



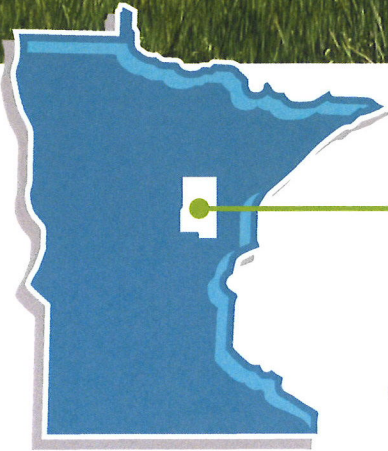
# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

**7A**  
Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** February 25, 2025

**Title of Item:** Discussion Item- Aitkin County Business Profile

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA  <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA	<b>Action Requested:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Information Only
<b>Submitted by:</b> Mark Jeffers		<b>Department:</b> Economic Development
<b>Presenter (Name and Title):</b> Mark Jeffers, Economic Development Coordinator		<b>Estimated Time Needed:</b> 15 minutes
<b>Summary of Issue:</b> <p>Under the direction of the Board of Commissioners, the Economic Development department has developed the Aitkin County Business Profile. This document highlights key economic data serving as a strategic tool to attract new businesses in the county. Designed to showcase Aitkin County economic strengths and opportunities, the profile provides this information to prospective businesses considering investment or relocation to the region.</p>		
<b>Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:</b>  		
<b>Recommended Action/Motion:</b> Discuss Profile and offer feedback		
<b>Financial Impact:</b> <i>Is there a cost associated with this request?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <i>What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$</i> <i>Is this budgeted?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		



**Aitkin County Mission**  
We strive to be a county of safe, vibrant communities that place value on good stewardship of local resources.

**Aitkin County Vision**  
To provide outstanding service in a fiscally responsible manner through innovation and collaboration with respect for all.

**Our Core Values**  
COLLABORATION  
INNOVATION  
INTEGRITY  
PEOPLE-FOCUSED  
PROFESSIONALISM

## Business Success, Simplified.

We provide a single point of contact for new and current businesses, providing all resources available for their business success in Aitkin County. Talking to Mark Jeffers is your first step on your entrepreneurial journey.

**Aitkin County's Economic Development Department is focused on the following:**

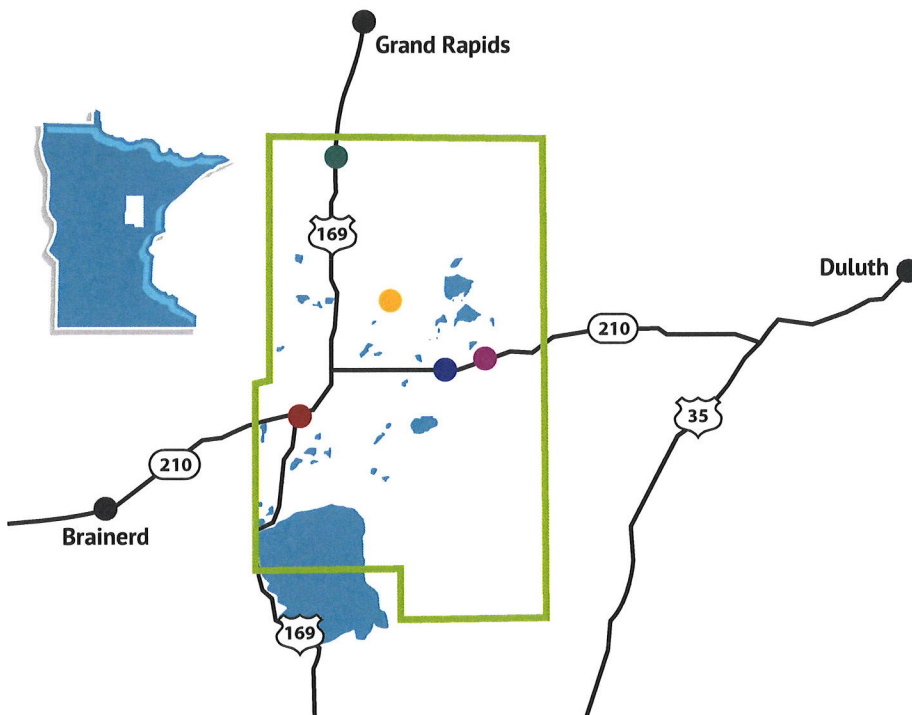
- 1 To Improve the quality of life in Aitkin County by highlighting our extensive outdoor recreational resources.
- 2 Improving broadband access to all Aitkin County residents and visitors in support of vibrant communities.
- 3 Attract businesses located outside of Aitkin County and to listen to the needs of the community that drive the economic engine.



