

### **3.0 EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM EVALUATION**

The City of Northfield was founded in 1855 on the banks of the Cannon River.<sup>1</sup> The transportation system in the City has evolved over the years and several challenges with the current system exist. Some of the very things that make the City an attractive place to live and work, also make it challenge to move people, goods, and services around and through the City by walking, bicycling, or driving a motor vehicle. These challenges are due to the beautiful natural features in the area, the vital state highways and rail lines bisecting the community, the important educational institutions of St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges, as well as the evolution of the City's development pattern.

The Cannon River generally runs from the southwest to the northeast through the City, and there are four crossings of the river in Northfield at TH 3, 5th Street, Water Street, and 2nd Street. There are also drainage ways, wetland complexes, and topography ranging from rolling to steep slopes that present challenges for expanding transportation facilities. The extensive college land holdings also present some challenges for the extension of collector roadways to the west and northeast.

The rail lines and state highways provide vital links for people and goods; however they also represent challenges to providing safe mobility for all modes of travel. Pedestrians and bicyclists encounter challenges when maneuvering through and across the motorized vehicle traffic stream to access different parts of the City.

Additionally, the development pattern over the years in Northfield has occurred, to some extent, without a broader community wide transportation vision for all modes of travel. Development that has occurred in more recent years has been in a curvilinear street pattern and lacks connectivity between neighborhoods. As a result, there is a reliance on the arterial roadways of TH 3, TH 19, and CSAH 28 to provide much of the motorized vehicle mobility, and important local roadway connections were not extended to provide options for local traffic. These deficiencies ultimately impact the ability to move goods and services to market and provide efficient emergency, civil, and transit services. These connectivity challenges also impact pedestrian and bicycle mobility.

Public open house meetings and separate workshops with partnering transportation agencies, business owners, and transportation providers were held during the development of this Transportation Plan. The purpose of these forums was to listen to and understand the needs of the public and specific organizations with interest in the Northfield area transportation system. The open house and workshops focused on

- Presenting the City's process for updating the Transportation Plan
- Sharing preliminary information regarding existing average daily traffic volumes and congestion levels, 10-year crash history, and proposed roadway extensions
- Presenting and discussing known issues

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.northfieldchamber.com/community/history.html>. Retrieved on June 9, 2008.

- Receiving and understanding the most important transportation issues or problems that the City of Northfield should consider

Figure 3.1-1 – Existing Transportation Issues Map summarizes the transportation challenges identified by stakeholders and the public during development of the Transportation Plan. Summaries of open house and stakeholder meetings can be found in Appendix C.

As population and business attractions grow, increases in traffic volumes have the potential to negatively impact the City by reducing pedestrian and bicycle mobility, increasing traffic congestion, and increasing parking problems. The City's ability to develop adequate Major Collector roadways is critical to maintain a satisfactory transportation system.

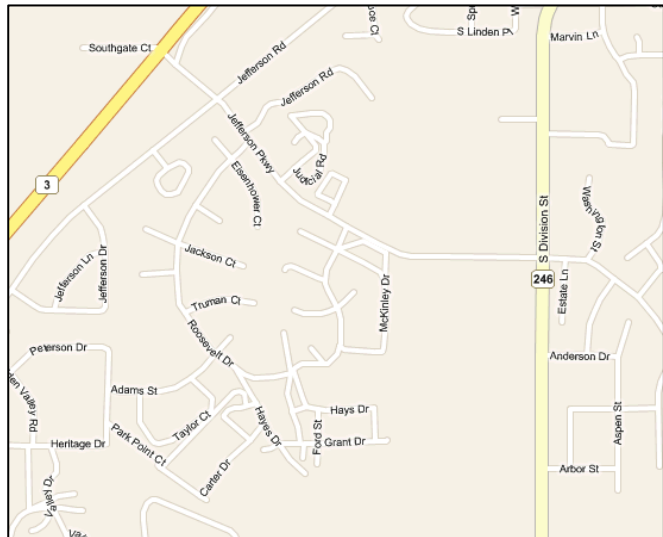
### 3.1 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM CONNECTIVITY AND SERVICE ROUTES

The following provides an overview of the transportation system for all trip types in the City of Northfield, including accommodation of trucks, emergency, and civil service routes on the existing transportation system in the Northfield area.

