

Age-Friendly Maple Grove Transportation Recommendations Report

November 2020



I. Introduction

- The goal of the report is to provide helpful information that may inform future planning and investments while recognizing challenges in light of current conditions. (Page 1)

II. Landscape of Mobility Options: This section discusses various transportation services and modes of transport.

A. Point-to-Point Transportation

- Cities can partner with Uber to provide a low-fare option for users. City subsidies could be less than the cost of operating local transportation service. (Page 1-2)
- Mobility4All is a Minnesota-based transportation option that can provide door-through-door special services for residents with physical mobility issues. (Page 3-4)

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- Summary points and recommendations—which involve My Ride, Uber, and circulator buses—are detailed.

I. Introduction and Summary

This report, developed by the Age-Friendly Maple Grove Transportation Committee, intends to help inform the City of Maple Grove’s transportation planning for the next three years—bearing in mind the challenging circumstances wrought by 2020.

Age-Friendly Maple Grove (AF MG) is a City-sponsored, community driven effort to make Maple Grove, Minnesota, a better place to grow older. Led by a cross-sector group of community volunteers and professionals from various sectors, the City of Maple Grove has been a member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities¹ since 2016. The network’s program is organized around eight domains of livability, one of which is Transportation. AF MG is a partner, resource, and ally of the City of Maple Grove, and respectfully presents this report to help the City advance its commitment to making Maple Grove a place where residents can remain active and engaged in later life.

The creation of this recommendations report is part of AF MG’s three-year action plan, which guides the initiative’s work for 2019-2021. Developed by AF MG’s Transportation Committee, the report provides information about transportation options that the City might consider to help it become a more livable community, especially for older residents.

We recognize and applaud the City’s stated commitment to providing a variety of transportation options for the community as a core part of social and environmental resilience, economic competitiveness, healthy neighborhoods, and active living.

This report also builds on a 2019 [Transportation Audit²](#), developed by the same team, which examined all available modes of transportation in Maple Grove at that time, and provided some analysis of strengths and key gaps related to how well older adults are able to get around the community. Below is a summary of the assets and gaps identified in the audit:

KEY ASSETS	PRIMARY GAPS
My Ride and Maple Grove Transit	Lack of on-demand service
Metro Mobility	Limited service hours of existing services (hard to find evening or weekend transportation)
Extensive trail and sidewalk network	Few or no suitable modes of transport to Mpls and Saint Paul for non-drivers
Proximity of retail, restaurant, and service hubs to large clusters of relatively dense housing – i.e., walkability in the city core	Need for education and increased awareness of existing services and how to use them

¹ The World Health Organization launched the Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities in 2006. AARP now operates it in the US, where there are more than 485 member cities, counties, states, and territories.

² The Age-Friendly Maple Grove Transportation Audit (2019) is available on the Transportation page at www.agefriendlymaplegrove.org.

<p>Transportation provided to residents by senior housing communities</p>	<p>Cost: Publicly subsidized services are affordable for most people, but private services (e.g., taxis, Uber) that offer more flexibility are less so.</p>
<p>City of MG supports improving walkability and multi-modal transportation</p>	

This report provides a quite thorough analysis of many modes of transport—from electric bikes to light rail to Autonomous Vehicles—and their likely role in the Maple Grove’s short- and long-term planning. It also examines current and future transportation trends at the national and regional levels. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for the City of Maple Grove to consider as they make planning and funding decisions over the next few years.

Below is a summary of these recommendations:

- 1) **Continue to grow MY RIDE as a valued service for Maple Grove residents of all ages.** MY RIDE is the center piece of Maple Grove transportation. Further investment in this service can benefit the entire community. This may include:
 - a) Smaller bus fleet when feasible to accommodate point-to-point requests more economically.
 - b) Ensure that the service can be available to those most vulnerable or lack other options.

- 2) **Explore other economical point to point alternatives** that might be used by Maple Grove citizens, such as partnerships or contracts with
 - a) Uber
 - b) Mobility4All

- 3) **Explore the concept of a circulator bus.** As Covid-19 subsides and businesses return to normal, there may be an opportunity to execute at a later date.

