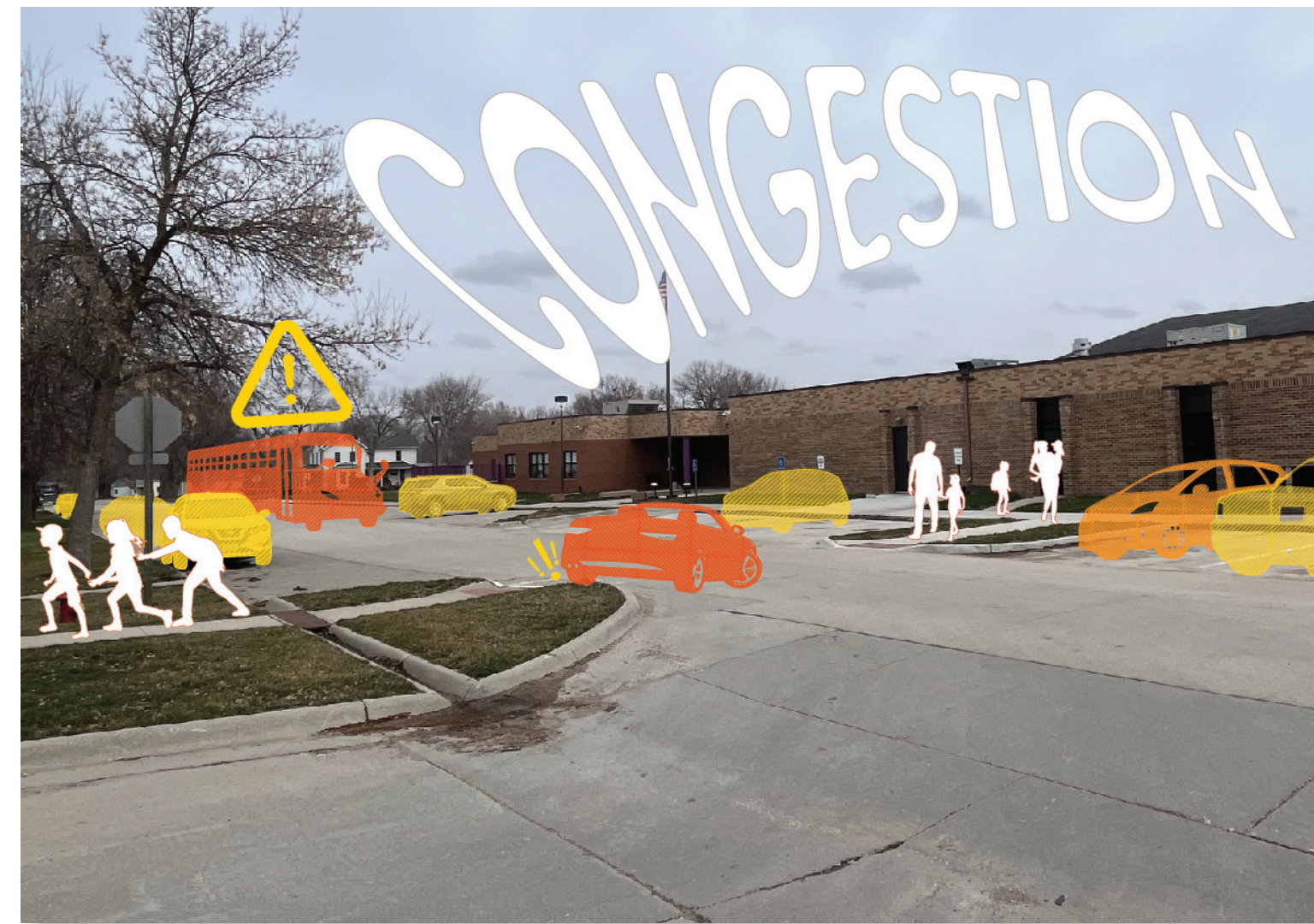




Wide sidewalks and ample parking make historic downtown Dow City convenient to visit.



Fast traffic makes crossing difficult on School Street, and the narrow roadway and limited parking is challenging at school pickup and drop-off times.



The Dow House is a historic landmark where people can take pleasure in a quiet stroll and take in scenic views of the Boyer River valley.



Highway 30 has little pedestrian infrastructure and high-speed traffic, which can make crossing precarious.



The Dow City Park is a popular destination for residents of all ages because of the plentiful amenities and smooth walking loop.



Myrtle Street's sidewalks are heavily worn and incomplete, forcing people to walk in the roadway.

What Factors Affect Transportation in Dow City?

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 Dow City, 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 Dow City'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 Dow City residents with different transportation needs to participate in focus groups. A total of 43 residents attended Dow City's workshop. Participants were separated into five user groups and the Dow City 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.



