



Iowa's Living Roadways

**community
visioning**

designing livable communities, 2018

Decorah, Iowa





"I believe that city design can shape people's behavior. Create dedicated bike lanes and people will bike."



"With so much traffic on [Locust Road] involving vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians, there needs to be a sidewalk and trail addition to the road besides making it a bit wider."

"Potholes, steps, sudden curbs, broken sidewalks make it impossible for my daughter in her wheelchair.

These lumps and bumps affect everyone, not only her! Zero entry curbs are awesome!"



Introduction

The Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program is a collaboration involving the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Living Roadway Trust Fund, Iowa State University and Trees Forever. One of the primary objectives of the Community Visioning Program is to assist participants in the process of building livable communities—that is, creating an environment that not only meets residents' basic needs but is also aesthetically appealing.

With assistance from Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology, ISU visioning program staff conducted a survey to better understand the transportation patterns and behaviors, needs and desires of Decorah residents. Surveys were mailed to 300 randomly selected residents living in Decorah and the surrounding area. To increase the response rate, the study was publicized through the local media and follow-up packets were mailed to nonrespondents.

With adjustments for ineligible respondents (e.g., incorrect addresses, no longer living in the community), the final sample size was 269. A total of 137 people returned surveys, for a response rate of 50.9%. (A response rate of 20% is considered valid.)

Why Do A Survey?

The survey gives the visioning steering committee objective, representative information for the goal-setting phase of community visioning. The quantitative data collected from survey responses complements the qualitative information gathered from the focus groups at the transportation assets and barriers workshop.

The modes of transportation that residents use and the routes they take suggest suitable types of transportation enhancements in these areas. Having a sense for people's willingness to help either financially or with their time is important because many transportation enhancements are funded from multiple sources, including grants, private donations, in-kind contributions, and volunteers. Understanding what types of improvements are important to residents gives the committee insight into how to prioritize projects.

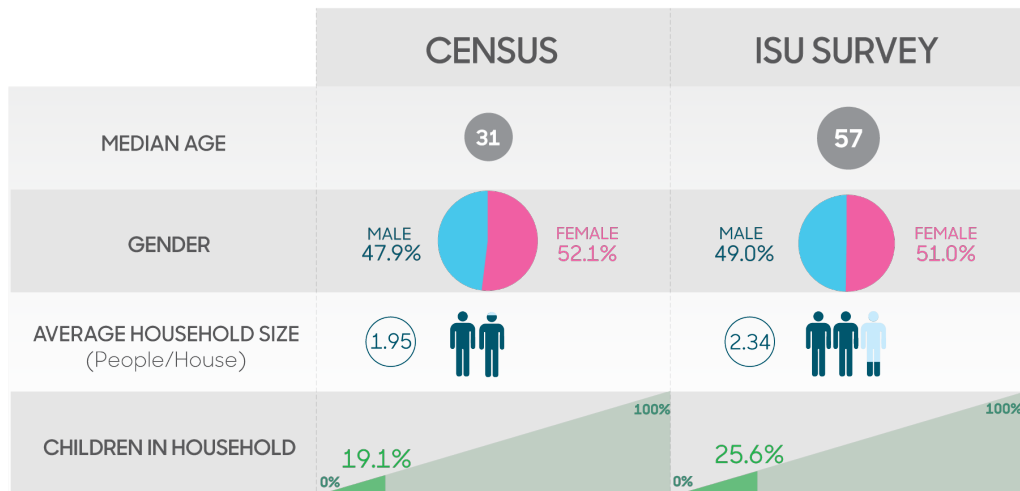
What Did We Find Out?

We asked survey recipients what routes they used most often for going to work, walking, and biking. We also asked whether or not residents would like a recreation trail and where they think it should be. We also discovered what residents think is most important in terms of transportation enhancements that address issues such as accessibility, mobility, and safety. Finally, we learned whether or not residents are willing to contribute their time or their financial resources to making enhancements to Decorah. This series of boards summarizes the results of the survey as follows:

- Willingness to Help
- Enhancement Priorities
- Commuting Routes
- Walking Routes
- Biking Routes
- Desired Trail Routes

How Did We Do?

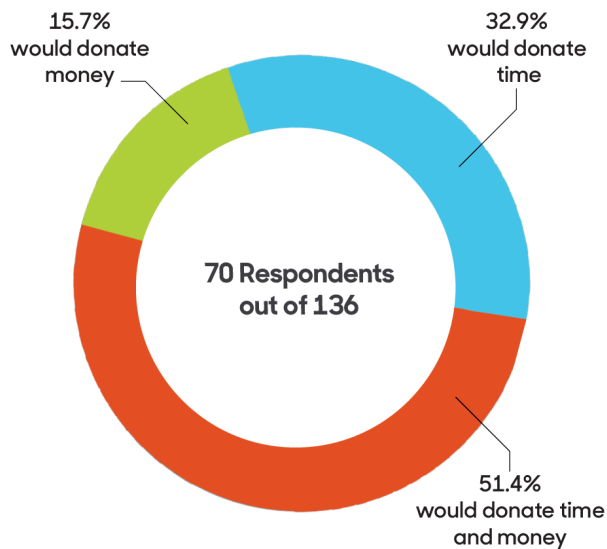
The demographics of the respondents are somewhat different from those obtained from the 2016 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate. For example, the survey respondents median age of 57 is significantly older than the 2016 estimated average age for Decorah residents of 31. The gender of survey respondents is similar to 2016 estimates. In terms of average household size, and number of children in the household, survey respondents' demographics differ from the 2016 estimates.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2016 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.

