

Twin Cities Electric Vehicle Mobility Network:

Community Engagement and Outreach



A partnership between
the City of Saint Paul,
City of Minneapolis,
Hourcar, and Xcel Energy



SAINT PAUL
MINNESOTA



Minneapolis
City of Lakes



February 2021



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February 2021

Author's note: Community Engagement was done under the project name Twin Cities Electric Vehicle Mobility Network (TCEVMN). At the time of report publication, the project was transitioning to using new names: EV Spot Network, EV Spot, and Evie Carshare.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Partners	10
Funders	13
Goals of Engagement and Engagement Timeline	14
Community Engagement	15
Major Findings	19
Recommendations	25
Takeaways	29
References	33

Introduction

HOURECAR, the Cities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, and Xcel Energy are working with residents to create the Twin Cities Electric Vehicle Mobility Network (TCEVMN), a unique partnership that represents the future of electric and shared mobility in the region.

With the goals of improving transportation equity and reducing harmful emissions, this project combines one-way electric vehicle car sharing and publicly accessible charging hubs powered by clean, renewable energy.

Challenge: Many people in Saint Paul and Minneapolis don't have the transportation options they need.

Today's options are sometimes too expensive, and often don't provide service when or where people need it. As a result, too many Twin Cities residents face challenges in getting to work, to school, to see family—challenges to participating in the full life of their community. The current system underserves many people and it also burdens them with extra pollution.



Introduction

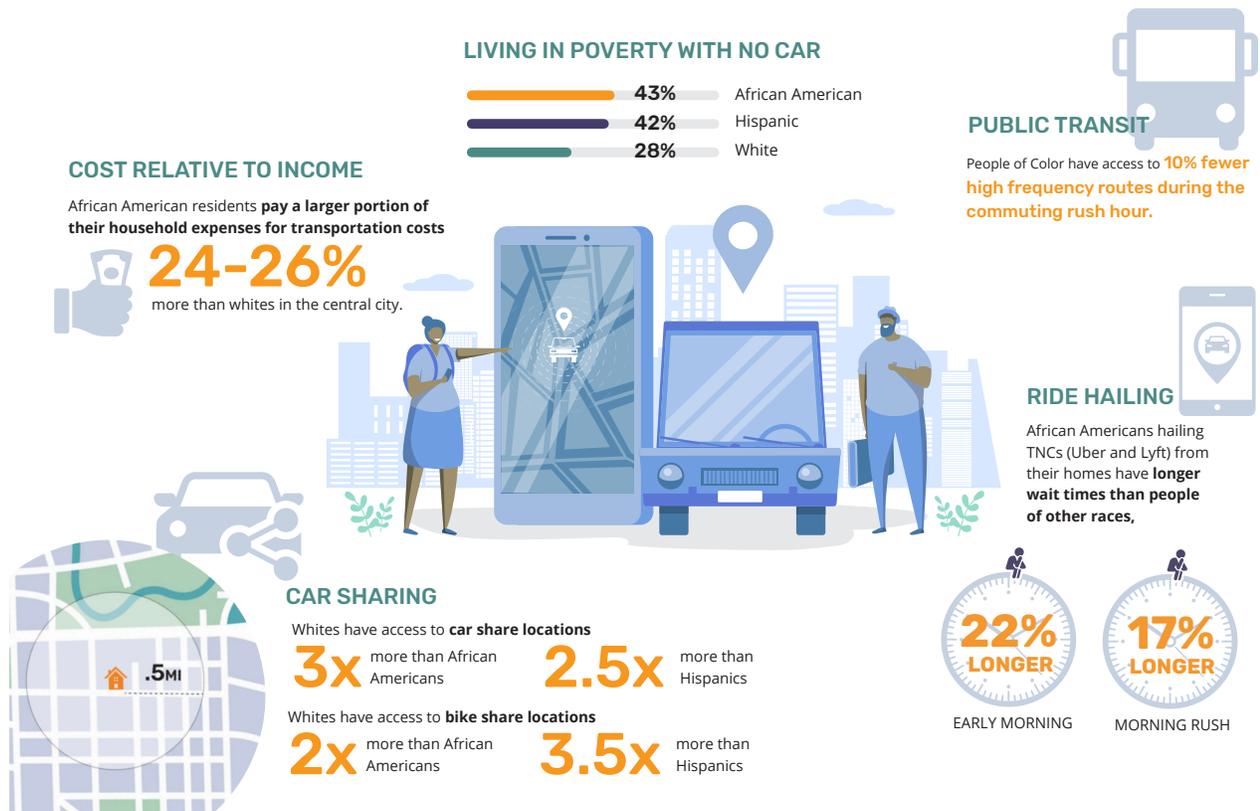
This network of EV carshare and public chargers will make the benefits of electric vehicles more equitably accessible.

For those that cannot purchase an electric vehicle or wish to remain without a vehicle, car sharing is an option that provides affordable access. Car sharing works best when paired with transit and walking, as well as micro mobility options like scooters and bike share. However, access to these services is not uniform across neighborhoods. According to the [Institute for Sustainable Communities](#)¹, there exist large gaps in access for people of color, especially Black and Hispanic households. This also holds true for low-wealth households. This project aims to close these inequitable gaps in access to car sharing and other transportation modes and increase transportation equity.

Equity and Smart Mobility

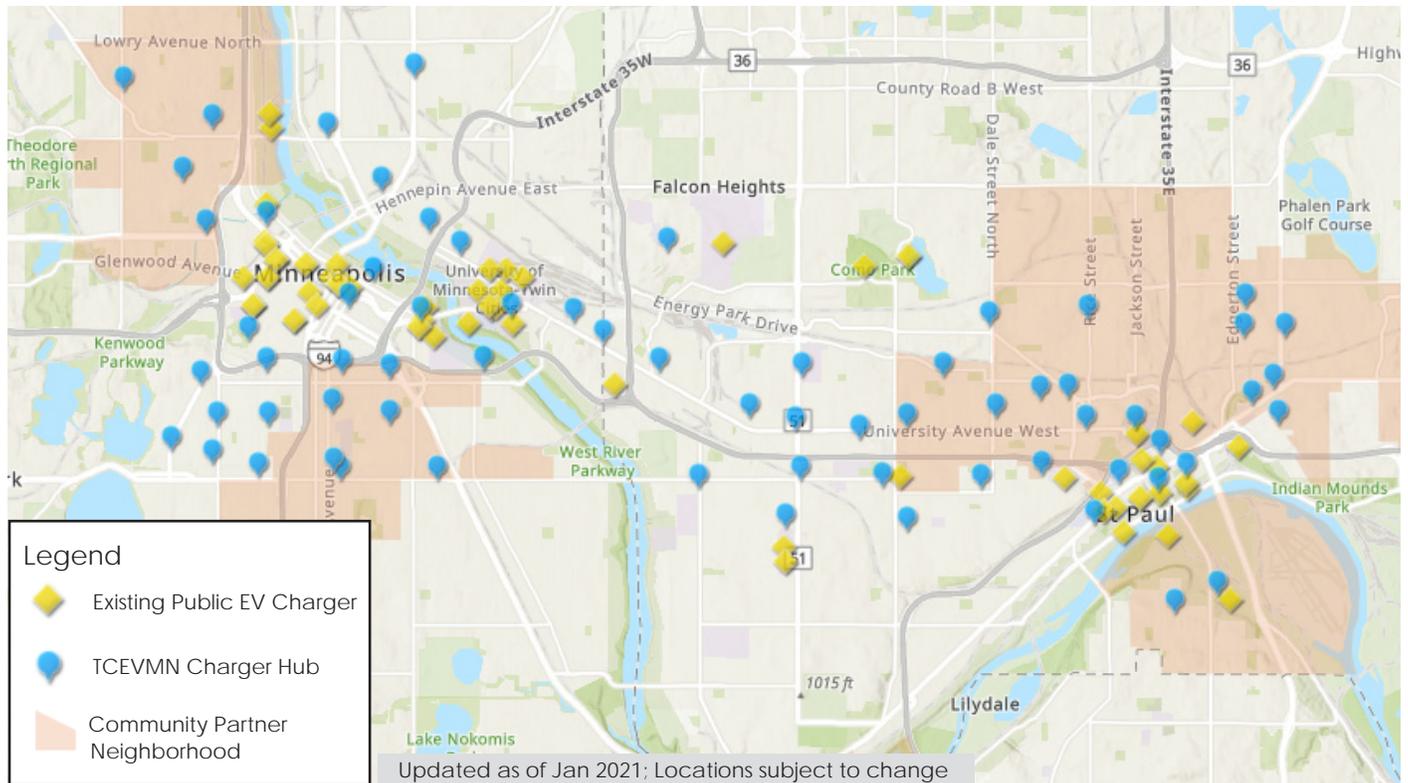


Access to transportation options in the U.S. is not always equitable, leaving many communities of color, especially those of limited means, struggling to obtain reliable, frequent, and affordable transportation to meet everyday needs.