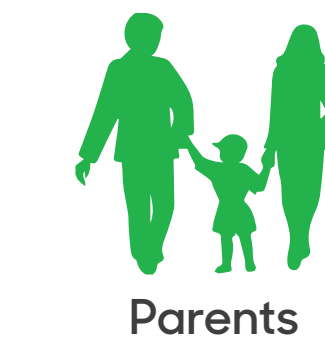
(2 participants): This user group is directly affected by accessibility barriers such as high curbing and uneven sidewalks that make it difficult to operate mobility-aiding equipment effectively. Handicapped parking, curb ramps, and smooth surfaces are critical transportation features.



(7 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.



(15 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.



(3 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.

"I love the Dow House. I take the dogs up there, and nobody else is around so it's really nice to let them [run]... it's beautiful up there."

"[We] could put a bridge over [or a tunnel under] Highway 30 so when people want to walk to the gas station, they don't have to walk across the highway...Even [just a]...painted [crosswalk]...that went across Highway 30...[would be helpful]."

"...Logan Street [doesn't] have any stop signs, so we have the issue of people driving really fast...[they] turn off Highway 30...and then...go all the way south [without having to stop]...[cars] just fly...we call it the raceway."



Actives

"...if there was a path [around the outside of town that]...was like the [one in the] park—wide and flat and in good condition—I would think almost every single person would use that for biking and walking."

"That Howard [St] crossing [on Highway 30] over to the gas station...that's the main [issue]...you should see [the] little [kids] try to run across there sometimes. I mean, it's scary."

"The park is nice [to walk around] because...they just put [the] sidewalk in a few years ago...[and] it goes all the way around the park."

"I like [biking near] the Dow House... you can ride up [the hill on S Prince St], and then ride back down...It's fun to go down...the hills...because you go faster."



Youth

"...Highway [30 has] a lot of [cars], and it [feels] really [unsafe] to get across the street...to get to the gas station... If you see a car then you have to [wait]...When there [are] no cars, you just run."

"If you're not looking where you're walking, then you're probably going to trip [on most of the sidewalks in town]."

"The hill [on Prince St] is [in] pretty bad [condition]. There [are] a lot of cracks. They tried to fix...[them but it didn't] work."

"...the park has a wonderful sidewalk all the way around it...[it's] so wide, and it's so nice to walk with your child right beside you."

"My children think I'm mean because I didn't let them cross [Highway 30] for the longest time...you [have to] treat them liked toddlers. Like, 'Okay. People are going to be going 50 miles an hour. Hold onto my hand.'"

"It would be awesome if we could do an actual walking path... in a perfect world...it [could be] connected to the school, to the park, and then...out to the cemetery..."

"I know there [are] a lot of people [who] have complained that people walk in the streets...I mean, we don't really have an option to not walk in the street because...so many streets [don't have] sidewalks."



Parents

"Usually pickup or drop-off at school is really congested...there [are] two or three spots... for all 20 [parents]...the [School St] crosswalk is also right [behind the parent parking spaces]. So it kind of makes me nervous backing up looking for...kids crossing."

"...we do have a lot of people [who] walk around the park...and I'm really glad to see that, but the thing that we're missing is [lighting.] A lot of people do walk at night...It'd be nice to have lights around our park."

"...[cars need to] slow down [on School St] because...kids are [constantly crossing the street] to play...we need slow-down signs or something. You wouldn't believe how fast people come by there."

"...people park [at the gas station] from the [no parking sign] to the highway...it can be pretty scary sometimes pulling out of there [onto Hwy 30 because] you [have] to pull out quite a ways [to see]."

"There...could be a walking path [to] the Dow House... [on Prince St]...[and] around [the Dow House]. That would be...an additional spot for people [to walk]."



Older Adults

"Right on this corner [of School and Park Sts] they put [a bump-out]...in for the kids to be able to... see [to cross]...[it made the road] too narrow... for two vehicles to go through there...[it's hard] to [navigate] that corner."

"It's hard...because there aren't that many places to get up on the sidewalk...there [are] places all over town that I have to go around, because [there are not ramps]... I can't go up them."

"I can't get from the street into the [baseball] field...and that would be [the same for] anybody [who's using a cane or [has any mobility issues]...From the street to get into the field, there's no... handicapped access."

"...they just started... keeping the sidewalk clear at the park in the wintertime...It is [nice], because I [can still] walk my dog."

"...we have one [handicapped parking space downtown]... That would be something [we need more of because] there's always somebody parking in it."



Mobility Challenged

"I...think it would be fun to see some flowers up in the park...I [would] just like to see some more color...stick a flower wherever there's ground...Just flower it up..."

"[On] all four [roads coming] into town... [speeding is] an issue...They're doing five, ten, fifteen over the speed limit..."

"...it would be great if we had a [trail] at least around the perimeter of the town for walkers. There [are] so many people [who] walk."

"...if we could find a safe way to cross [Highway 30] that would be a priority...I see kids on bikes [crossing the highway] to get ice cream in the summertime, and we have semis flying through town...It's terrifying."

"One of the greatest things for the town... where people truly can just go and feel safe has been the park...kids can play. You can walk. The park has been such a positive addition with that sidewalk going all the way around."