#### 3.1.1 ROADWAY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

The existing functional classification of roadways in and around Northfield is illustrated in Figure 2.2-1. The roadway system lacks roads functioning as Minor Arterials, and TH 3 is the only continuous roadway through town. As outlined in Section 2.2.2, Minor Arterial roadways are recommended to be spaced 1 to 2 miles apart in urban/urbanizing communities. The lack of Minor Arterial roadways and roadway system continuity results in additional congestion on TH 3. This results in TH 3 serving both north-south and east-west travel. For example, part of TH 19 runs concurrently with TH 3. Additionally, there isn't a Minor Arterial roadway in the northwest corner of the City and CSAH 23/43 isn't designed to function as such. Section 3.5.3 describes the study underway to address this need.

Additional challenges relate to the lack of interconnected neighborhoods in some parts of the City. This is particularly evident in the area south of Jefferson Parkway. The extensive amount of cul-de-sacs results in an overreliance on Jefferson Parkway and TH 246/Division Street for all trips in the area. The colleges of St. Olaf and Carleton also represent some challenges for connecting neighborhoods and the Local and collector street system that serves them. This is due to their extensive land holdings and the challenges associated with extending corridors through their properties.



*Extensive cul-de-sacs result on an overreliance on Jefferson Parkway.*

The City has done a good job in obtaining right-of-way and constructing some Major Collector roadways. Jefferson Parkway and Thye Parkway are good examples of corridors providing connectivity across parts of the City.

Jefferson Parkway and Greenvale Avenue are examples of important Major Collector roadways with a current design that under serves existing traffic volumes and bicycle mobility. In addition, Jefferson Parkway from Jefferson Road to Division Street/TH 246 has as an inadequate design for school bus traffic.

### 3.1.2 TRAIL AND BICYCLE ROUTES

As noted in Section 1.1, more than one-quarter of Northfield's population walks or bikes to work. The Parks, Open Space, and Trail System Plan outlines trail and bicycle route deficiencies, including the following

- Trail on the east side of the river that traverses through Riverside Lions Park currently dead ends in a parking lot
- Lack of integration of the trails into the overall design for the greenway in newer developments
- Linking downtown Northfield with the overall trail system with existing street and parking challenges
- Challenges with retrofitting facilities into existing developed areas of the community

Another challenge in this area is the ability to move traffic safely across Minor Arterial routes, particularly TH 3 and TH 19, in a manner that conveniently links trip origin and destinations.

The Northfield Area Task Force on Non-Motorized Transportation (Report May 2008) identifies high priority infrastructure needs relative to bike routes, bike lanes, and linking trail, as well as additional ideas for infrastructure improvements relative to sidewalks, shared-use paths, bike lanes, roads, and bicycle parking.

### 3.1.3 PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

The Parks, Open Space, and Trail System Plan indicates there is a need for improved pedestrian-level connections and flow through and around the downtown area. Other challenges identified include retrofitting sidewalks into existing developed areas of the City. Recognizing that trails are used for pedestrian mobility, as well as bicycle transportation and recreational uses, the findings noted in Section 3.1.2 also apply here.

### 3.1.4 TRANSIT SERVICES

Currently, Northfield Transit is the only transit service provider in Northfield. It provides curb-to-curb ride service opportunities within Northfield City limits as described below.



