

G.I. J.E.T.T.



***CONNECTING GRAND ISLAND TO JOBS,
EDUCATION, AND TECHNICAL TRAINING***

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Construction
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ALASTERS

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Chapter 1 | Introduction

G.I. + J.E.T.T. is a project that aims to connect Grand Island to jobs, education, and technical training. The project was conducted as a study to gain an understanding of the current workforce and training travel needs of Grand Island residents and to identify any gaps in accessibility to large employers and schools in the area. As a result of the study, a plan was created to address transportation barriers to workforce and educational opportunities that is both feasible and cost-efficient.

Grand Island is working to “develop a pilot transportation program designed to remove access barriers for secondary and post-secondary students to workforce educational opportunities, technical training and major areas of employment.”

ICMA EMO 2023 COHORT – CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NE

ICMA Economic Mobility and Opportunity

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has created an Economic Mobility and Opportunity (EMO) Grant supported through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The grant program seeks to identify solutions for upward mobility in local communities, and to strategize how local decision-makers can advance opportunities for economic mobility within their own communities. This grant made the study of connecting students and workforce to technical training and jobs possible, and allowed for important discussions amongst local government, leaders, and employers to evaluate economic needs of Grand Island residents.

G.I. + J.E.T.T.

The City of Grand Island received a grant from the ICMA in 2023 to conduct a study on connecting residents to jobs, training, and education. The study was launched and completed within the summer of 2023. Data was collected from the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, and Replica, which is a data platform that combines a range of population and travel data to provide insights about people and how they travel. The data was then utilized to understand how residents of Grand Island commute to work and/or school and at what times, and to identify any gaps in services people who may not have reliable access to a vehicle may face.

This information was then used to guide mobility recommendations that will address both the need for access to work or school, as well as access to services that would provide upward economic mobility and opportunities for residents. During the study, public outreach via a survey was also conducted to collect feedback on transportation preferences and needs. Additionally, large employers in the area were interviewed to gain a better understanding of any challenges their current and potential employees may face in commuting to work.



Economic Mobility

In order to address economic mobility concerns, it is important to understand the concept of economic mobility. The Urban Institute has identified three factors that ensure upward mobility, which is described further in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Indicators of Upward Mobility¹

Economic Success

When a person has adequate assets and income to support themselves and their family's well-being

Valued by the Community

When a person feels respected, dignified, and a sense of belonging that comes from contributing to and being appreciated by the people in their community

Power and Autonomy

When a person has the ability to have control over their life, to make choices

¹ Urban Institute, Mobility Metrics Framework <https://upward-mobility.urban.org/>



Upward mobility is based on the principle that anyone can move up economically, regardless of the economic status they were born into. Local government can help foster upward mobility by encouraging economic and workforce development opportunities. The following actions can have a positive influence on upward mobility:

- Public transportation access
- Sector-specific job training
- Transitional employment and re-entry support
- Access to quality public education

This study aims to focus on how transportation access in particular can positively influence upward mobility in Grand Island, by improving physical access to jobs and training for residents. Although the actions mentioned above are essential to providing increased quality of education and work opportunities to residents, a mobility study can aid in ensuring that an equitable transportation system is in place first for people to have access. Other factors can be influential in creating more upward mobility, in addition to transportation. The Urban Institute has identified five pillars that can support people as they seek to enhance their quality of life. These five pillars are highlighted in **Figure 2**.

income, race, ethnicity, or disability with more opportunities that secure them a better future within Grand Island.

Figure 2: Five Pillars of Upward Mobility



Although not all of the pillars above will be addressed by G.I. J.E.T.T., addressing even a few of these pillars could have a substantial impact on ensuring equitable access to opportunity for people in Grand Island. By addressing the barriers to accessing high-quality schools and employment opportunities, the residents of Grand Island could see a higher likelihood of securing stable employment and therefore increase their economic standing and quality of life. This study aims to focus on how local government and leaders can assist with removing economic barriers and seeks to identify how to connect people who have previously been disadvantaged due to



Chapter 2 | Existing Conditions

This chapter outlines the demographic, economic, and physical landscape of Grand Island, Nebraska. The existing conditions within these three categories provide insight into the assessment of how accessibility to employment and schools can be improved upon and will lay the groundwork for mobility recommendations discussed later in this report. Providing an analysis of existing conditions will serve as the initial onset of identifying gaps and the effectiveness of proposed strategies.

Study Area

For the purpose of this study, the analysis includes all of City of Grand Island’s municipal boundary. A map of city limits of Grand Island is provided in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3: Grand Island City Limits

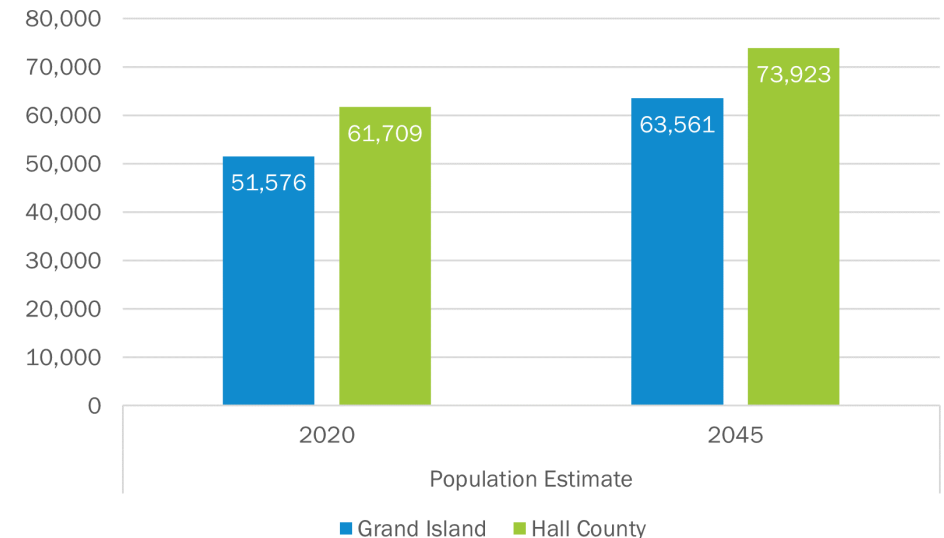


Community Profile

This study is focused on the City of Grand Island, located in central Nebraska, and is within close distance to Interstate 80 and US Highways 30, 2, 281, and 34. Access to these corridors has made Grand Island a mobility hub for the Central Nebraska area. The area is home to Central Community College, Grand Island Public Schools, as well as a few private schools. Grand Island is also home to many large companies that employ most of the community.

The City of Grand Island attracts around one million sandhill cranes each spring due its proximity to the Platte River. During the spring of 2023, the community saw around 30,000 visitors that came for the sandhill crane viewing, which provided a \$17 million impact for the local economy¹. In addition to the Sandhill Cranes and hosting the State Fair, Grand Island has the potential to attract more tourism with future growth opportunities. Grand Island is forecasted to continue to grow, which will only enhance the need for additional services in the area such as enhanced access to jobs and education. The population is projected to grow by 23% between 2020 and 2045, as shown in **Figure 4**. Given that Grand Island has a large Hispanic population, it can be inferred that Grand Island’s diversity will grow into 2045 as well.

Figure 4: Population Growth in Grand Island and Hall County and Percent Change, 2020-2045



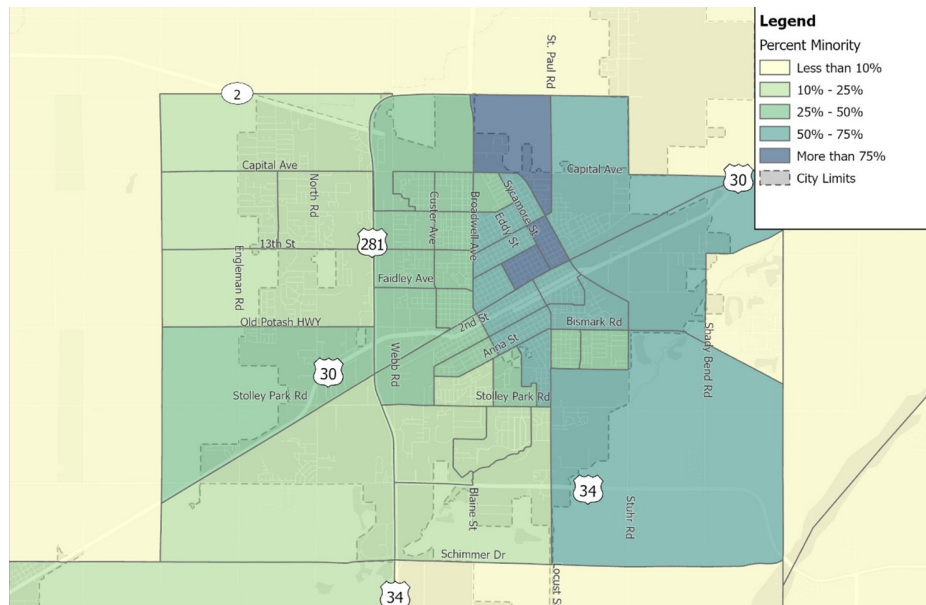
Source: United States Census, Grand Island Area MPO 2045 LRTP, Woods & Poole economics



The minority population of Grand Island includes people of color who identify as Black, Indigenous, Asian, or Hispanic/Latino. These groups have historically been disadvantaged through socioeconomic barriers, and upward mobility aims to address the needs of these groups specifically. Many people within this group tend to have lower education, income, and employment rates, so focusing strategies to uplift these groups into workforce development will address mobility barriers in Grand Island. As shown in **Figure 5**, most of the minority population residences are concentrated in north-central Grand Island, with the rest of the community still having a large amount of diversity throughout.