- 4) **In partnership with the city of Maple Grove, formalize alignment of transportation plans and policies with broader city goals - ensuring that decisions are being guided by the city’s core values.**

II. Transportation: Future Opportunities

a. Introduction

Transportation is a core component of society. Much of how society functions depend on transportation to move people, goods, and services. While the transportation field is ever evolving, it has decidedly taken a turn with Covid-19 and social justice issues. While this report is geared to highlight new and different transportation options and strategies, the Age-Friendly Maple Grove team is respectful of the new reality of economic and other challenges that Covid-19 and social justice issues will bring to Maple Grove in the next few years. Our goal is to provide new ideas that may be useful in future planning but understand the execution of any new ideas in the near term may prove challenging.

b. Landscape of Mobility Options & Possibilities

1. Point to Point Transportation: Opportunities for Consideration in the Next Three Years

a) Uber Partnerships

Uber is a ride-sharing service in which private car owners hired by Uber provide on-demand rides to individuals who schedule and pay for the service through an application (app) on a smart phone.

Recently Uber has partnered with municipalities to provide this service to residents using vouchers that fix the passenger's rate, with the municipalities picking up the rest of the fee. A municipality may choose this arrangement as an alternative to paying for vehicles, drivers, insurance, maintenance, and fuel costs for a city-owned and -operated transit program. In some cases, the Uber relationship provides that critical and often elusive "last mile" service between home or job and major transit (bus or light rail) stops.

Vouchers

Uber transit vouchers are customizable by the local organization. The vouchers can be used only within the parameters set by the transit agency. They can be created in advance of requests, can be scaled to both the fee rate and the number of uses, and any geographic limits (within the city or to certain non-city destinations). They are simple for a user to download to a

smart phone, tablet, or computer. The vouchers are available at any time around the clock and any day of the week.

The voucher remains in the user's app until it is redeemed or expires.

The vouchers can be configured in a variety of ways, with different subsidies for different eligible user groups, or different times of day (i.e., better subsidies for off-peak times). The feedback from usage contributes to budget planning. Subsidies can be capped at a certain dollar amount.

The city pays only for vouchers used, not vouchers created.

Management

An Uber representative works with the city to customize vouchers and set up an Uber Central Dashboard, which gives the city a complete picture. There is no additional charge for Uber representative support.

The dashboard shows all voucher activity; past, present, and future. The dashboard can be a scheduling service in which the user can have the transit agency schedule rides and return pick-ups. It shows the number of riders that are waiting for pick-up, are in progress to destinations, and completed rides. The future rides feature shows rides scheduled in advance for an upcoming date.

Uber and the transit agency also have access to real-time data for number of users, times of day, days of the week, destinations, subsidy costs, and so on.

Note: There may be insurance and liability concerns when a public entity subsidizes or provides a voucher for an Uber or Lyft. Drivers may not have the insurance, training, vehicle maintenance, or clear a criminal background check, as opposed to a public transportation driver. These hurdles would need to be discussed and resolved.

Pros

- Voucher-subsidized Uber rides can be scheduled right away, any time of the day or day of the week.
- Vehicles and drivers are part of Uber, and do not have to be managed by the city.
- City owned or operated vehicles could be diverted from single-user scenarios to dedicated routes.
- Initial partnerships can be as short as six months.

Cons

- Immediate subsidy costs can be roughly predicted by current MyRide user data, but the actual costs will not be known until the program is in use.
- Users must have smart phones or use services such as ‘Go Go Grandparents’ to book the Uber.

b) Mobility4All: A Point to Point Service for Riders Who Want or Need More Care

Mobility4All is a relatively new transportation company that specializes in transportation for people who want or need more care and includes transport of a rider’s healthcare equipment. Mobility4All is a Minnesota-based ride service that specializes in providing hand-to-hand and door-through-door trips for people who need a higher level of care. It offers fully screened and specially trained drivers. Riders can schedule rides on-demand or in advance, and even request their favorite driver. Mobility4All provides real time updates and communication between the driver, rider, and caregiver.