Steering Committee

"...I would like...better parking for parents near...the school...there [are] only three or four spots for parents to drop off their kids, and then you are literally backing out into the designated walkway for kids..."

Dow City

What People Said

Transportation Assets and Barriers Analysis
 Julia Badenhop, Sandra Oberbroeckling, Britney Markhardt
 Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation



User Types



Actives



Mobility Challenged



Older Adults



Youth



Parents



Steering Committee

Valued Destinations, Activities, and Qualities

Undesirable Qualities and Features

Most Desired Improvements and Activities

Dow City Park	Downtown	Dow House	Scenic & Well-kept Surroundings	Visibility Issues	Absence of Lighting	Challenges Crossing Highway 30	Speeding Traffic	Traffic-flow Issues at the School	Inadequate Sidewalk Infrastructure	Complete, ADA-Compliant Sidewalks	Trail Development	Highway 30 Crossing	Additional Lighting	Address Traffic Flow & Parking at the School
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Actives walk, bike and drive. This group would like a dog park and a workout park or trail in town to provide additional recreation options to residents. Actives described the playground at the school as "fabulous." They also appreciate the patio at the community center.

Mobility-challenged individuals drive and use electric wheelchairs. They applaud the street-level, handicapped-accessible to the community center. This group would benefit from handicapped access to the baseball field so they can enjoy games with family and friends.

Older adults drive vehicles and golf carts and walk in town. This group finds it challenging to enter and exit several downtown businesses in a wheelchair. They would like to see a mural on one of the downtown buildings similar to the murals in Dunlap, as well as "Children at Play" signs on Logan St.

Youth walk, run, and ride bikes around town. Older youth also drive. They would like electric bike stations where people could rent e-bikes. Youth are intimidated by the width of US 30 and think it should be divided into two roads. They also want metal fencing along the highway to keep vehicles from going into the ditch.

Parents walk and drive. They are primarily concerned with the safety of their children. This group wants the roads repaved so people can rollerblade or skateboard safely. Parents proposed a trail following Scatter Branch Creek through town to create a connection to nature.

Steering committee members walk and drive. This group wants more trees throughout town to help relieve some of the summer heat. Committee members value the drainage ditches for their ability to slow traffic in parts of town. They aren't comfortable biking longer distances due to high traffic on the streets leading out of Dow City.

Dow City Park is popular among all user types. People enjoy the mature trees and walking on the wide, well-maintained and accessible looped path. Additionally, there are benches, a splash pad, and fun activities such as gaga ball and basketball for kids and adults. Residents of all ages like the aesthetics of Dow City's downtown, which features flowers and seasonal holiday decor. Wide sidewalks and ample parking improve the area's functionality. Downtown thrives with activity and is particularly charming during the Christmas season. The Dow House is a pleasant place to walk and people enjoy taking in scenic views of the Boyer River valley and letting their dogs run in the spacious grassy area. Older adults mentioned the historical significance of this landmark. Parents commented on the plentiful parking available. Scenic, well-kept surroundings are important to adults. Residents appreciate the attractive trees and flower in Dow City Park, downtown and at the Dow House. Older adults talked about the beautiful autumn foliage at the trailer court. Several areas present visibility challenges for drivers. The awkward angle of the intersection of Logan St and US 30 blocks sight lines for turning vehicles. Multiple groups around Dow City Park's trail make the park unusable after dark. Many streets in town, including Logan and Boyer Sts, among others, are devoid of streetlights. Heavy, high-speed traffic, wide crossing distance, and the lack of designated crosswalks along US 30 pose safety concerns for both drivers and pedestrians, especially for parents are reluctant to let their children cross the road alone. Both youth and adults raised the issue of speeding in town especially by drivers entering on US 30 and County Rd 850 and M14. Speeding traffic on School St, especially exacerbated by the absence of speed-limit signs. Limited parking, a narrow road caused by intersection to traffic-flow problems at the school. People worry about bump-outs, buses, and heavy machinery all contribute backing their cars into the school. People worry about it hard for people with mobility challenges to navigate town. Participants in every focus group expressed a desire for uniform sidewalk infrastructure ensuring sidewalks are level and handicapped accessible. There was also a call for adding sidewalks along roads that don't have them. Several groups support developing of wide, smooth walking trails communitywide. Residents would like a perimeter trail that connects popular destinations such as the cemetery, the school, City Park, and the Dow House. Parents are particularly interested in nature trails. A safe pedestrian crossing along US 30 is a priority among residents of all ages. Suggestions included a designated crossing with flashing lights at the intersection of US 30 and Howard St and a bridge over US 30 to completely separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic. Multiple groups advocated for additional lighting to improve night use and security throughout town. Specific locations where more lighting is needed include Dow City Park, at the baseball field, and along Logan and Boyer Streets. Residents had a number of ideas for solving the traffic-flow and parking problems at the school, including constructing a bypass for County Rd M14 around the school, adding off-street parking for parents, and creating a safer route for kids to walk home from school.

Dow City Emerging Themes

Transportation Assets and Barriers Analysis

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