

Memorandum

Campus Parking and Transportation Demand Management – St. Olaf College

ISG

To: Mike Berthlesen, CFO

From: Will Kratt, PE, PTOE

Date: April 7, 2025

Subject: Campus Parking and Transportation Demand Management – St. Olaf College

INTRODUCTION

St. Olaf College (St. Olaf) is a highly residential campus in the City of Northfield, Minnesota (City) that has growing enrollment with nearly 3,200 full-time students and 900 faculty, and staff. As a result of this growth, St. Olaf has a waiting list and unmet need of nearly 300 students for parking permits, with 1,141 students currently holding parking permits. St. Olaf actively manages traffic and parking demand through several strategies, policies, and tactics. Still, today's waiting list results in several on-campus and off-campus frustrations while St. Olaf proactively works to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips and vehicular parking demand.

Students who bring a car to campus (first year students living within 250 miles of campus are not allowed) but are unable to obtain a parking permit often end up parking in undesirable places, generating complaints from nearby off-campus residents due to student vehicles being parked on City streets. It is also a frustration for current and prospective students and families who want and/or need an on-campus parking option. Therefore, St. Olaf is exploring options for providing additional on-campus parking to eliminate today's imbalance, while remaining committed to continually take action to reduce future parking demand rates.

St. Olaf shares similar goals with the City regarding travel to, from, and on its campus. The St. Olaf meets many of these objectives through campus planning, availability and access to multiple modes of transportation, design elements that promote access and safety, policies and services that reduce vehicular demand, and education for students, faculty, and staff about transportation opportunities and safety.

The following sections describe the current parking management system and how transportation demand is currently managed—by mode, policies, services, and education. Additionally, they discuss how transportation demand will be managed with future changes and developments.

ST. OLAF PARKING MANAGEMENT

The goals for St. Olaf's parking management are the following:

- To support students in getting where they need to go—college, home, internships, healthcare, entertainment, and more
- To support faculty and staff capacity to get to campus
- To ensure sufficient parking accessibility for visitors, including prospective students, music and athletic event attendees, and others
- To be a good neighbor within the City by welcoming citizens, shoppers, diners, and event goers, while managing, as much as possible, the impact of increased campus-related traffic—such as by keeping parking primarily on campus
- To make transportation options like walking, biking, and transit convenient and accessible for students

Memorandum

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In 2020, St. Olaf undertook a campus-wide parking study as required by City ordinances tied to the reconstruction of on-campus student housing that opened in the fall of 2022.

Updates and changes since 2019/2020 reports to this academic year - 2024/2025:

Campus Community Growth Summary

	2019/2020	2024/2025
Student Enrollment	Fall 2019: 3,072	Fall 2024: 3,202
Faculty/Staff Counts	484 Staff 316 Faculty 800 Total	549 Staff 351 Faculty 900 Total

To meet current parking demand and eliminate the current issues the imbalance creates, St. Olaf is seeking to add to its parking capacity through three steps:

- Adding 93 net new spaces in a lot between Skoglund and the softball field. St. Olaf currently needs to park cars on green space in the winter during its Christmas Festival to accommodate visitors plus the campus community.
- Adding 26 spaces to the existing parking lot east of the football field connecting to Lincoln that were designed for parking.
- Adding 20 spaces to the utility street to the east of the new residence building by creating one row of horizontal parking spaces into the east side of this road into college land.

St. Olaf is intending on:

- April 7, 2025 - Submitting its parking and traffic surveys as well as its request to the City to add more parking, which will be through a conditional use permit.
- April 17, 2025 - Engaging with the Planning Commission to discuss its additional parking requests and listen to questions, concerns, and ideas.
- May 2025 - Formally present its request for additional parking to the Planning Commission.

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT BY MODE

Students, visitors, faculty, and staff travel to and from the St. Olaf campus via many different modes of transportation. Users have many choices available on and off campus. What follows is a description of each of the modes, and how campus planning, design, and amenities contribute positively toward meeting the goals and objectives of the City of Northfield's plans.

