



People appreciate the scenic views, plentiful amenities, well-maintained and walkable paths, and mature tree canopy at Waukon City Park.



Waukon's Downtown has limited protection from the elements, and the street is cracked and has insufficient parking to accommodate the heavy traffic.



The historic downtown of Main Street features wide sidewalks, plentiful parking, and various amenities, including lighting, flower pots, and trash cans.



First Avenue SW's narrow roadway is prone to fast-moving traffic, and access to the sidewalk is often impeded by parked cars and seasonal flooding.



The Five Bridges Trail is well used because of its smooth path, ease of access, and close connection to natural features.



Fourth Street SE is a common walking route, but fast traffic, a narrow roadway, and scant pedestrian infrastructure make walkers feel unsafe.

What Factors Affect Transportation in Waukon?

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 Waukon, 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 Waukon'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 Waukon residents with different transportation needs to participate in focus groups. A total of 50 residents attended Waukon's workshop. Participants were separated into five user groups and the Waukon steering committee.



Actives

(5 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

(4 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

(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.



Youth

(17 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

(9 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'd like to see a trail system that connects...the golf course to the city park, cemetery, Five Bridges Trail, up to the wellness center...so that you could get on a trail and not just walk, but actually go somewhere."

"There's an old railroad right-of-way that runs... along [Paint Creek], and eventually...all the way down to the Mississippi. Boy, if that were a trail for biking or hiking, it would be really cool."

"So one of the faves [for walking] is going around the golf course, which could really benefit from a sidewalk...it's a nice long stretch...and it loops around."

"[I know people who] would...come in their... cars, and then they would walk around the path at the cemetery... it's quiet in there, and... there's not traffic."

"...most of the time I walk in the street... it's safer, because the sidewalks are upheaved and...there [are] many [streets] that do not have sidewalks..."



Youth


"I would like sidewalks because a lot of my friends live on [side] roads and there [are] not a lot of sidewalks. Some of my friends live [east of the golf course], and there [are] not [any] sidewalks."

"By East [Elementary]... there's one sidewalk...[on 2nd Ave NW that] is all cracked up...a lot of kids use it...because a lot of kids walk to school."

"Main Street is...where everything to do is. It has sidewalks to walk on. And it has garbage cans [with Waukon Indians branding] along the sidewalks too..."

"[We need] more crosswalks...[at] the soccer fields, there's only one crosswalk [on 13th St NW and]...a lot of people jaywalk."

"I like to walk around. There's a nice long trail. It's the Five-Bridge[s] Trail... it loops around a little bit..."



Parents

"...we walk because we can walk to the library, we can do downtown, we can go to Aztec, [but we] cannot get from the south side to the north side [of Main St] because we don't have any stop signs, even for school kids..."

"[We should] develop [the water retention area] into a tallgrass native prairie... You could put a pathway through [it]...so kids [who] want to go up to school could walk through a native area, natural area."

"...there are people [who] walk [the golf course loop] day and night...it's probably the most popular walking route in town..."

"...on 13th St [NW], we have...all of our soccer fields and all of that, and there's no sidewalk anywhere...you have kids and parents all the time there..."



Older Adults


"Well, the condition of the sidewalks is very poor. A lot of them are cracked and you can't even walk on them...It's pretty much all over the main area in town...I walk on the street when I walk..."

"...there are constantly people walking on [the street around the golf course] the wrong way, and...There's no other place for them to walk other than on the highway."

"[11th Ave SW is] a fairly new road that they put decorative lights in. The street lighting is beautiful there at night, I think. You get the reflection off the pond..."

"...people walk a lot [at] the cemetery... The streets are good [and] they're paved... And it's quiet...And [it has] mature trees."

"I'd like to see...more parking for our hospital... [When] you drive in front of that hospital, and you've got cars [angle] parked...It's hard for two cars to get through there at the same time."



Mobility Challenged

"A very popular spot for walking is the cemetery... We drove and walked that many times. It's nice and flat...[it's] less crowded... you don't have to worry about traffic...You'll see kids learning to ride bikes..."

"...a lot of people will walk [the golf course loop], and it [doesn't seem safe]...people drive faster than they should...it's a nice walk... but they need sidewalk around there."

"...we go [to City Park] a lot and we walk...they put... walking paths in on... the south side...right beside the pond..."

"...to get places to park and then find a spot [where] they can get over the curbs to get those wheelchairs up on the sidewalk is a challenge...[So you have] to go down [the] block...to get to the corner..."

"[When] you're parking on the streets or downtown...it's hard... there is not a lot of handicapped parking around Waukon."



Steering Committee

"I would like to see...a recreation-type of trail that joined...Waukon and Lansing or Waukon and Decorah or both...that would kind of hook up to what we do have in Waukon too. I think that would help bring people to Waukon."

"...a lot of [the sidewalks] are trip hazards, and I think that's why a lot of people walk on the streets...the sidewalk might be fine, but then you go down 10 feet and it's going to be really poor."