Pricing is \$15 per ride or \$290 unlimited up to 7 miles for the year. The website and app allow rider to input their requirements—such as the need for a wheelchair-accessible vehicle, the need to transport an oxygen tank or service dog, and whether the rider has visual or hearing impairments. The City of Maple Grove may be interested in discussing a contract to supplement the good work of MY RIDE. <https://mobility4all.com/>

Pros

- Cost effective service that residents can book themselves.
- Serves people who need extra care.
- Appears to have a few financial options – either per ride or annual payment plans.
- A Minnesota-based company.

Cons

- New to the market. Only a brief track record.
- No weekend or evening service. (Service available only Monday-Friday, 8am-6pm.)

2. Walkability

Walkable communities promote health, foster a sense of connection and community among residents, and provide an overall sense of place and belonging that helps make a neighborhood livable for people of all ages and life stages. Sidewalks or walking paths separated from the roadway are the preferred accommodation for pedestrians. They provide many benefits including safety, mobility, and healthier communities. Recreational walking is one of the easiest ways for people to get the recommended allotment of physical exercise each day. Moderate exercise, such as walking, contributes to both physical and mental well-being.

Maple Grove has 55 miles of paved trails. Many of these trails pass through woods and around lakes providing an ideal walking environment. In addition to the trails, Maple Grove has approximately 145 miles of concrete sidewalks. Sidewalks have been required in all new subdivisions in Maple Grove since 1995. Money was set aside for neighborhoods built prior to that time that wish to have sidewalks added.

In the interest of better understanding Maple Grove's current walkability, Age-Friendly Maple Grove conducted a series of walking audits in summer and fall of 2020. For purposes of this report, downtown is defined by the area bound by Weaver Lake Road on the north and Elm Creek Blvd on the west and south, and Hemlock/Zachary to the east. Because downtown is the primary walking area in town, and there are four senior housing communities located in or on the edge of downtown, AFMG conducted the walking audits in the downtown and surrounding areas. The audit used forms and format developed by AARP, and a summary of the results is posted on the transportation page of the AF MG website (agefriendlymaplegrove.org). Results indicate that, overall, the downtown area is very friendly to walking, but crossing out of downtown is difficult for slower walkers or anyone with a disability due to many lanes of often heavy traffic. There is one pedestrian underpass at Weaver Lake Road and Jonquil Lane leading out of downtown, but more of these would increase walkability.

Overall, the walkability in Maple Grove is quite good and significantly better than what is found in many other suburban cities. The trail system is extensive, and the City is developing a plan to bring all sidewalks and curbs into ADA compliance, which will improve walkability. Getting from one shopping area to another is usually not walkable, so the other forms of transportation discussed in this report are meant to alleviate that problem.

Pros

- Maple Grove has a strong history of walkable neighborhoods.
- The City continues to invest in sidewalks and trails to improve walkability.

Cons

- Housing, business, and transportation only occur together in select areas and most of Maple Grove has been developed.
- Bringing services to residential areas may not be desired by the residents themselves.

3. Point to Multipoint Transportation: Opportunities for Consideration in the Next Three Years**a) Circulator Bus**

A circulator bus is a small or shuttle bus serving an area confined to a specific locale, such as a downtown area (downtown circulator) or suburban neighborhood, with connections to major traffic corridors. This may be a concept that Maple Grove could pursue as a supplement to MyRide.

Numerous suburban cities have partnered with nonprofit organizations to offer circulator bus services. The cities of Lakeville, West St. Paul, Cottage Grove, Edina, Hastings, and Stillwater work with nonprofit DARTS (Dakota Area Regional Transportation). They also have corporate sponsors such as local businesses who may get additional customers as a result of the service. The affordable all-you-can ride fare (ranging from \$2-\$5 per day) allows riders to get on and off along the continuous, one-hour route.

In general, the circulator runs one day a week, on a specific hourly schedule, between the hours of 10:00am and 3:00pm or 9:00am and 2:00pm. They have about 10 stops that include senior living communities, shopping areas, and medical offices. Some of the communities also have on-demand stops within 2 blocks of a scheduled stop.