Introduction

Current electric vehicle chargers do not equitably serve neighborhoods. This project works to close these gaps by increasing access to car sharing and public charging.



The majority of public chargers currently serve the downtown areas, the University of Minnesota, and select high-traffic corridors, leaving far too many neighborhoods underserved. Approximately half of the 70 charging hubs in the TCEVMN will be installed in low-wealth communities and communities of color. These hubs will substantially improve access to public charging, especially for people residing in apartments and condominiums outside of the downtown areas and the U of M campus.

Many residents of multi-unit dwellings are unable to install private or shared chargers at their place of residence. The addition of new chargers near residential areas means more people can transition from gasoline to electric-fueled vehicles. As more electric vehicles become available, used EV's will also become more abundant, making ownership feasible for more households.

Introduction

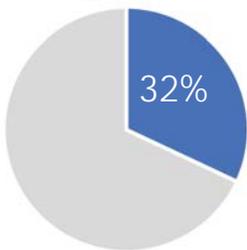
Despite driving less, low-wealth people and communities of color are most affected by air pollution. This project will reduce tailpipe emissions and improve air quality in the Twin Cities residential neighborhoods that are most impacted.

According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, [low-wealth people and communities of color are most impacted by air pollution.](#)² Tailpipe emissions from gasoline powered, on-road vehicles are a major source of pollution in our region. Encouraging people to adopt clean transportation modes can help reduce tailpipe emissions. Making these options affordable and accessible to more people in more communities is key to this transition.

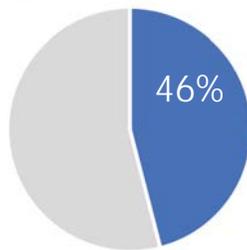
Air Quality Risk

These communities are more likely to be near higher levels of air pollution.³

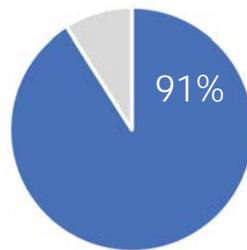
Statewide Average



Low-Income Communities



Communities of color and Indigenous communities



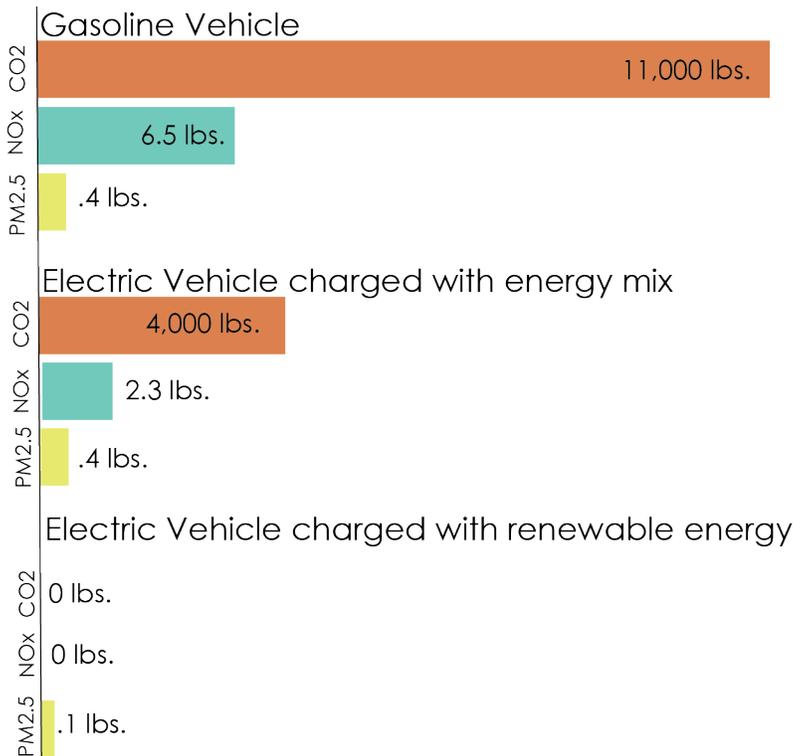
The chart figures represent the average number of people above state risk guidelines in each group.

Introduction

The TCEVMN advances shared goals of lowering transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions and increasing transportation access and equity in the region.

In 2015, on-road transportation accounted for 26% of greenhouse gas emissions in Minneapolis⁴ and 31% in Saint Paul⁵. Both cities continue to work to reduce these numbers and prioritize clean transportation projects. Electric vehicles are a cleaner transportation option, especially when charged by renewable energy sources like wind and solar. The TCEVMN will be powered by 100% renewable energy, prioritizing overnight charging for the car sharing fleet when wind energy is abundantly available.

Annual emissions by fuel type
(12,000 miles for compact/midsize car)



Data source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency⁶



Introduction

Electric vehicles represent a necessary step away from fossil-fuel dependence, and a step toward a cleaner and more resilient transportation system.

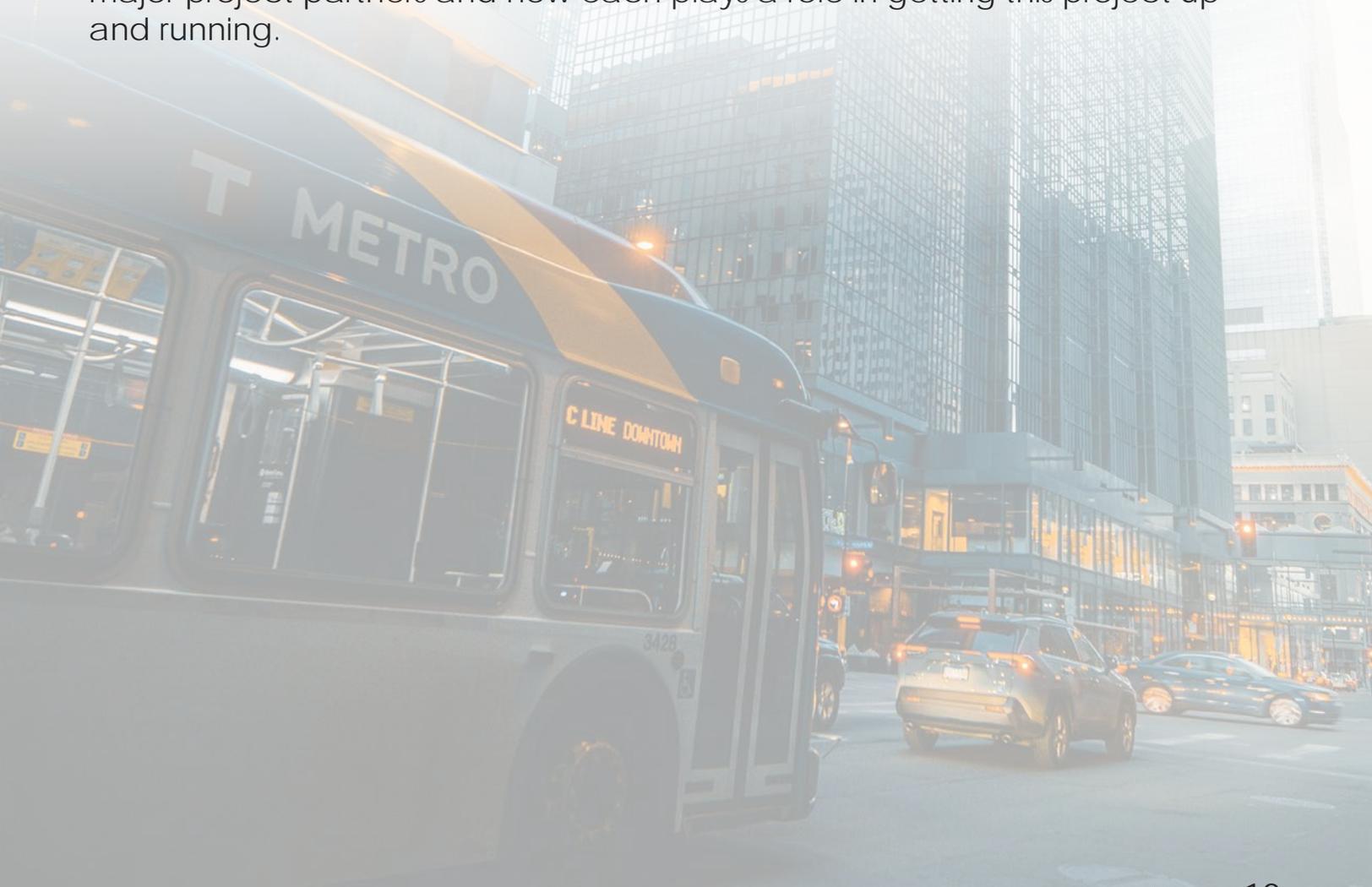
Reliance on gas-powered vehicles to move people and goods will take time to shift. Giving people a set of multi-modal options that provides them with the right mode at the right time is key to this transition. Expanding public charging access will help spur electric vehicle adoption. As more charging infrastructure is built, confidence in electric vehicles will increase, prices will come down, and more people will trade in their gas-powered vehicles for electric vehicles.

Making progress on all these goals, and doing so equitably, requires working closely with the people who would use the envisioned system. This report details the extensive community engagement work that the partners did as part of designing the TCEVMN. It gives a deep dive into the engagement process, highlighting the work of our ten community-based organizational partners. It discusses major findings from engagement efforts as well as recommendations, actions, and takeaways. Most importantly, this report frames the discussion for moving forward with future engagement efforts.

Partners

The Twin Cities Electric Vehicle Mobility Network is a unique public-private partnership that sets a precedent for collaboration in order to implement forward-thinking transportation options.

This partnership specifically addresses gaps in the regional transportation system and looks toward a future with cleaner and more equitable transportation options for more people. While each community has varying transportation needs, this partnership recognizes that car sharing and electrification will get our communities closer to mutual goals. The following section highlights major project partners and how each plays a role in getting this project up and running.



Partners



SAINT PAUL
MINNESOTA

The City of Saint Paul is a national leader in efforts to mitigate climate change and increase transportation equity. Mayor Carter serves on the National Steering Committee of Climate Mayors, and Saint Paul was selected to participate in the Bloomberg Philanthropies American Cities Climate Challenge. In 2020, Saint Paul's efforts were recognized by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) as the Most Improved City in the United States. The City of Saint Paul has taken the lead on TCEVMN and manages the project.



Minneapolis
City of Lakes

With a commitment to using 100% renewable energy by 2030, the City of Minneapolis is ambitious in its greenhouse gas reduction efforts. Transportation projects like TCEVMN fall in line with goals of providing options to its residents for trips that provide people with effective, clean transportation options. The City of Minneapolis plays a supporting role in the project and leads hub siting in the city while simultaneously undertaking their related Climate Challenge mobility hubs project.



Since 2005, Hourcar has provided alternatives to car ownership while increasing awareness of the benefits of a multi-modal lifestyle. Hourcar strives to make these services accessible to all persons. Hourcar is a thought leader in shared mobility with the goal of making the TCEVMN a model for regions throughout the country. Hourcar is leading community engagement on this project, and will serve as the service provider for the car sharing network, which includes program development.



Xcel Energy provides energy that powers millions of homes and businesses across eight Western and Midwestern states. Xcel Energy's clean energy vision includes plans to reduce carbon emissions 80% by 2030 putting the company on path to provide customers with 100% carbon-free electricity by 2050. Xcel Energy is contributing the electrical "make-ready" for this project. Permission for this investment was granted by the state's Public Utilities Commission.

East Metro
STRONG

East Metro Strong is a public-private partnership of businesses, cities, and counties working together to bring more and better transit investment to the East Metro and catalyze job growth and economic development opportunities. East Metro Strong has supported program design and community engagement, and has been a key fundraiser.



The American Lung Association works to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy, research and strategic partnership. They champion clean air for all by focusing on the single largest source of air pollution and greenhouse gas emission: vehicle exhaust. The American Lung Association is part of the Clean Cities Coalition.

Partners

Core Partner Council

Ten community-based organizations make up the Core Partner Council (CPC). These organizations focus on issues of livability in their communities, such as housing, jobs, transportation, community safety, food access, and more. Each community organization was chosen because they are deeply embedded in their community, using their expertise to understand community needs and solve problems in unique ways. Each organization is in a neighborhood comprised of a majority BIPOC community members, wherein more than 40% of households live at or under federal poverty guidelines, otherwise known as ACP50 neighborhoods. These neighborhoods have lower car ownership rates per household and higher transit ridership rates than the city average. Each community has a unique set of needs surrounding transportation and our core partners are best situated to connect with community members to understand these needs more holistically.



Core Partner Council



Funders

Community Investment

More than just funders, these organizations have invested in the work being done on the Twin Cities Electric Vehicle Mobility Network. Generously funding this project, each funder actively commits to local communities in ways that help create transformative change. These organizations make it possible to make a bigger impact in the way of community engagement and program development, as well as supporting necessary infrastructure improvements. Although this project has a primarily local and regional focus, it fits neatly into a larger national framework of building clean energy transportation solutions for all communities through unique partnerships.



This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) under the Office of Vehicle Technologies Award Number DE-EE0009226.



Goals and Timeline

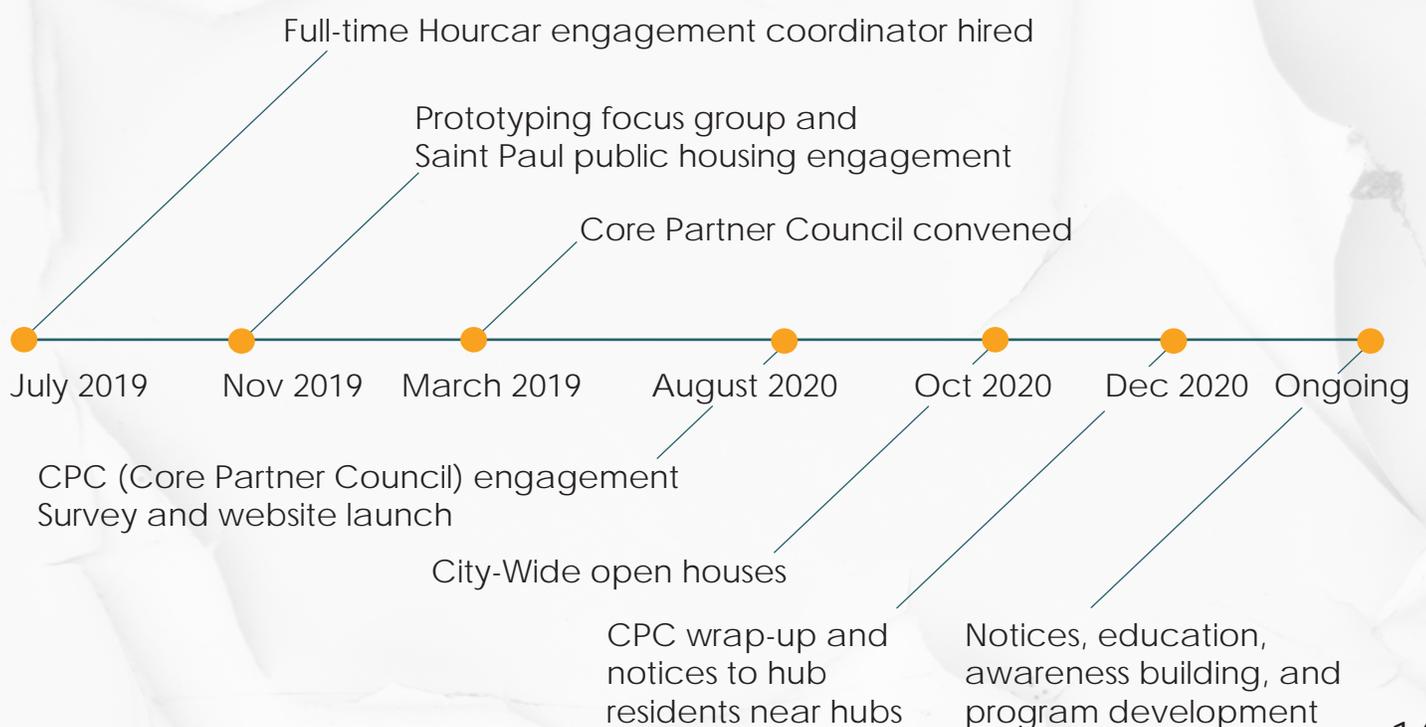
Goals of Engagement

The following goals speak to both that of engagement and the TCEVMN project. Rather than static markers, these goals represent ongoing efforts for the short and long term.

1. To better understand barriers with regard to accessing Hourcar's service
2. To educate people about electric vehicles and related charging infrastructure
3. To inform people about the addition of publicly available charging options within Saint Paul and Minneapolis
4. To better understand affordability of current and future service, including most accessible methods of payment
5. To create ongoing partnerships with community partner organizations and individuals and engage more deeply around transportation needs, especially in historically under-served communities
6. To take action to mitigate barriers to access through ongoing community partnerships
7. To create programming and technology improvements that respond to the needs of community members

Engagement Timeline

This timeline illustrates major efforts to move community engagement forward. While the first round of engagement is considered finished, the TCEVMN project team will continue to coordinate education, awareness, and programming efforts in conjunction with our community partners and widely throughout the community.



Community Engagement

Creation and Process

The TCEVMN team approached engagement through a variety of methods, including prototyping focus groups, the creation of the Core Partner Council (CPC), outreach to Saint Paul public housing residents, outreach to charging hub adjacent neighbors, a survey, website, libraries, and city-wide open houses geared toward the general public.

Hourcar's first full-time, dedicated community engagement coordinator was hired in July of 2019. While community engagement was not new to Hourcar, this action created much needed capacity within the organization. This initial step has helped Hourcar forge relationships with community leaders and organizations, and the person in this position will continue to lead efforts in cultivating new and ongoing relationships with community. This is especially important as the service is launched and as community gives feedback on what is working and what needs to be improved or modified.



Community Engagement

Prototyping Focus Groups

Prototyping focus groups were done in-person beginning in November 2019 and continuing through early March 2020. The rest of the work was done digitally through late Spring 2020. Prototyping was guided by Sylver Consulting and funded by the Climate Challenge. The project team hosted a series of prototyping focus groups with community members to better understand service design, barriers to access, pricing, trip choice, and branding for the future service. This initial work helped establish a baseline through which to direct other engagement. Below is a summary of the structure and results of each session. Many of the questions raised during these focus group sessions were similar to questions received in broader community engagement efforts.

THE TWIN CITIES ELECTRIC VEHICLE MOBILITY NETWORK

Prototyping: What is it and why was it done?

FROM NOVEMBER 2019 – MARCH 2020, a series of focus groups and one-on-one interviews were carried out with people living in the neighborhoods in which the *Twin Cities Electric Vehicle Mobility Network* is being planned.

A sub-set of the community was engaged to co-create this new electric vehicle (EV) car-sharing service.

Focused prototyping sessions helped us to shape the new car-sharing service for maximum impact, before bringing it forward to the larger community.

A PARTNERSHIP OF:



Here is a summary of *what we did and what we learned...*

	Who Participated?	Topic of Conversation	What Was Learned
TEST 1: Understand the value of the EV car-share program	22 RESIDENTS of the EV car-share service area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explored the value of the EV car-share service to resident lives Identified motivators and benefits of service use Articulated barriers to service access 	FLEXIBILITY, FREEDOM, AND INDEPENDENCE were the values of importance for most, and values that residents felt the EV car-share service could deliver for them
TEST 2: Determine the types of trips for which users will rely on EV carshare	19 RESIDENTS of the EV car-share service area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed a 7-day travel log of their transit behaviors Participated in a one-on-one interview to determine which, if any, trips from their travel log might be replaced with the EV car-share service Discussion explored cost/convenience trade-offs associated with different transportation modes 	TIME, EFFORT, AND RELIABILITY were the most important factors in choosing EV car-share vs. other transportation options
TEST 3: Articulate how to drive awareness for the EV car-share program in the community	300 RESIDENTS (50% in and out of the EV car-share service area)	Participated in an online survey designed to identify the ideal messaging tactics for the EV car-share service within the Minneapolis/St. Paul region	Insight was gained on how to NAME AND BRAND the service for optimal understanding, what COMMON QUESTIONS people had and therefore needed to be addressed in initial program information, and WHERE BEST TO ADVERTISE the program in the community

What else did we hear?

“When I had the HOURECAR service, it was really convenient for shopping, but this one-way service would be a game changer!”

“The predictable, no surge pricing that car-sharing has to offer is really appealing. The price always stays consistent.”

“This service makes me think twice about buying a car. I feel like it would give me the freedom to drive when I need to without spending all that money.”

Community Engagement

Public Housing Engagement

In addition to the prototyping and CPC, the project team spent time within Saint Paul public housing complexes, presenting the project to residents and answering questions. Plans of returning to solicit deeper feedback was planned for Spring 2020, as well as engagement at Minneapolis public housing. While the COVID pandemic prevented further in-person engagement, we were still able to use monthly newsletters to provide information and links to the survey for residents. Virtual live sessions were not accessible due to technology limitations and resident accessibility. Further engagement in both cities will continue in person when it is considered safe to do so.

General Engagement Methods

Library networks in both cities were used to share information about the project, and communications were sent widely to educational institutions in the Twin Cities. A centralized website was created to provide a place for people to learn about details of the project. Housed under the City of Saint Paul, the website communicates information about both cities. The website hosts information about proposed charging hub locations, the complex hub selection process, recordings of the city-wide open houses, FAQ's, and other relevant materials. The survey is also accessible via the website.

All of these materials were translated into 5 additional languages, including Hmong, Spanish, Somali, Oromo, and Karen, reflecting the diversity of some of the cultural and ethnic groups residing in the Twin Cities area. Additionally, notices were sent to thousands of residents and property owners that are in close proximity to proposed hub locations. Feedback is ongoing through Winter 2020-2021.



I WANT TO

RESIDENTS

BUSINESSES

VISITORS

GOVERNMENT



TRANSLATE

WORK

[FOR ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS AND TENANTS](#)

[FAQS](#)

[COMMUNITY INPUT AND DESIGNING THE SERVICE](#)

TWIN CITIES ELECTRIC VEHICLE MOBILITY NETWORK

The Twin Cities Electric Vehicle Mobility Network is a project being developed by the City of Saint Paul, City of Minneapolis, HOURCAR, and Xcel Energy to create a network of electric vehicle charging hubs throughout the Twin Cities and make electric vehicles publicly available through a car-sharing service.



Community Engagement

Core Partner Council

The first large group CPC meeting was held on March 11th, 2020, just before Minnesota went into lock down due to COVID-19. This dramatically changed our approach and the approach of our partners in the months following. The Core Partner Council (CPC) was created with the intention of acknowledging the expertise and wisdom of our partners and their respective communities. These organizations were approached because they directly serve residents in ACP50 neighborhoods, where car share is expanding beyond Hourcar's existing coverage.

