MEETING DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Citizens' Transportation Advisory Committee

First meeting • Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2026 • 6 p.m. • Microsoft Teams

Prepared by the Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO) using the meeting transcript, Teams chat, and Mentimeter screenshots. This is a discussion summary, not verbatim minutes. Comments reflect individual perspectives, not votes or adopted CTAC positions.

Attendees

Community participants (14): Andrea Nistler; Christine Knoblauch; Eric Stein; George Schoephoerster; Isaac Dibb; John Stielow; Lee Samuelson; Leon Longard; Meghan Mihalik; Mikhail Usovich; Pat Pflipsen; Patrick Lynch; Philip Dullinger; Tom Braatz.

APO staff (3): Alex McKenzie, associate transportation planner; Brian Gibson, executive director; Vicki Johnson, senior transportation planner.

Overview

The Saint Cloud APO held a second introductory CTAC session on Sept. 30 to explain regional transportation planning and the one-year CTAC pilot. Members described how they get around the area, discussed present-day challenges, and shared hopes for the Imagine 2055 long-range transportation plan. Three Mentimeter prompts and a lively Teams chat added feedback from participants who did not speak on every topic.

CTAC exists to bring residents' lived experiences into discussions that inform APO staff, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and the Policy Board. It is advisory only; it does not score projects, select funding, or make final transportation decisions. No motions or formal recommendations were made.

Key takeaways for TAC

- Traffic delays and corridor design: Frequent stops, traffic signal timing, red-light running, and congestion on Division Street/Highway 23 and Highway 15 were recurring concerns. Some participants favored fewer signals, more overpasses, or interchange-style crossings.
- Transit frequency and connections: Members described limited evening/weekend buses, long travel times between nearby suburbs, and difficult access to Saint Joseph; they asked for more direct links and accessible options.
- Walking, bicycling and accessibility: Requests included consistently separated bicycle facilities, safe Mississippi River crossings, connected sidewalks wide enough for mobility devices, and better maintenance.
- Freight and emergency movement: Members asked whether through-truck traffic could avoid Division Street, while recognizing that businesses also rely on truck access. Emergency vehicle delays were raised as a concern.
- Specific safety locations: Stearns County Road 136 near I-94, Mayhew Lake Road and the Division Street/25th Avenue area were identified for potential follow-up, alongside speeding, turning movements and enforcement.

Meeting purpose and format

APO staff described the organization's role in coordinating regional transportation planning, studies, federal funding, and public input rather than constructing streets or operating signals.

Staff anticipates quarterly, discussion-focused meetings lasting about 60 to 90 minutes, with topic materials sent in advance when possible and both online and in-person meeting options explored during the pilot. Meeting themes will be shared with TAC and the Policy Board.

> *"This is the space where we can actually dig deeper and try to understand exactly what the issues are"*
> Brian Gibson, APO executive director

Discussion themes and specific suggestions

1. Traffic signals, backups and roadway access

- Division Street at 25th Avenue: Pat Pflipsen described congestion at the lane reduction and conflicts near the Walgreens access, including being left partly in Division Street while waiting to turn. This was raised as a specific safety and traffic-flow concern.
- Signal timing and turning: Participants reported long waits at signals even when opposing traffic is light. George Schoephoerster supported exploring flashing yellow left-turn arrows; Isaac Dibb requested more flashing yellow left-turn options in chat, and John Stielow suggested replacing some Highway 15 signals with ramps.
- Red-light running: Christine Knoblauch reported seeing repeated violations along Highway 15 between Second and 12th streets. Other chat participants distinguished enforcement and driver behavior from roadway design, while acknowledging both need attention.

> *"I have actually had my tail end sitting in Division Street more than once because of the traffic jam up waiting to turn into Walgreens"*
> Pat Pflipsen

2. Public transit: frequency, direct routes and after-hours travel

- Later service: Meghan Mihalik said friends working weekend evenings rely on costly Uber or Lyft rides after bus service stops; the concern is particularly acute for workers who depend on public transportation.
- Connections across communities: Leon Longard described the difficulty of traveling from Sauk Rapids to Sartell and school or industrial job sites when buses run infrequently. He suggested suburb-to-suburb connections instead of routing all trips through downtown Saint Cloud.
- Potential new routes: Isaac Dibb proposed using the planned Waite Park transit center to connect toward Sartell, and potentially Saint Joseph. Patrick Lynch suggested commuter-oriented connections between Sartell, Waite Park, and Saint Cloud; Meghan noted difficulty reaching work in Saint Joseph by bus.
- Accessible and emerging service: Participants discussed on-demand service and self-driving vehicles as possible future tools but cautioned that the cost and physical accessibility of such options must be considered.

> *"they're losing about half their hours wage just to get home from work"*
> Meghan Mihalik

> *"Finding ways to connect the suburbs in a circular pattern, in addition to just going through downtown, would be helpful for a lot of people."*
> Leon Longard

3. Walking, bicycling, sidewalk continuity and river crossings

- Separated bicycle facilities: Andrea Nistler asked for consistent space between vehicles and bicyclists, citing portions of Stearns County Road 136 with limited shoulders and a gap near

Granite View Road toward Waite Park. She also noted that newer projects and converted rail trails are improvements worth recognizing.
- Sidewalk accessibility: Meghan Mihalik described friends who use mobility aids encountering narrow sidewalks or sidewalks that end abruptly, sometimes forcing travel in the roadway.
- Mississippi River: Tom Braatz said most bridges feel uncomfortable for e-bike travel and identified the University Bridge as a comparatively usable crossing. Members raised the need for safer river connections and more consistent bicycle routes.

"it's really difficult to get across the river."
Tom Braatz

4. Truck movement, alternative routes and emergency access

- Truck routing: Isaac Dibb proposed exploring restrictions on through-truck traffic on Division Street during parts of the day, while retaining local deliveries, and evaluating whether major highways could better serve through movements. Lee Samuelson agreed in chat that a truck bypass could help freight keep moving.
- Understanding actual freight needs: Philip Dullinger noted that some trucks pass through the region rather than serving a local destination. Others emphasized that freight-producing businesses still need access to the core metro area.
- Emergency response: Participants questioned whether heavy traffic, blocked intersections, and rail crossings can delay ambulances and other emergency vehicles. These were participant observations, not verified travel-time findings.

"A truck bypass may be something to think about. No trucks except local deliveries between 15 and 23"
Isaac Dibb (followed by "At least during daytime hours.")

5. Speed limits, roadway safety and traffic controls

- Stearns County Road 136: Andrea Nistler suggested a clearer transition to lower urban speeds where the road enters Saint Cloud, including a possible reduction from 55 to 45 mph and a better warning approaching a two-way-stop intersection near I-94. Staff said they could pass the concern to the appropriate roadway agencies.
- Mayhew Lake Road: Tom Braatz described traffic-speed concerns, reported crashes and new development, and asked whether local authorities should have more flexibility to adjust limits on certain roads. Staff explained the need for engineering justification and, in some cases, a MnDOT speed study.
- Roundabouts and e-bikes: Participants expressed different views on roundabouts as a replacement for some traffic signals. Philip Dullinger described safety concerns about some e-bike riders not stopping; others noted roundabouts may keep vehicles moving while moderating speeds.

"it seems like maybe that's something legislation or something should be changed"
Tom Braatz, discussing local speed-limit authority

6. Long-range choices for 2055

The Mentimeter responses and follow-up discussion raised a desire for accessible public transportation, greater safety, separated freight routes, connected regional bikeways, better use of roundabouts, native landscaping and alternatives to existing highway crossings. A participant proposed an I-94 bridge rather than the 33rd Street crossing; other comments discussed self-driving cars and potentially different infrastructure needs in 2055. Staff noted that future trends are uncertain and encouraged continued Imagine 2055 feedback.

Mentimeter: questions and responses

The three anonymous Mentimeter prompts were discussion starters, not voting or a statistically representative survey. Counts are the number of entries displayed in the screenshots; they are not the total number of meeting attendees. Original screenshots appear in Appendix A with participants' wording preserved.

Prompt 1 — "When you think about getting around the Saint Cloud area today, what is one word that comes to mind?" (10 responses)

The displayed entries were "car," "congestion," "crowded," "for buses infrequent," "fragmented," "frustrating," "frustration," "potholes," "time" and "waiting." Each appeared once. Participants voiced concerns about time, congestion, unreliable connections and surface conditions. Philip Dullinger also volunteered "fluid" aloud, explaining that the existing road network works well for his needs; that spoken contribution was separate from the ten on-screen entries.

Prompt 2 — "I could get around more easily if …" (10 responses)

Responses called for fewer or shorter stops at traffic lights; reduced or consolidated access points; one or more overpasses across Highway 15 and Division Street; consistent, physically separated bicycle lanes; safe walking and biking paths; more reliable sidewalk maintenance; more frequent bus service; and direct transit connections between suburbs. One response noted a Sauk Rapids-to-Sartell bus trip can take over an hour when it routes through downtown.

Prompt 3 — "Thinking about the future, what is one thing you hope is different about transportation in our region?" (8 responses)

Respondents envisioned safer, accessible transit; more public transportation and pedestrian space; roundabouts in suitable places; better emergency access and bus routes; separated freight movement; regional bikeway connections; and new approaches to major corridors. Other entries suggested replacing Division Street with native planting and considering an I-94 bridge instead of a 33rd Street crossing. The screenshot also mentions self-driving cars.

APO staff information shared

- Highway 15: Brian Gibson described a $2.5 million funded corridor study from Second Street South to Highway 10. Alternative intersection concepts and public input were described as part of planning, not as approved construction projects.
- Highway 23/Division Street: Vicki Johnson described planned MnDOT pavement and traffic-signal work in 2028 and 2029, along with some accessibility improvements. She clarified these should not be described as full reconstruction of the corridor.
- Western Transit Center and Metro Bus Forward: Staff discussed possible route revisions, higher frequencies on selected lines, and more transfers outside downtown. Details and timing were described as pending; staff indicated a hoped-for rollout around 2027.
- Regional freight and roads: Staff identified freight interviews, the 33rd Street Bridge environmental work, and regional corridor/beltline planning as relevant ongoing efforts. Specific participants' routing suggestions would need study and coordination with roadway owners.
- Imagine 2055: Residents were invited to use the regional long-range plan's survey and interactive map at Imagine2055.com to identify both problems and successful locations.

Next steps

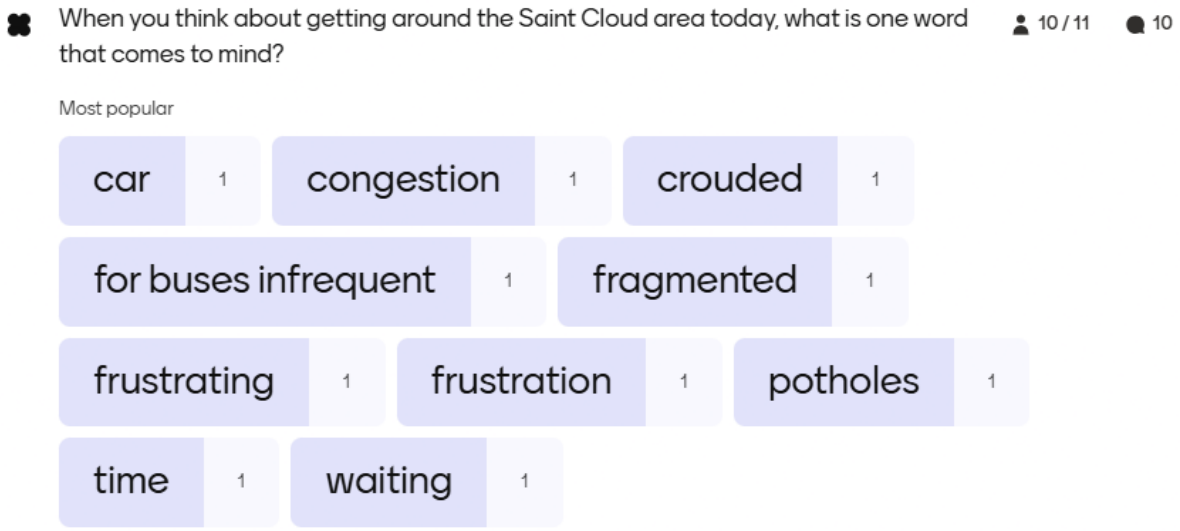
- Circulate this draft to evening-session participants for corrections, then summarize the main themes for TAC and the Policy Board alongside a separately reviewed 1 p.m. session summary.
- Maintain an internal list of potential discussion topics and locations, including freight routing, evening transit, intercity bus service, accessible sidewalks, bicycle and river connections, intersection operations and speed management.
- As studies or public-input opportunities advance, share accessible background materials and invite CTAC feedback where appropriate. No implementation decisions were made at this meeting.

Record note: This document covers the 6 p.m. CTAC session through its closing remarks, plus meeting chat. Informal comments that continued after the meeting closing are not treated as CTAC discussion or decisions.

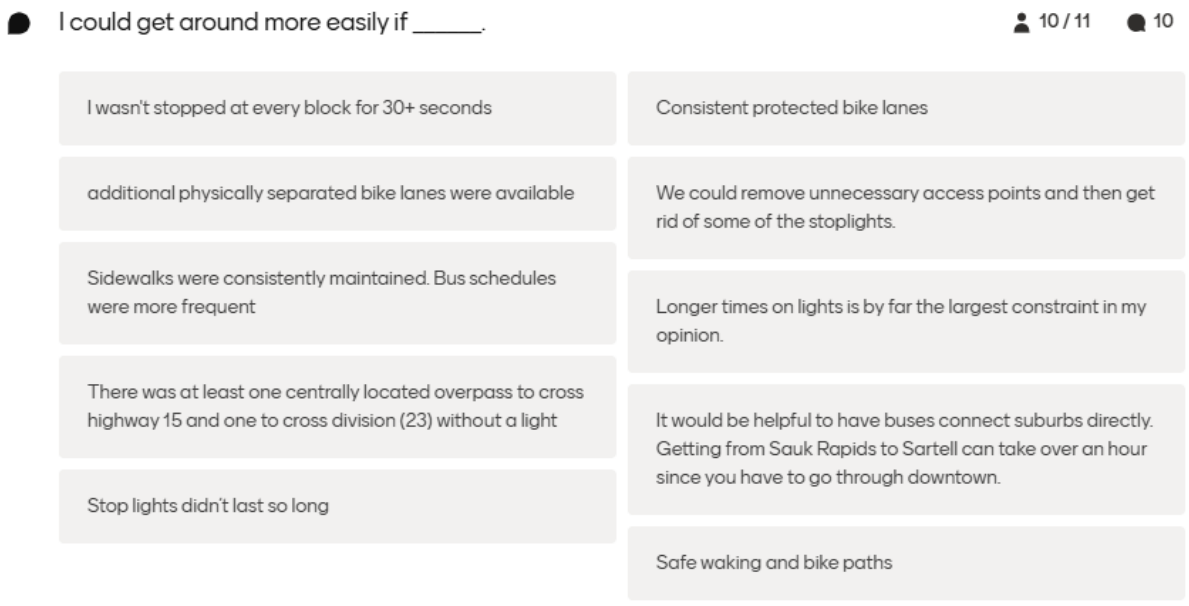
Appendix A — Original Mentimeter screenshots

Screenshots preserve the responses as submitted, including capitalization, wording and spelling. Individual responses should not be attributed unless a participant identified their own answer.

1. When you think about getting around the Saint Cloud area today, what is one word that comes to mind?



2. I could get around more easily if _____.



3. Thinking about the future, what is one thing you hope is different about transportation in our region?