People within these areas may have a higher likelihood of not owning a vehicle due to barriers such as lack of citizenship, limited income to maintain a vehicle, and/or not being fluent in English. Therefore, residents that fall into these categories face further issues such as lack of access to the workforce due to limited means of transportation and/or difficulties entering the workforce without the education or technical skills required.

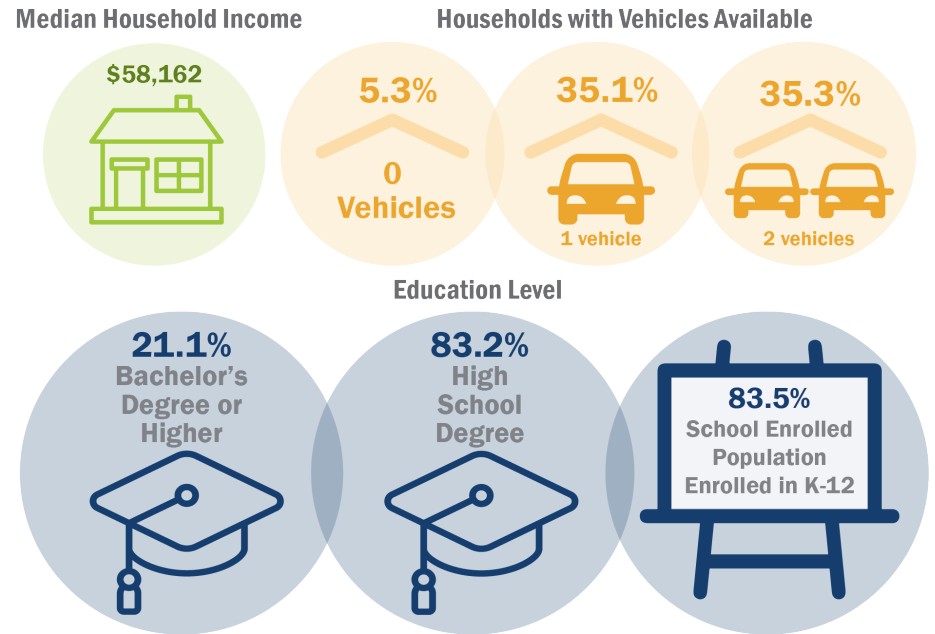
Figure 5: Minority Population



Source: ACS 2019 5-Year Estimates

Other demographic data such as income, education, and household vehicles were collected as well. In Grand Island, the median annual household income is \$58,162, according to the American Community Survey in 2021. This is lower than the national average of \$70,784, however most residents remain above the poverty line, with only 12% of residents experiencing poverty in 2021². As a result, around 5% of residents do not have a vehicle in their household. Most residents do have a vehicle; the data indicate roughly 70% of residents have one or two vehicles. Lastly, much of the population (83.2%) in Grand Island holds a high school degree, and a majority of those who are still of school age (83.5%) are currently enrolled in school. **Figure 6** provides the details for each demographic metric that was collected for Grand Island.

Figure 6: Grand Island Household and Education Demographics



2 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2021



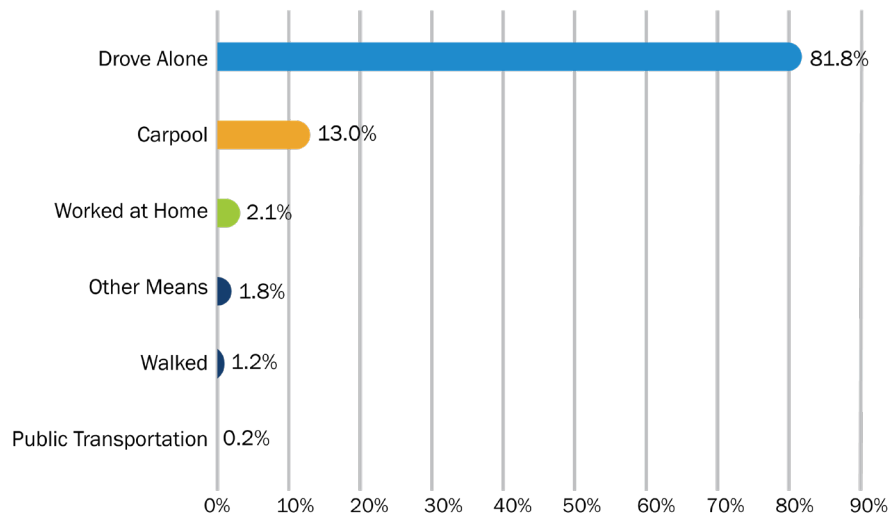
Workforce Profile

This section presents an overview of Grand Island’s workforce, including residents’ transportation habits for commuting to work, and other important employment indicators. It will form the basis for the upcoming discussion on mobility recommendations within this study. By analyzing the current landscape of accessibility into the workforce, the ease of upward mobility can be understood, and any challenges can be addressed.

Commuting Characteristics in Grand Island

As of 2021, 66.5% of Grand Island residents were employed³. A majority of the population commutes to their workplace everyday, leading most residents to have to rely on personal transportation. In Grand Island, many people do not utilize the existing CRANE service, as only 0.2% reported using public transportation according to **Figure 7**. This is most likely because the transit service is not fixed route, and users must call a day in advance for their ride. Therefore, most residents (almost 82%) travel to work alone in their personal vehicle, and only 13% of residents have carpool arrangements to travel to work.

Figure 7: Means of Transportation to Work



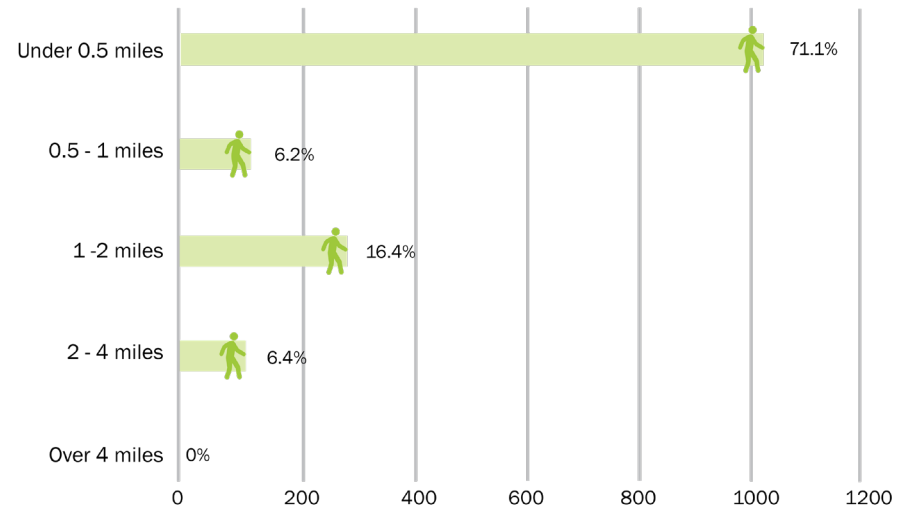
Source: American Community Survey 2015 5-Year Estimates

3 ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates

Some people in Grand Island do walk for commuting purposes, although it is a very small percentage. Utilizing Replica data, those that walk for work or school purposes were evaluated (as opposed to those that walk for recreation or other purposes). Understanding how many people rely on walking to get to work or school can help identify gaps in accessibility to these opportunities, as not all who walk may do it out of choice but rather necessity due to unreliable transportation. Safety concerns regarding walking longer distances in Grand Island could lead to equity concerns as residents that have to walk may not have access to as many educational or employment opportunities if they are located at further distances than one can comfortably and safely walk.

Figures 8 and 9 show the distance pedestrians walk to work and school in Grand Island, with a majority of pedestrians having a short commute of under 0.5 miles to either work or school. It is worth noting that around 29 percent of pedestrians have a walking commute of 1-4 miles to work, and around 40 percent walk 1-4 miles to school. This indicates that some people rely on walking longer distances to get to work or school and may be in need of another transportation option.

