

TRANSPORTATION ACCESS IN

HAYWARD

from **ARRIVE TOGETHER:** Transportation Access and Equity in Wisconsin

The report examined the effectiveness and equitability of transportation in nine cities and major metropolitan regions across Wisconsin. This examination is a culmination of 2010 U.S. Census data, figures provided by public transportation systems, the state of Wisconsin, and direct personal interviews with transit riders. The report concludes that, while each community faces unique challenges in providing transportation access to employment, medical services, major businesses, local attractions or other points of interest, the absence of consistent and sufficient funding for public transportation is a major hurdle across the board. Inadequate financial support from federal and state governments and an inability to raise additional resources through local funding mechanisms like Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) are making it increasingly difficult for local public transportation systems statewide to provide mobility.

NAMEKAGON TRANSIT OVERVIEW

Namekagon Transit, formerly known as Sawyer County LCO Transit, was initially established to shuttle users of the Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) Casino, located in the LCO reservation. Today, however, Namekagon Transit serves the City of Hayward and LCO, providing public transportation to any resident of Sawyer County and offering additional services to residents of Washburn and Barron Counties.

Currently, there are three fixed routes in Hayward that provide access to key services and job hubs such as the courthouse, grocery store, hospital, and LCO Casino. Additionally, with a reservation placed one day in advance of an anticipated ride, residents of Sawyer County may schedule a ride with Namekagon Transit from their door to any desired location within the service area. Namekagon Transit also provides paratransit for those with disabilities.



TRANSIT SYSTEM ACCESS

For residents in Northwestern Wisconsin who lack a personal vehicle or who have a disability that prevents them from driving, Namekagon Transit provides a valuable service. As an added bonus, Namekagon Transit connects Hayward residents to nearby cities, including Barnes, Rice Lake and Winter on a semi-regular schedule. This is especially important because travel times between towns and cities in this region are often over one hour in length one way.

Namekagon Transit provides an example of how transit can function, even in a less densely populated area. The use of shuttles rather than buses meets the needs of the smaller population and the door-to-door pickup provides more flexibility for the rural area.

TRANSIT SYSTEM BARRIERS

Cost can be a barrier for some residents. Currently, the typical fare for a Namekagon Transit rider is \$1.00 or \$2.00 at certain peak hours. While this is less than in other urban areas in Wisconsin, such as Madison with a standard \$2.00 fare, not all residents of Hayward can afford this cost on a regular basis. For those who receive food stamps or who find themselves between jobs, accessible transportation may still prove difficult in Hayward despite the existence of Namekagon Transit. Furthermore, the transit system's service ends at 8:30 p.m. on weekdays and 9:00 p.m. on Fridays and weekends; for those who need transportation for a second shift job or evening entertainment, the hours may be limiting.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND SERVICE AND FUNDING

Public transit funding for Sawyer County/ LCO is comprised half of federal grant funding, about a quarter from local fundraising, a fifth from state funding, and billed income such as advertisement and fares to constitute the remaining tenth of the budget. Seventy percent of local funding comes from the LCO. For a rural transit system, Namekagon transit shows a lot of promise. However, as with other transit systems across the state, there are many opportunities for expansion. While the doorstep pickup is a unique and efficient model for rural transit, there are times of the year when those rides must be scheduled two days in advance, which can be inconvenient for the rider. If shuttles are consistently booked, increasing their number or hours of operation could be a possibility to improve service. Expanded fixed routes or hours could help meet more needs of those in the area. Because internet access is not reliable throughout the region, a mobile app could provide the most up-to-date information to potential riders who do not have internet access but who do have mobile data plans. Greater funding support and increased regional collaboration could allow for further improved service throughout Sawyer, Washburn, Barron and Bayfield counties.

For full report: sierraclub.org/wisconsin/ArriveTogetherReport

Namekagon Transit in Action:

Marnie of Hayward is an adult with a disability and is unable to drive. She uses Namekagon Transit and is pleased with the price, the service, and the territory and routes, which take her around Hayward and to nearby communities like Spooner.