



Families, actives, and youth appreciate access to nature on local trails.



Some bridges are difficult to cross because there is no extra space for cyclists or pedestrians.



Curb cuts and tactile warning strips help the mobility- and sight-impaired cross safely.



Richland Road connects important places, but fast traffic and lack of bicycle or pedestrian areas inhibit use.



Important services, such as the US Post Office, have nearby accessible parking and a curb cut. These features are appreciated by residents.



Frequent trains disrupt crossing in town; lack of clearly identified and well maintained crossing areas creates anxiety for cyclists and pedestrians.

## What Factors Affect Transportation in Van Meter?

Transportation is integral to small-town life and a vibrant economy. In the context of the Community Visioning Program, we recognize walking, biking, and driving as quintessential modes of travel to various destinations important to residents and visitors. Access to these destinations is crucial for many everyday activities—getting to work and school, participating in community events, and providing for basic needs such as food, health care, and healthy activity.

In this participatory assessment, we want to find out which factors and conditions affect transportation use in Van Meter, where these factors and conditions are most prevalent, and how they influence route and transportation choices locally. Because residents have the best knowledge of how Van Meter's transportation system works, we use focused, small-group conversations, mapping, and photos of the best and worst to understand local transportation.

## Different Users = Different Needs

To capture insights about transportation from a variety of perspectives, we invited Van Meter residents with different transportation needs to participate in focus groups. A total of 61 residents attended Van Meter's workshop. Participants were separated into five user groups and the Van Meter steering committee.



Actives

**(5 participants):** This user group represents those in the community who engage in outdoor recreation, including cycling, walking, running, swimming, skiing, etc. The availability of multiple venues for outdoor recreation matters to this group.



Mobility Impaired

**(4 participants):** This user group is directly affected by accessibility barriers such as high curbing and uneven sidewalks that make it difficult to operate mobility-aiding equipment effectively. Handicapped parking, curb ramps, and smooth surfaces are critical transportation features.



Older Adults

**(10 participants):** Accessibility—both in terms of physical access and proximity—is a major concern for this user group. Because some people in this user group do not or are unable to drive, having goods and services within walking distance is important.



Youth

**(11 participants):** This group uses primarily non-motorized modes of transportation, so pedestrian- and bike-friendly streets and sidewalks are important. These users value the ability to get to destinations on foot or via bicycle and having goods and services within walking distance.



Parents

**(20 participants):** Safety of their children is a primary concern of this user group. Access to safe and easy routes to school activities is another significant factor to this group. Parents of young children desire smooth, wide surfaces for strollers.



Steering Committee

**(11 participants):** The common denominator for this user group is that their observations are influenced by special knowledge of the transportation system acquired during the Community Visioning assessment process. As a result, this group is more representative of decision makers.

## Transportation Assets and Barriers Analysis

Julia Badenhope, Sandra Oberbroeckling, Chad Schultz, Giannis Koutsou, Parmiss Sazgar, Alisa Courey, Paola Monllor-Torres

Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation