

## 4/22/24 Older Adults Focus Group

**Description:** A small group discussion was held with people who were older adults or who worked on behalf of older adults living or working in the Duluth-Superior area.

### What We Heard – Comments:

- People are living longer, with a variety of circumstances and needs: some retired and some still working; some living by themselves, some in a family unit and some in a care facility; some are comfortable with technology and some are not; some are socially active and some are not, etc.
- “Age 65+” does not accurately define older adults – 65 is considered middle-aged by many these days!”
- “We are active people, and we want to stay active and independent.”
- “More than previous generation, many of us want to work as we age, and maintain our independence.”
- “We have such a car-centric society that it’s easy to overlook people who don’t (or can’t) drive. It seems like they forget about sidewalks when they fix roads or in the winter with plowing.”
- “Crosswalks mean nothing. Cars rule the road, we just get in their way.”
- “Driverless vehicles? Not so much!”
- Income can be a serious limiting factor to an independent lifestyle, in terms of transportation. Hard to afford a vehicle.
- “The NLX passenger train sounds like a great idea as a way to get down to the cities, but I wonder if I’ll be able to afford it.”
- “Losing your drivers license due to physical limitations is a huge change, often hard to accept, which leads to some people being behind the wheel when they probably shouldn’t be.”
- “The so-called Better Bus Blueprint do not seem like an improvement –my closest bus stop was removed (longer walk to and from the bus stop), the new routes are hard to understand, and it doesn’t go where I need to go (Walmart)”
- “Older folks use cabs, not Uber and Lyft – but they are expensive and often unreliable.”
- “I have an unsafe feeling at the Duluth Transit Center at night.”
- “I’ve almost gotten run over, by bikers and skateboarders on the sidewalks. If we can’t have the sidewalks and we can’t have the roads, where are we supposed to be able to walk in this town?”

### Key Takeaways:

- Pedestrian safety was cited as a top priority for older adults (also for disabled people and kids).
- Active transportation options – walking and biking facilities -- are desired to maintain physical health and independence as driving may not be an option.
- Year-round accessibility and sidewalk snow removal need to be addressed as a bigger priority in the community, with an increased awareness of how it pertains to older adults and individuals with limited mobility.
- Sidewalk conditions, ease of access to public spaces and transportation, and street design, can significantly impact the daily lives of older adults, individuals with mobility challenges, and the community at large. Age- and disability-friendly transportation facilities should be standard: safe, crossable streets are vital for enhancing safety, ensuring accessible mobility options, and promoting active and healthy lifestyles.
- Older adults are not a single type of person – wide range of abilities and assistance needs, from completely dependent to completely autonomous.
- Resources like matching up services with people’s needs are important, as well as innovative solutions like Community Action Duluth’s Mobile Market.