healthcare.



# POLICY FOUNDATIONS

While infrastructure projects shape the physical design of the transportation system, the City's policies and practices are just as critical. Transportation policies refer to specific written guidance decision-makers can look to when making planning decisions. In some cases, these policies may be very clear and provide good guidance. In other cases, conflicting policies may create confusion or be outdated. Practices refer to the City's method of making decisions and implementing projects. These practices are not necessarily documented but can be critical to understanding how departments communicate and how projects make their way from idea to ribbon-cutting.

Part of the impetus for the Transportation Plan was a recognition that the City of Fargo's transportation policies and practices have not kept pace with the community's goals, and that the City was struggling to implement many projects under their current policies. As part of the initial stages of the Transportation Plan, the project team completed a review of the City's current policies and practices to identify key challenges and opportunities. These initial findings will be expanded in future project stages, with the project ultimately including recommendations to modernize the city's policies, as well as case studies best practice guidance to provide implementable examples.

## KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Initial interviews with the City's Planning, Public Works, and Engineering Departments revealed a number of key themes, as shown below. In general, each key challenge identified also presents a major opportunity to improve.

| CHALLENGES   | OPPORTUNITIES  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>PRIVATE ROADWAYS</b></p> <p>Developers in the City often request permission to construct private residential drives. The City currently has no key policy regarding how to handle this issue, though private drives are generally discouraged.</p>   | <p>The City should establish and adopt a clear policy prohibiting the construction of private drives or limiting their construction to specific cases where city standards are met. This will limit confusion and uncertainty, while ensuring that all streets within the City of Fargo are constructed to adequate standards.</p> |
| <p><b>INNOVATIVE STREET DESIGN</b></p> <p>Like many cities, Fargo has increasingly benefited over the past several years from innovative street designs such as roundabouts, road diets, curb extensions and separated bicycle facilities. However, maintenance on these street treatments is often a challenge, and no clear guidance exists to help the City decide where they might be appropriate.</p> | <p>The City should adopt policy language to guide the placement of innovative street and intersection designs. This would include guidelines that consider available space, surrounding land use, maintenance needs, and other factors to determine what treatments may be appropriate.</p>  |

| CHALLENGES  | OPPORTUNITIES  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>CONTEXT-SENSITIVE STREET DESIGN</b></p> <p>Today, streets in Fargo are planned based on their federal functional classification. Functional classifications are broad categories that group streets based on their intended purpose and capacity, with no regard for the surrounding land use context. While this system is adequate for planning highways, it falls short on local streets and streets that may pass through several land use contexts within the City limits.</p> | <p>The Transportation plan should build on street design guidelines established in the Fargo/West Fargo Parking and Access study to develop context-sensitive street design guidance.</p>  |
| <p><b>TRANSPARENCY</b></p> <p>For new developments, most street design decisions are made through an internal spreadsheet, which is not currently codified in the land development code. This creates a lot of confusion and questions from developers.</p>   | <p>Street design guidelines should be codified in the updated land development code to create transparency and clearly communicate expectations to developers.</p>   |
| <p><b>CONNECTIVITY</b></p> <p>Improving street connectivity is a stated goal of many of the City's plans, but no connectivity policy or guidance has ever been codified. Street connections are decided on an ad-hoc basis during the development process.</p>  | <p>A documented connectivity policy or guidelines should be included in the land development code rewrite to improve connectivity for future development. A future connections map should also identify current missing connections to be included in future improvements.</p>                 |
| <p><b>IDENTIFIED NEEDS</b></p> <p>As in most cities, transportation needs are increasing faster than available funding can handle. The City recently transitioned to a 5-year CIP process, but the creation of the CIP is not a collaborative process. In addition, the City does not have a comprehensive "needs list" that lists all necessary reconstructions, maintenance projects, and improvements within the City.</p>   | <p>Creating a needs list (or state-of-good-repair list) with cost estimates can help communicate the magnitude of the City's increasing transportation needs. Long-term funding conversations should be intentional and honest about the inadequacy of available resources.</p>                |
| <p><b>PRIORITIZATION</b></p> <p>Transportation projects within the City are not prioritized in a data-driven or systematic way. Each department maintains a "wish list" of projects, which are then translated into a CIP based on available funding, political pressures, or other factors.</p>  | <p>A standard, modernized prioritization process would allow each project to be assigned a score to illustrate the impact it has on City goals. The process should be customized to the City, and consider multimodal access, safety, cost, equity, and connectivity, among other factors.</p> |

## HARNESSING THE OPPORTUNITY

### Responding to COVID-19

This is a unique moment for transportation planning. COVID-19 has affected the ways cities function and thrive. Funding streams, travel patterns, workforce profiles, and community values have changed. While Fargo was not impacted as dramatically as other areas of the country, the City is not immune to the long-term changes and funding challenges the pandemic created.

As a long-term strategy for a changing city, the Transportation Plan seeks to respond to the shifting needs and priorities that likely will occur in the decades to come. In many ways, the pandemic has accelerated these trends. Providing multiple travel mode choices, creating an adaptive transportation network, and developing neighborhood-centric land use patterns are more critical now than ever. A resilient city will thrive in a post-COVID world. The need for long-term resiliency further highlights the need to establish a smart and sustainable transportation strategy.

### Federal Funding

In addition, the Transportation Plan will prepare the City to harness expected funding opportunities, such as the historic federal infrastructure funding package (currently under consideration as of publication) and grant opportunities. An additional \$550 billion in federal transportation funding is anticipated to be available over the next five years. This plan will document the City's commitment to federal planning priorities by clearly identifying a way to select projects based on their contribution to identified goals. Following this process, the City best positions itself for competitive federal awards.

#### Top Federal Funding Priorities

Fargo must compete with other cities around the country for federal transportation funding. To be competitive, the City should demonstrate its commitment to the administration's infrastructure funding priorities, including:

- › Safety
- › Innovation
- › Equity and Environmental Justice
- › Climate Resilience
- › State of Good Repair

These priorities are reflected in the plan's vision and goals, and will be considered as recommendations are developed in future project stages.



