



Asset: The trails, shade, and views at Dunning Springs Park make it a beautiful, fun, and desirable destination for locals and visitors.



Barrier: Steep hills throughout town make movement challenging for the mobility-impaired group.



Asset: Water Street is a popular destination for all users and provides access to almost everything, including awesome food and shops.



Barrier: Locust Road is busy with car and pedestrian traffic. The lack of sidewalks, lighting and narrow lanes make users feel unsafe.



Asset: Dug Road is a desirable destination because of an accessible trail and view of the river.



Barrier: College Drive is an important route that connects Whippy Dip to the pool. However, lack of shade, concrete surfaces, and fast turning on College Drive make walking and biking feel uncomfortable.

What Factors Affect Transportation in Decorah?

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 Decorah, 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 Decorah’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 Decorah residents with different transportation needs to participate in focus groups. A total of 75 residents attended Decorah’s workshop. Participants were separated into five user groups and the Decorah steering committee.



(9 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.



(11 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.



(23 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.



(13 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.



(11 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.



(8 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.