ARE PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP?

More than 51% said YES!



Willingness to implement change

Most survey participants who answered this question are willing to contribute both time and talent and financial help to community improvements (51.4%), while more than 32% would contribute their time and talent. More than 15% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to contribute financially.

Compared to other small towns in Iowa, Decorah residents are more willing to become involved in improving their community. In 2014, on average, 43% of residents in small, rural towns volunteered to help with a community project.¹

How Do You Get People to Help?

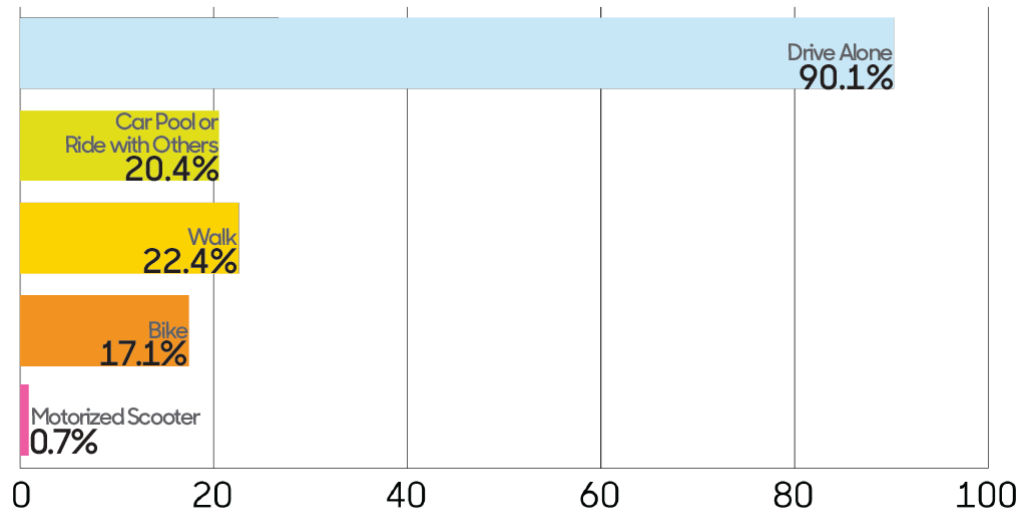
In 2014, the most common reason residents in small-town Iowa said they didn't become involved in community projects is that no one asked them (34%). Twenty-eight percent on average said that they don't have time, which is significantly lower than the 2004 average of 59%. Sixteen percent indicated that they didn't know how to become involved, and 7% said that no community project needed volunteers.¹ These results indicate that the best ways to get people involved in community projects is to simply ask, along with advertising opportunities through traditional and social media outlets.

¹ *Sigma: A Profile of Iowa Small Towns 1994 to 2014* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2015).

How Do Decorah Residents Travel?

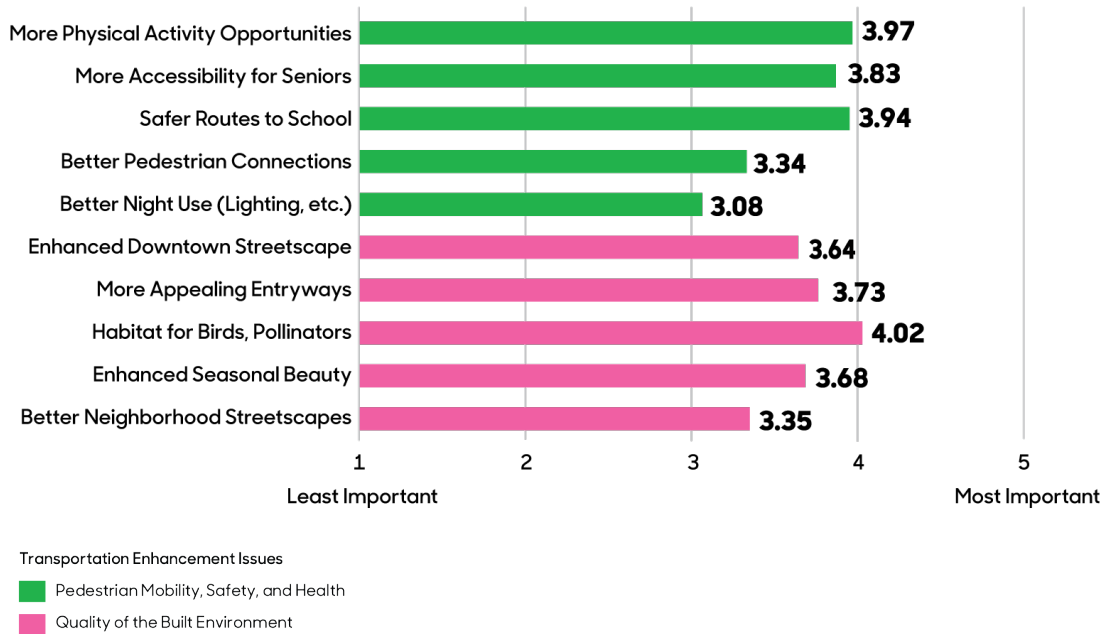
Most survey respondents drive to important destinations such as the convenience store, the post office, school, and church (90.1%). More than 20% car pool or ride with someone else, 22.4% walk, and 17.1% bike. One respondent uses a motorized scooter.