**Contact Mark Jeffers**  
*Economic Development Coordinator*  
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Aitkin, Minnesota 56431

# Aitkin County: A Growing Gem in Northern Minnesota

Aitkin County, a strategic hub nestled between Brainerd, Grand Rapids, and Duluth, offers a unique blend of natural beauty and modern amenities. With a strong economic foundation in tourism, forest products, and agriculture, the county is experiencing significant growth.



● **Aitkin** is the largest city in Aitkin County and the county seat. It holds a rich history as a riverboat town on the Mississippi River. Aitkin is home to a robust arts and entertainment community.

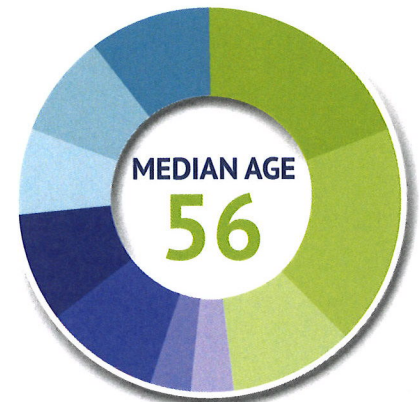
● **McGregor & Shamrock Township** are areas that have great recreational lakes and natural wonder resources.

● **Palisade** is the home of Berglund Campground and the Great River Road.

● **Hill City** has a rich history in the logging industry, which has influenced the town's development and character.

● **Tamarack** is known for its close-knit, rural community. It's a quiet town where local events and gatherings play an essential role in community life.

2023 POPULATION  
**16,102**  
14TH FASTEST GROWING MINNESOTA COUNTY  
2020-2023 +2.6%



### 2023 POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

● Under 5   3.7%	● 45-54   10.2%
● 5-14   9.4%	● 55-64   18.5%
● 15-24   8.9%	● 65-74   19.1%
● 25-34   7.2%	● 75-84   10.7%
● 35-44   8.6%	● 85+   3.8%



Minnesota	Aitkin County
79.7%	● White   93.5%
6.7%	● Black   .5%
.9%	● American Indian   1.9%
5.1%	● Asian   .2%
2.3%	● Other   .7%
5.3%	● 2 or More   3.2%
5.7%	● Hispanic   1.4%

Sources: National Association of Counties, US Census Bureau: 2018-22 American Community Survey



## Find the Perfect Balance of Work and Play

At the intersection of adventure and opportunity, you'll find Aitkin County. Our abundant outdoor recreational opportunities, from world-class fishing to miles of trails, attract top talent and foster a thriving workforce.



### Live Music, Arts & Entertainment

A place with a robust arts community - with visual arts, performances and culinary delights taking center stage. Theaters, galleries, festivals. Authentic Minnesota artwork and handcrafted goods.



### River Trails

Home to more Mississippi River miles than the entire state of Kentucky, and more miles than any other county in Minnesota. You'll find over 100 miles of river trails and paddling routes, including a section of the Mississippi River State Water Trail.



### ATV / Snowmobile Trails

Access to more than 660 miles of snowmobile trails and 230 miles of ATV trails that traverse Aitkin County's wilderness, across varying types of terrain.



### Hunting

Aitkin County boasts over a ½ million acres of public land, with 225,000 acres of county public land and 330,000 of State of Minnesota public land. It is a prime area in the state for hunting whitetail deer and bear.



### Fishing

Trophy fish on nearly 400 lakes, including Minnesota's second largest, Lake Mille Lacs.



### Cycle. Hike. Camp. Ski.

Parks and Recreation areas across the county offer a variety of trails and campgrounds year-round.

# Meet the Aitkin County Consumer

To effectively navigate the local market, it's crucial to have a deep understanding of the community you serve. This section provides essential demographic insights, including household income levels, health indicators, and educational attainment. By analyzing these statistics, businesses can make informed decisions about resource allocation, marketing strategies, and product offerings to better meet the needs of their target audience.