"...there are walking trails [at the park], and so you don't have to worry about so much getting hit by a car, just because it's not that busy."

"I would say visibility is difficult coming out of cross [streets], when the streets [downtown] are fully parked."

"[I want] safety...which means everything from a level walking field to visibility to...not [having] cars right next to you...that actually there's some separation."

Waukon

What People Said

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



User Types	Valued Destinations, Activities, and Qualities					Undesirable Qualities and Features					Most Desired Improvements and Activities				
	Waukon City Park	Five Bridges Trail	Waukon Cemetery	Scenic Views	Golf Course Loop	Inadequate Sidewalk Infrastructure	Narrow & Deteriorating Roadways	Winter Weather Challenges	Insufficient Parking	Visibility Issues	Sidewalk Improvements	Multituse Trail System	Additional Trees & Vegetation	Increased Connectivity	Additional Transportation Safety Measures
Actives	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mobility Challenged	●		●	●	●	●		●	●		●				
Older Adults	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Youth	●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Parents	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			●	●		●	●
Steering Committee	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Active adults primarily walk and drive. This group laments the fact that the nicest sidewalks seem to be on the busiest streets, and they don't like walking close to vehicular traffic. Actives like going to the airport to fly kites with their kids and walk their dogs. They appreciate the businesses on W Main St but find the area visually unappealing.

Mobility-challenged individuals walk, drive, and use public transportation. Wide, smooth surfaces are important to this group. They noted that some of the handicapped parking spaces downtown are not located close to curb ramps. This group would like more handicapped-accessible parking throughout town.

Older adults primarily walk and drive to local destinations. This group is concerned about how people walking the golf course loop have to contend with parked cars, vehicular traffic, and golf carts because of the absence of a sidewalk. They want more lighting in town and like the new streetlights on 11th Ave SW.

Youth walk, bike, ride scooters, and ride the school bus. Older youth also drive. This group likes the new equipment in the Elementary School Park. They want a dog park, as well as a place for kids to hang out (e.g., trampoline park, climbing wall, go-cart track).

Parents travel through town by walking, biking, and driving. This group is concerned for the safety of their children. Parents suggested having bike rentals at the airport so visitors could bike downtown. They also would like to see the proposed water retention area developed as a native prairie with a hiking trail.

Steering committee members walk, bike, drive, and use public transportation to get around town. This group would like more green spaces in the community. Committee members said that it's hard to bike in town because of the hills and the fact that there are no places to leave bikes.

Waukon City Park is popular among all user types. People like the mature trees, the pond, the campground paved road and paths are great for walking. During the winter, the park is used for sledding, snowshoeing and skiing. Both adults and youth enjoy Five Bridges Trail. Older adults and actives appreciate the trail's scenic views and convenient, and they like to dip their feet in the creek near the trail during the summer. Adults consider the Waukon Cemetery a nice place to walk because it has a level, paved path. Walkers enjoy the mature trees and the quiet, welcoming environment. People in the mobility-challenged group said they see sunrises and sunsets from the airport. Actives like the views from the airport. Actives like the views in Northgate. Participants in all groups identified scenic views as important to them when walking. Older adults appreciate scenic views as mobility-challenged group noted the "incredible" views of 1st Ave SE, 4th St SE, 7th Ave SE and Rossville Rd. Actives described the loop as "a nice long stretch." Broken, narrow and missing sidewalks are vexing to all user types. For example, the loop for the beautiful both adults and kids to walk on busy streets. The ubiquitous broken sidewalks make it hard to bike or push a stroller. People of all ages talk about the rutted or potholed streets. Several winter weather challenges were identified including icy areas such as 3rd Ave NW by the schools and along the curb is a nuisance to both drivers and walkers. Parents noted that the City Park road is not cleared in winter. Parking problems—whether too few spaces or poor physical condition—were cited by residents, who noted that there is limited parking downtown overall and on Main St from the school to intersections and complex, and the fairgrounds don't have enough parking. People noted that visibility—primarily at intersections and sidewalks—is impeded by parked vehicles. Both drivers and pedestrians have trouble seeing oncoming traffic along the golf course loop and youth suggested more wider sidewalks to accommodate their varying needs. Developing a multi-use trail system that connects local destinations is popular across a number of user groups. The steering committee, actives and parents also want regional trails connecting Waukon to Decorah, as well as Waukon Junction and eventually the Mississippi River. Residents of all ages want more trees and vegetation throughout town, with a particular emphasis on the trees downtown. Youth requested shade structures or shrubs in parking lots to make them more attractive. Better connectivity for all modes of travel is a priority for adults and youth. Along with pedestrian/cyclist links to popular places, residents want better access to Northgate and a link to County Home Park. Youth want an additional egress on the north side of the high school. Parents, actives and youth are concerned about safe crossings particularly downtown and near the schools. Suggestions included controlling intersections, adding crosswalks, and reducing traffic speed along Main Street. Parents want a safe crossing from City Park to the cemetery.

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Emerging Themes

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