Please note that some respondents indicated that they use more than one mode of transportation to get to work; therefore, percentages add up to more than 100%.



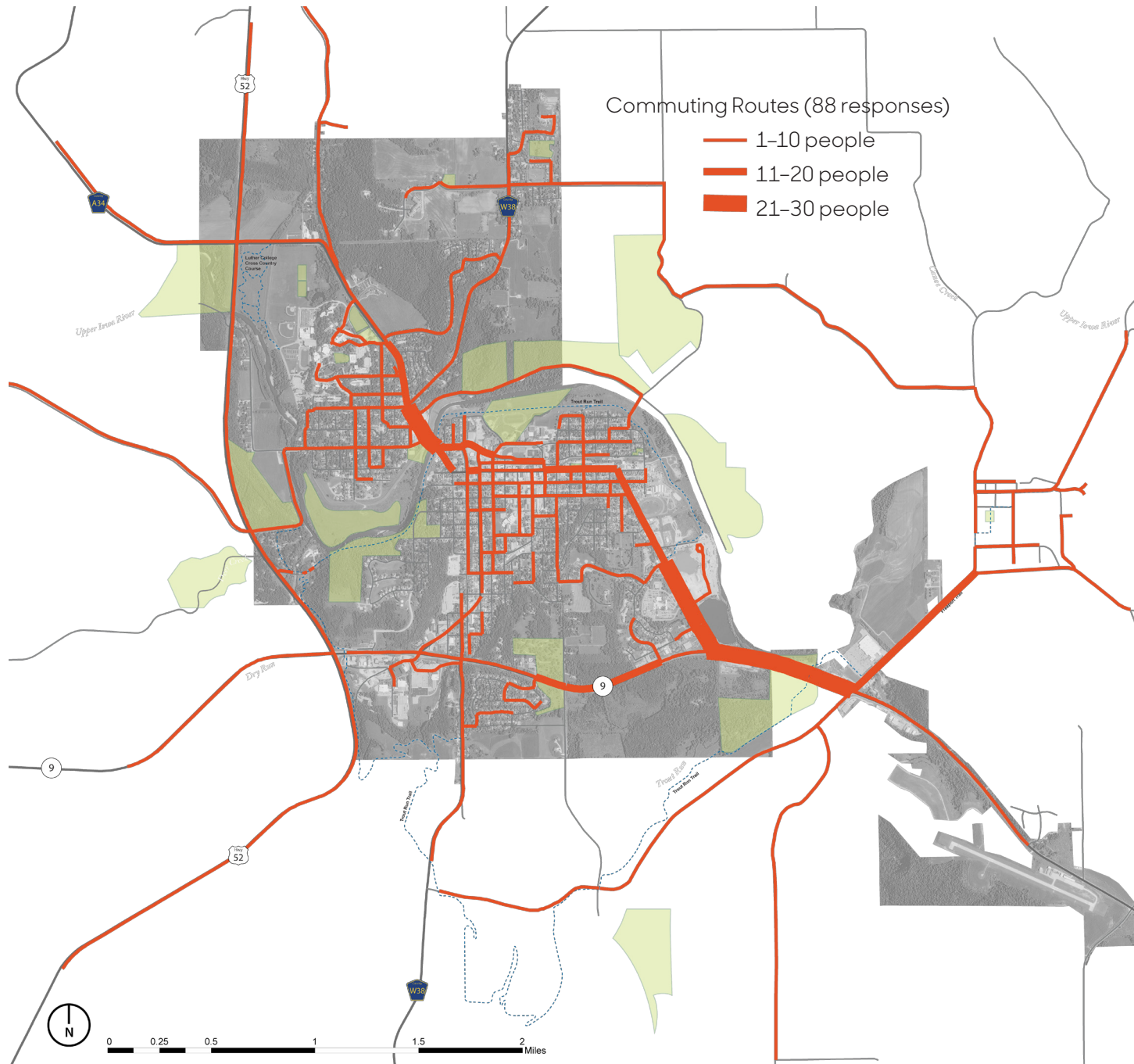
WHAT TYPES OF ENHANCEMENTS ARE IMPORTANT?