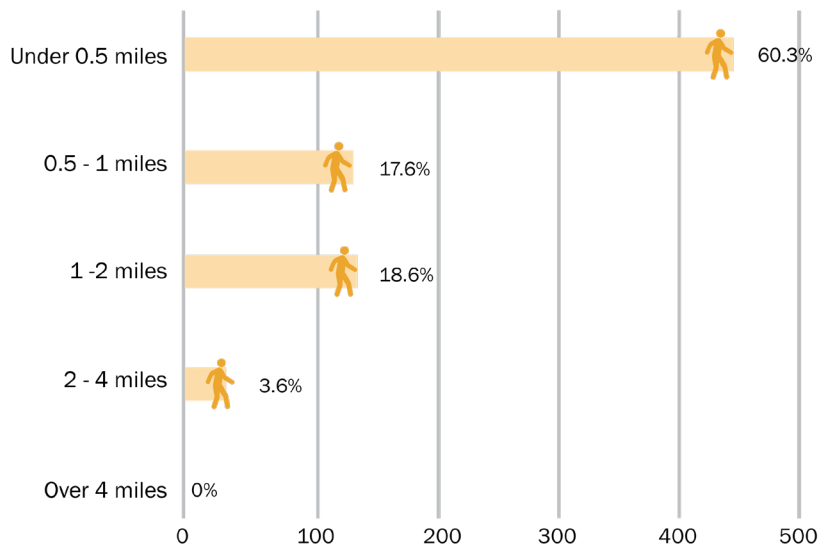
Figure 8: Walking Trip Distance to Work in Grand Island



Source: Replica

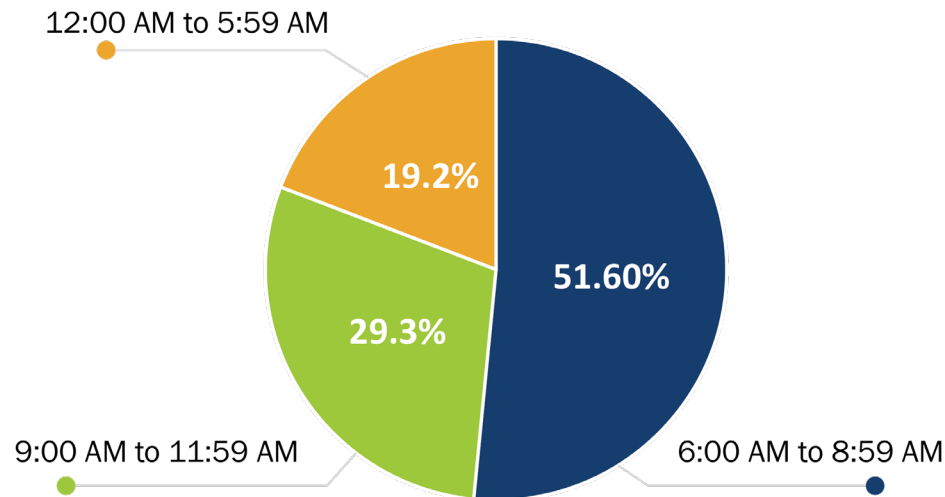


Figure 9: Walking Trip Distance to School in Grand Island



Source: Replica

Figure 10: Time of Departure to Work



The average time of departure to work is another important metric to consider as it can provide insight into transportation solutions for people that consistently commute at similar times. **Figure 10** shows that 51 percent of residents leave for work between the hours of 6 AM and 9 AM. This indicates that there are opportunities for morning commuters regardless of economic standing might benefit from arrangements such as carpools or using public transportation to reduce the number of vehicles on the road, reduce costs, and improve air quality.

Roughly 75 percent of workers in Grand Island have a commute of 20 minutes or less, while the remaining 25 percent of workers have a commute that exceeds 20 minutes, according to **Figure 11**.

Figure 11: Travel Time to Work

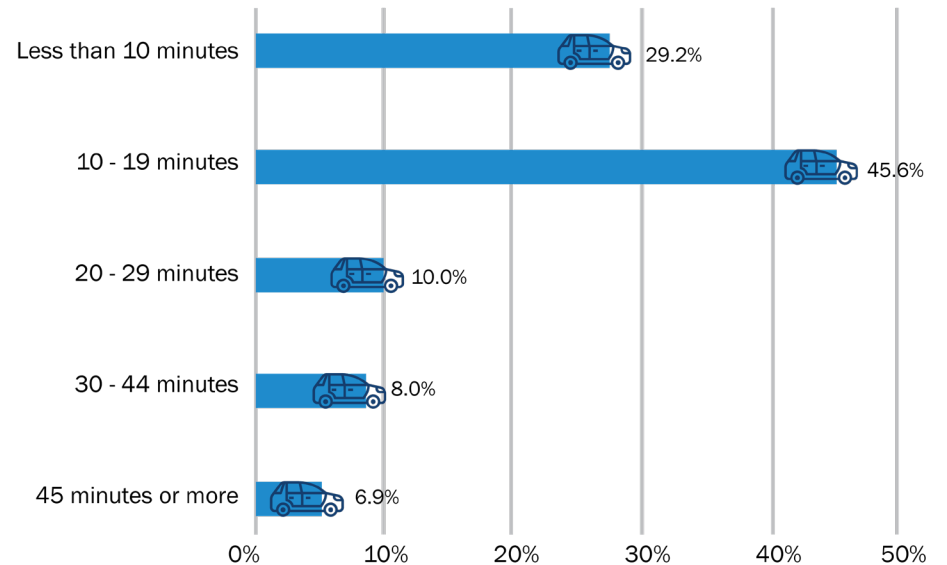
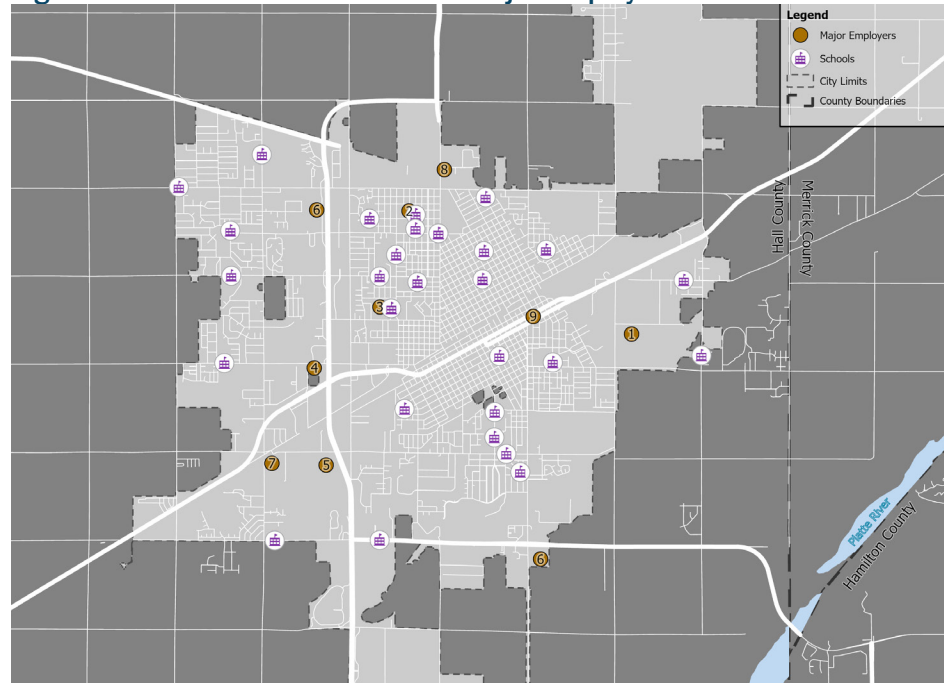


Figure 12: Locations of Schools and Major Employers in Grand Island



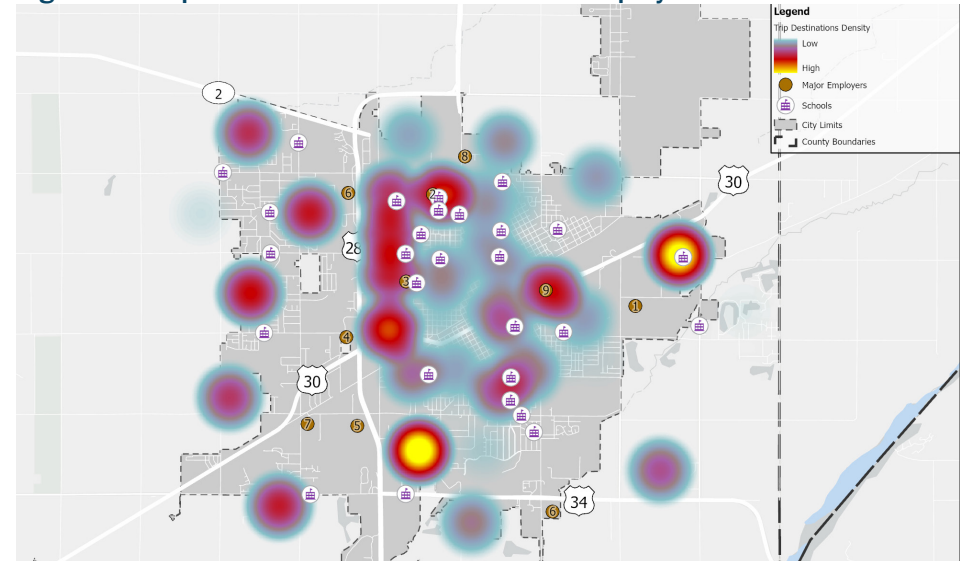
Source: Replica, GI TDP

As shown above in **Figure 12**, many school locations are concentrated in north-central Grand Island, which is also where the senior high school is located. Most of the school locations are nestled into residential neighborhoods, which may cause unwanted traffic noise and congestion at school start and end times. Major employers are evenly dispersed throughout the community, which may allow for greater accessibility from home to work.