More than a steering committee, we wanted our partner orgs to have autonomy and flexibility in their engagement approach. The recognition that each organization reaches their community in unique, effective ways was one that we leaned on heavily. Each organization was approached because of their reputation as engaging leaders that are committed to racial, economic, and environmental equity and justice. We approached organizations that directly interact with or serve their communities on a regular basis. This means that all the organizations with whom we contracted intimately understand ongoing and changing community needs. While the goals of engagement were uniform across the CPC, the approaches and outcomes were unique.



Community Engagement

Major Findings

While there were many topics brought to light through our varied engagement efforts, a few stood out. These topics are especially relevant in addressing equity for those who need it most. [Transportation access is a social determinant of health](#)⁷, and ties into racial, economic, and environmental justice outcomes. Throughout this process, many challenges emerged that made doing this work more difficult. The global COVID-19 pandemic meant that engagement methods needed to be revised and adjusted. This put extra strain on our Core Partner Council as they worked to provide their communities with essential services, as well as perform the work we had asked of them. Flexibility in working with our community partners was key to performing the work needed for this project. Minneapolis lay at the heart of the Black Lives Matter movement and civil unrest brought a renewed sense of urgency in addressing community safety, especially for Black community members. This ties in directly with TCEVMN, and how communities of color and immigrant communities can use the service in a safe manner. The challenge of making this service a community asset and not another tool of displacement lay ahead of us as we prepare for launch. The next section provides an overview of the topics most discussed within engagement efforts, followed by recommendations in addressing these topics.





Community Engagement

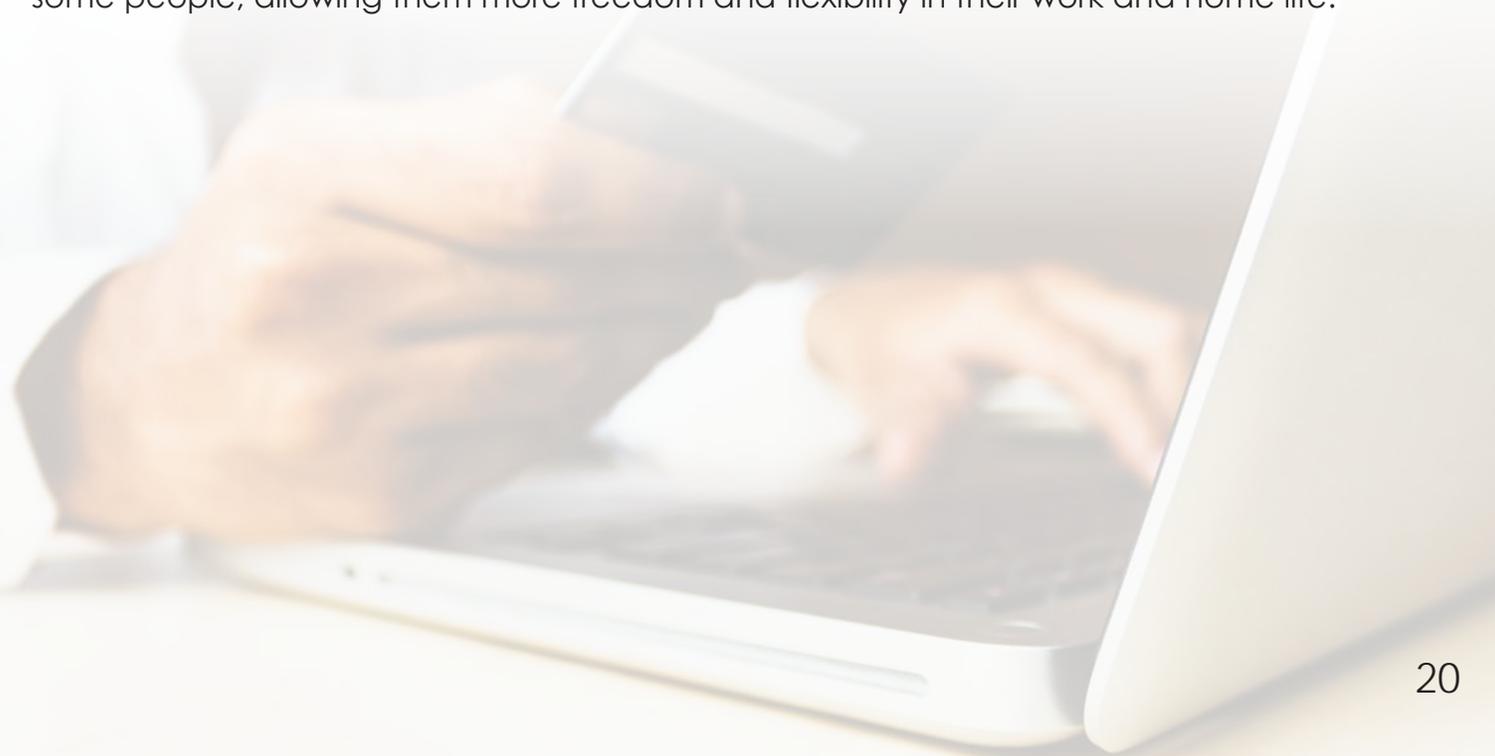
Major Findings

Cost of car sharing is a barrier, especially for low-wealth households or those without a steady full-time income.

Many lower-income people found the price of Hourcar's current fee structure to be out of reach, especially when compared to transit. A flat, fixed monthly subscription is desirable, both for predictability and budgeting concerns. Lowering the price of the car-sharing services and membership fees is essential to providing greater access to those who need it most.

Some people function within a cash-only economy or have limited access to a debit or credit card. This severely limits participation in many shared mobility services, including car sharing. While pre-paid debit cards can be used, there exists a host of issues that make it more difficult to use with car sharing. Expanding methods of payment is critical to getting more people into car sharing, as well as other shared mobility options.

One relevant thing to note related to pricing is time, and time savings. Although Hourcar's services may cost slightly more than transit, community members have mentioned a trade-off between time spent on transit versus car share. This is especially true with the introduction of one-way service. Many people commented that they are willing to pay slightly more than the cost of a transit ride for one-way car sharing trips if it means they can save time off their daily trips. In some cases, this could be a difference of more than 2 hours of saved time for some people, allowing them more freedom and flexibility in their work and home life.



Community Engagement

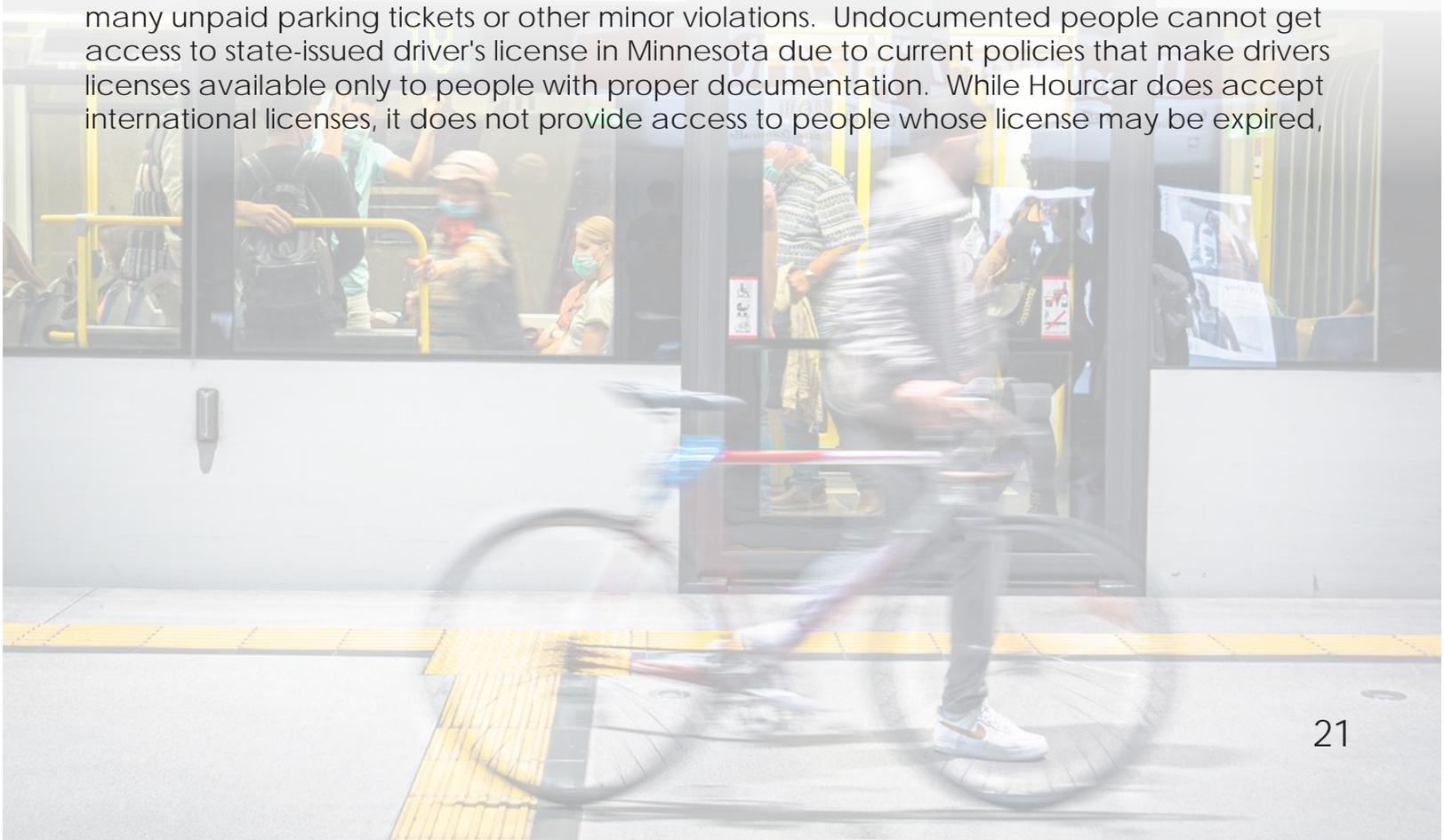
Major Findings

Accessibility of service has many layers and extends beyond monetary concerns.

Hourcar's application process takes time, and verification is done manually by Hourcar staff (prior to February 2021). The feedback we received spoke to the need to provide quick, easy application and approval. Many people want to be able to use an application on their smartphone to apply for membership, upload documents, make reservations, and complete other relevant tasks. Community members have also expressed the need for a website that is easier to use.

Additionally, many community members communicated the desire to access the service in languages other than English, including being able to talk with staff that can accommodate ELL speakers in real-time. For some, language translation means the difference between using the service and finding other solutions, even when other barriers are minimal.

For many people without drivers' licenses, this service is completely out of reach. Many Black, Indigenous, and Latinx community members noted that the over-policing of themselves and their neighbors means that people have lost their licenses over things like too many unpaid parking tickets or other minor violations. Undocumented people cannot get access to state-issued driver's license in Minnesota due to current policies that make drivers licenses available only to people with proper documentation. While Hourcar does accept international licenses, it does not provide access to people whose license may be expired,



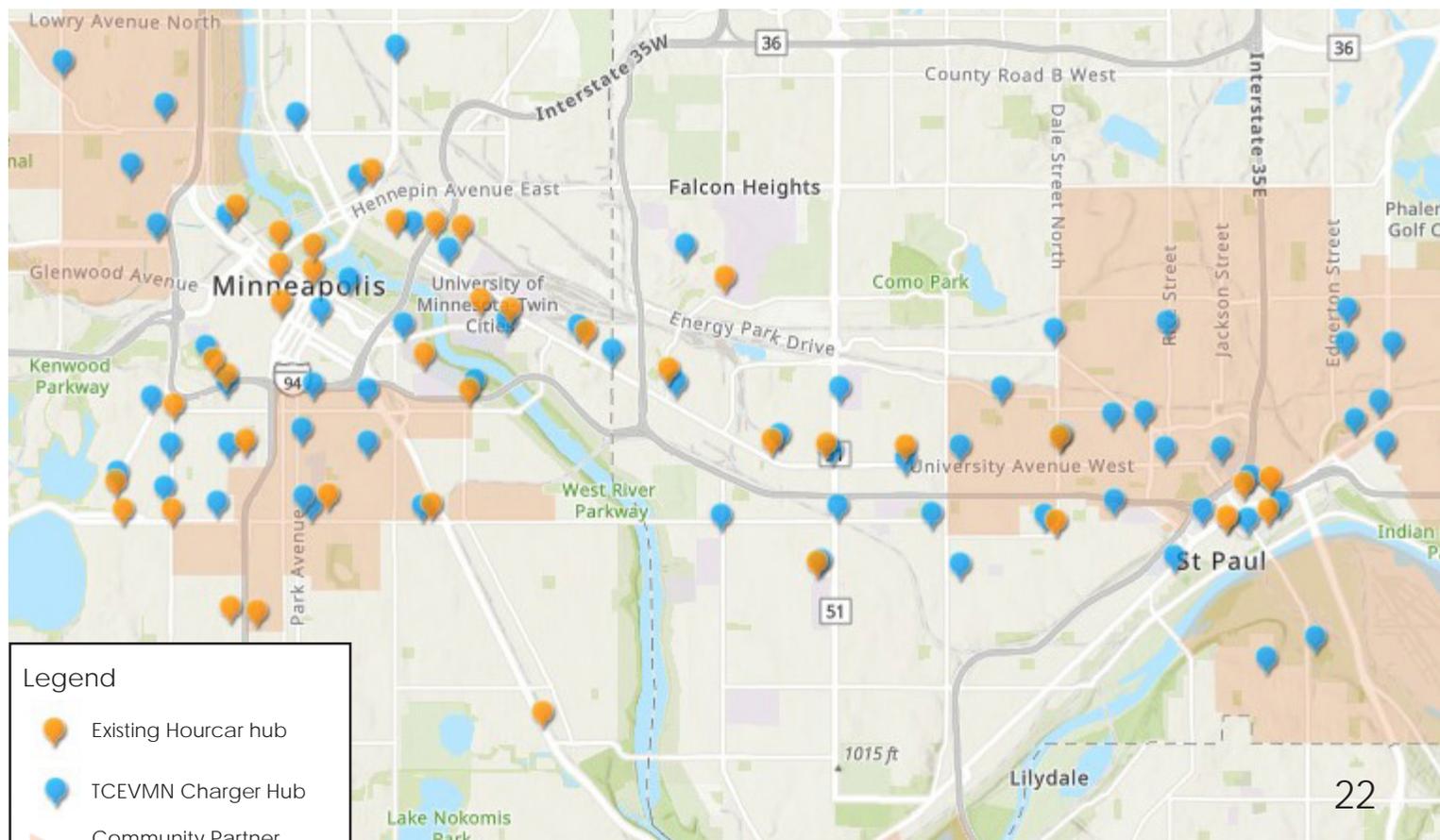
Community Engagement

Major Findings

People desire greater availability of vehicles and locations.

Proximity to car share vehicles is another accessibility concern. Proximity has different meanings for different people. For people with limited physical mobility, not having a car where they live means access is sometimes too challenging or impossible. Cars that cannot hold a wheelchair are also a barrier for some. For community members that live in historically under-invested neighborhoods, it means that there may not be vehicles near where they live and the extra effort to get to those vehicles makes the service impractical. It is obvious that equitable access must address all of these topics of proximity and availability.

Still others have noted that even when there are no other barriers, proximity to hubs is critical to their usage. Minnesota is cold and snowy for over half of the calendar year, and unless people have fairly close access to both hubs and vehicles, they will make other arrangements. Convenience is a huge factor for many people; balancing convenience with time and cost is something people will continue to weigh when choosing mode(s) of transportation. The map below shows existing and future car sharing hubs, illustrating the expansion of physical locations. The service area for one-way trips has yet to be determined, but will minimally encompass a continuous, connected area within 1/4 mile of all future TCEVMN hubs.



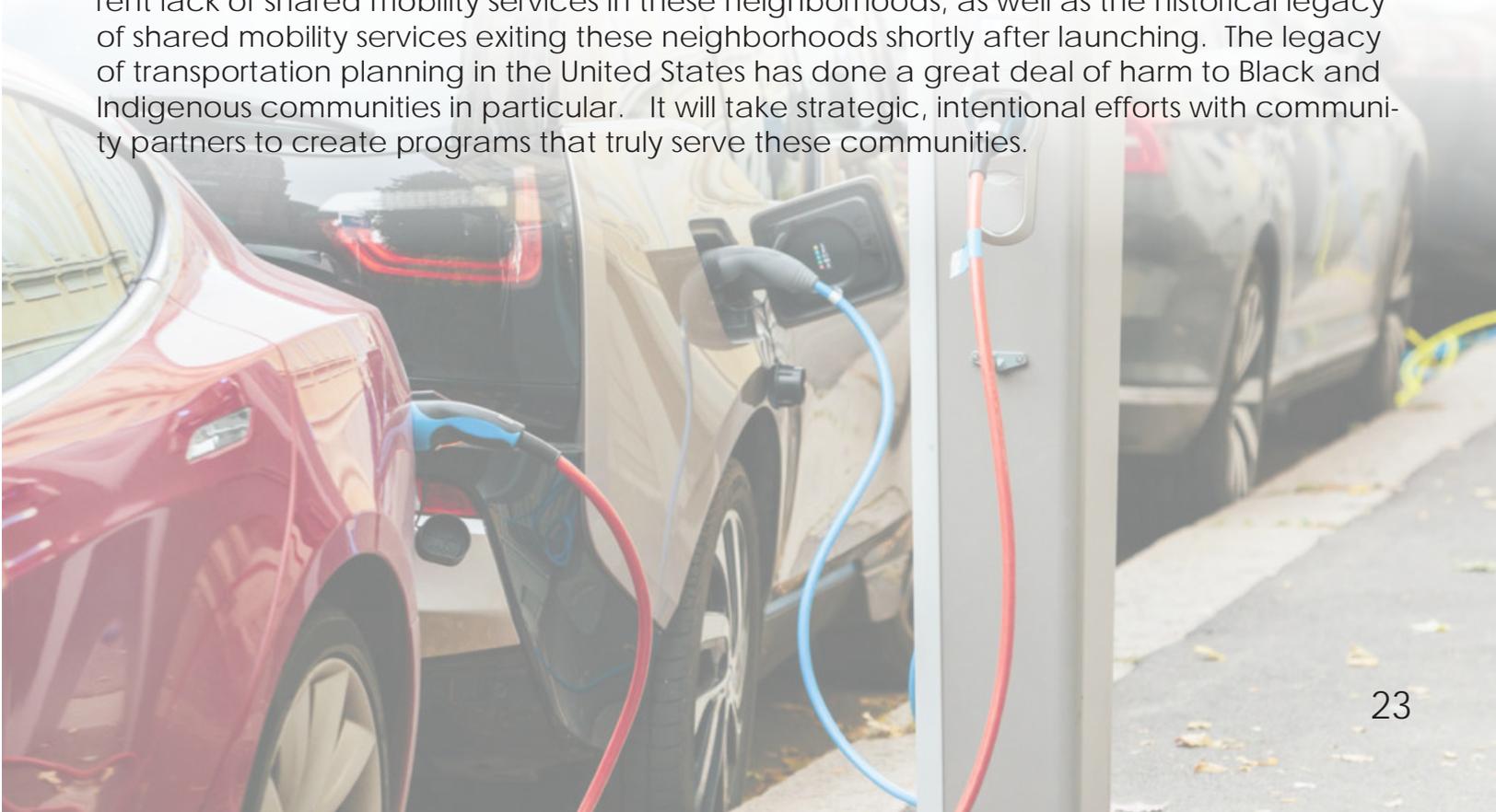
Community Engagement

Major Findings

Location and security of the new charging hubs was brought up many times over the course of engagement.

General locations of charging hubs were received with overall positive feedback, with people wanting more hubs in their neighborhoods and not just along transit and retail corridors. Many people that live outside the car sharing service area expressed enthusiasm about the increased charging hub locations, allowing greater range of movement for existing and future electric vehicle owners. Many current electric vehicle owners expressed the desire for additional DC level 3 chargers, or “fast chargers”. The desire for more fast chargers speaks to the need for additional mobility between trips, especially when those trips are longer or further in duration. Although level 2 chargers will be more abundant in this network, some level 3 chargers will be installed in high-traffic areas and along highway corridor areas to facilitate ease of mid and long-range travel.

There also exist a concern over the security and safety of charging hubs. Many people desire adequate lighting, security cameras, and anti-theft systems. Some suggested in-car video surveillance as an additional way to provide a sense of security. There is also an overall concern about the number of hubs located in historically under-invested communities, despite the plan for half of the hubs to be installed in these places. This reflects both the current lack of shared mobility services in these neighborhoods, as well as the historical legacy of shared mobility services exiting these neighborhoods shortly after launching. The legacy of transportation planning in the United States has done a great deal of harm to Black and Indigenous communities in particular. It will take strategic, intentional efforts with community partners to create programs that truly serve these communities.



Community Engagement

Major Findings

Multi-modal connectivity is key to the success of car sharing and other shared mobility services.

Current Hourcar service is located adjacent to transit corridors and all hubs are within a 1-2 blocks of transit stops. Many of the existing hubs in Minneapolis are located at or near mobility hubs, which are defined by the City of Minneapolis as “a place where people can connect to multiple modes of transportation to make their trips as safe, convenient and reliable as possible.”⁸ Many people asked about additional multi-modal services that plan to be incorporated in the new system. The installation of bike racks near charging hubs, as well as the location of scooter and bike share parking was often mentioned as a necessity. The addition of bike racks to the vehicles was also brought up as an asset and way to make multi-modal trips easier and more seamless.

While the installation of bike racks at charging hubs is in the works, coordinating with private shared mobility companies is much more challenging. Many of the scooter and bike share companies that service the Twin Cities cover limited neighborhoods, and many of our partner neighborhoods have little to no coverage. It will take many levels of collaboration, negotiation, and local policy change to bring greater access to these related shared services.

COVID-related cleaning and sanitizing is on the top of people’s minds.

This pandemic has changed the way we think about everything, including transportation. Transit ridership is down, and many current Hourcar members are choosing to use car sharing at higher rates as a safer way to get around. Many community members have asked about the cleaning and sanitizing of the Hourcar fleet. In response, Hourcar has made changes to make it safer to use Hourcar’s services. Full-time staff has been hired; their role is solely dedicated to cleaning and sanitizing vehicles on a weekly basis. HEPA air filters and alcohol-based wipes are provided in every vehicle. This will continue as Hourcar transitions toward an all-electric fleet.

Recommendations

Taking Action

The following two sections illustrates the recommended actions to address many of the concerns and questions raised by our community. Some of these are currently happening or will be implemented before the launch of the TCEVMN project. Some will take deeper strategic planning and additional resources, as many of the topics brought to light are systemic and need long-term collaboration with a large number of people and organizations. Much of the education and awareness building will include our community partners. The chart below gives a quick overview of where we are on implementing improvements. Many of these improvements have multiple tiers and will take time to develop.

Recommended Actions	Has been addressed	In Progress	Future Improvement
Increase affordability	X	X	X
Build Awareness		X	X
Make it easier	X	X	X
Translate into multiple languages			X
Incorporate ride share			X



Recommendations

Increase affordability

Make the car sharing service and membership more affordable.

Hourcar has been taking steps to increase the affordability of its service before this report was released. In February 2021, HOURCAR launched a new software platform, with hourly usage rates that are up to 40% lower for all users. A new “stopover” rate charges the user even less when they pause their trip when they are not driving but wish to keep the vehicle reserved in their name. Annual membership fees will be eliminated and replaced with smaller monthly fees, including the optional damage fee waiver which is designed to protect the member if they are at fault in an accident. Breaking up these membership costs into monthly charges means the cost of membership will be within reach for more people.

However, we know that these lower price points are still out of reach for some users, especially for people without consistent income or low-wage workers. A qualified low-income rate structure is in the works, with programming to accompany those efforts. While we do not know what it looks like yet, we envision partnership with our stakeholders and others to craft a program that may pool resources to help lower-income people cover application costs, monthly membership, and trip-related costs.

Related to this effort, the integration of a third-party payment app or prepaid cards available at local retailers is something in which community members have expressed interest and we continue to explore. While this effort is the most resource intensive, Hourcar recognizes the value it brings to unbanked and underbanked people specifically. As efforts to incorporate car sharing into Mobility as a Service (MaaS) are underway, payment integration will likely become easier and more fluid as well.

Recommendations

Build Awareness

Awareness and Education efforts must be central.

Our community partners have reiterated the need for awareness and education efforts around Hourcar, car sharing, and electric vehicles. This was made evident throughout our engagement efforts. The desire to have in-person demonstrations present a challenge as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and will happen once it is safe to do so. Collaboration with our community partners to distribute education and awareness materials will happen before the initial launch and throughout the network build-out. Many indicated the desire to have step-by-step videos in many languages with actors from our respective partner communities. A large marketing campaign will launch in tandem with broader education efforts, which will include branding of the network, charging infrastructure, and car sharing components. There are also plans to continue engagement efforts with our partners in an effort to improve service and build awareness.

Make it easier

Make the website easier to use and launch an app for smartphones.

In response to current members, community feedback, and user testing, Hourcar has taken an important initial step to upgrade its software platform. This new platform offers an easy-to-use app for smart phones, and a desktop version that surpasses the former software. People will be able to apply for membership and be approved in minutes instead of days. Additional security features verify the identity of the member upon application and make it easier to report damage before starting every trip. With the new one-way feature, members will be able to locate cars in real time, no matter where they are in the service area.





Recommendations

Translate into multiple languages

Make charging and car share services more accessible to ELL speakers.

The Twin Cities is home to many immigrant groups, many of whom use languages other than English as their primary language. Many people communicated the desire to access the TCEVMN network and would be more inclined to do so if translation was more readily available. This extends beyond websites and phone applications; real time translations for car sharing members means peace of mind for some people that expressed concern over handling emergency and real time troubleshooting. Hourcar is exploring options for real-time translation services. Hourcar is also exploring translating the new technology platform, as well as the website as we move toward redesign.

Incorporate ride share

Develop a blended community ride share.

Many people who shared their thoughts expressed the desire to share rides with people in their community, especially if it means helping those that may not be able to drive themselves. While this can be informally done now, integrating this option into the new technology platform would make it easier to connect more people to car sharing, making a bigger difference in providing equitable access. The desire to help others, as well as cost share, were reasons people cited when asking for ride share integration. This idea has implications for people that have lost their license, have physical limitations that prevent them from driving, or simply do not have a license.



Takeaways

Lessons learned

This section focuses on lessons learned through the engagement process, as well as an examination of methods. TCEVMN engagement was created with the intention of centering community, especially those from historically under-invested and marginalized communities. Engagement plans were anything but typical due to a host of factors, but the decision to let our Core Partner Council lead engagement in their own communities was essential to this work. This process has created a strong base from which to continue efforts around making car sharing more equitable, and making electric vehicle adoption more feasible.

Grassroots engagement works.

For the CPC specific engagement, we partnered primarily with smaller organizations that were largely led by people of color and white allies who have deep grassroots connection to their community. This approach was weighed carefully, knowing that larger organizations may have a capacity to do the work, but sometimes lack the grassroots approach or deeper community connections. Many of the leaders of these organizations live in the communities they serve. We ended up with primarily neighborhood-based, smaller organizations because of the hyper locality of TCEVMN. The deep, meaningful relationships that our community partners had already established within the communities in which they operate made a greater difference in the outcomes of feedback gathered.





Takeaways

Centering BIPOC voices means moving the gauge on social and systems change.

Minneapolis was at the heart of the civil unrest and protests around the murder of George Floyd in 2020. This global movement for justice and systemic change matters deeply to our partners, our communities, and to the project team. The ability to pivot around this also impacted the success of the outcomes by recognizing the difficulties in doing engagement at a moment in history which is fraught with so many injustices and hardships. Part of engaging within an anti-racist lens means listening to Black and Indigenous people, as well as all people of color and allowing these communities to lead the conversation. Deep listening paired with direct action is essential to bringing equity and justice to our community.

Consider capacity of partner organizations.

The capacity of these smaller organizations was something that did come up and impacted some of the work. Many of the orgs were able to adapt, but some were consumed with things like advocating for a moratorium on renter evictions, creating or strengthening food distribution, COVID information sharing, 2020 Census work, staff reductions, supporting mutual aid efforts, and so much more. In a year like 2020, this is to be expected. However, offering greater resources for smaller orgs can be a game changer, especially if they are able to hire someone to do the work rather than tacking on another project to existing workloads.

Relationships matter.

Although some of the intended work did not happen as planned, the relationships forged during this time have been strengthened and solidified. As we move toward the next phase of engagement, those that were unable to do some of the work they had hoped are considering what that involvement may look like moving forward. The TCEVMN team continues to explore ways to collaborate and explore what it means for the communities we serve.

Takeaways

Be mindful of engagement bias.

Engagement efforts from projects like TCEVMN skew toward a whiter, wealthy audience. This demographic tends to have more time and availability to engage. However, making this project beneficial for everyone means that those who cannot engage as freely must also be part of the conversation. This is why our Core Partner Council was so important to our engagement efforts. Centering the voices of more community members is key and ensures a step toward increased equity for those who need it most.

Open and honest communication is vital.

Throughout the engagement process, a clear line of communication was kept open between Hourcar's engagement coordinator and its community partners. Regular check-ins and updates were a part of the process. Even when the communication was to give a few words of support, encouragement, or offer help, it allowed everyone to know where they stood in the process. When little progress was being made on engagement efforts, reaching out and listening was powerful and needed in a year that offered very little stability or comfort. Pivoting as a response to fluctuating capacity challenges meant that some of the work looked different but was still accomplished.

Flexibility is key.

Much of the success of the engagement around TCEVMN was due to the flexibility and variability of the process itself. The bulk of engagement was done during the COVID-19 global pandemic, which disrupted every part of our lives. When much of the engagement plans were initially built around being physically present, we had to shift toward more creative ways to engage virtually, or socially distanced.



Takeaways

There are always room for improvements.

Actualizing equity means we must intentionally plan with community members that need additional affordable transportation options. Transformative change means that we must find ways to amplify equity in ways that create investment without displacement. Car sharing alone does not achieve that change, but programming and service improvements that respond directly to the needs of community can.

As this project moves toward fruition, continued partnership efforts will look to make deep positive impacts. Consistent conversation around program development with our community partners will allow the team to explore how to address complex problems. Understanding nuances around how different community members access car sharing will allow us to tailor the service within sub-sets of the community. Targeting service improvements toward access to employment centers, medical appointments, childcare arrangements, and other types of trips that are otherwise complicated can create rippling impacts. Addressing the intersections of transportation, housing, employment, food access, childcare, education, and more will allow this project to mature in ways that can fill gaps in the transportation system that cannot be as easily filled by other modes.

As this project progresses, we hope to achieve much needed progress on economic, racial, and environmental equity in car sharing. This will take time and continued collaboration with multiple stakeholders, and centering under-resourced communities is crucial to this effort. We hope that this report can be a stepping stone for others, and can spur conversations around what is possible in achieving equitable, affordable, and environmentally resilient car sharing.

References

Endnotes

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