Quality of the Built Environment!



Importance of transportation enhancement by type (125 responses)

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, participants in Decorah ranked creating more habitat for birds and pollinators as most important, with a mean value of 4.02. Transportation enhancements that address pedestrian mobility, health, and safety are also considered important, such as providing more opportunities for physical activity (3.97), creating safer routes to school (3.94), and providing more accessibility for seniors (3.83). These findings are consistent with the views expressed by focus group participants during the Transportation Assets and Barriers workshop held in April 2018.



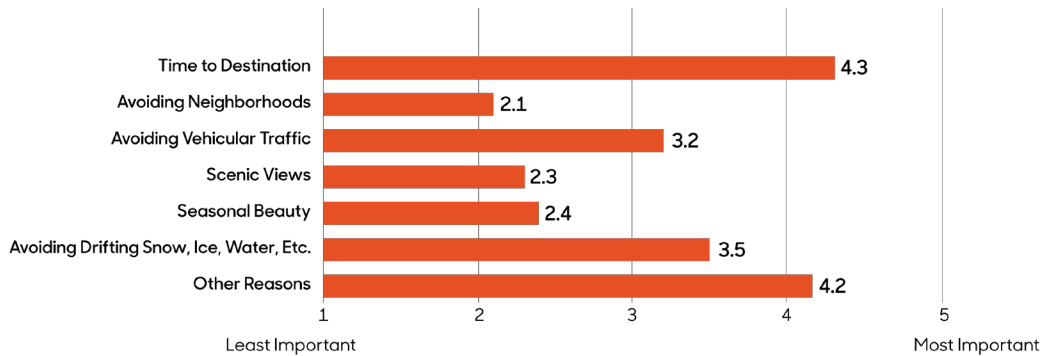
Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>.

How People Get To Work

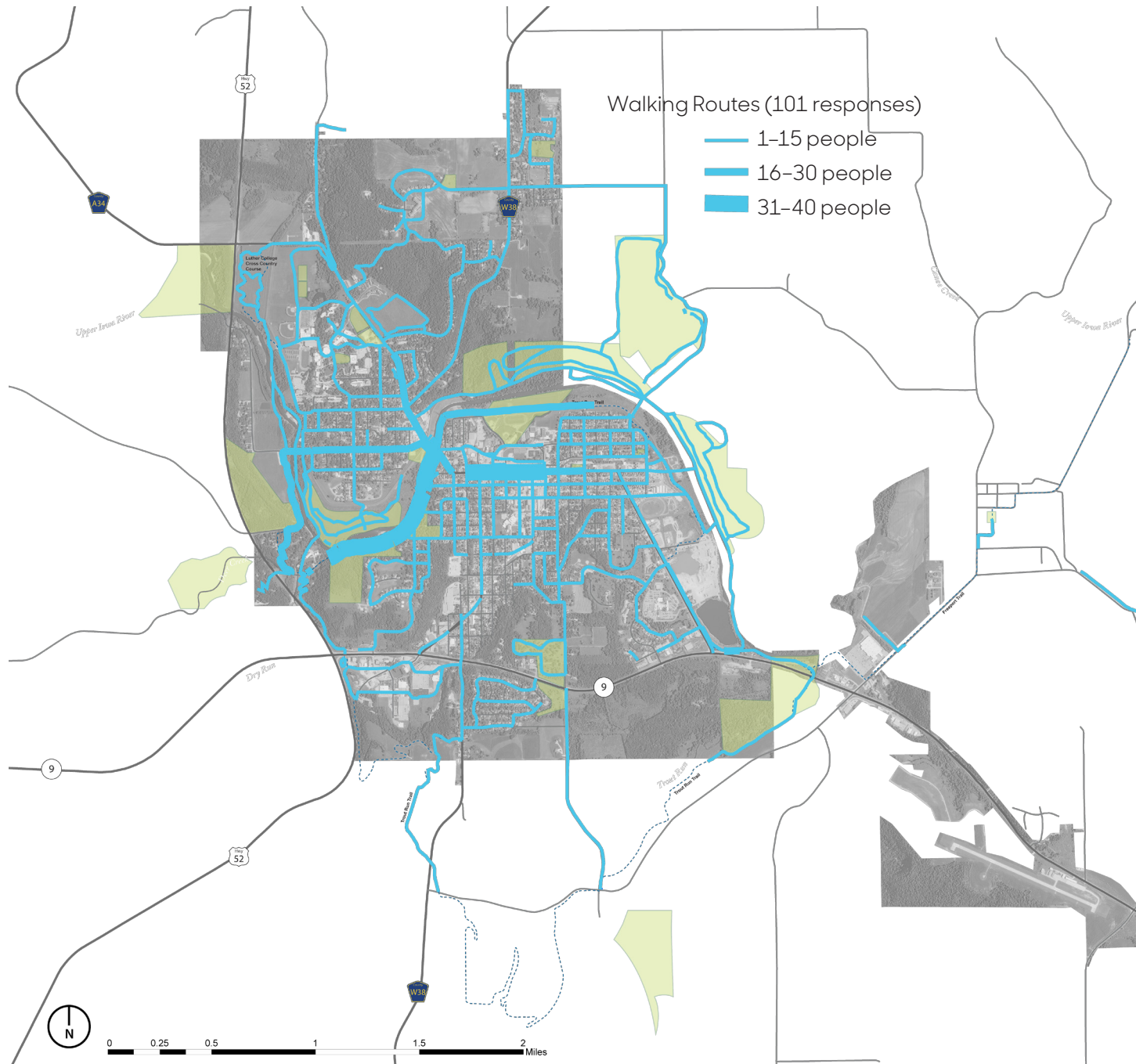
This map shows the commuting routes identified by 88 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their thickness, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. The primary commuting corridor in Decorah is Highway 9 to the southeast. Some people also go north-south on Highway 52 and travel on County Roads W38 and A34. In town, Montgomery Street, Water Street, and College Drive to Locust Road are the most heavily traveled.

The circulation patterns that emerge when routes for biking, walking, and commuting are overlaid suggest suitable types of transportation enhancements. For example, where pedestrian and vehicular traffic intersect, such improvements could include creating better visibility, defining crossing points, or improving signage.

Why They Go That Way



On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that factored into their choice of commuting route. Among Decorah participants, time to destination is the most important factor, with a mean value of 4.3, followed by other reasons (4.2), which include avoiding schools at start and end times, road conditions, avoiding stoplights, and for walkers, availability of sidewalks. Avoiding weather-related issues such as snow and ice is also considered important, with a mean value of 3.5. Avoiding neighborhoods, scenic views, and seasonal beauty are not critical factors in determining commuting routes.

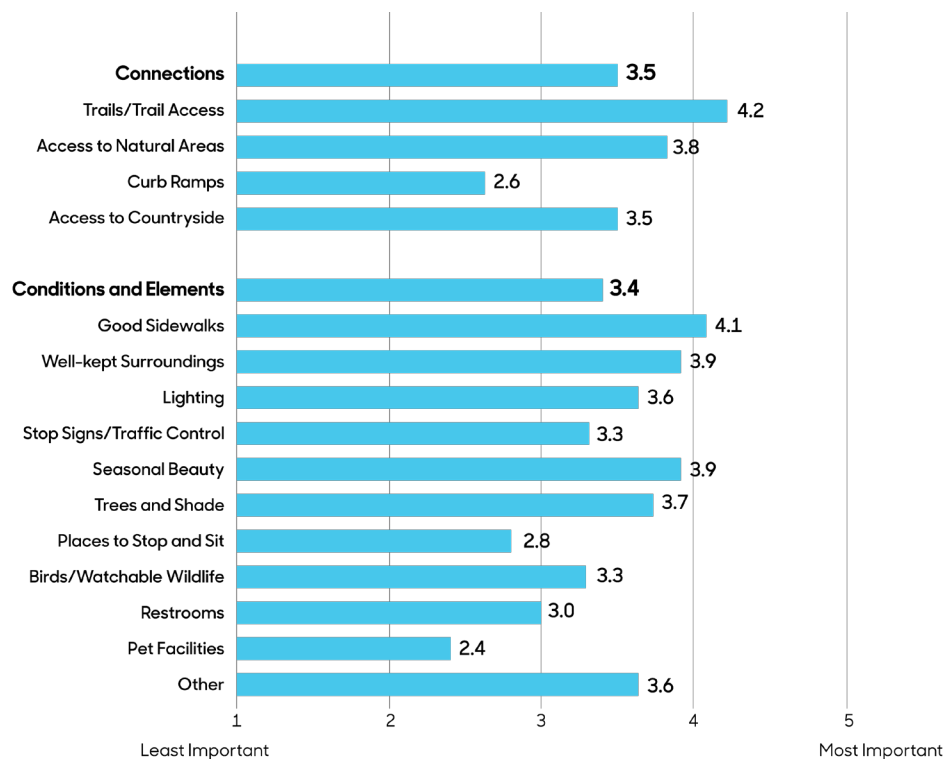


Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>.

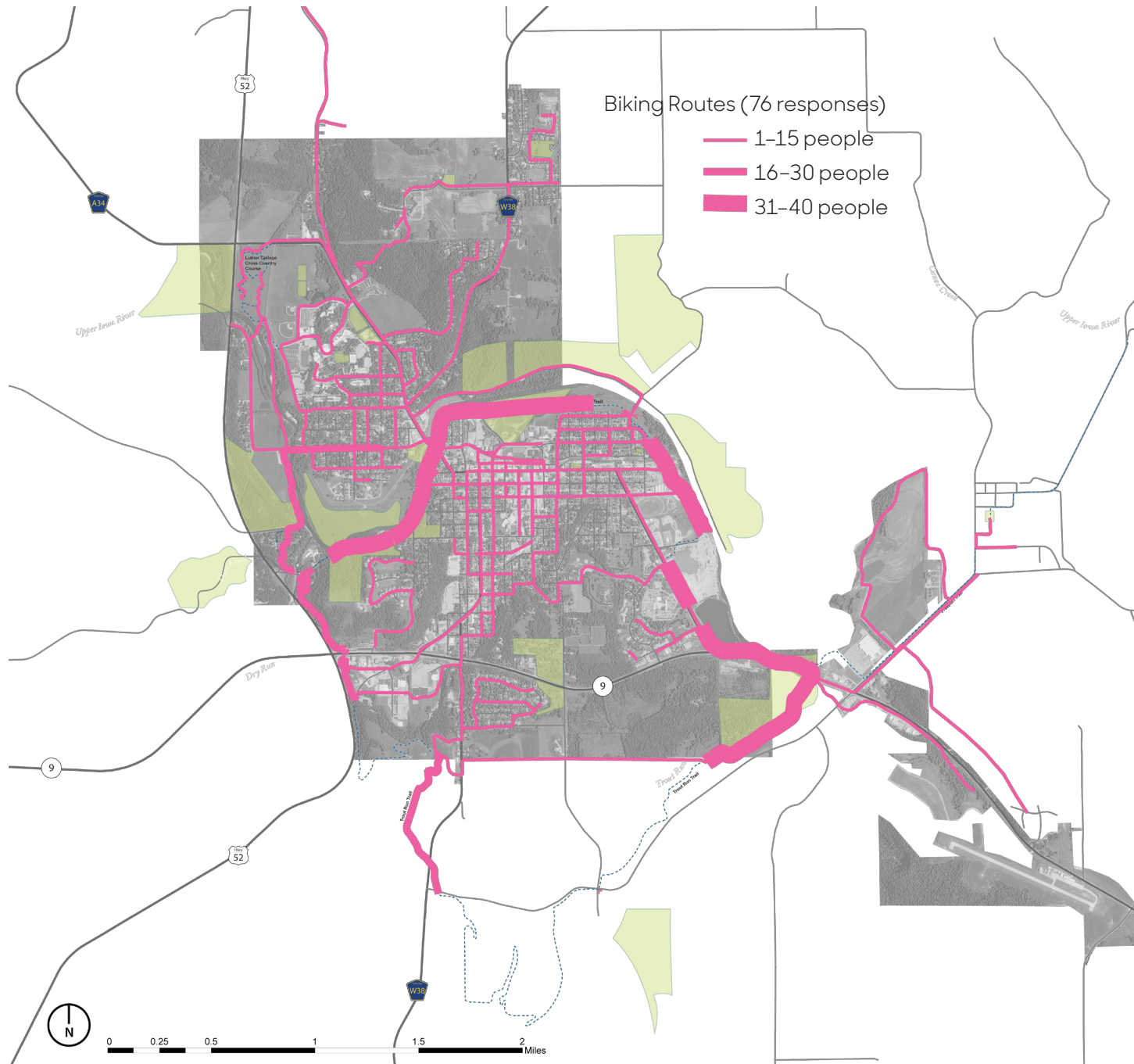
Where People Walk

This map shows the walking routes identified by 101 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their thickness, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. Trout Run Trail within town and Water Street downtown are the most popular walking routes. A number of people walk on Ice Cave Road and 5th Avenue, and connect to Trout Run Trail at the west end of 5th Avenue. Some people walk in the parks and at the Decorah City Prairie, some walk in Phelps Cemetery, and some walk the Luther College cross country course.

Why They Go That Way



On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their walking experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Among Decorah participants, connections and conditions/elements are of similar importance, with mean values of 3.5 and 3.4, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 4.2. Good sidewalks (4.1) is the most important element to walkers, followed by well-kept surroundings and seasonal beauty (3.9). Other factors include snow removal, water fountains, surface conditions, and access to parks.

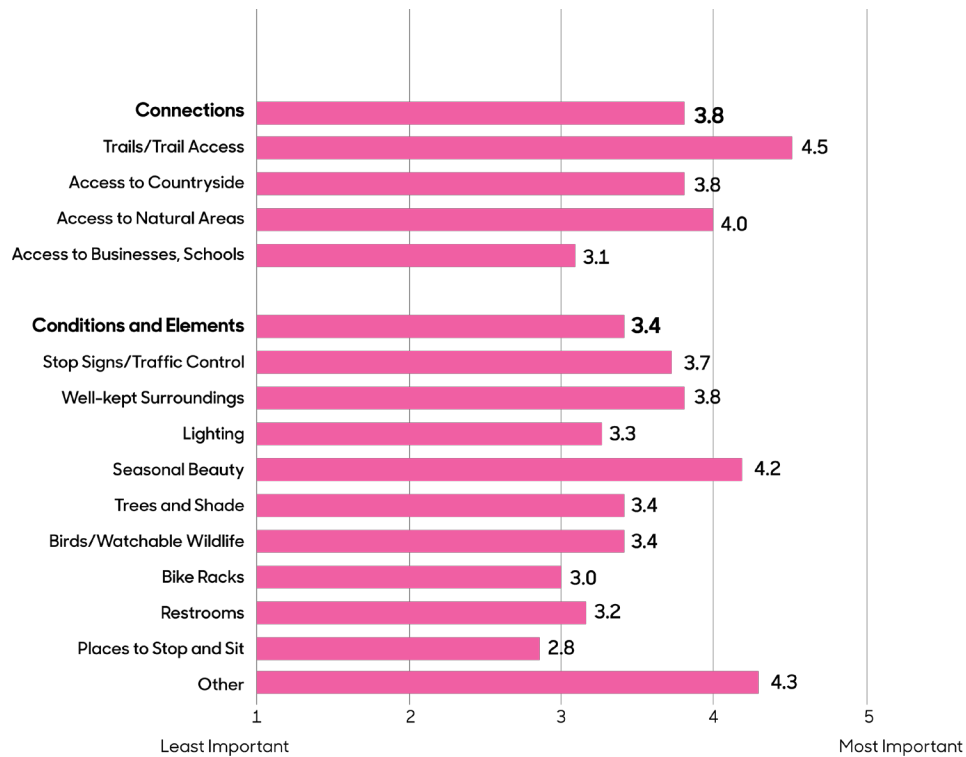


Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>.

