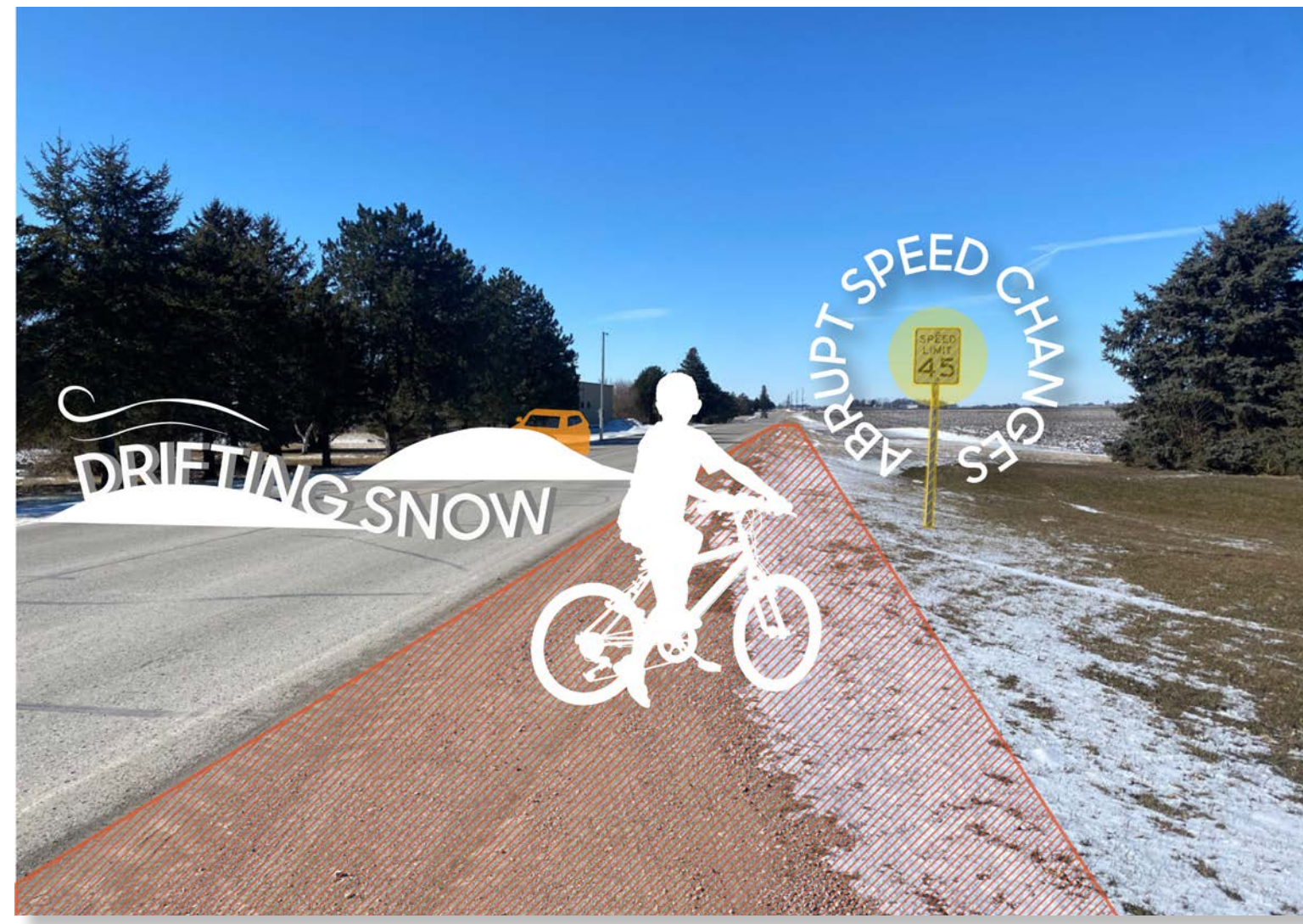




The Burt Activity Complex has transportation amenities for walkers, drivers, cyclists, and children taking the bus to school.



Drifting snow, lack of pedestrian access, and abrupt speed changes make 300th Street difficult for drivers, walkers, and cyclists alike.



Immersion in nature and a reflective environment draw many walkers and runners to the Burt Cemetery.



Focus-group participants said that they walk on the streets because the sidewalks are inconsistent and poorly maintained.



A beautiful tree canopy and city decorations make Walnut Street a welcoming entrance into Burt.



Walnut Street sidewalk conditions make traversing intersections difficult for pedestrians and cyclists.

What Factors Affect Transportation in Burt?

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 Burt, 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 Burt’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 Burt residents with different transportation needs to participate in focus groups. A total of 44 residents attended Burt’s workshop. Participants were separated into five user groups and the Burt steering committee.



(7 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.