Pedestrian

Almost no matter how people travel to and from the St. Olaf campus, they are a pedestrian at some point during their trip. Whether someone is dropped off near a patient entrance or walking from the farthest staff parking lot, pedestrian safety is always paramount.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO CAMPUS

The St. Olaf campus benefits from its connection to the City's street grid to the east. Several pedestrian routes that cross public streets or on-campus vehicle circulation areas are designed and enhanced to prioritize the pedestrians and encourage walking as a mode of transportation choice. The campus's location near residential areas also supports and makes walking between home and work feasible for those who choose to live nearby. The existing sidewalk network east of campus, which connects to the rest of the City, is complete and was upgraded/expanded with the new St. Olaf student housing.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ON CAMPUS

Improvements to public streets and the campus's internal circulation are frequently being made.

Bicycling

Bicycling is a chosen mode of travel for several staff members to and from campus. Much of the City is within typical bicycle commuting distance, and accommodations to make bicycling safer and more comfortable are provided on many public streets and on campus.

- Fall 2022: The college built an indoor bike garage in the new residence hall. It has the capacity for 55 bikes inside and is fully utilized (plus bike racks outside the hall and across campus).

In discussion: One of the student organizations has been working with a local bike shop to bring a bike share program to campus. If the project is implemented, bikes will be stored in the bus waiting area in Buntrock Commons to provide ease of access. They have proposed placing six to eight bikes in the location.

BICYCLE ACCESS TO CAMPUS

The City of Northfield adopted their most recent Pedestrian, Bike, and Trail System plan in 2019. One of the bicycling gaps identified in the plan was the few east-west connections from campus to Downtown Northfield. The planned bicycling network includes on-street bikeways on the following City streets, which would provide improved bicycle access between the St. Olaf campus and the rest of the City:

- St. Olaf Avenue
- Lincoln Street
- 3rd Street
- Linden Street

As the City continues to implement in planned bicycle network, St. Olaf remains committed to being a community partner.

BICYCLE PARKING ON CAMPUS

Bicycle parking on campus consists of bicycle racks and bicycle lockers.

Memorandum

Campus Parking and Transportation Demand Management – St. Olaf College

ISG

Transit

Planning

- Spring 2024: The college reviewed student surveys regarding their transportation needs and reviewed its existing transportation programs.
- Summer 2024: The college worked in partnership with Carleton and Northfield Lines to improve its transit programs by:
 - Merging their separate 'Campus Go' point to point van programs
 - Adding to weekend bus service to the Twin Cities by adding an additional stop at the University of Minnesota
 - Adding an additional route (offered more times)
 - Offered at a lower rate (\$30 round trip vs \$70 prior) with stops at the airport, the Mall of America and the University of Minnesota.
- Summer 2024: The college worked to find off-campus housing that was on the existing Hiawatha line (Northfield Retirement Center and Kraewood) and worked with Hiawatha Lines to add a stop by the Kraewood site for ease of students.
- Fall 2024: The college launched a communication plan to inform students about the new options and updated the Transportation website with information about all of the options available.
- Spring 2025: The college worked with Carleton and Northfield lines to add the transit app 'Pingo' as a service for students to schedule the Campus Go pick-ups and to track their locations.
- Spring 2025: The college is advocating for the Hiawatha Lines to use the same 'Pingo app' for ease and reliability of use for students.

Operations

Many students, faculty, and staff utilize transit to and from the St. Olaf campus via area transit agencies. St. Olaf maintains a website with transit options available for students: <https://wp.stolaf.edu/transportation/>

HIAWATHA LINES

Circulator (Red/Blue) Bus

Hiawathaland Transit is the public transportation provider offering daytime service to locations within the city limits of Northfield. Hiawathaland Transit has established routes that serve most of the city. Riders may board the route at their discretion. Please see map for route stop locations and times. Normal route service is free with a St. Olaf ID.

Ridership: 2024-2025: 2,558 rides (September through March) or average of 365 a month (a round trip would be 2 rides)
2023-2024: 2,223 rides September through June) or average of 222 a month

Express Bus

The Hiawathaland Express bus is a public, shortened route (compared to the Blue and Red Hiawathaland routes) that is free to ride with a St. Olaf ID. The Express bus is most commonly utilized to access shopping, dining, and the movie theater and runs Monday–Saturday, 3:00 P.M.–10:00 P.M.

Ridership: 2024-2025: 17,112 total rides (September through March) or average of 2,445 a month (a round trip would be 2 rides)
2023-2024: 22,213 total rides (September through June) or average of 2,221 a month

Memorandum

Campus Parking and Transportation Demand Management – St. Olaf College

ISG

NORTHFIELD LINES

Campus Go

Formerly known as Oles-Go, this shuttle service is now shared between St. Olaf and Carleton, providing daytime transportation in Northfield and Dundas for students to get to medical appointments, pharmacy trips, or to volunteer or work locally. This service is not intended for shopping or entertainment. Hours are expanded to 8:30 A.M.–5:00 P.M. and will run Monday through Friday while either campus is open. Students can schedule trips in advance by calling roughly 20-30 minutes before they wish to be picked up at either Buntrock Commons, or the St. Olaf Avenue stop. The driver will work with the student on a plan to return to campus. This service is free to students with a St. Olaf ID.

Ridership: St. Olaf has utilized 1,337 trips using this program in 2025 (January through March) or an average of 445 per month.

Metro Express

Northfield Lines operates a daily service from Buntrock Commons to the Mall of America and Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, with an added stop at the University of Minnesota from Friday through Sunday. From these stops, there are opportunities to navigate throughout the Twin Cities via Metro Transit.

Tickets for Monday through Thursday are \$35 each way, and tickets for Friday through Sunday are \$15 each way. Roundtrip tickets for Friday through Sunday are now available for \$30.

Ridership: St. Olaf has had 1,520 trips using this program in 2025 (October through March) or an average of 253 per month.

Break Bus

Northfield Lines works with St. Olaf to provide shuttles to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport for all official college breaks. One-way shuttle tickets are \$35, which includes one suitcase and one carry-on, and must be purchased in advance through Northfield Lines. To view the shuttle schedule and purchase tickets for future breaks, please visit the Northfield Lines website.

Ridership: St. Olaf has had 1,696 riders from September through April 6th using this service

Transit Route Ridership Summary

Transit Route	Sept through March	Monthly Average
City Circulator	2,558	365
City Express	17,112	2,445
Campus Go	1,337	445
Metro Express	1,520 (Oct to March)	153
Break Bus to Airport	1,696	N/A

Personal Vehicle + Parking

When people require or choose to use a personal vehicle to get to and from campus, several programs and policies (found throughout this memo) are in place to promote safety between pedestrians and vehicles and to right-size the amount of parking provided on and around the campus. In tandem with all the other transportation demand management strategies being implemented on campus, the result is a safer campus that meets the transportation needs of all students, visitors and staff.

Memorandum

Campus Parking and Transportation Demand Management – St. Olaf College

ISG

Parking permit fees are regularly evaluated and adjusted and hourly parking has recently been implemented to actively manage parking demand.

ST. OLAF POLICIES + SERVICES

St. Olaf has several services and policies for students, faculty, and staff that reduce single-occupancy vehicle usage. These align well with several of the principles and goals outlined in the City of Northfield's planning documents.

Safe Walk

Students may request a safe walk escort by calling the St. Olaf Public Safety Department, which is available 24/7.

First-year Students

Students are not eligible to obtain a parking permit during their first year. Exceptions are granted for students who reside 250 miles or more from campus and for a disability-related need.

Electric Vehicle Charging Spots

Electric Vehicle (EV) charging spots are reserved for electric vehicles actively engaged in charging. Only electric vehicles with a valid charging requirement are permitted to occupy EV charging spots. Occupying an EV charging spot without actively charging the vehicle is prohibited. EV chargers are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Non-electric vehicles are prohibited from utilizing EV charging spots at all times.

In 2024, St. Olaf College in partnership with Carleton College, the City of Northfield and the Community Action Center submitted a proposal to design an electric car-share program in Northfield. Unfortunately, this effort was not successful, but the commitment of the partners to continue to work together on this and other transit and car-sharing efforts continues.

