



Grand Avenue offers pedestrians a shady tree canopy and engaging architecture, along with all new sidewalks and street surfaces.



Eighteenth Street is littered with large cracks and potholes that create precarious conditions for drivers and pedestrians crossing the street.



Main Street's wide sidewalks, accessible curb cuts, and smooth roadway accommodate both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.



Noisy, speedy traffic and no sidewalks pose a threat to pedestrians walking in the right-of-way to reach stores such as Walmart and Hy-Vee.



People enjoy walking along the well-maintained paths in Rand Park and taking in the beautiful scenery.



Wide intersections and the absence of vegetation and shade make downtown Main Street an uninviting landscape.

## What Factors Affect Transportation in Keokuk?

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 Keokuk, 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 Keokuk'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 Keokuk residents with different transportation needs to participate in focus groups. A total of 55 residents attended Keokuk's workshop. Participants were separated into five user groups and the Keokuk steering committee.



Actives

**(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.



Mobility Challenged

**(3 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

**(21 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

**(6 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

**(6 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 like to run a lot...[but] our streets are so bad. If I go running at night and I don't have basically a flare gun, you're going to break your ankle because [the sidewalks are] terrible... if you had some kind of trail system where you could get to at least main areas...that would be awesome..."


"Walking down along the river, you can watch the barges and the tugs...and there's always waterfowl down there...And I enjoy being able to do it with people... so having bad or really narrow sidewalks complicates that."

"...if you want to walk someplace [where] you're not going to trip, National Cemetery is the place to go..."

"...the best [route] to run and bike around here is to take Mississippi River Road out [of town]... there's actually...a shoulder that's wide enough to either run or bike out there."

"The length of the trail is important to me. So often they put in a quarter mile's... or a half mile's worth of trail...it's just not worth it."

**Youth**



"We [walk] to Rand Park a lot...from near the [high] school...and it's easy to get there physically, but it also [feels] really [unsafe] at night because there [are] no lights along the way."


"...a lot of parks [other than] Bentley's Park don't have wheelchair-accessible areas...There [are] a lot of disabled kids [who] can't... go to [another] park and... might get bored at Bentley's Park because they've been there so many times."

"...the high school's sidewalk is pretty nice...it's good for walking so you don't trip."

"[I would like] more hiking trails because I go hiking a lot... somewhere where there's lots of nature and it's really pretty."

"[Grand Avenue] is a pretty good street to me...the roads are smoother. [The] sidewalks are smoother and the houses and the yards are nicer."

**Parents**



"[Space is] really tight around [George Washington Elementary] School...Especially at pickup time. The cars are backed up all the way [down] another block and around the corner blocking the street...It's hard to see...[traffic flow is] not good...around that school because...there's no parking lot..."

"...they really did do a good job on Grand Avenue when they...put in all new sewers...they put in great sidewalks... from Rand Park down to...Triangle Park...And they preserved so many of the trees...It's good for driving and for walking, and it's still attractive."

"...[the] sidewalks [on 8th St] are buckled...and so that makes it difficult for [pushing] strollers, or if a kid is going to take a scooter to school, they have to go in the street."

"...[The Indian Hills] neighborhood...[and the] trailer court [are] full of children, and they are walking on the highway to get anywhere."

"...I...would love to see the biggest possible [trail] loop that you could fit at Tolmie [Park] so that people could walk around...[and] I would love to see more sidewalks that connect to the parks...[because] people are wanting to walk and ride their bikes and take their kids to the parks, but you...have to drive there or be in the street."

**Older Adults**



"...there [is] some low-rent housing out on Johnson Street Road...those people have little children, and they are pushing strollers and having one by the hand, and there [are] no sidewalks at all."

"I would really like to see a walking trail in a well-populated area...Perhaps in Tolmie Park...I think it would be wonderful... [there's] already parking in Tolmie Park, and there is the possibility space-wise to do it."

"...we have all kinds of speculation about [working] with the SEIBUS to have a regular route that ran four times a day around town... they had four stops around town... people could ride it for [a fare] or they could buy a pass...it could help the students and the rest of the community as well..."

"A lot of people walk down Grand Avenue...it's a pleasant neighborhood...and you have trees and landscaping and...a river view...It has a [relatively new] sidewalk all the way up and down it."

"...if we could get a bicycle path [to McCredie Park]... for the Little League kids...we could keep them off [Hwy 218 and] they could ride their bike out to their ball games."

**Mobility Challenged**



"...if I cannot navigate my way to a walking trail successfully, it might as well not exist...I would almost argue connectivity is more important than the trail itself..."

"...this is a really old town, so [in] lots of [places there] are really old sidewalks... Or no sidewalks... And that's an even bigger problem..."

"The sidewalks are very poorly maintained and there [are] a lot of big cracks in them, and there [are] also a lot of places where they veer off in one direction and then another direction...which can be a nightmare to travel with a mobility cane..."

"[I walk] mostly [for] exercise. I do enjoy listening to nature, but also just listening to the sound of the town."

"It would be lovely to see... some form of public transit that would facilitate greater independence."

**Steering Committee**



"I would say Grand Avenue is an asset to the community...it's extremely wide... [The] sidewalks are new. [The] architecture is very beautiful...the sidewalks are shaded."

"My wish...would be...to get some...trails or sidewalks from somewhere on Plank Road...out to the ballparks for kids to be able to...[get to] McCredie and even Joyce [Park]."

"...there [are] no sidewalks [on Johnson Street Road]... So you will see [a lot] of...individuals...pushing [strollers]...in the roadway."