**93.8%**

**White Population**  
45.5% Ages 25-64

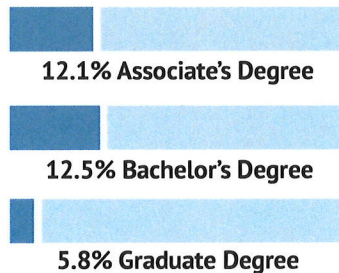
Under 5		3.7%
5-14		9.4%
15-24		8.9%
25-64		44.5%
65-74		19.1%
75-84		10.7%
85+		3.8%

The negative natural population rate of change for Aitkin County indicates deaths outnumbering births and can lead to population decline in the community. The county's net migration rate is positive which indicates an inflow of people, or that **more people are moving into the county than leaving.**



**24.9%**

**Attend College**



A county needs working-age residents to support current and prospective companies, and **counties with sufficient working-age residents tend to have training and educational opportunities** for young workers to develop their skills.



**92.9%**

**Insured Rate**

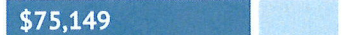
The share of residents in Aitkin County with no health insurance is 7.1 percent, 1.2 percentage points below the national level.

A healthy population contributes to a more productive workforce, and the health consequences of poverty are severe. People living in poverty, especially children, are at a higher risk for mental illness, chronic disease, higher mortality and a lower life expectancy.



**\$56,406**

**Median Household Income**



**National Median Household Income**

The median household income for Aitkin County stands at \$56,406, which falls below the national median by 24.9 percent.

**The county has an average household income of \$71,757 among its 6,797 households.**

Under 10k		5.1%
10-24k		16.7%
25-49k		22.7%
50-99k		32.7%
100-199k		19.5%
200k+		3.4%

Sources: National Association of Counties, US Census Bureau 2021/22,, US Dept. of Health & Human Services.



## Building a Healthier Tomorrow

Aitkin County is committed to fostering a thriving community where health and well-being are prioritized. Healthcare providers, educational institutions, and emergency services play a vital role in building a healthier tomorrow for all residents.



### Healthcare

**Riverwood Healthcare Center** is a leading provider of healthcare in Aitkin County with the following:

- Over 500 team members
- Surgery wing
- 24/7 emergency care,
- Cardiology
- Oncology
- Stroke care

Riverwood is committed to providing high-quality, accessible healthcare for the entire community.



### Schools

Aitkin County public schools include high schools and elementary schools within three school districts:



**Aitkin High School**  
ISD #1



**McGregor**  
ISD #4



**HillCity**  
ISD #2

Each offers smaller class sizes and a variety of opportunities for athletics and activities.

**Central Lakes College (CLC)** is the area college of choice for seekers of success. This comprehensive community and technical college serves 5,500 students per year.



### Emergency Services

Public safety is a top priority in Aitkin County, thanks to the tireless efforts of our dedicated first responders.

#### Police Departments

Aitkin County's public safety is maintained by a collaborative effort. The **Aitkin County Sheriff's Office** serves as the primary law enforcement agency for the county, providing patrol, investigations, and a wide range of law enforcement services. Within the county, the **Aitkin Police Department** ensures the safety of city residents, while the **Hill City Police Department** (operating part-time) contributes to local law enforcement efforts in its jurisdiction.

#### Fire Departments

Aitkin County's fire protection is provided by a network of dedicated volunteer departments, including the **Aitkin, Hill City, McGregor, Palisade, Tamarack, and Jacobson Fire Departments**. Each department provides fire and rescue services for its respective community, while also assisting neighboring departments when needed.