Newtrax, a nonprofit group transportation provider, has also partnered with several cities—White Bear Lake, Vadnais Heights, Mahtomedi, Roseville, and Forest Lake—to offer weekly loops to shopping and other key destinations.

The AF MG Transportation Committee has not obtained any cost information on this service nor asked DARTS, Newtrax, or any other providers about potential partnership opportunities.. This would require City approval from appropriate City leaders.

Pros

- Fixed schedule is easy and convenient
- Serves people with disabilities or mobility limitations

- Potentially low cost to implement if MyRide buses are used
- Opportunities to partner with local businesses
- Opportunities to learn from numerous existing programs around the Twin Cities

Cons

- Harder to serve residents living in individual homes in the community; more targeted to multi-unit buildings.
- Cost to administer is unknown
- Cannot launch during COVID-19

b) Smaller Bus Options

As Maple Grove looks to accommodate riders at different times of the day, smaller groups of riders, or those with disabilities, smaller vehicles might be a good solution. Often there are single riders who need to travel only a short distance, or older riders who feel safer with a City service versus Uber or another private company. Investing in smaller buses might be a wise option for the City as older buses need to be replaced.

Pros

- Less costly than large buses
- Able to accommodate an individual or small group in a more cost-effective manner

Cons

- The smaller size might be a problem for larger group sizes.

c) Expansion of MY RIDE

MY RIDE is an advance reservation, shared-ride, curb-to-curb service available to the Maple Grove general public as well as to the City of Osseo, Hennepin Technical College, North Hennepin Community College and Starlight Transit Station. It is offered by the City of Maple Grove through Maple Grove Transit. A ride reservation is required to use MY RIDE. Reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis. Ride requests can be placed up to 14 days in advance. It is recommended that ride requests are made as early as possible. Same day ride requests will be granted as capacity allows. During the Covid-19 epidemic, MY RIDE has been affected by reduced ridership, but has picked up and delivered groceries to those requesting that service.

MY RIDE has been immensely popular. Many suburban communities do not offer a comparable service. With suburban transit rides oversubscribed pre-COVID, the longer wait times for users did cause some issues, particularly for older individuals. Interestingly, there was increased use of MY RIDE by youth needing afternoon transportation from school to sporting events. This demonstrates the broad value of and need for varied transportation options in the community. Unfortunately, this uptick in youth demand has limited capacity for older passengers at certain times of the day, particularly for those that have disabilities or have no other access to affordable transportation.

One solution has been to advocate for increased funding. The Suburban Transit Association has seen a ridership grown from 4.8 million to 5.2 million rides in past 10 years. It has asked the Legislature to restore nearly \$2 million in funding that was cut in previous years as well as revisiting the motor vehicle sales tax distribution. Budget challenges resulting from COVID-19 are likely in the coming year or two. Once schools are back in session and athletic programs in full swing, MY RIDE may again run into scheduling and capacity issues. Purchasing smaller vehicles when possible may be helpful.

Until the budget can support the expansion of MY RIDE, there may need to be some triage with the service, particularly with older residents and people with disabilities who need to get to essential services like physician's offices and grocery stores. Utilizing other services such as Uber may be necessary, if possible, until expansion occurs.

Pros

- Very popular and well utilized service
- Services all ages and abilities
- Owned and managed by the City of Maple Grove

Cons

- As demand for MY RIDE grows, the ability to maintain the same level of service to older residents and people with disabilities may be impacted
- Current fleet may need to change as popularity grows
- Timeline for state budget increases is unknown
- Does not provide evening or weekend service

d) Car Share

Car sharing is an alternative to individual car ownership and offers more flexibility than ride-hailing programs like Uber, Lyft or iHail. Car sharing allows a person to rent a car for as little as an hour and can serve as an alternative to the expenses associated with car ownership. For some versions, the user needs a valid driver's license, a valid credit card, and a smart phone, although

reservations can be made online. Unlike car rentals, users have various pick-up and drop-off options.

Car sharing programs fall into various categories based on their business applications.