Faculty/Staff Priority Carpool Parking

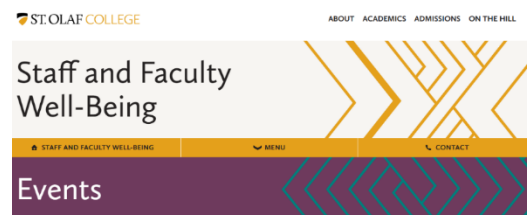
The Environmental Sustainability Committee, Human Resources, and the Parking Office have designated select priority carpool parking spots in faculty and staff parking lots. Priority carpool parking spots are designated for faculty and staff members participating in a registered carpool. Faculty and staff must register their carpool to participate.

ST. OLAF TRANSPORTATION EDUCATION

St. Olaf has several communications that go out to students, faculty, and staff regarding transportation to, from, and on campus. Often communications include education on the amenities, behaviors, and programs that can promote increased safety and better health. These same elements can also lead to reduced single-occupancy vehicle usage.

April Walking Challenge

The Green Advocate Program at St. Olaf provides a regular educational communication to staff on a regular basis. Through a rotating array of topics, each of the City's transportation demand management goals and objectives is discussed throughout the year. These range from transportation safety to sustainability practices to ways to reduce one's impact on the environment and local community through individual actions.



2ND ANNUAL APRIL WALKING CHALLENGE

- All St. Olaf Staff and Faculty are invited to participate and collectively reach the campus goal of 28,000,000 steps! This is just 2,000,000 more than our total last year. Steps will be calculated at the end of each week between April 1-30.
- Using your mobile device, follow these links.
 - Download the [StepUp app](#) on your digital device
 - Use [this link](#) to join the St. Olaf team
 - Start walking/running – your mobile device will track your steps.
 - Each week the WB Committee will gather the total step count and post the progress on this website.
 - For those of you who would like to "self-report", this [Google Form](#) will be active starting April 1.

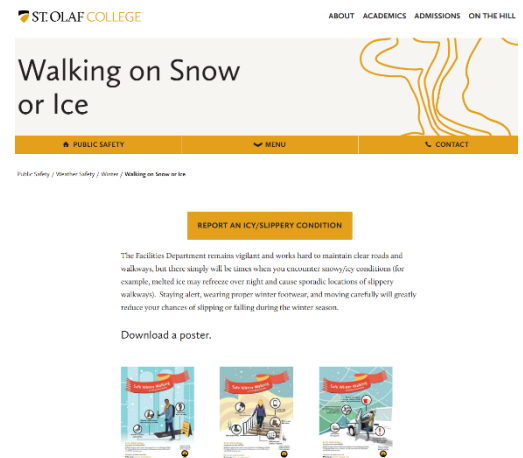
Memorandum

Campus Parking and Transportation Demand Management – St. Olaf College



Pedestrian Safety

St. Olaf regularly reminds students, faculty, and staff about the importance of pedestrian safety. One example is safety walking on snow or ice, which is critical in making walking a year-round mode of transportation in our northern climate. Information on the website and posters are two examples of how this has been communicated.



Noticing of City Parking Regulations

Students, faculty, and staff are informed of City parking regulations through several postings and notices. These include the rule that no person shall leave a vehicle in one space on a street for more than forty-eight (48) hours, and the winter street parking regulation, which states that it is illegal to park a motor vehicle on any public street in the City of Northfield from 2:00 A.M. to 6:00 A.M., from November 15 to March 15 each year.

Parking Policy Enforcement

St. Olaf strictly enforces its parking policy and the campus community is asked to support that by ensuring that all vehicles are being operated safely and parked in appropriately assigned spaces. St. Olaf's parking policy can be found at <https://wp.stolaf.edu/parking/motorvehiclepolicy/>.

CURRENT AND FUTURE ST. OLAF CAMPUS PLANS AND PROJECTS

Campus Planning

St. Olaf regularly analyzes current conditions and expected future conditions and creates plans for efficient use of land and financial resources to meet the educational needs of the community. With proper planning, this allows St. Olaf to frequently update the campus to provide the facilities necessary for higher education needs. The proper balance of buildings, parking, and open space will allow St. Olaf to continue to update the campus well into the future within its boundaries while implementing transportation demand management practices.