"I do frequently ride my bike out to Aldi's or Hy-Vee...but it's really not...handy to get to at all...because... you're on the street; there's a lot of traffic."

"I would change the streetscape of the downtown...I would make it a three lane... with bike lanes...and I would add trees and [another] green space."

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

	Rand Park	Grand Avenue	Access to Natural Areas	National & Oakland Cemeteries	Downtown Main Street	Gaps in Connectivity for Walkers/Cyclists	Inadequate Sidewalk Infrastructure	Deplorable Roadway Conditions	Flooding/ Drainage Issues	High-speed, Heavy Traffic	Local Trail System	Bike Infrastructure	Roadway Infrastructure Improvements	Contiguous Sidewalk Network	Public Transportation
--	-----------	--------------	-------------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------	---	------------------------------------	-------------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	--------------------	---------------------	-------------------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------

Actives	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mobility Challenged	●		●		●	●	●	●		●	●			●	●
Older Adults	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Youth	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	
Parents	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Steering Committee	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Actives drive, walk, bike, and run. They consider the best route for running and biking is the Mississippi River Road out of town because it has a shoulder and is well cleared during winter. Middle Road is also popular for scenery and its challenging hills. This group thinks a plank bridge across the Mississippi River would be a nice attraction.

Mobility-challenged individuals walk, drive, or ride with someone else. Smooth sidewalks with straight intersection crossings and functional stoplights are important to them. This group suggested a trail for walkers only, along with downtown sidewalks made from a distinctive material that could be felt underfoot.

Older adults drive, walk, bike, and run. This group is bothered by high winds throughout town, especially along the river, because there are no windbreaks. They feel safest walking in open, public places with other people close by, and would like a multi-generational trail in a well-populated area.

Youth walk, bike, ride on the bus or with parents, ride scooters, and run. Older youth also drive. This group appreciates the handicapped-accessible Bentley's Playground and want more accessible play options for kids. They like biking down long hills; as one child said "We take our feet off the pedals. And it's what makes us look like a butterfly..."

Parents walk, drive and bike. This group is primarily concerned for the safety of their children. They are frustrated by traffic flow and congestion during pickup and drop-off times at George Washington Elementary. Parents were vocal about the need to replace the sound wall between Highway 218 and Indian Hills for safety reasons.

Steering committee members drive, walk, and bike. They think that the downtown streetscape has too much concrete and not enough greenery. Committee members would like "bike school buses" or cycling programs to get kids to walk and bike to school instead of being driven short distances.

Rand Park is a popular destination among all user types. People enjoy walking and biking its roads and paths, while taking in "gorgeous views" of the river, strolling through the flower garden and connecting with nature. Youth like playing disc golf and skateboarding there. The wide roadway, smooth sidewalks, trees, historical architecture, and Grand Avenue south of Rand Park a great route for walking and driving. Actives feel safe running there because it has the best sidewalks in town.

Residents of all ages take pleasure in experiencing nature, including watching waterfowl at the riverfront hunting for geodes in Soap Creek, gathering wildflowers, picking berries, and bird-watching. Some people simply delight in walking, running, biking or relaxing in shaded areas. Adults enjoy walking and biking in the National and Oakland Cemeteries because both are beautiful, quiet places with little vehicular traffic. Parents consider the cemeteries as safe places for their kids to go, while active people frequently walk and bike in the National and downtown area, which has wide, flat sidewalks, quiet planters, and green spaces add to the appeal. Both adults and youth appreciate the conveniently located shops.

All groups named gaps in connectivity for non-vehicular traffic as a serious concern. There are no sidewalks or bike lanes to the apartments on Johnson Street, or to Wal-Mart, McCredie Park and many other places are also disconnected. Broken, narrow, and overgrown sidewalks throughout town are vexing to all demographic groups. Examples cited during the focus groups include sidewalks on Orleans Avenue, Blondeau Street, 8th Street near George Washington Elementary, Concert Street, and Middle Road, to name a few.

Residents consider deteriorating roadways the bane of their existence, describing them as "bumpy," "rutted," "cracked," and "narrow," among other things. Some of the streets named include those in the Indian Hills and West K neighborhoods, and all the streets from 7th Street to the river.

Participants in several focus groups talked about drainage issues that cause flooding or standing water on many streets, often mentioning the intersections of 11th and Main Streets and 6th and Johnson Streets, as well as Concert Street, as being susceptible to flooding.

High-speed, heavy traffic—particularly along Main Street and streets adjacent to George Washington Elementary—pose safety concerns for all groups. People said that drivers speed up on Main Street to avoid red lights. Parents blamed the lack of walkability for traffic density in residential areas. Participants in all focus groups are eager to have a trail system in town and had many ideas for trail connections. Connecting the local parks, the cemeteries, schools, and shopping areas was a popular notion. Older adults and parents lobbied for a trail within Tolmie Park.

Committee members, older adults, parents, and actives want infrastructure to support cyclists, including bike lanes along the Main Street corridor to McCredie Park and bike racks to the cemeteries and the parks along with bike racks and signs to alert drivers that bikes are allowed on the roads. Pedestrian connections, especially to the retailers north of downtown, the more "remote" residential areas, and parks such as Tolmie and McCredie, are a high priority for all user types. Fixing existing and adding new sidewalks throughout town was a common suggestion.

Although Keokuk is served by SEIBUS, adult residents feel constrained by its limited availability, and would like a public transportation system that has a regular schedule, is open to all residents, and is affordable. The parents group suggested resurrecting the trolley system along Main Street.

# Keokuk Emerging Themes

## Transportation Assets and Barriers Analysis

Julia Badenhop, Sandra Oberbroeckling, Britney Markhardt

Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation