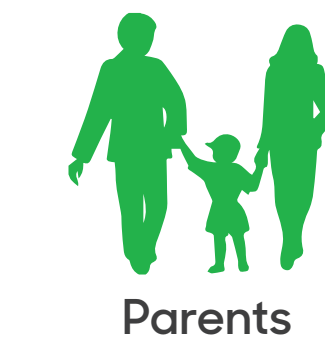
(7 participants): This user group is directly affected by accessibility barriers such as high curbing and uneven sidewalks that make it difficult to operate mobility-aiding equipment effectively. Handicapped parking, curb ramps, and smooth surfaces are critical transportation features.



(9 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.




(7 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.



(7 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.



(7 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.



Actives


"...I also feel like Walnut...kind of by the post office...whenever you have cars parked on both side of the road...it's tight...It's a one-lane road in between there...[and] you have to wait for...any oncoming traffic to get past."

"I've noticed when I'm walking, people go right through those stop signs [at the intersection of Walnut St and Grand Ave] ...a lot of them don't stop. Some of them don't even slow down."

"It would be kind of cool to put a sidewalk...[around the] perimeter [of Burt]. Kind of like a bike or a walk path that basically outlines...the town."

"...[the sidewalk] gets really bad...on [Walnut St west of] 4th Street...they're just not even there or...they're a hazard. Flat out, they're a hazard...Busted up. Lifted. Cracked."

"[People like to walk] wherever you [have] a lot of trees. The more trees, [the nicer it is] to be [there]...Walnut] Street [has a lot of trees and shade]."



Youth


"...whenever I'm riding [on 120th Ave]...it gets really weird, because there [are] a bunch of cars going, and you have to just get to the side, so it would be nice if they just put a sidewalk right beside the road."

"[We need good sidewalks on Walnut] Street, obviously...At least on one side. [Then] I would say at least [to] one park. The parks are where we're mainly going, especially if we need a sidewalk."

"The [downtown Walnut] Street sidewalks [are nice. I like]...how smooth they are in some places."

"A good thing about [Burt is], we have a lot of parks. I mean, they don't have [much] variety, but we do have them."

"[The] sidewalks are really bad... [they] just look like grass. And it... makes our town look bad..."



Parents


"...with [the] business [around town], we have long semis hauling...equipment...through town occasionally. This corner [of 8th Street and 300th St] right at Classic Stop is a pretty tight corner [for them] to get around."

"...I feel like our sidewalks are as old as the rest of the town, so...that's kind of a challenge... [there's a] lack of sidewalks. [They are in] poor condition, raised or uneven...[and] a lot of tree issues, trees making the sidewalks heave."

"...you want to raise your kids in a community like this. And the safer you can make it for your kids [the better. They should be able] to get to the bus stops properly instead of walking down the street."

"...[our roads are] definitely showing [their] age...I would say our condition is better or marginal compared to a lot of the other towns the same size. But there [are potholes] that could be repaired..."

"...[there are no] sidewalks for kids to walk on...I see them walking right down the middle of the road, which is a hazard...to drivers and to the kids."



Older Adults

"...we prefer walking in [the Activity Complex] because we [have a] flatter surface. You don't have to worry about the traffic or anything...We're really grateful to have this building to walk in."

"...on Bush Street...there is a stop sign [in front of the Activity Complex], but so many people take it as a suggestion...I mean, [cars] really barrel through, and I'm always worried because the kids do get on the bus [there]."

"...it's pretty coming into town [on Walnut St] with all the trees... in the summertime when they're in full bloom, it's...almost like a tunnel..."

"...either people walk or they ride golf carts. Nobody bicycles. There [are] no bike trails...I've never seen anybody in Burt riding around. They just realize it's not an option."

"...if you're going to walk around Burt, you're going to end up on the road sometimes."



Mobility Challenged

"...[We need] sidewalks desperately...A lot of us walk...and now we... [have to] walk at the school because the roads [don't feel] safe... but we prefer to walk around town."

"...I've used a walker probably for a couple years now...[and some businesses downtown are] very hard to get into...you have to call them if you need to use their ramp...[or some have] a step...you never realize how hard it is until you have to use a walker."

"It would be nice to see some kind of walking path or something through the park. I mean, something like that...would be really great for our community."

"I think [it] would be wonderful...[to have] something where you could walk [to] Algona [and] Bancroft [from Burt]...I would support that."

"We need more handicapped spots...[at the activity complex]... there's just one [spot]...The library only has one too."



Steering Committee

"Generally, it bothers me when I have to walk on a sidewalk...because...we walk side by side. When we walk on a sidewalk, I feel like I always have to be behind...because they're not wide enough."

"It would be nice to have some beautiful things... maybe [a] sculpture or something to look at...I always liked the mural that was on [Walnut] Street... murals would be lovely."

"...the sidewalk [on Grand Ave] is literally heaved...when we used to take the kids on bikes, you'd have to go out and around it."

"...I'd put in a bike trail all the way around the outside of town."

"[120th Ave] is a problem when you're biking... because [vehicles] are going really fast...I bet you they go 55 miles an hour down that road at times..."