Peer-to-peer (P2P) carsharing allows car owners to rent out their vehicles for short time periods, allowing car owners to receive passive income while they are not using their vehicles. An example of the P2P carsharing model is Turo. Drivy is a European version of this model.

Turo offers hundreds of models you will not find anywhere else, which can be picked up or delivered where you want it. All car owners and service personnel in the Turo community are screened, and cleaning and disinfecting of cars is required. There is 24/7 customer support and roadside assistance. Turo provides a choice of protection plans that include varying levels of liability insurance from Liberty Mutual provided through Turo Insurance Agency, as well as physical damage protection.

Booking on Turo can be done with the smart phone app or online, but checking in is done by smart phone. Turo operates all over the country, including in the greater MSP area. Rates are per day, with many local listings in the \$25 to \$45 range. Trucks, SUVs, and luxury vehicles are higher.

Pros

- Possibly a greater number of vehicles to choose in your area
- Can have the car delivered to you, and drop off locations are flexible

Cons

- Vehicle reliability and sanitizing could vary depending on the individual car owners

In the **Business to Consumer (B2C)** carsharing model, drivers can rent a car owned by a private carsharing company directly instead of dealing with a rental agency. The only surviving service from those started in the 2010s is Zipcar. Popular services Maven, DriveNow, and car2go closed operations in 2020. General Motors, which operated Maven, said the effects of the coronavirus caused them to shut down. Competition from ride-hailing services was cited by car2go. Enterprise, the rental car agency, joined the car-sharing model in a few cities, only to close operations due to Covid-19.

A Business to Consumer (B2C) user can sign up for a membership plan such as Zipcar as low as \$7 per month, or \$70 per year, with usage rates as low as \$11

per hour or \$82.50 per day. The actual rate depends on the type of vehicle that is chosen.

A person can arrange to use a “shared” car for a pre-arranged period of time, which provides more flexibility than a ride-share program like Uber, Lyft or iHail. The driver can go to as many destinations as needed within the time frame and mileage allowance. Fuel refills may be included in the share fee.

For example, Zipcar ([Zipcar.com](https://www.zipcar.com)) includes a gas card in every Zipcar; allows up to 180 miles with each trip depending on the membership plan; a free, designated parking spot to return the car; and 24-hour roadside assistance. Zipcar has operations in Minneapolis, Northfield, and St. Paul.

The car is locked with the keys inside and is opened using the Zipcar’s smartphone app. Zipcar sends a key card to the user with long-term membership plans.

Secondary insurance is included as part of the membership plan. Additional damage protection can be purchased. Zipcar damage protection plans include: Standard protection (included in membership), \$1,000 fee per incident may apply; Plus protection, \$375 fee per incident may apply, \$5 per month or \$50 per year; Premium protection, \$0 per incident, no damage fees, \$9 per month or \$79 per year.

After making a booking, you will find details about the location of the car you booked on the confirmation page of the website, on the reservation page of the mobile applications and in a confirmation email. Details will include the address, pictures of the location, and any location-specific instructions to help you pick up your vehicle.

Pros

- Possible alternative to—and less expensive than—car ownership
- More flexibility than ride-hailing services.
- In some cases, users have multiple vehicle choices

Cons

- Limited availability in suburbs
- Requires smart phone

Nonprofit carsharing operators such as Hourcar support the use of shared vehicles for social and environmental purposes.

Hourcar is a Minnesota nonprofit car-sharing organization serving Rochester and the Twin Cities. The service provides members with convenient, short-term reservations to a fleet of more than 50 safe and efficient vehicles. Hourcars are stationed at designated hubs located across the Twin Cities and in Rochester. Most hubs are in public parking ramps and at local businesses, credit unions, and grocery stores. Hourcar's most successful hubs are in urban areas with lots of people, good connections to Metro Transit, and limited parking—like the downtown cores, college campuses, and medium-to-high-density neighborhoods.

Hourcar is a local shared-mobility nonprofit organization which connects people to their communities with convenient, equitable, and sustainable multimodal transportation. Membership is required for two of the plans, with a third plan modelled on hourly rental rates. The association says it is for work-from-homers, one-car families, carpoolers, college students, part-time workers, renters, and retirees. The cars are owned and serviced by Hourcar, which provides a fuel card in each car for refills.