To understand the popularity of these various destinations, Replica was utilized to find trip destination density and identify which employers or schools may have the most commuters. **Figure 13** displays the data using a heat map with the yellow and red areas portraying the most frequented areas of Grand Island. Based on the figure, there are a few trip destination hot spots in Grand Island, however the largest concentration of destinations is north-central Grand Island along the US Hwy 281. The corridor along 281 has the largest concentration of commercial and retail uses, likely attracting many residents to the area. It is worth noting that those who do not have

reliable access to transportation will not be represented within the trip destination map, as they may travel using other people’s vehicles or other modes such as walking and bicycling which may not be reflected accurately.

Figure 13: Trip Destinations with School and Employer Locations

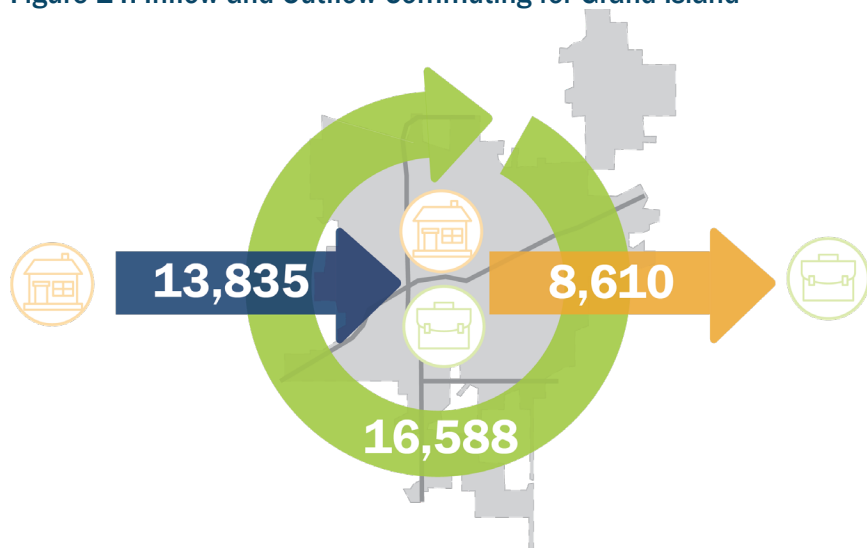


Source: Replica, GI TDP

Grand Island has many residential and employment opportunities and attracts many people outside of Grand Island while retaining those that reside within the city as well. An assessment using the On-The-Map tool provided by the United States Census Bureau was utilized to understand the travel patterns into and outside of the study area. **Figure 14** presents the inflow and outflow dynamics for Grand Island in 2019, which was the most recent year with available data. Over 16,000 residents of Grand Island live and work within the city, as represented by the circular arrow. 13,835 people travel into Grand Island for work but reside outside of the city. Meanwhile 8,610 people work outside of Grand Island but reside within the city. This shows that Grand Island is a leader in employment opportunities for the area and could provide many opportunities for all residents to improve their quality of life and access greater economic opportunities.



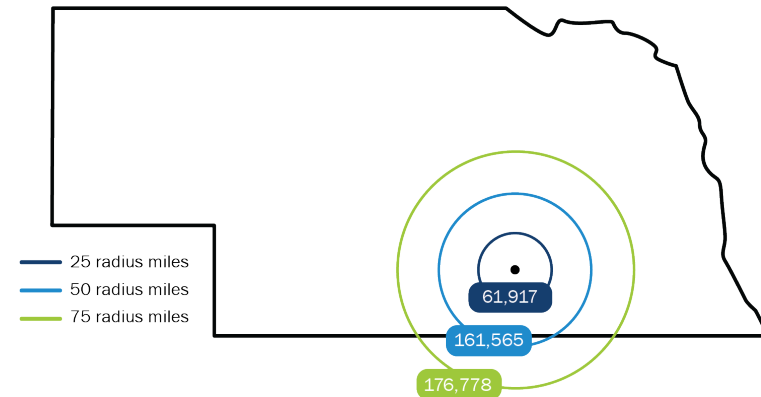
Figure 14: Inflow and Outflow Commuting for Grand Island



Source: Census On the Map 2019

However, as much as Grand Island can provide access to jobs, training, and education, there are many employment opportunities outside of the city that can offer opportunities for people with varying education and skill levels. In their study of the Nebraska Statewide Vanpool Program, the UNO Center for Public Affairs Research found that within a 75 mile radius of Grand Island, the employment pool for the city would expand from roughly 62,000 people to almost 177,000 people. This could bring lots of potential for economic development within Grand Island, as well as bolster economic mobility for the residents living in Grand Island already. **Figure 15** shows 25, 50, and 75-mile radiuses around Grand Island to demonstrate workforce potential.

Figure 15: Radius for Employment Pool⁴



Source: UNO Center for Public Affairs Research

Existing Transit Service

Existing transit service in Grand Island was assessed to understand the service that is currently provided and how it operates. The existing transit service was considered along with barriers residents may face in finding transportation to work or school including lack of vehicles or inability to drive.

Overview of Service

Grand Island currently offers CRANE, which is a public transit service that requires passengers to book their trip a minimum of 24 hours in advance with limited availability for same day trips. Bus fare is \$2.00 and allows riders to schedule their trips Monday-Friday from 6:00 AM to 5:30 PM and Saturdays from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Based on trip data from CRANE, the service has seen an increase in ridership, with 31,666 passenger trips in 2021⁵.

According to survey feedback, many residents of Grand Island feel that the CRANE service is not convenient for the purposes of commuting as booking trips in advance is not flexible. Although CRANE is a helpful and useful service for the Grand Island area, another transportation solution may need to become available to close the gap between the bus service and commuter schedules.

⁴ [Vanpool | Connecting the Workforce to Work](#), UNO Center for Public Affairs Research
⁵ Grand Island Transit Development Plan 2023-2045

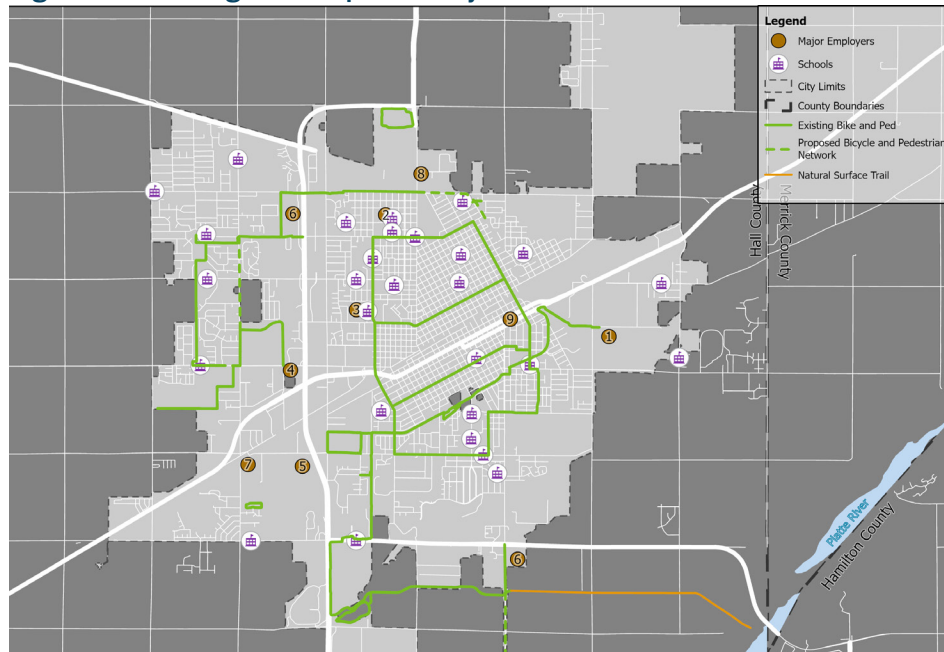


Existing Walking and Bicycling Network

Much of Grand Island is developed on a grid street network with sidewalks and low-volume, low-speed streets. This network of walking- and bike-friendly streets creates some opportunities for non-automobile transportation for shorter trips. There are higher-speed, higher-volume streets and railroads that intersect this network and create some barriers to safe and accessible walking and biking. The grid is broken as the network expands from the center of the city but is supported by an growing off-street multi-use trail and sidepath network. That network is shown in **Figure 16**.