#### Emergency Medical Services

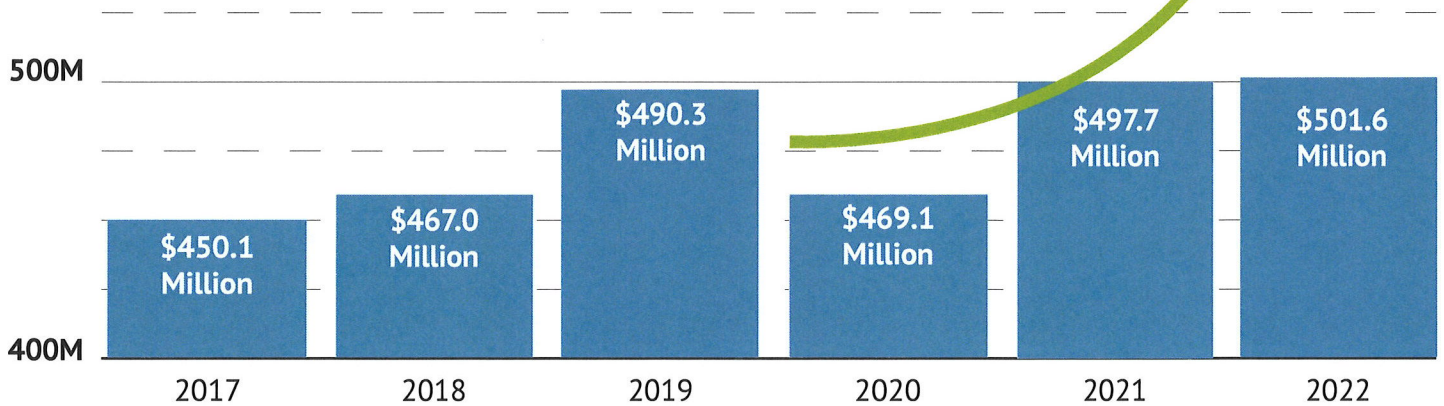
Aitkin County's emergency medical services are provided by a network of dedicated providers, including the **Aitkin, McGregor, and Hill City Ambulance Services**. Each service provides EMS and medical transport within their respective service areas.

## Economic Growth & Low Tax Rates

Gross Domestic Product (GDP), also known as economic output is widely used to measure economic health, reflecting the total value of goods and services produced by an economy over a given period. Aitkin County boasts one of the lowest tax rates in the state, which can be a significant advantage for businesses considering relocation or expansion.

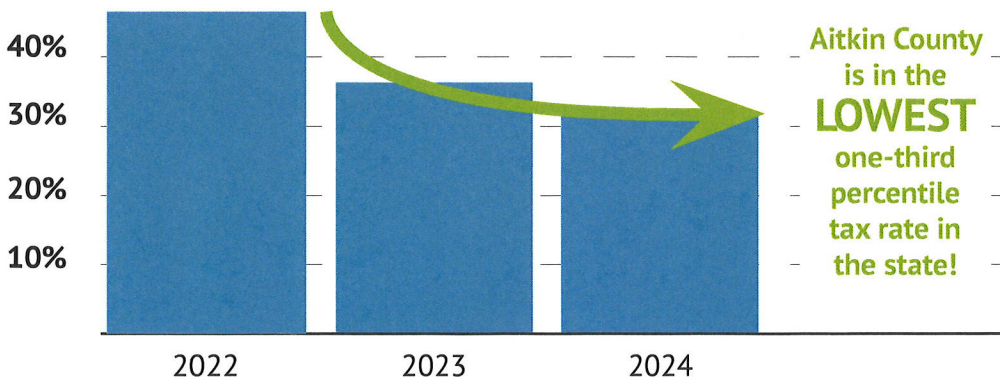
**6.9%**  
GDP Increase  
From 2020 to 2022

### Gross Domestic Product by the Year



### 2022 Industry GDP

Aitkin County's GDP is primarily driven by Education & Healthcare, Government and Retail Trade, which together account for a significant portion of the county's economic output.



Aitkin County is in the **LOWEST** one-third percentile tax rate in the state!

### Tax Rates

Factors like a favorable tax environment, such as Aitkin County's position in the lowest one-third percentile tax rate in the state, can contribute to a business-friendly climate that can positively impact economic growth and, consequently, the local GDP.

Sources: National Association of Counties, US Bureau of Economic Analysis

# Cost of Living & Economic Snapshot

Key economic indicators, including median household income, cost of living comparisons, and an analysis of the local housing market provides valuable context for individuals and businesses considering relocating to or investing in Aitkin County.

**\$56,406**  
**Aitkin County Median Household Income**



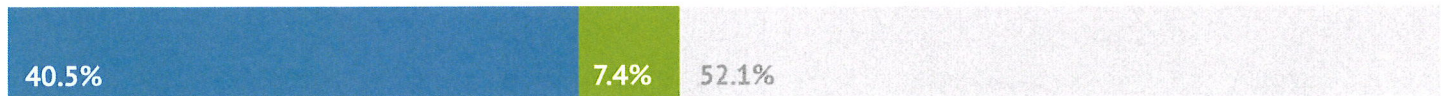
## Basic Cost of Living Estimates, 2023

	Yearly Cost	Hourly Wage	Monthly Costs						
			Child Care	Food	Healthcare	Housing	Transportation	Other	Taxes
<b>Single Adult</b>									
Aitkin Co.	\$30,258	\$14.55	NA	\$409	\$161	\$663	\$707	\$256	\$326
State of MN	\$34,704	\$16.88	NA	\$419	\$160	\$1,021	\$572	\$345	\$375
<b>Family</b>									
Aitkin Co.	\$62,337	\$19.98	\$405	\$932	\$576	\$875	\$1,323	\$432	\$652
State of MN	\$67,320	\$21.58	\$544	\$955	\$574	\$1,285	\$977	\$536	\$739