The application fee is \$25, and membership in the top plan is \$65 a year or \$7 a month, with an hourly rate of \$8.95, or a weekday rate of \$70, with 100 miles free. Another plan is 5.75 per hour, but with a 40 cent per mile charge after the first mile.

Pros

- Localized operation improves service and communication with members
- Pick up and drop off at known local sites
- Flexibility about amount of time the service is used – does not need to be an entire day.

Cons

- Available only in a highly localized area
- Requires setting up an organization, finding start-up funds, to create in a city or suburb without such a plan

Co-op carsharing members can co-own a vehicle and share costs for its repair and refueling. This sharing model also applies to corporate and residential carsharing programs.

References and links: Zipcar.com; Hourcar.org; Turo.com

III. National, Regional, and Local Transportation: Current & Future Trends

Although these are challenging times in the United States with Covid-19 and social justice issues, there are many interesting transportation strategies being pursued both nationally and regionally. These trends would most likely extend beyond the next three years.

Some of the more recent strategies include:

- **Align transportation with broader city goals**

Some cities look to align their transportation systems with overall goals for their city. This ensures that core values guide a community's transportation planning. Here is one suggested set of goals:

- 1) Safety
- 2) Healthy food options within 20-minute distance
- 3) Walking/biking options given high priority
- 4) No more than 45% of household income is spent on transportation
- 5) Streets reflect the community
- 6) Ensure that racial equity is considered in transportation needs

This is an easy yet effective way to bring a holistic approach to transportation and future need/development.

- **Integrated scheduling and payment across transportation modalities**

While much of this is conceptual and still in the planning stages, cities like Pittsburgh are contemplating a scheduling and payment system that meets the consumer at their need. The system would allow a consumer to schedule transportation across vendor/service depending on type of transportation needed and pay in one interface. This would provide a seamless experience to the consumer and assist in overall utilization reporting on transportation modality.

- **Transportation policy for newer modes of transit**

Some age-friendly cities are applying transportation policy to newer forms of transportation. For example, **the growing popularity of scooters, including electric ones, and electric bikes has raised the issue of how these modes share sidewalks with pedestrians, with particular concern for older or disabled people, children, or other more vulnerable users.** Some cities have responded by developing and communicating new policies to ensure that sidewalks can be used safely by all.

While Europe leads the way with **electric bikes**, they are still gaining adoption in the United States. Electric bikes fall into three classes.

- Class 1 is Pedal Assistance. It provides the rider a low speed electric pedal assistance with a powered back wheel.
- Class 2 is Throttle which is closer to a scooter with power on demand mounted on the handlebars.
- Class 3 electric bikes can travel up to 28 miles per hour.

Electric scooters are more common in the United States. They can travel up to 15-20 miles per hour. Commonly sold at stores such as Best Buy, and rentable in many cities, including Minneapolis, they are growing in popularity.

These modes of transportation are relatively new. Some communities are beginning to develop policies on sidewalk and trail use as well as educational information on pedestrian right of way. Some thought-provoking questions for electric bikes and scooter policy include the legal speed on sidewalks and trails, are any electric bikes and scooters street legal, and what limitations might be placed on electric bikes and scooters in pedestrian and nature preserve areas.

- **Autonomous Vehicles (AV) /Driverless vehicles**

Even prior to a Covid-19 impact on progress, driverless or Autonomous Vehicles (AV) have not advanced significantly in 2020 and appear to have numerous hurdles to clear before they are widespread across the United States. According to manufacturers like Daimler, there has been a 'reality check' relative to the challenges of development and the regulatory/legal barriers that would be involved in large scale adoption. One challenge noted by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) is that there is no consensus on what the landscape of AV looks like. There is currently not agreement on the use of 3D camera standards and other aspects of technology that will need to be standardized to truly create more adoption.

Cities such as Pittsburgh, PA have agreed to be test cities for AV technology. What they have found is that the technology requires more nuance. For example, there are concerns as to whether a driverless car can detect things like a parent and a stroller, or people in costume on their way to a football game.