As shown in the figure, the network has good connections within the center of the city connecting major generators such as Central Community College, various local public schools, including Grand Island Senior High School, and major employers such as the medical center, Walmart, JBS and the high school. Additional proposed trail network connections would connect more work and school destinations.

Figure 16: Existing and Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Network



Chapter 3 | Community Engagement and Findings

Engagement was a critical step in understanding the needs of residents and any barriers they may face in having access to work and education. Ensuring that the feedback received is reflected in the recommendations of this study will make upward mobility feasible for everyone in the Grand Island community.

Activities for public involvement conducted for G.I. + J.E.T.T. included a public survey that was kicked off to the public at the Grand Island Fourth Street Festival on June 24th, 2023. The survey continued to be promoted via press releases, email, and social media posts. This chapter will provide a summary of the outcome of the public engagement and key takeaways from the feedback received.

Public Survey

A public survey was utilized to gather feedback on how the public travels around Grand Island, and what they would like to see in the future transportation network. Survey responses provided a basis of understanding for if any residents do not currently have reliable transportation, and how many residents primarily travel to school or technical training.



GI JETT Survey Booth at the Fourth Street Festival

As previously mentioned, the survey opened to the public on June 24th at the Fourth Street Festival, which was identified as an important event for the community as well as an event that attracts many of the Hispanic/Latino residents, who data indicate may be more likely to face transportation



issues. The survey was distributed in both Spanish and English, and a total of **172 responses** were collected when the survey closed on August 1st.

Key Takeaways of Survey Respondents

After review of survey responses, a few overall themes became apparent. The following section will provide more detail on the feedback respondents gave on the transportation network in Grand Island.

- A majority of respondents (78%) were not students or traveling for school or technical training.
- 83% of respondents travel to work between four and seven days a week.
- 55% of respondents indicated that they do not walk, bike, or use transit. The majority of those that do walk or bike to work travel between one and three miles.
- 60% of respondents stated they would use public transportation if it was available and convenient for them.
- Most respondents stated that they have observed more residents walking and biking to destinations, however it is not always safe or efficient for pedestrians.
- 11% of respondents said they do not have reliable access to an automobile (as shown in Figure 16).
- 30% of respondents walk to work or school.
- Of these walking respondents, the majority (23% of survey respondents) walk more than a mile to get where they are going.

Of the 74 written comments in the survey, the majority of concerns and suggestions fell into three categories:

- **Reliability/Accessibility:** Many expressed that the current CRANE system is not convenient due to the operating hours and the 24-hour notice for a required ride is a barrier. Many added that scheduled bus routes and expanded operating hours would benefit the growing community.
- **Bicycle/Pedestrian Needs:** Several respondents noted they would appreciate dedicated bike lanes and/or connected shared-use paths to places such as schools and grocery stores.
- **Cost/Expense:** Some respondents were concerned with cost of transit expansion for taxpayers.

Figures 17-20 represent survey responses, and highlight how a population that lacks reliable access to transportation does exist within Grand Island.

Figure 17: Respondents with reliable access to a car everyday

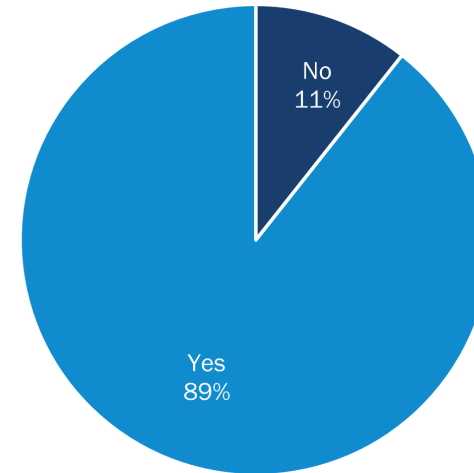


Figure 18: Distance of travel respondents who walk or bike to work everyday

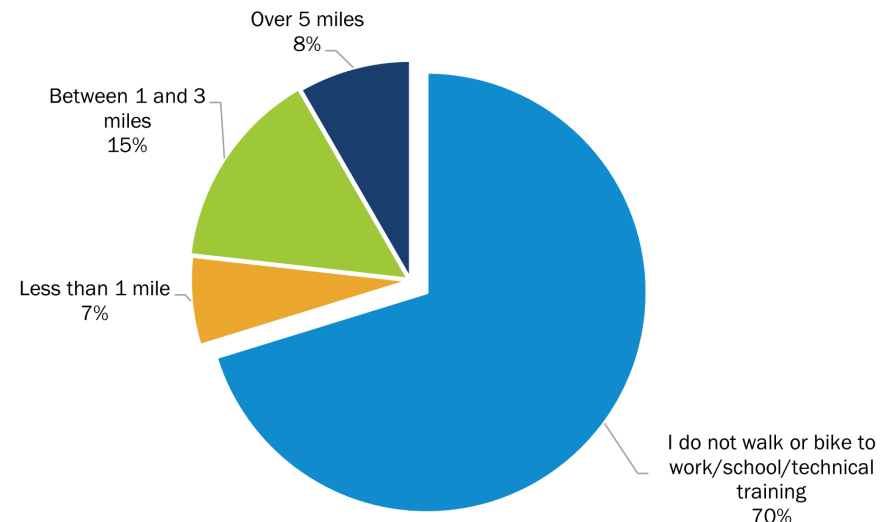


Figure 19: Survey question asking the three most important characteristics of an alternative transportation option

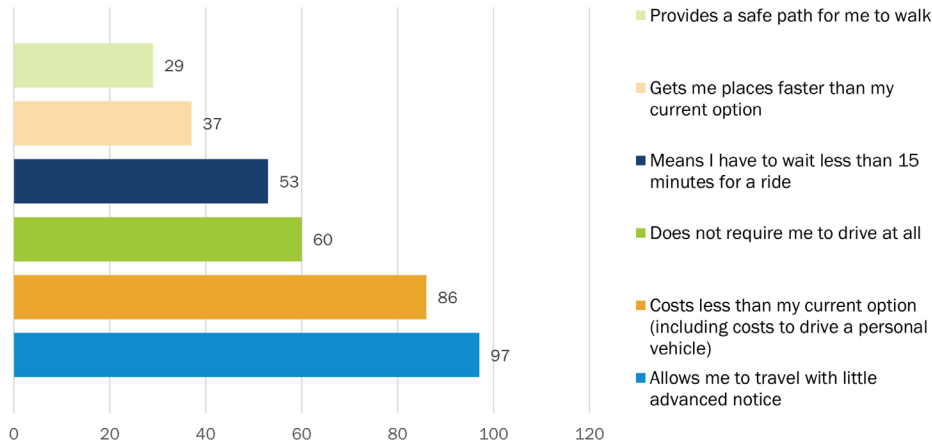
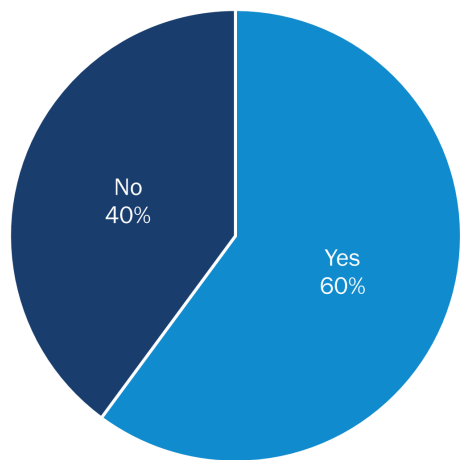


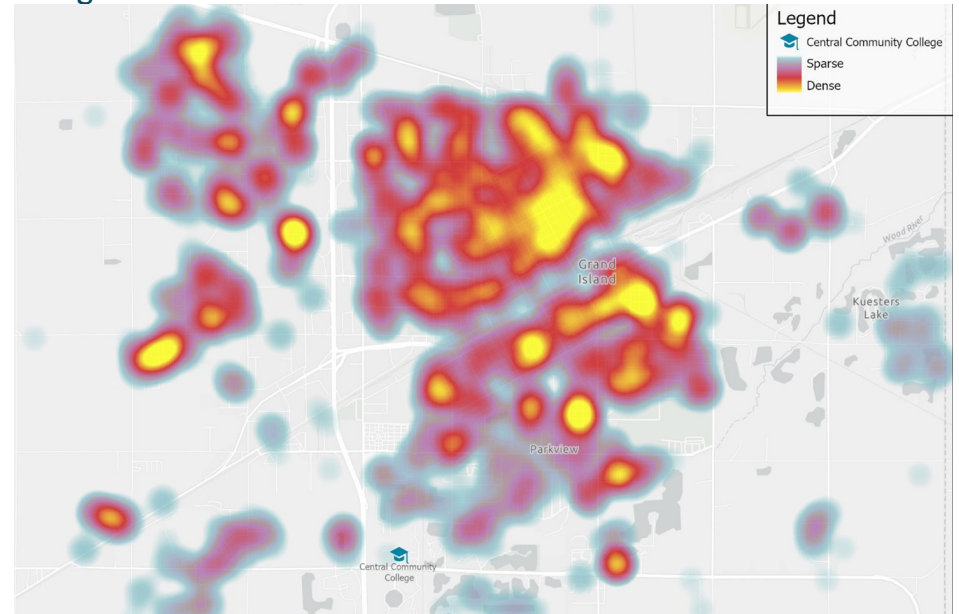
Figure 20: Survey question asking if respondents would use public transportation if available and convenient



Chapter 4 | Methods and Data

In combination with collection of demographic data from the Census and public survey input, additional data was gathered using Replica to estimate common routes to access work or school locations. **Figure 21** shows anonymous student home locations which were provided by Central Community College to estimate common locations of students and their accessibility to school and technical training opportunities.