Family consists of the average 2 Adults (1 working FT, 1 PT), 1 Child

## Housing Unit Statistics, 2018-2022

Aitkin County 14,197 housing units



United States 141M housing units



■ Owner-Occupied Units
 ■ Renter-Occupied Units
 ■ Seasonal / Second Home

Sources: DEED Cost of Living, US Census Bureau





## Business Landscape

Aitkin County boasts a diverse workforce across a range of industries, including healthcare, retail trade and manufacturing. Understanding the local labor market is crucial for businesses seeking to recruit and retain talent, and this information will provide valuable insights for both employers and job seekers.



### Major Employers



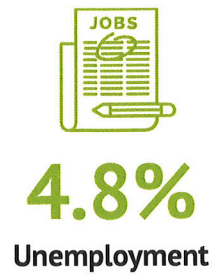
Sources: Aitkin Co. Industry Employment Statistics, 2023

Let's talk business. Call 218-513-6188 to learn how Aitkin County Economic Development can help.

NaturallyBetterHere.com

### Employment Rate

Labor force trends in Aitkin County in 2023 showed of 7,514 civilians, 95.2% were either employed or actively seeking employment.

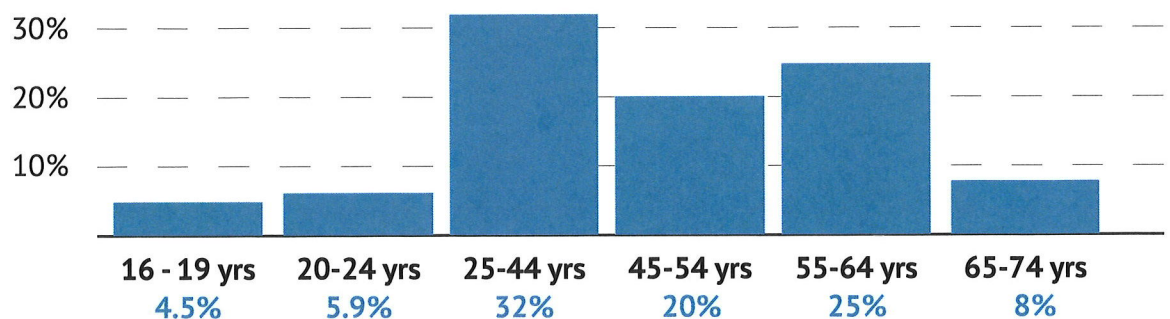


### Top Industries 2023

Industry	# of Jobs	% of Total Jobs	Average Annual Wage
1. Healthcare & Social Assistance	763	17.8%	\$16,395
2. Retail Trade	610	14.2%	\$31,529
3. Accommodation & Food Services	561	13.1%	\$18,999
4. Educational Services	447	10.4%	\$10,205
5. Manufacturing	397	9.3%	\$56,693
6. Public Administration	364	8.5%	\$51,284
7. Construction	249	5.8%	\$51,721
8. Other Services	149	3.5%	\$23,105
9. Wholesale Trade	124	2.9%	\$53,547
10. Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt.	104	2.4%	\$21,,956
11. Professional & Tech Services	97	2.3%	\$36,527
12. Finance & Insurance	98	2.3%	\$53,279
13. Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	61	1.4%	\$31,723
14. Mining	48	1.1%	\$37,000
15. Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	24	0.6%	\$44,022
16. Real Estate & Rental/Leasing	19	0.4%	\$27,623
17. Information	13	0.3%	\$69,811
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,285</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$46,272</b>

### Workforce by Age

Employment in Aitkin County has shown year-over-year growth in employment between 2022 and 2023. The highest age of the active workforce is 25-44 years.