That said, there is serious investment underway in AV technology. A few of the investors include Softbank at \$2.25B and Honda at \$750 m with a commitment to invest \$2B over the next 12 years. Chevrolet and Ford continue to work on driverless solutions to impact the US and global markets. Additionally, a number of Autonomous Vehicles pilot projects are underway in several US cities. Waymo, a Google company, has a fleet of minivans that service a 100-mile area of Phoenix, Arizona. While approximately half of that area includes service with a truly driverless vehicle, an engineer in a car follows the

driverless car with the ability to take over at a moment’s notice. Customers sign a non-disclosure agreement to participate. Waymo was the first company in the US with a permit to operate driverless cars, while Cruise just received a permit to operate five driverless, unoccupied vehicles in San Francisco.

Lastly, MIT is asking the industry to think more strategically. Driverless cars are new technology initially designed for early adopters with deep pockets. MIT’s Joseph Coughlin suggested that the AV industry should impact 85% of the population and not specialize in those who can afford expensive technology.

AV technology will impact Maple Grove at some point, but it does not appear to be imminent unless the city chooses to be a test site.

- **Personal Rapid Transit**

Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) is an innovative urban public transport system using small cars which are deployed on networks of interconnected tracks. The PRT has the ability to move a number of people conveniently between a specific route – similar to a train system but allows for some privacy with individual cars. It is an alternative to trains, buses, and other transportation within a city or suburb. Generally, PRT has had high ridership because it is closer to an on-demand services with little to no wait times at stations. It is less costly than light rail and may have a lower operating cost due to lower labor and general maintenance. It also has more flexibility in route lay out than other forms of rail.

PRT Transit Planning, Construction and Operations:

No at-grade street and trail crossings No foundation pilings or retaining walls No tunnels or sheet piling No buried cable ducts No traction power substations No overhead power catenary wires or posts No vibration or acoustic noise emissions No ongoing track and switch maintenance No excavation and replacement of bad soils No relocation of freight rail No future maintenance funding from Legislature Can be built primarily on public right-of-way Almost no land acquisition required Reduced need for Park and Ride lots Simplified surveying and route planning	Minimal utility relocations Simple 13.8KV 3-phase power feed Simple Environmental Impact Statement Minimal wetlands impact and mitigation Minimal tree and brush removal 3-berth stations are small (19 ft x 38 ft) Flexible station siting and guideway routing Rapid construction and installation Mostly built in factories, not on-site Small OMF building and yards Reduced OMF staffing requirements Immunity to severe winter weather conditions Full automation means low operating costs Curve radius as small as 75 ft . . . and many more . . .
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Personal Rapid Transit holds exciting possibility in some regards, but it does require a major investment and commitment of resources on the part of a city and other partners, and there are few models to reference that could provide more information about these tradeoffs.

Light rail connectivity to Blue Rail in Twin Cities metro area

At the time of this report, it appears that the Blue Line, or Bottineau Light Rail, project is stalled. The Blue Line would have extended light rail service from Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park, and several cities in between. However, the BNSF railway is unwilling to allow the project to go forward on its property. While there is frustration on the part of the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County, there does appear to be a strong willingness to find a solution. There is a belief that the light rail is necessary in this area. There also is a realistic understanding that Covid-19 and social justice issues will impact economic and social factors going forward.

The *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* reported on October 16, 2020 that NorthStar light rail ridership is down 95 percent during the pandemic; ridership between Big Lake and Minneapolis is down 99 percent. Due to lower revenue from lack of ridership, there will be budget considerations and much discussion on what the future of metropolitan transit might look like. With the riot damage and continued violence in Minneapolis and parts of Saint Paul, there is concern about whether employers may move and/or stay in those downtown areas. Additionally, some of the outer suburbs have suggested more bus service and less rail; while others believe that multi-modal transportation must include rail.

Assuming that the Metropolitan Council finds a solution—whether that is light rail or bus/rail hybrid—Maple Grove will need to continue to plan how these additional services might affect transportation and business in the future. Over the next three years, there may be a need for more buses from Maple Grove to the Minneapolis downtown as opposed to transportation from the Maple Grove Transit Hub to the light rail station.