Figure 21: Address Density of Students Registered at the Community College



Source: Anonymous Student Addresses provided by Central Community College

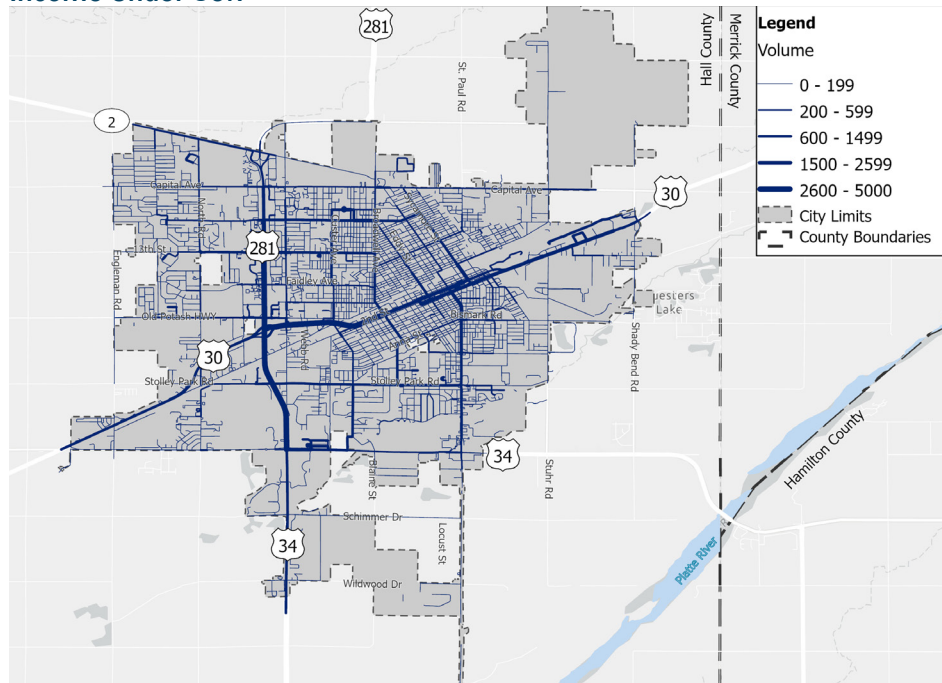
As shown above, students that attend Central Community College are dispersed throughout Grand Island. However there is a large concentration that reside in the central area of town which is a considerable distance away from the community college. These students are most likely forced to drive to the community college due to its distance from downtown Grand Island. The accessibility to Central Community College is important to acknowledge as it is the largest provider of training, outside of a secondary school, that will provide opportunities for younger adults to receive certifications and



technical degrees to enter the workforce.

Additionally, to better understand how accessible places of work and education are, trip volumes on corridors in Grand Island were analyzed using Replica. The data was filtered by commuters with an annual income at or below \$50,000 per year and who have destinations to work or school only. These filters were applied specifically to identify what barriers people who are lower income may face, and if the main corridors used could be accessible for individuals without access to a personal vehicle. **Figure 22** shows the most traveled corridors for work or school purposes are 1st and 2nd Streets, US Highway 30 and 281. Other collector roads that serve local schools including Forrest Street that connects to the high school and Tech Drive which connects to the community college are also shown as having higher volumes than neighboring streets.

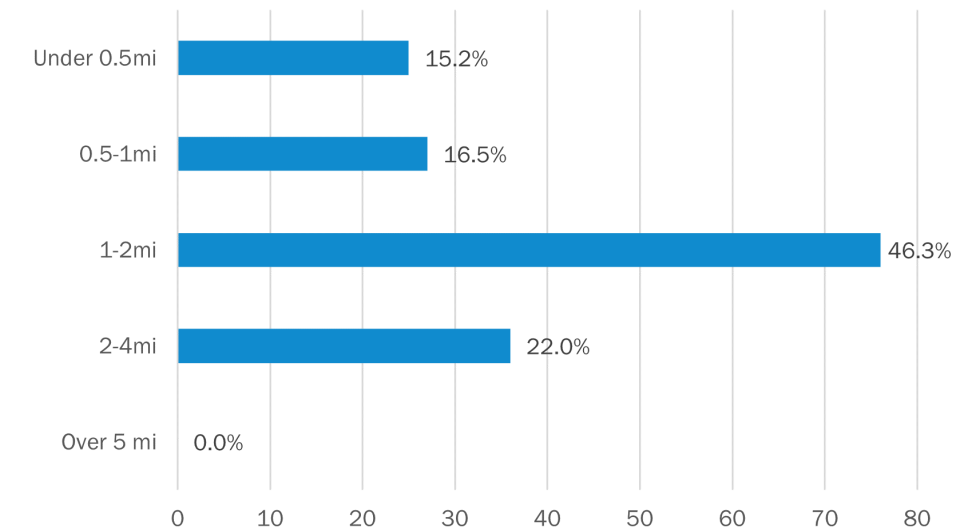
Figure 22: Trip Volume to Work or School for Individuals with Annual Income Under 50k



Source: Replica

The data above, collected using Replica as well as other sources, assisted to fill in the gaps between what the overall transportation habits of Grand Island residents are and those that filled out the survey. 11% of survey respondents stated they do not have reliable access to a car every day, which indicates there could be a larger group of residents that do not have reliable access to a vehicle, and therefore may lack access to employment. This only inhibits upward mobility for lower income residents.

Figure 23: Walking Distance of Employees without Cars to Work (miles)



Source: Replica



Employer Interviews

Local employers were interviewed to gain their perspective on reliable worker access to businesses. Two of those employer interviews are summarized on the following page.

Company A

Employer has multiple locations in the city.

Company tends to have higher wage employees with reliable personal vehicle transportation to Company A's plants in the city.

There is a plant just outside of the city where some employees might have some access barriers to reliable transportation.

Overall reliable transportation for Company A's employees seemed like a low-level need.

Company B

Employer has a large operation on the edge of the city.

Employer noted that wages in their industry are very cyclical, and currently are rather high compared to historical levels due to the economy.

Location has access to trails and has noted a significant number of workers using bikes to get to work.

Historically has seen the need for transportation assistance for some workers with unreliable transportation access. Looked into vanpooling and carpooling in past years.

Currently, lack of transportation is not a barrier to hiring new workers.

While these larger employers did not note that a significant number of their employees had barriers to reliable transportation, the data analysis and surveys noted that many lower income workers did not have reliable transportation for jobs. As our survey noted that 11% of respondents did not have reliable access to car for work, and 23% of respondents walk at least a mile to work or school. These two facts likely indicates that smaller companies might be the employers of these mobility-challenged residents.

Chapter 5 | Summary of Issues

One of the key issues this study aims to address is the reoccurring issue of reliable transportation access in Grand Island. In order to identify areas where people may lack access to upward mobility opportunities, factors such as cost, residential centers, employment centers, and accessibility were considered in identifying how to transport residents to work, training, or school. Issues with the existing system were explored and then evaluated alongside the supplemental data that was gathered to come to a final recommendation to enhance upward mobility in Grand Island through transportation access.

The following issues were identified as the most important to address so all residents can afford the same economic opportunities.

Key Mobility Issues for Grand Island Residents

- 1. Cost** – personal vehicles are expensive to maintain, which can add barriers for lower-income people who need transportation to work or school.
- 2. Car-centric** – large dependence on personal automobiles and lack of transportation alternatives.
- 3. Growing Population** – adding more cars on the road will place more stress on the current transportation network and create longer commute times.
- 4. Accessibility** – the current transit service in Grand Island requires trip reservations a day in advance, and other options such as biking and walking are not safe and accessible in many locations.

The recommendations in this study consider all four of the above issues, in combination with concerns gathered through public feedback. Although the solution may not encompass every concern and issue, the objective is to provide accessibility to residents that is cost-effective with a shorter implementation timeline and that allows for flexibility.

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Chapter 6 | Program Recommendations

Vanpool Program

After considering the geography of Grand Island, existing transportation services, common trip origins and destinations, as well as public feedback, a vanpool is recommended as the best option to provide Grand Island residents flexible and affordable transportation to education, training, and job opportunities. A vanpool is an arrangement that a group of riders make to share their ride to work or school in a vehicle large enough to accommodate a minimum of seven people. A vanpool allows commuters to have access to destinations that they may otherwise not have access to using public transportation, or if they lack personal transportation.

The Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) has partnered with Commute with Enterprise to create a statewide vanpool program in Nebraska. Vanpools are available across the state, regardless of being in an urban or rural area. The costs will vary based on the number of commuters in each vanpool (a minimum of seven people is recommended), number of miles driven, and external factors such as gas prices. The vanpool program, titled Go NEWhere, offers many benefits, including the following:



Source: Nebraska Public Transit

- A monthly subsidy from NDOT of \$600
- No special license required (a driver's license is still necessary)
- Vanpool vehicles are switched out annually by Enterprise
- Enterprise provides a commuter matching program, that will match commuters with similar routes to a vanpool –
- Scheduled service and maintenance by Enterprise (maintenance costs are still responsibility of commuters)
- 24-hour roadside assistance
- Month-to-month flexibility

Additional benefits are accrued outside of the lower cost of a vanpool com-

mute. Employers who arrange for employee vanpools can see benefits such as less employee stress, employee appreciation, and increased recognition of the employer for promoting safe, reliable, and sustainable transportation to work. Companies can also see decreased cost of building maintenance as less parking spaces will be required with the use of vanpools, which could save an employer \$17,000 to \$48,000 per parking space⁶.

Bikeshare Program

A bikeshare program is another option that could allow more access to work and education destinations in Grand Island for residents without reliable access to a vehicle. The cities of Omaha and Lincoln have partnered with a local non-profit organization to provide a bikeshare program to residents, which offers daily passes, as well as monthly and annual memberships. This bikeshare program has the potential to be brought to Grand Island and provide residents with an additional transportation option that comes with no commitment to maintenance or ownership of a bike and is offered at a low cost.

An interview was conducted with the executive director of ROAM SHARE, which is a nonprofit that develops bike share programs throughout the region. The purpose of the interview was to learn how communities in Nebraska have collaborated with ROAM to bring a bikeshare program to their communities, and what necessary funding and maintenance requirements are. A city with similar geography and population to Grand Island would be the city of Papillion, which has a population of around 24,000 people, and offers four bike share stations. Grand Island has a larger population and a traditional street grid pattern and trail system that is likely more conducive to biking and potentially bike share.

The bike share program offers opportunities for not only more equitable transportation access, but also for more recreational activities as well. The cost of the bike share program for users varies by city and other factors such as sponsorships. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has a partnership with BikeLNK, the bike share program in Lincoln, to provide students and faculty with a very low-cost membership. A similar partnership could be pursued with Central Community College, Grand Island Public Schools, and other partners in Grand Island and ROAM to allow students and employees more

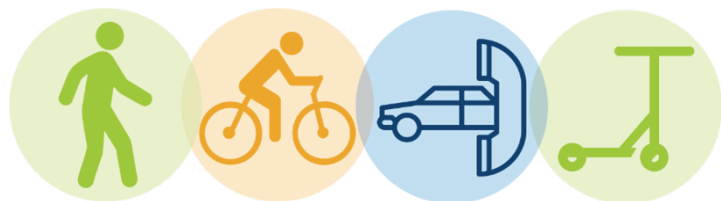
⁶ [Vanpool | Connecting the Workforce to Work](#), UNO Center for Public Affairs Research



access to destinations without using a vehicle.

Alternative Transportation Options

As part of this mobility study, various other transportation options were considered for allowing greater accessibility to work, training, and school outside of a personal vehicle. While these modes are not the top recommendation, they are still essential for ensuring the transportation network in Grand Island is accessible and affordable for everyone, regardless of their economic standing. The modes that were analyzed as mobility solutions for Grand Island were walking, bicycling, mobility-on-demand (MoD), and electric scooter-share and will be discussed further in this section.



Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

Building on Grand Island's current trail system and focusing on connecting disadvantaged populations with employment, education, and training locations across the city can provide a long-term option for meeting the needs of this study.

Walking

28% of people stated in the survey that they make 5-25 walking trips per month to their destinations on average. Walking can be a beneficial form of transportation as it provides exercise, is environmentally friendly, and most importantly is the cheapest as it is free. However, due to the amount of space and infrastructure required to support cars, walking has become increasingly difficult and more dangerous. Many residents of Grand Island added comments in the survey stating that walking paths are not connected, accessible, or sometimes even safe leading them to opt for other transportation modes. Adding walking infrastructure to increase pedestrian safety and connectivity will still help Grand Island in the long run to allow residents greater access to important destinations, especially for school children and other students who may not have reliable transportation to access education.

Bicycling

Bicycling was also considered as a recommendation for increasing access to jobs, education, and training as it is a much quicker option than walking, can be done for a very low cost, and allows riders to reach further distances. Many urban areas offer bikeshare programs that allow users to rent bicycles from docking stations to then be dropped off at their next destination, which allows users to bicycle without worry of storage or ownership. Similar to the issue of walking, many survey respondents stated that they do not feel comfortable bicycling in Grand Island due to the lack of bicycle lanes and feeling of safety. Additional bicycle infrastructure such as bicycle lanes, bike racks, and expanded and connected shared-use paths could encourage more residents to bike to their destinations and lower the cost of transportation as well as improve air quality.

Mobility on Demand / Transit Expansion

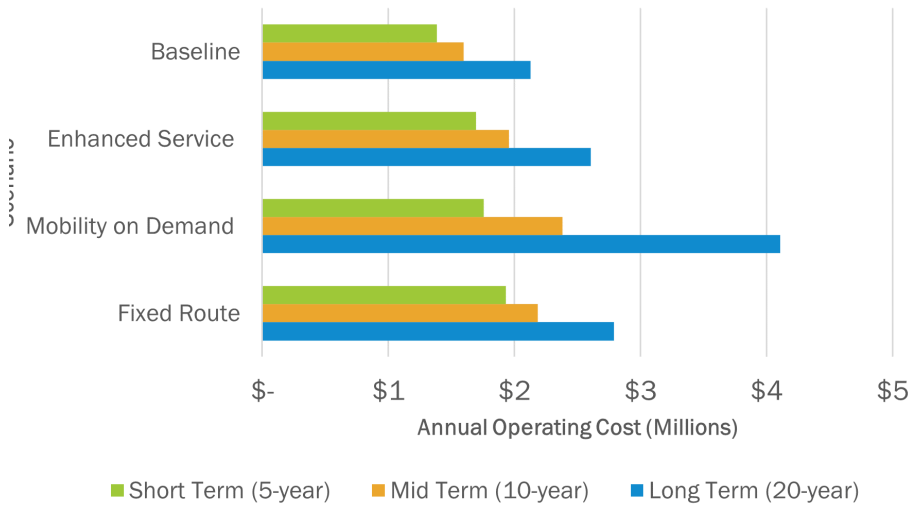
Mobility on Demand (MoD) is a transportation service that offers access to a variety of transportation modes through the use of digital platforms that allow users to request, book, and pay for a transportation service in real-time. Many services are offered through MoD such as rideshare through popular platforms including Uber and Lyft, bikeshare, scooter-share, and carshare, which allows for short-term vehicle rentals.

As a part of the recently completed Grand Island Transit Development Plan, the city looked at a potential Mobility on Demand transit alternative. Projected operating costs were compared between current CRANE services, expanded / enhanced CRANE service, an MoD transit service, and a fixed route bus service. **Figures 24 and 25** describe the operating costs for the following four scenarios:

- **Baseline:** assumes no changes are made to the existing CRANE system.
- **Enhanced Service:** assumes CRANE's existing operations are enhanced to extend service hours and same day reservations.
- **Mobility on Demand (MoD):** assumes CRANE would contract a private company to provide service as requested by passengers via a mobile application.
- **Fixed Route Service:** assumes CRANE would operate four fixed routes in addition to its demand response service.

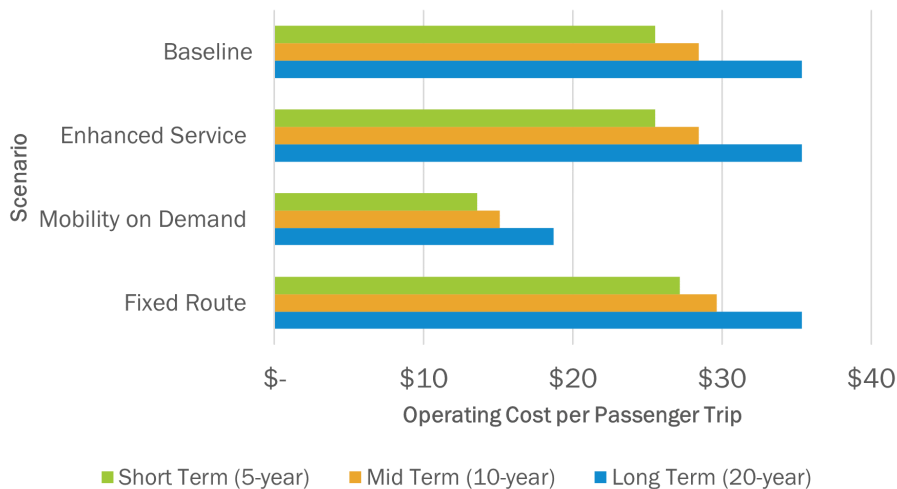


Figure 24: Annual Operating Costs of Current Crane Service and MOD



Source: GO GI Transit Development Plan

Figure 25: Operating Cost per Passenger Trip



Source: GO GI Transit Development Plan

As shown in the figures above, the overall operating costs of an MoD option are anticipated to have significant expanded costs for the system but come with the potential for a lower per-passenger cost.