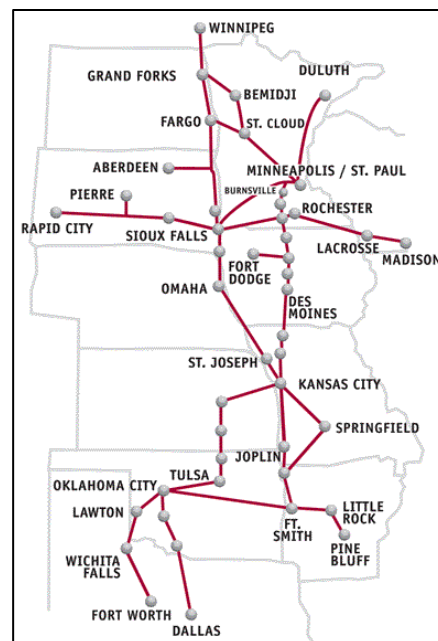
*Dial-A-Ride Service* is a curb-to-curb bus service between requested locations. Riders are given the first available time based on demand and other schedules. Buses are lift-equipped and drivers are trained and certified to assist passengers who need help getting on and off the bus. Two-hour advance reservation requests are required for general Dial-A-Ride Service, and 24 hours in advance for lift service.

*Ride-to-Work Service* offers dependable, pre-scheduled rides within the City of Northfield to and from a place of work, Monday-Friday, 7 AM - 5:30 PM.

*Summer Youth Service* is an unlimited ridership pass program providing rides within Northfield City limits to persons under the age of 18. This program is offered from 7 AM to 4 PM Monday through Friday during June, July, and August. Schedule requests to prearrange rides must be submitted seven days prior to activity start date for regularly scheduled events. For other trips, a 2-hour notice is requested.

*Jefferson Lines Connection* is a service provided to the Jefferson Lines Bus Depot at the Big Steer Travel Center. This service is provided Monday through Friday, twice each day. Reservations are required 24 hours prior to service. Pick-ups and drop-offs are made curbside within Northfield. In addition to providing connections to the Burnsville transit station, it also provides routes to various cities in the central part of the United States.

Jefferson Line Routes



### 3.1.5 TRUCK ROUTES

There are certain routes within the City of Northfield that trucks need to use to move goods and services to market and make deliveries to and from area businesses. Routes servicing higher amounts of truck traffic are necessary to meet the needs of the land uses they serve. Generally, truck routes follow municipal state aid, county state aid, or state highway designated corridors. During construction of new roadways or reconstruction of existing roadways, it is necessary for the roadway to be designed to accommodate the appropriate design vehicle.

### 3.1.6 EMERGENCY AND CIVIL SERVICES ROUTES

Maintaining mobility on select roadway corridors is necessary to provide effective public services. Similar to the needs of trucks to service area businesses, it is necessary for Major Collector and Minor Arterial roadways to be designed for emergency vehicles, such as fire trucks, to efficiently navigate the roadway system to reach their call locations. Equally important is the need for maintenance vehicles to be able to effectively maintain primary plow routes for preserving access to key areas of the City or to respond to important public facilities that are vital to the City health and well being such as the wastewater treatment plant, dam, and water treatment facilities.

### 3.1.7 RAIL

There are three rail lines in the Northfield area. According to Mn/DOT Office of Rail, the primary line is operated by Union Pacific and generally runs parallel to TH 3 through the City. It extends north out of the City to a junction in Rosemount and beyond. As of 2006, there were approximately 11 operations per day.

The line extending to the northwest near St. Olaf Avenue is operated by Progressive Rail. It extends to Air Lake in Lakeville. While the line continues to Savage, no trains are currently running west of I-35. There are approximately 7 operations a day on this line in the Northfield area.

The third line is also operated by Progressive Rail. This line extends east to Randolph and has approximately 2 operations a day.

### 3.1.8 AVIATION

Stanton Airport is the only aviation facility within the Northfield area. It is a private 2,550 x 200' grass runway providing taxi service, crop dusting, and glider opportunities. Airlake Airport in Lakeville and the Faribault Airport are the closest public airports to the City of Northfield. Airlake Airport is located approximately 17 miles northwest of Northfield, and Faribault's airport is approximately 14 miles to the southwest. These airports primarily serve private business travel and personal recreational travel needs. Broad assortments of international, domestic, and regional airlines fly from the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

## 3.2 EXISTING TRAFFIC VOLUMES AND CAPACITY

The existing traffic volumes within the area were collected from Mn/DOT, including recent counts by the City of Northfield, Rice County, and Dakota County, and are represented in Figure 3.2-1 – Existing Volume and Congestion. Capacity improvements are recommended on any roadway with a future level of service of D, E, or F, as defined in Section 2.4.5.

Roadway analysis indicates that the system operates well for several roadways within Northfield; however, some roadways are currently providing a Level of Service C or less. Roadways identified below as near congested (having a volume to capacity ratio between 0.75 and 1) or congested (having a volume to capacity ratio greater than 1) are recommended to be monitored and programmed for capacity improvements when necessary.

Roadways that are periodically congested (having a volume to capacity ratio between 0.5 and 0.75) are generally identified as providing an acceptable level of service. Following are the roadways that are currently periodically congested or near congested

### NEAR CONGESTED

- TH 3 from Woodley Street to TH 19/5<sup>th</sup> Street
- TH 19 from Eaves Avenue to CR 59 and from CSAH 78 to TH 3
- Water Street from 5<sup>th</sup> Street to 7<sup>th</sup> Street
- Division Street from 5<sup>th</sup> Street to 8<sup>th</sup> Street
- Jefferson Parkway from TH 3 to the east leg of Roosevelt Drive

### PERIODICALLY CONGESTED

- TH 3 from Woodley Street to CSAH 1 and from TH 19 to CSAH 47
- TH 19 from west of Garrett Avenue to Eaves Avenue and from CR 59 to CSAH 78
- Dakota County CSAH 23 / Rice County CSAH 43 from Thye Parkway to St. Olaf Avenue
- 5<sup>th</sup> Street from TH 3 to Washington Street
- Woodley Street from TH 3 to Washington Street
- Jefferson Parkway from the east leg of Roosevelt Drive to Division Street
- CSAH 1 from TH 3 to Farrell Avenue

### 3.3 SAFETY ANALYSIS

A planning-level analysis of the existing transportation system in Northfield was completed and included evaluating crash records in the ten-year time period from January 1, 1997, through December 31, 2006. In an effort to determine trends, crashes were categorized by year and type, as well as crash severity. As described in Table 3.3-1, over the 10-year analysis period, there were a total of 1,475 crashes. The most common crash types were right angle and rear end crashes. The majority of crashes were non-injury (70%) and six crashes had fatalities.

TABLE 3.3-1 – CRASH SEVERITY

<b>Crash Type</b>	<b>10 Year Total (1997 – 2006)</b>
Fatal	6
Injury – Incapacitating Injury	46
Injury – Non-Incapacitating Injury	133
Injury – Possible Injury	256
Property Damage - No Apparent Injury	1,034
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,475</b>

Source: Mn/DOT – Minnesota Crash Mapping Analysis Tool (MnCMAT)

Over the 10-year period, there were 35 crashes involving a bicyclist or pedestrian. Of the six fatal crashes, one involved a bicyclist and one involved a pedestrian. Both of these fatal crashes were at intersections experiencing a high crash frequency. Figure 3.3-1 indicates the locations of these bicyclist/pedestrian crashes, with the fatalities displayed in red. For comparison purposes, bicyclist/pedestrian crashes were evaluated for the same 10-year period in other similar cities to Northfield, including St. Cloud, Mankato, Winona, and Red Wing. This analysis revealed that Northfield has a relatively low number of bicyclist/pedestrian crashes compared to other cities, even when population and bike ridership are taken into account. Despite this finding, it is recommended that problem areas be studied and improvements be implemented to further reduce the number of crashes at problem intersections and roadway segments.