Burt

What People Said

User Types	Valued Destinations, Activities, and Qualities					Undesirable Qualities and Features						Most Desired Improvements and Activities				
	Walnut Street Tree Canopy	Downtown Streetscape	Burt Township Cemetery	Walking Outdoors	Burt Activity Complex	Inadequate Sidewalk Infrastructure	Seasonal Challenges	Inferior Roadway Conditions	Visibility Issues	Heavy and High Speed Traffic	Limited Parking	Trail Development	Sidewalk Improvements	Additional Trees	Roadway Infrastructure Repairs	
Actives	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Actives walk and drive cars, side-by-sides, and golf carts. They think there should be radar speed-limit signs on Walnut St to slow traffic. Actives said that a dog park would be "huge" for recreation. This group considers lighting in town to be deficient, with the exception of Walnut St.
Mobility Challenged	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Mobility-challenged individuals drive cars and golf carts, walk, and bike. This group wants a transit system to Algona for medical appointments and more handicapped parking downtown and at the activity complex. They appreciate the way-finding signage downtown.
Older Adults	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Older adults drive and walk to get around town. This group doesn't want any new sidewalks and suggested replacing bad sidewalks with grass to preserve the beautiful trees in town. They like the fact that the bus stop has a shelter for kids to use when the weather is bad.
Youth		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Youth walk, bike, roller skate, and ride scooters around town. Older youth drive cars and golf carts. They would like more crosswalks in town, especially on Walnut St and 120th Ave to cross to the gas station. Youth think that Burt has a good number of parks, considering its size.
Parents		●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Parents walk, bike, and drive automobiles and golf carts. This group is primarily concerned with the safety of their children. Parents are uncomfortable driving through town with truck traffic and mentioned that high-profile vehicles and tractors have damaged overhead power lines.
Steering Committee	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Steering committee members walk, bike, and drive a variety of vehicles from automobiles and golf carts to side-by-sides and lawn mowers. This group would like to increase the use of the athletics park by adding a man-made lake with a trail around it, adding a dog park, and having a farmers market there.

Residents appreciate the "heart-shaped" tree canopy that lines Walnut St for its beauty, particularly in the fall. Additionally, the trees create a visually appealing drive into town, especially at sunrise and sunset. The mobility-challenged group enjoy the shade these trees provide.

All groups like the aesthetics of the downtown district which features decorative flowerpots, banners, a mural and seasonal holiday lights. New sidewalks and additions of fresh air, new lighting, and additions to the mobility-challenged group enjoy the shade these trees provide.

Residents of all ages and abilities take pleasure in walking outdoors, whether at the cemetery, the activity complex, or along city streets. Older adults and kids have fun walking their dogs. Older adults like walking on trails in the country to experience nature and wildlife.

The Burt Activity Complex is the heart of the community and is a popular venue for sporting events, weddings, and other activities. Older adults value the safety of walking sidewalks around the park are well lit and in good condition.

All groups experience challenges with the uneven surfaces damage from tree roots and disconnect of existing sidewalk infrastructure. Participants in the focus groups named many streets, with these sidewalk issues most notably Grand Ave and Walnut St west of Grand Ave.

Burt residents face seasonal conditions affecting travel including flooding in low-lying areas, poor drainage after heavy rain, and snow drifts across several streets, namely 5th, Bush, and 300th, among others. Wind tunnels exacerbate drifting, impacting commuters and creating visibility issues.

People of all ages take issue with road conditions in town, pointing out Grand Ave and Walnut St as especially rough. Numerous potholes throughout town, crowned roads, and manhole covers not level with the road create problems, as well as partially gravel roads such as Oak St.

Some groups voiced concerns about visibility at various intersections in town. Buildings obstruct views at 8th and Walnut Sts, forcing drivers to pull out too far to see oncoming traffic. Trees and shrubs at Wisconsin and 1st Sts create a blind curve that is compounded by the absence of lighting.

Adults worry about speeding and heavy traffic in town. They report speeding as a common problem, especially by drivers entering town on Walnut St. High traffic on Bush is seen as a safety risk near the bus stop where kids gather.

Parking is limited at a number of places in town. Mobility-challenged individuals noted the lack of handicapped parking at the activity complex and downtown. During large events at the activity complex and pickup times, more scarce and visitors have to park on nearby streets.

Developing new trails is a priority among most residents. They envision a perimeter trail around Burt, connecting destinations such as the cemetery, parks, and downtown. The mobility-challenged group is interested in regional trail links to Bancroft and Algona.

All user types desire a well-maintained, continuous sidewalk system with existing sidewalks repaired and widened. Parents want connections made to the activity complex, the bus stop, and the daycare. Actives suggested having walking lanes similar to bike lanes on streets.

Both adults and youth understand the benefit of trees. Actives, youth, and parents want trees to mitigate wind and snow drifting issues along 120th Ave and 300th St. The steering committee called for increasing tree coverage in the cemetery to create a more pleasant space for visitors.

Residents want road conditions to be addressed all through town. Specific improvements named were repairing Grand Ave and widening Walnut St downtown. Older adults would like new water mains and sewer lines. Actives suggested resurfacing or replacing all the streets.

Burt Emerging Themes

Transportation Assets and Barriers Analysis

Julia Badenhop, Sandra Oberbroeckling, Britney Markhardt

Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation

