



## Press Release

### For Immediate Release

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## Health + Transportation Study Links Regional Health and Transportation Access, Prompts New Mental Healthcare Rideshare Service

**ROCKFORD, IL** – R1 has released the 2024 Health + Transportation Study for the Rockford Region. This study highlights the link between reliable, accessible transportation and community health within the Rockford Metropolitan Planning Area, emphasizing the importance of incorporating public health considerations into future planning decisions. The study serves as a reference for regional municipalities as they plan and implement transportation improvements and expansions.

To read the full report, go to <https://r1planning.org/planning/transportation/> (Community Health tab).

“The Health + Transportation Study was developed through a collaboration between the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Community Impact Department, demonstrating R1’s capability to address multifaceted regional issues,” says Tim Verbeke, R1 Transportation Principal, who coordinated the transportation data for the study.

The study details how design, active transportation, traffic safety, pollution, and other factors impact community health and provides 23 recommendations that municipalities can incorporate across five categories:

- Active Lifestyles
- Healthy and Sustainable Environment
- Safety
- Choices and Access for All
- Equity

“It is important that the public and decision-makers who influence the region’s transportation and healthcare systems understand these connections so they can take action for a healthy, thriving community,” says Michael Dunn, R1 Executive Director.

One of the study’s findings was a clear need for additional transportation services that allow individuals to access mental health services, particularly during off-hours or in locations not served by public transit. Up to one-third of regional mental healthcare providers reported that patients not receiving necessary services is a significant barrier.

To fill this gap, R1 is partnering with the Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB) to implement recommendations from the study, specifically through the development of a mental health-focused rideshare service. Mental healthcare service providers will be able to request a HIPPA-compliant driver to transport clients who cannot receive services due to a lack of transportation. Eligible requests can be made by WCCMHB-funded organizations (see Engage R1 for a list) and will be provided by Kaizen Health at no cost to the client or healthcare provider.

“This is a great example of how R1’s planning and data expertise identifies a community need and then collaborates with other areas of the agency to efficiently put a solution in place,” says Jason Holcomb, R1 Director of Community Impact, who assisted with the study’s health data and rideshare implementation. “It’s a powerful model, especially in supporting wider-reaching efforts, like the WCCMHB’s work in addressing regional health.”

**ABOUT RPC** – Region 1 Planning Council is a special-purpose, regional government agency providing cross-jurisdictional, government-to-government collaborative planning for Northern Illinois. The regional planning model provides an efficient means to promoting a well-informed, comprehensive dialogue that holistically addresses regional issues by fulfilling the needs of government entities for long-range planning, securing funding, and analyzing and providing data in support of regional projects and initiatives.

**ABOUT WCCMHB** – The Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB) is a board of appointed community leaders and public officials dedicated to investing and supporting mental health and substance use services for adults and children in Winnebago County. WCCMHB receives funding through a half-cent sales tax which was approved by Winnebago County residents in March 2020. This sales tax generates approximately \$18 million annually for mental health and substance use services across the county. WCCMHB positively impacts the Winnebago County community by increasing access to local services by providing support and funding to organizations, non-profits, and government agencies that offer mental health and substance use services. This allows Winnebago County residents to live and recover in the community.

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