Crash data for the most recent five-year time period from January 1, 2002, through December 31, 2006, are displayed on Figure 3.3-2 to illustrate crash frequency. A five-year period of time was used for this analysis because it allows for a crash frequency pattern to be observed that is more meaningful in the current condition. With a longer period of time, there would be a chance for more significant design or traffic operational changes to have occurred that may misrepresent current problem locations. Locations with the highest crash frequency are

- TH 3 between Locust Drive and Heritage Drive
- TH 3 / Jefferson Pkwy
- TH 3 / TH 19 (West 5th Street)
- TH 3 / West 3rd Street
- TH 3 / TH 19 (West 2nd Street)
- Jefferson Pkwy / Jefferson Road
- TH 246 / Jefferson Pkwy
- TH 246 / Woodley Street

Most of these locations are on the State Trunk Highway System. Recent improvements have been made along TH 3 between TH 19 and Greenvale Avenue, including geometric improvements and the addition of left turn lanes, concrete medians, and bike lanes. These changes were made in 2005-2006.

The number of crashes for each year in the 10-year time period were graphed and a trend line was identified. The crash frequency trend is slightly negative, meaning crash frequency has remained fairly stable over the 10-year period. The same conclusion can be made for bicyclist/pedestrian crashes.

### 3.4 PAVEMENT CONDITIONS

As of May 2007, the City of Northfield pavement condition index (PCI) for their road network was identified as follows

- Good condition – 41 miles
- Fair condition – 10 miles
- Poor condition – 17 miles

The 2007 average network PCI was 71. As outlined in Section 2.8, this rating was just over the City's targeted PCI goal of 70. The City's predicted 2008 average network PCI rating is 64.

### 3.5 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES

Following are the regional roadway or transit initiatives or studies completed or underway in and around the City of Northfield.

#### 3.5.1 TH 19 ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY PLAN (IN PROGRESS)

Mn/DOT is currently working on an access management and safety plan for a section of Highway 19 for the area between TH 3 and I-35. The final plan is anticipated to include the locations for primary and secondary intersections, local road network improvements, and the process for implementing the plan.

#### 3.5.2 TH 19 SCOPING STUDY (STUDY ANTICIPATED TO BEGIN IN 2009-2010)

Mn/DOT is anticipating initiating an environmental and alignment scoping study in approximately 2009 or 2010. While the details of the study have not been finalized, the study is anticipated to include evaluating the current and possibly a revised TH 19 alignment north of Northfield. The study limits have been identified from Rice County CSAH 46, located west of I-35, to approximately 1.5 miles east of TH 56 in Goodhue County. Mn/DOT District 6's Long Range Transportation Plan does include some funding for TH 19 in 2015-2020. The Long Range Transportation Plan is currently being updated, which could impact funding for identified improvements.

#### 3.5.3 NORTHWEST NORTHFIELD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR STUDY (2008)

Building on the needs identified in the Dakota and Rice County 2025 Transportation Plans, Dakota County, in cooperation with the City of Northfield and Rice County, is completing a transportation study of areas north and west of the City of Northfield. The purpose of this study is to investigate arterial and collector roadway needs associated with future Northfield area growth. This study will be conducted as a system approach examining arterials and collectors in the area.

The goal of this study is to develop a plan for a future transportation network to link disconnected parts of the road system, thereby improving the mobility for those traveling in and through the northwest Northfield area. These changes are needed to adequately support the increased intensity of development and increased commuting levels expected as a result of population growth and land use changes through the year 2030. Upon completion, the route will provide continuity between CSAH 1 and Dakota County CSAH 23 for regional travel.

To achieve this goal, the existing transportation system will need to be enhanced from a system that was developed to support rural land uses, to a system that will support more urbanized land uses. These enhancements will result in a more dense, complete, connective, and continuous road network.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Dakota County. 2008. Northfield Roadway Study. <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/EnvironmentRoads/Reports/Road/NorthfieldRoadwayStudy.htm> . Accessed February 14, 2008.