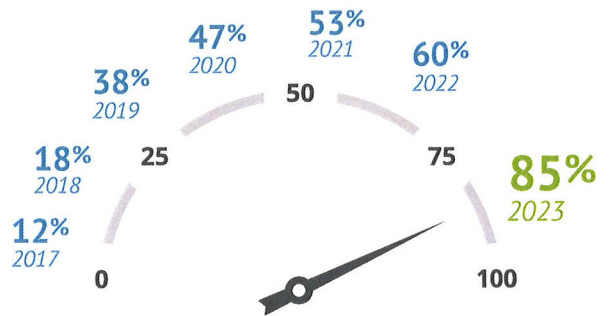




## Broadband Services

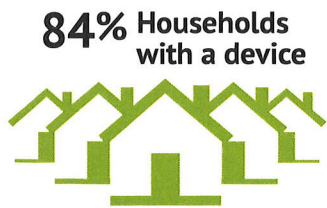
Reliable and high-speed internet access is crucial for businesses of all sizes in today's digital age. Aitkin County continues to improve broadband access in speed available to the businesses and residents.

**% of Households Served to State Speed Standards**  
Rounded to the nearest percent

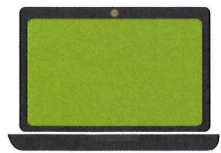


### Households with Device Access

Rounded to the nearest percent



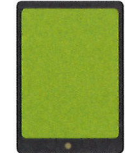
95.5% Statewide



83.2% Statewide



90.1% Statewide



65.8% Statewide

Area Providers Include



Sources: MN DEED

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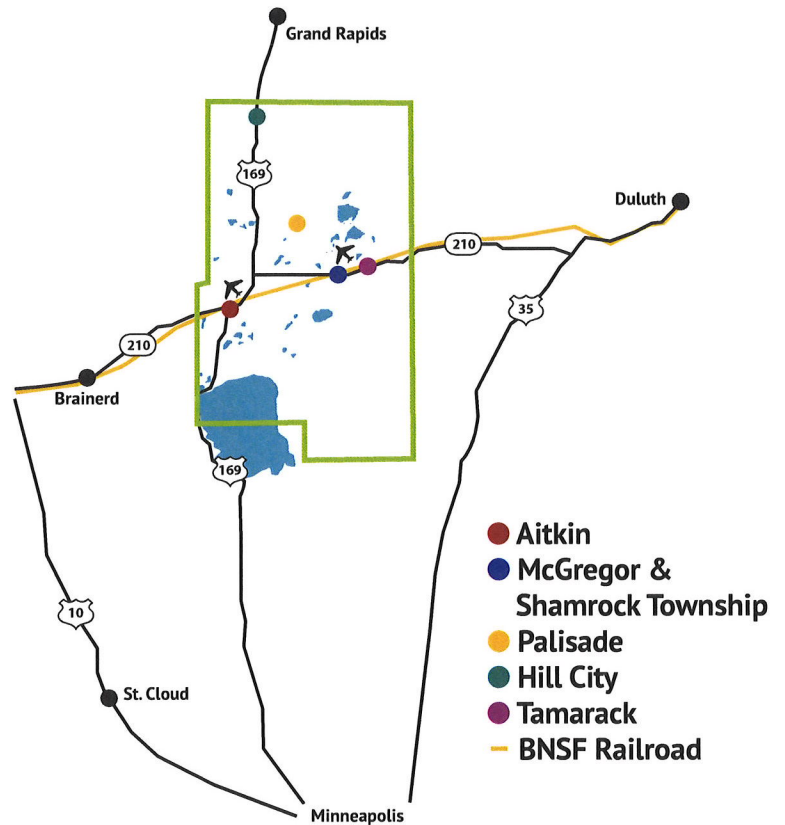


## Transportation

Aitkin County offers a range of transportation options for goods and services, connecting residents and businesses to regional and national markets. Located between major urban centers like Brainerd, Duluth, St. Cloud, and Minneapolis, the county provides convenient access to **major highways**, **two local airports** and the major **BNSF railroad line**.



**BNSF Railway is one of North America's leading freight transportation companies**, operating a rail network of 32,500 route miles in 28 states and three Canadian provinces. BNSF is one of the top transporters of the products and materials that help feed, clothe, supply and power communities throughout America and the world.



<b>Mileage from Aitkin</b>	<b>Aitkin to Duluth: 70 Miles</b>
	<b>Aitkin to Minneapolis: 120 Miles</b>
	<b>Aitkin to St Cloud: 85 Miles</b>
	<b>Aitkin to Brainerd Lakes: 30 Miles</b>