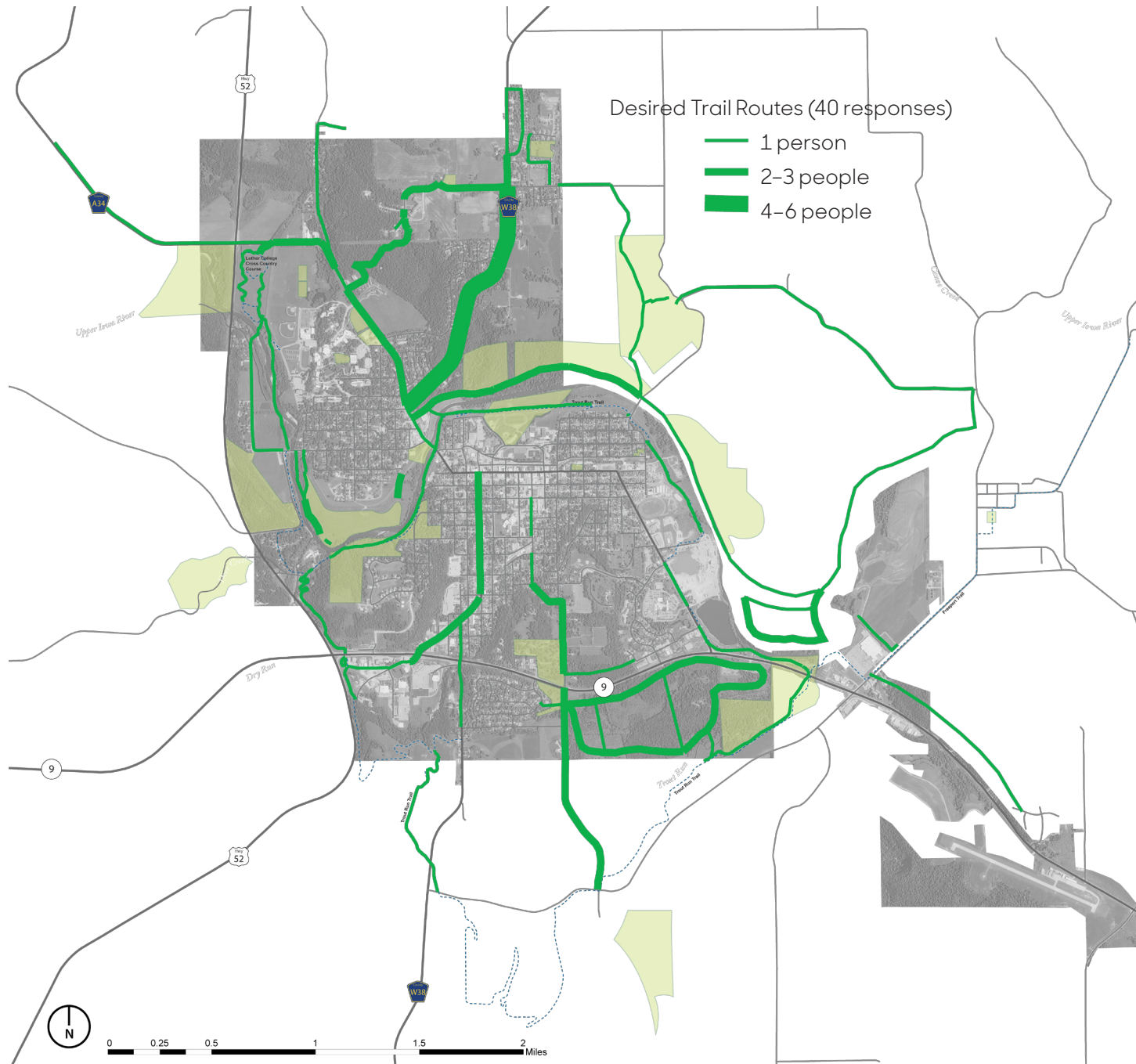
Where People Bike

This map shows the biking routes identified by 76 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are used is depicted by their thickness, with most frequently used routes being the thickest. Trout Run Trail within town is the most popular biking route. Some people bike the city streets, especially 5th Avenue. A few people bike around the Luther College campus, and some bike along Ice Cave Road to Quarry Hill Road.

Why They Go That Way



On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their biking experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Among Decorah participants, connections are more important than conditions/elements, with mean values of 3.8 and 3.4, respectively. In terms of connections, access to trails is most important with a mean value of 4.5. Other factors (4.3) are the most important elements, and include water fountains, surface conditions, existence of dedicated bike lanes, hills, and access to parks. Seasonal beauty is also an important element to cyclists (4.2).

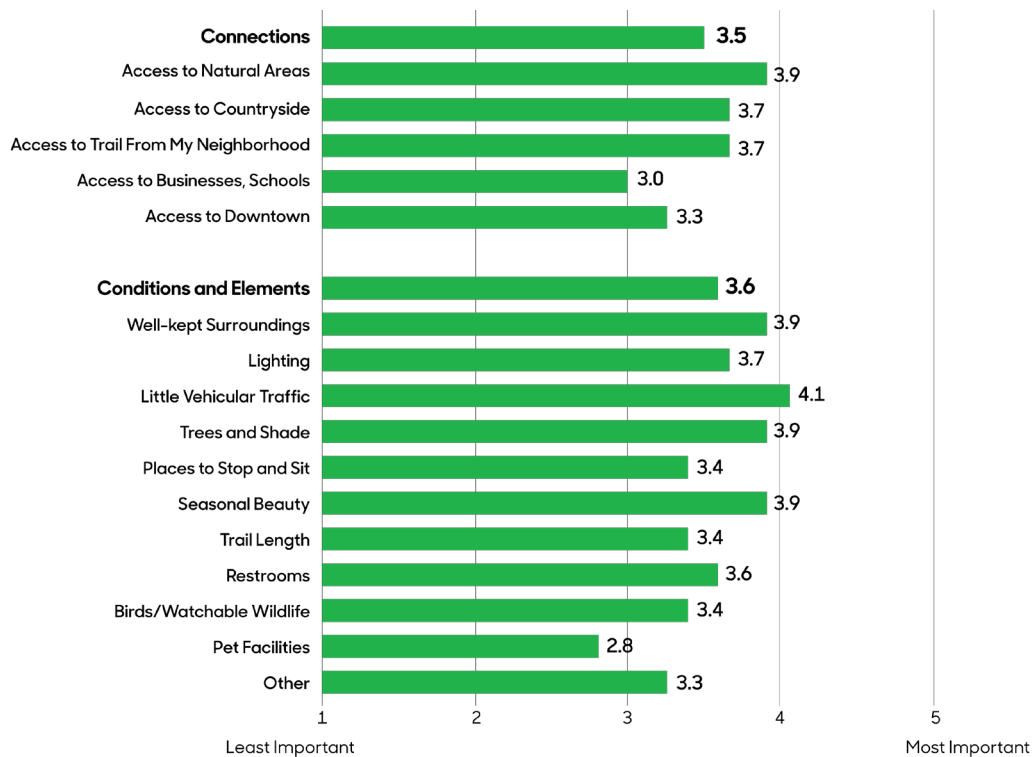


Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," <http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislib/>.

Where People Want Trails

This map shows the desired trail routes identified by 40 survey respondents. The frequency that the routes are identified is depicted by their thickness, with most frequently identified routes being the thickest. The most popular location for a trail among survey respondents is along Locust Road. Ice Cave Road, Mechanic Street, and Ravine Street and Pleasant Avenue to Trout Run Road are also desired trail routes.

What Trail Features Are Important



On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important, survey participants ranked the characteristics and features that made their trail experience better. These features are categorized as either "connections" or "conditions and elements." Among Decorah participants, connections and conditions/elements are of similar importance, with mean values of 3.5 and 3.6, respectively. In terms of connections, access to natural areas is most important with a mean value of 3.9. Little vehicular traffic is the most important element (4.1), followed by well-kept surroundings, trees and shade, and seasonal beauty (3.9 each). Other factors include separation from motorized traffic and well paved, wide surfaces.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Iowa State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a US veteran. Inquiries can be directed to the Director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, 3210 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-7612.