### 3.5.4 CSAH 1 CORRIDOR PRESERVATION STUDY (2008)

CSAH 1 provides east–west travel through northern Rice County. The study purpose was to coordinate necessary planning for a continuous CSAH 1 Minor Arterial corridor with other roadway and land use planning activities in Dundas and southern Northfield, so a long–term sustainable roadway network could be achieved. The study recognized the efforts previously evaluated by the City of Northfield for the extension of Jefferson Parkway. It explains that this river crossing option would remain open until an environmental review can be completed to determine an appropriate Cannon River bridge location in the Northfield/Dundas area. The preferred planning alignment identified to be preserved for further planning, preservation, and environmental analysis was selected based on its ability to best accommodate the needs of the regional transportation system, local land use, and local transportation, while minimizing impacts on environmental and cultural resources. The preferred route selected is identified below.



*CSAH 1 Preferred Planning Alignment*

### 3.5.5 NORTHFIELD INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION (NIC) STUDY (2000)

The NIC Transportation Task Force comprised of local business leaders and school officials focused on twelve roadway segments, most of which had been considered in previous transportation studies. Some of the Task Force’s conclusions were similar to previous studies, in other cases they were different or additional elements were added. The study notes that areas were evaluated based on safety, access, and effect on quality of life in Northfield. Study area conclusions are summarized as follows

- Area #1 Future TH 19 Bypass – Agrees with current City Council approach asking Mn/DOT to prepare a corridor study. Supports 320th Street option if handled carefully in Waterford area.
- Area #2 Proposed Cedar Avenue Extension (320th Street to North Avenue) – Supports currently planned direct extension of Cedar Avenue south from 320th/Cedar west intersection.
- Area #3 North Avenue (TH 19 to Cedar Avenue) – Supports currently planned upgrade.

- Area #4 Thye Parkway (Cedar Avenue Extension to TH 3) – Supports currently planned development.
- Area #5 North Avenue (Zanmiller Drive to TH 3) – Proposes extending North Avenue to TH 3 as originally conceived in 1965.
- Area #6 Proposed Cedar Avenue Extension (North Avenue to TH 19) – Supports current plan. Suggests addition of sidewalks and bikeways.
- Area #7 Jefferson Parkway Extension (TH 19 to Armstrong Road) – Supports and suggests two alternative routes.
- Area #8 Jefferson Parkway Extension (Armstrong Road to TH 3 across Cannon River) – Supports strongly. Discussion of alternative crossing locations.
- Area #9 Jefferson Parkway Link (Sibley View Lane to Lake Drive and Michigan Drive East to Spring Creek Road) – Supports immediate completion of this missing link.
- Area #10 Jefferson Parkway Extension (Spring Creek Road to TH 19) – Supports completion as part of ring road to help relieve center city congestion.
- Area #11 Spring Creek Road (Jefferson Parkway to TH 19) – Supports full pavement to TH 19, sidewalks, and future upgrade south as area develops.
- Area #12 TH 19 and TH 3 Common Roadway Segment – Suggests reintroducing turning lanes eliminated at 2nd Street and 5th Street.

In addition, the Task Force recommended that the City Council immediately consider a 20 year plan to finance transportation needs and begin, in certain cases, early acquisition of future road right-of-way. The report also raises general concerns about control of development adjacent to new roadways, the development of reliever roads for south commercial development, the adequacy of pedestrian and bicycle transportation infrastructure and public transportation, and how transportation plans can become reality.

The findings and recommendations from the NIC study are generally consistent with what has been implemented since the study was completed, are currently under study, and/or are included in this Transportation Plan. The one exception is Area #1 – Future TH 19 Bypass. This recommendation was not carried forward since current traffic volume data does not appear to support a TH 19 bypass. cursory review of traffic volume data on the east side and west side of Northfield indicates less than 10 percent of traffic on TH 19, west of TH 3 would be diverted to a bypass route. The vast majority of traffic on this portion of TH 19 has a trip origin or destination within Northfield and would not be served by a northerly route at 320th Street. Rather, this Transportation Plan supports a balanced roadway network to better serve local and regional trips by

providing convenient choices for trip routes and transportation modes. The Northwest Northfield Corridor Study recommendations provides the framework for regional and local roadway connection, including alternative route choices for TH 19 west of town to/from TH 3 north of town.

### 3.5.6 RICE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2006)

The current Rice County Transportation Plan identifies existing limitations of the highway system in and around the Northfield area and identifies needs anticipated in 2025 based on anticipated growth in the County. Existing limitations include intersections with crash rates greater than the state average or more than twice the state average. Of the 7 intersections identified in Northfield listed below, 6 had crash rates of more than twice the state average

- TH 3 at TH 19 (north junction)
- TH 3 at TH 19 (south junction)
- TH 3 at Jefferson Parkway
- TH 3 at Jefferson Road
- TH 246 at Jefferson Parkway
- TH 246 at CSAH 1/CSAH 22/CR 81
- TH 246 at CSAH 29 (Woodley Street/Division Street)

The Plan also includes a future long-term continuity corridor vision improving regional, cross-county mobility options. In the Northfield area, new continuous corridor conceptual routes include CSAH 1 on the south, Decker Avenue to Dakota County CSAH 23 on the west, Jefferson Parkway on the east, and Dakota County Road 96 on the north. The Plan explains that specific studies are necessary to identify the specific route and feasibility prior to implementation.

Jurisdictional transfer candidates to align the jurisdiction of roadways with the unit of government best suited for its responsibility are included in the Plan. County Road 79, CSAH 43, and CSAH 78 are roadways identified as transfer candidates from Rice County to the City of Northfield. Decker Avenue was identified as a transfer candidate from Bridgewater Township to Rice County. The Plan does not include a specific timeframe for transfers to occur. Transfer candidates in the Northfield area may be dependent on the findings and implementation of the Northwest Northfield Highway Corridor Study and implementation of the CSAH 1 Corridor Preservation Study.

### 3.5.7 DAKOTA COUNTY 2025 TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2004)

The Dakota County Transportation Plan identifies goals to prioritize limited resources to the highest priority needs of the transportation system and preserve the existing system. In the Northfield area, a study of CSAH 23 to the south into Rice County was recommended and is currently underway as the Northwest Northfield Corridor Preservation Study. A project identified in the Capital Improvement Plan is the paving of CR 96 between CSAH 23 (Cedar Avenue) and TH 3 in 2008.

### 3.5.8 RICE COUNTY TRANSIT STUDY (2001)

The objective of the Rice County Transit Study was to conduct a transit service performance and market analysis of systems operating in the county to identify unmet needs and to look for opportunities to enhance transit service. Specific study recommendations for the Northfield area include the following

- Continue to manage the transit service within its urban area (City Service Option N2)
- Expand demand response service in terms of service hours and territory
- Provide service into the early evening on Monday through Saturday, operating between 6 AM to 8 PM
- Provide service on Sundays between 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM
- Provide service into Dundas and perhaps to other outlying areas surrounding Northfield
- Establish a link to Jefferson Lines service, with Northfield Transit operating a connecting route to the Big Steer Travel Center located at the junction of TH 19 and I-35 (service is currently provided)
- Review current marketing efforts. Revise and reprint Northfield Transit brochure to include information on any new services instituted, including the link to Jefferson Lines. Materials should be available in both English and Spanish language editions. Look to expand marketing to reach broader markets through media advertising, such as the local newspaper and radio station, and the City web site and local cable access channel
- Implement a computer aided dispatch system for trip reservations
- Rural service of one round trip per day be provided between Lonsdale and Northfield and between Faribault and Northfield<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rice County Transit Study. 2001. SRF Consulting Group, Inc. Pages 1, 57-59.

### 3.5.9 DAKOTA COUNTY TRANSIT PLAN (IN PROGRESS)

Dakota County is currently in the process of seeking public input on their Draft Transit Plan. The purpose of the plan is to establish a long-term vision for transit services and facilities in Dakota County. The transit vision provides a framework for improving existing and future mobility needs within Dakota County. The Plan recognizes the most substantial current need facing the County is that of providing transit service to urbanizing communities into the regional service picture. It states that communities developing at the fringe of urbanized areas will soon approach levels of residents and jobs warranting inclusion in the regional transit service picture. Potential transit expansion areas identified include Lakeville, Farmington, and Hastings. The plan findings regarding out-of-county travel include

- Over 60 percent of all trips never cross the county border. However, this market has historically proven a difficult one for transit to serve, given traditionally low levels of population and employment density. County circulator service has been attempted in the past by a few transit providers. As the county continues to develop, and as communities proactively plan for transit-oriented development, this market may become increasingly viable for intra-county transit service.
- Out-of-county connections not oriented to Minneapolis or St. Paul include the I-494 strip, Scott County, and reverse commute services to Eagan. Few transit services to these areas currently exist. Of these services, the I-494 strip appears to be the strongest candidate in the short-term. Future travel trends indicate that both reverse commuting into Eagan and connections to Scott County will increase in importance.<sup>4</sup>

Responding to the draft plan, the City of Northfield approved Resolution 2007–131 requesting the following items be incorporated into the Dakota County Transit Plan

- Community service needs in the Northfield area that include intercity, regional, commuter and reverse commuter service, and service to the regional medical facility
- Transit connections to/from Northfield to existing public transit services in the metro area
- Recognition of the Northfield Transit multimodal hub as an opportunity to provide regional connections across county and city borders to enhance the transit network
- Partner with the City of Northfield to support the development of transit and transit-related infrastructure to provide integrated transit systems<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dakota County. 2008. Draft Dakota County Transit Plan. Accessed February 14, 2008. <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/EnvironmentRoads/Transit/PublicTransportation/Welcome.htm>

<sup>5</sup> City of Northfield. 2007. Northfield City Council Resolution 2007–131, December 17, 2007.

### 3.5.10 MILL TOWNS TRAIL

The Mill Towns Trail is a scenic recreational trail currently under development in Southern Minnesota. The trail will link existing trails: the Cannon Valley Trail from Cannon Falls to Red Wing, and the Sakatah Singing Hills Trails between Faribault and Mankato. The Mill Towns theme recognizes the historic mills that were once important to the economy of this area.

The Mill Towns State Trail will provide a connection between public and semi-public open spaces serving three counties and six communities. It is envisioned as a recreational investment that will link these communities in a way that will ensure their continued vitality. Goals for the trail include the following

1. Develop a Trail Route - develop a trail route that can be used for hiking, biking, and snowmobiling or skiing, which links Cannon Falls, Randolph, Waterford, Northfield, Dundas and Faribault
2. Provide a Permanent Link - provide a permanent trail right-of-way linking the Cannon Valley Trail at Cannon Falls and the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail at Faribault
3. Establish a Recreational Facility - establish a recreational facility focused upon the communities along the proposed right-of-way
4. Create an Identity - create an individual identity for the Mill Towns State Trail that will distinguish it from both adjoining trails
5. Establish Loop Options - establish loop options for trail users in each of the communities along the trail
6. Provide Access - identify and provide access to public spaces, historic mill sites, and the cultural and natural features along the trail
7. Identify Trailheads - identify trailhead sites in each community to facilitate economic development
8. Promote Open Space - promote the trail as an integral element in the regional open space system
9. Promote Community Health - promote the trail as a vital facility for health in the community<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.milltownstrail.org/>. Retrieved on June 10, 2008.