There will be more to come over time, but the Blue Rail is a fabulous opportunity as it becomes a part of the state's larger transportation system.

- **Met Council 2040 Plan**

The Metropolitan Council has developed a robust 2040 Transportation Plan. By 2040, it is estimated that the Twin Cities will add more than 700,000 people. As the state thinks about transportation, it must also think about land use, development and its relationship with cities, suburbs, and townships across the state. There is a clear understanding that many jobs and opportunities now exist in the suburbs, including Maple Grove. Many people working in communities like Maple Grove do not necessarily

live here, and continued transportation planning will be required well into the next decade. Additionally, with more work from home activity due to Covid-19, there is a distinct possibility that people may live in more rural areas but work virtually anywhere.

The 2040 Transportation principles are as follows:

- Support the needs of the region's mature highway system, including dedicating significant resources to maintaining and rebuilding the existing system and using preservation projects to rethink major regional corridors.
- Manage congestion in an innovative, cost-efficient manner and provide reliable alternatives to travel in congested corridors.
- Implement increased transit service and an expanded transitway system; support higher demand for development (housing, shops, jobs) along transit lines and around stations.
- Support more opportunities for other travel modes; include bicycle and pedestrian elements in comprehensive transportation and land development plans; provide tools needed to implement them.
- Plan for the long-term needs of freight modes such as trucks, barges, and railroads.
- Balance the needs of the aviation system with local land use decisions.

Covid-19 has placed some planning on hold and may change some transportation policies over the next three years. However, there continues to be opportunities for Maple Grove to partner with the Metropolitan Council – particularly as they seek to strengthen regional partnerships and support transit riders who work in Maple Grove over the course of the next decade or two.

Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations

At the time of this report, Covid-19 continues to impact our daily lives, public health, business operation and profitability, and the success of global economies. Additionally, the State of Minnesota is working to rectify social justice issues and heal while recovering from riot damage in our large cities. The next three years may prove to be challenging for our state and national economy, as well as the fabric of our society. Age Friendly Maple Grove will work with the city to communicate all transportation options as needed.

The Age-Friendly Maple Grove Transportation Committee and Leadership Team continue to support Maple Grove as a strategic partner as it responds to these challenges. As a committee, we will partner with the City to lobby for funding that was lost through budget adjustments in the state legislature and work to assist in future vision through regular discussions with the Metropolitan Council on the 2040 planning process.

Here are the Age-Friendly Transportation recommendations for the next three years:

Recommendations

1) Continue to grow MY RIDE as a valued service for Maple Grove residents of all ages. MY RIDE is the center piece of Maple Grove transportation. Further investment in this service can benefit the entire community. This may include:

- a) Smaller bus fleet when feasible to accommodate point-to-point requests more economically.

Ensure that the service can be available to those most vulnerable or lack other options. As schools restart their extracurricular and sports schedules more fully, there may be a need to triage kids traveling to athletic practices so that older and disabled citizens can retain ready access to MY RIDE for basic needs such as getting groceries and picking up medication. Increased use of public transportation services by a broader swath of residents, such as by students traveling after school, is a positive development in many regards. It results in less traffic, fewer vehicles on the road, and an increase in the degree to which the use of public transit services become part of community culture.

2) Explore other economical point to point alternatives that could involve City partnership or contracts with:

- a. Uber
- b. Mobility4All

This recommendation also draws from a key gap referenced in the Transportation Audit (see Introduction): a lack of services that can be used on-demand and are available virtually 24/7.

3) Explore the concept of a circulator bus. As Covid-19 subsidies and businesses return to normal, there may be an opportunity to execute at a later date. Along with the other “Pros” identified on page 8 of this report, during AF MG’s community needs assessment in 2016 and 2017, numerous residents suggested this type of service as one they wish were available in Maple Grove.

4) Transportation Goal Alignment. Consider formalizing alignment of transportation plans and policies with broader City goals, to ensure that transportation decisions are being guided by the City’s core values.