Shuttle Service

Some larger companies have the means to provide a shuttle service for employees to have free transportation to and from work. This shuttle service is very similar to a vanpool in that it aims to alleviate the stress and cost of commuting to work each day and allows employee riders to not have the driving responsibility. Additional benefits of an employer-provided shuttle service that could advance upward mobility include:

- Access to employment opportunities that are a further distance from their residence.
- Employees can save money for other core family needs / allows employees with limited income reliable access to work.
- Better time management for employees not commuting and contributing towards a healthier work-life balance.
- More inclusive workplace to include workforce members who cannot or do not drive.
- Provided transportation to work can also increase employee satisfaction and lead to higher retention.

Electric Scooters

Electric scooters are another feasible option for Grand Island, as many similar towns have implemented a scooter-share program, such as Kearney. Additionally, the cost of owning an electric scooter or renting one is much lower than the cost of private vehicle ownership and can allow more travel flexibility without the worry of parking. Electric scooters can also provide a first and last-mile connection for those who still prefer to use public transit, or who live at a distance that is too far for walking. Winter temperatures and driving conditions can make using scooters impractical for year round commuting for many workers.

Matrix Valuation

To further consider the best transportation option to supplement the needs of residents in Grand Island, a matrix valuation shown in **Figure 25** was completed in the form of a pros and cons list, to gather which transportation mode offers the most benefits. **Figure 24** provides an additional breakdown of successful strategies for the populations that work, or attend college or high school.



Figure 26: Potential Best Strategies for Economic Mobility

Population	Transportation Strategy Options
Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vanpool, walking and biking investments (trails / bikeshare) Shuttle services
College Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking and biking investments (trails / bikeshare) Shuttle services Regular trips via CRANE
High School Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking and biking investments (trails / bikeshare) Regular trips via CRANE

Figure 27: Matrix Valuation for Transportation Alternatives in Grand Island

Transportation Mode	Pros	Cons
Vanpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost-effectiveness increases with more passengers Flexible lease and destinations Less commute stress Decreased parking demand at worksites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most efficient with employee residences clustered near each other Dependence on others for timely arrivals Responsibility of group for maintenance of vehicle Could be challenging to accommodate needs of every person
Walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free Environmentally friendly Health benefits No need for parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to shorter commutes Weather-dependent Time consuming Safety concerns
Biking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low cost Can reach distances walking alone could not Health benefits Avoids traffic congestion Can be more accessible with bikeshare program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not suitable for everyone's abilities Weather dependent Safety concerns Limited biking infrastructure
Electric Scooters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost effective Environmentally friendly No need for parking Can be integrated with public transportation Reduces congestion and reliance on cars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not reach longer distances Safety concerns Weather dependent Limited availability in some locations Maintenance and charging required
Shuttle Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could be paid for by employer Less commute stress Can provide networking opportunities Builds employee retention Can overcome transportation barriers potential employees have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited flexibility with fixed schedules Limited routes and coverage areas Crowded during peak hours May have to operate using shuttle stops that may require riders to walk

Chapter 7 | Conclusion

G.I. + J.E.T.T. is a vital initiative undertaken in Grand Island with the goal of improving connectivity for residents to jobs, education, and technical training. The project encompasses a comprehensive study that aims to evaluate existing transportation services in Grand Island and identify any gaps in accessibility to educational institutions and major employers in the area. Subsequently, the findings have shown a range of options for a feasible plan to overcome transportation barriers is needed, which will thus open more opportunities for upward mobility in the community.

The city of Grand Island is taking proactive steps to implement a pilot transportation program designed to eliminate access barriers for secondary, post-secondary, and adult students and workers to tap into workforce education, technical training and employment hubs. The five pillars of upward mobility identified in [Chapter 1](#) help to identify what areas can be addressed to improve upward mobility within the context of Grand Island. Although not all five pillars fall under the purview of G.I. + J.E.T.T, addressing even a few of them, such as high-quality education, could yield substantial benefits for Grand Island residents. An innovative solution to transportation barriers that hinder access to education or employment could empower residents that were previously disadvantaged due to factors such as income, race, or ethnicity.

After review of existing conditions data, public feedback through surveys, and interviews with local employers, it was determined that a set of strategies was needed to address the gap in employment, education, and training accessibility in Grand Island.



Recommended Strategies

LARGE EMPLOYERS WITH LOWER-WAGE WORKERS WOULD BENEFIT FROM A VANPOOL PROGRAM

A vanpool program was identified as the best fit for many Grand Island workers, as it comes at low cost to those who participate, includes a significant subsidy from the state of Nebraska, and is safe and reliable. The vanpool would be the responsibility of the participating riders and the small, non-subsidized remaining costs could potentially be covered by employers as other employers in Nebraska have with the vanpool program. A vanpool costs substantially less to a passenger than driving and owning a personal vehicle for commuting purposes every day, and requires less people have the responsibility of driving.

EXPANDED BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INVESTMENTS

There is an opportunity to continue building on the core multi-use path / trail system in Grand Island with expanded trail connections between lower-income residential areas, school, and major employers. The planned network would continue building on this network to create more safe and practical walking and biking commute and schooling connections to serve both workers and students accessing schooling and training. Two elements to consider enhancing the access of low-income residents to these employment, schooling, and training opportunities would include:

- A bikeshare program with stations located in neighborhoods, near schools and employers so that bike ownership is not a barrier to biking access.
- A trail investment program that prioritizes investments based on equity and access to jobs and education. This program might look at low-income neighborhood and school access as a primary driver in trail investment decisions.

IDENTIFY CANDIDATE STUDENT AND TRAINING TRIPS FOR THE CURRENT CRANE SERVICE

Some of the identified service gaps like student training trips might be best served by the existing CRANE service. These are typically high school students going to individual company sites for training at regularly scheduled times. These are low density / single person trips that are not well served by a shuttle service or vanpool but may qualify for a cost-effective CRANE trip.

Transportation is not the only method for improving upward mobility, but this study has identified it as the largest barrier preventing Grand Island residents from accessing jobs and education in an equitable manner. Grand Island will begin to experience growing pains within its transportation system as residential areas continue to expand, eventually requiring additional solutions beyond the vanpool and bicycle and pedestrian system investments to accommodate all residents.

Maintaining the Momentum

Some next steps that can be taken to begin implementing the findings of this study include:

1. Maintain and build on the partnerships established by GI JETT

Partnerships between the city of Grand Island, local employers, local schools, Central Community College, and CRANE to continue driving an implementation plan for closing the GI JETT access gap. These partnerships can create more opportunities for collaboration to provide additional transportation services to Grand Island residents to access work and school opportunities.

2. Solicit vanpool participants on both business and employee side

Continue to build on the partnerships mentioned above to identify potential vanpool candidates at various employers and educate employers on the program. A vanpool program can be a good solution for a group of residents with the same employer, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Employers who provide vanpool programs to employees could see access to a larger employment pool, as well as see more employee retention. Additionally, employers could assist with the cost of the vanpool program, allowing employees to save on transportation costs.

3. Investigate options for bikeshare and scooter expansion

Central Community College currently administers a limited bikeshare program on the Grand Island campus. A broader bikeshare or scootershare program across Grand Island could expand access



to bicycling for mobility-limited residents. Other communities in Nebraska offer larger bikeshare programs, which have only grown in popularity. Grand Island could form a partnership with a bikeshare or scootershare provider to offer residents greater accessibility options to travel to school or work.

4. Target trail investments for disadvantaged communities in the area

In addition to active transportation, a connected trail network can provide more accessibility to work and school destinations for residents without access to a vehicle, or students who may not be able drive. By focusing these investments in historically disadvantaged areas, residents could see improved mobility and access to employment and training, as well as improved community character. Neighborhood meetings and review of trail opportunities in the city’s planning documents might identify near-term trail improvements that would serve targeted neighborhood needs.

5. Coordination between CRANE and Grand Island Public Schools to filling gaps in transportation for getting high school students to technical training

Not all high school students have access to a personal vehicle, or may have other restrictions of having the ability to drive to potential training or education opportunities. The existing CRANE service could serve as a solution, however coordination between CRANE and the local school district will be required to identify transportation barriers, as well as develop a program to allow students to carpool to training opportunities using CRANE busses. This could involve a simple review of students involved in technical training programs that have mobility challenges, and aligning CRANE resources with those student’s needs, along with education on how to book trips through CRANE.

