

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interstate 35 (I-35) is among the most important, and historically controversial, infrastructure projects within the Duluth-Superior area. A comprehensive study of I-35 therefore must take stock of the existing infrastructure, how it interacts with local and regional facilities, how it supports, or inhibits, different modes of travel serving different purposes. Additionally, such a large study area and prominent interregional corridor plays a large role in the local economy, land use, and environment, all of which must be considered and evaluated alongside I-35's infrastructure and operations.

**Key takeaways from the existing conditions analysis found on the following pages are summarized below:**

- The roles of I-35 are diverse throughout the area – from providing critical interregional access, to both defining and separating communities – each with varying degrees of impact on adjacent land uses.
- Much of the adverse impacts of the corridor – particularly connectivity barriers, safety issues, and land use separation – occur within neighborhoods with disproportionately high percentages of renters, those who don't own a car, and those who commute with modes other than cars.
- Unlike other Minnesota metro areas, Duluth's population and real estate markets have largely remained stagnant over the last several decades – a trend estimated to continue into the immediate future.
- Traffic fluctuates along I-35 and at key interchanges seasonally and daily, with summer months and weekend traffic combining to increase traffic volumes by 10-19 percent above average, and winter traffic decreasing over 15 percent from average.
- Just 10 percent of traffic originating south of the project limit continues north through to TH 61 and the North Shore.
- Notable proportions of short (<2 miles) trips occur in the Cody, Fairmount, Spirit Valley, Downtown, Endion, and Congdon Park neighborhoods surrounding the interstate, indicating there may be demand for non-motorized travel across and along the corridor.
- Much of the study area experiences acceptable traffic operations during peak hours and throughout the day. Intersections in the Canal Park area do experience more significant delays for a few hours of the day.
- All segments of I-35 within the study area operate above expected safety levels, particularly where interchange and ramp spacings and design are substandard. The majority of ramp terminals and surrounding intersections operate either above the statewide average crash rates, or with a statistically significant deviation from the expected crash rate.