**Tiffany Michaels** (00:09): Hi, I'm Tiffany Michaels. I'm a Houston County storyteller. I live in Black Hammer Township, 10 miles north of Spring Grove, Minnesota. I'm 14 years old and entering high school this fall. I know that transportation plays a part in everybody's lives, from riding the school bus, to commuting 30 minutes outside of our county to work. Transporting children to childcare providers, getting to doctor appointments, shopping, or just walking around the block. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and recent census information of Houston County's 19,000 residents, about 10,000 work. Of those workers, about 55% commute outside of the county. That's about 405,831 miles daily. Wow. It's hard to see the people in the numbers. So I talked to a random group of workers and **Commuter** s from my community.

**Tiffany Michaels** (00:58): How far do you travel to get to work?

**Janet Britton** (01:01): I'm Janet Britton. I used to work at Tweeten Lutheran and at Abel. I used to go about six blocks.

**Theresa Curtis** (01:09): I'm Theresa Curtis, about a half-hour.

**Jana Halverson** (01:12): Jana Halverson, three minutes.

**Commuter** (01:14): My farthest commute when I lived in the cities was half an hour but in traffic.

**Emily Hahn** (01:22): Emily Hahn, an hour, about.

**Angela Gavin** (01:24): My name's Angela Gavin, about three minutes.

**Daniel Michaels** (01:28): Daniel Michaels, about 25 minutes.

**Tabitha Peter** (01:31): I'm Tabitha Peter. 20 minutes tops.

**Nick Peterson** (01:35): Nick Peterson. One block.

**Logan Sanis** (01:38): My name is Logan Sanis. I live about seven to eight miles. I can get here in about 10 minutes.

**Calvin Johnsilling** (01:44): Calvin Johnsilling, about five minutes.

**Tiffany Michaels** (01:52): What would you do, pass the time during that?

**Commuter** (01:55): Listen to audio books.

**Commuter** (01:57): A lot of music, usually. 94.7's pretty good. Listen to 93.3 every once in a while and 105.7.

**Tiffany Michaels** (02:05): Look around, just drive. Listen to music?

**Commuter** (02:08): I listen to music. I listen to oldies 60s to 80s.

**Commuter** (02:16): Listen to the radio.

**Commuter** (02:18): Listen to music, pretty much any pop. The 101 or z93. Pretty much anything.

**Commuter** (02:31): I usually have my youngest daughter in the car. I end up trying to pacify her with books and toys and snacks and water. I usually listen to books on tape or nothing at all.

**Tiffany Michaels** (02:53): Would you ever choose to carpool?

**Commuter** (02:56): It wasn't optional.

**Commuter** (03:00): I didn't because the people I worked with all lived in other areas of the cities, none of them lived where I lived, so I couldn't. I had to be on my own.

**Commuter** (03:09): I work alone. That wouldn't... It doesn't apply to me.

**Tiffany Michaels** (03:21): Does the commute to your work sometimes interfere with getting back for family or things like that?

**Commuter** (03:29): No, not really. I just expect to spend half an hour on the road.

**Tiffany Michaels** (03:43): I also asked people if they enjoyed their commute or if they preferred a shorter or longer commute. They had varied responses.

**Commuter** (03:51): Definitely, more than 10 or 15 minutes would be... I wouldn't make it a lot more difficult.

**Commuter** (03:59): I like longer drives because it gives me more time to listen to music.

**Commuter** (04:04): When I was commuting, when I would go anywhere, I think it's nice to have a little bit of a drive to have that downtime, to help me relax. If it was a stressful day or something, to try to let that go before I got home, maybe just jam out to some music and just take your mind off of things.

**Tiffany Michaels** (04:32): And I was curious about what modes of transportation people use to get to work.

**Commuter** (04:36): I used to... When I was younger, I used to walk.

**Commuter** (04:39): Took my four-wheeler, which was nice, but then I got... So I drove my car. I

**Commuter** (04:45): I can walk to work or bike, some days I do that. It doesn't take me long to get home at night.

**Tiffany Michaels** (04:52): Do you just walk to work then?

**Commuter** (04:55): Most of the time, unless if I have something to take off right away for after work, like pick up my daughter from another town or something.

**Commuter** (05:03): I drive a car. I drive a Kia Optima.

**Commuter** (05:07): I drive more than I walk.

**Tiffany Michaels** (05:10): Nowadays, the most common mode of transportation in rural America is motor vehicles. In the past, there were many more options available for daily transportation. Passenger trains and buses were some of the most commonly used ones. There used to be train depots and bus stations in every community in Houston County. Transportation has evolved over time and the communities have evolved along with it.

**Advertisement** (05:32): Many transportation issues are an all too common reality, but if you're in Southeast Minnesota, Semcac helps in a variety of ways. Rolling Hills transportation offers specific bus routes twice weekly to take care of shopping in Winona and Caledonia. Semcac also offers a volunteer driver program. Providing transportation for persons ages 60 and older to medical business and personal appointments. Go to Semcac.org...

**Tiffany Michaels** (05:54): Transportation needs change as people grow older. It is becoming more difficult for a rapidly growing senior population in rural America to successfully age in place. AARP defines aging in place, as the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of age, income or ability level. Volunteer service providers has sprouted up in Houston County to try and meet their growing needs from organizations like Semcac, to friends and family.

**Commuter** (06:23): I'm 72 and a lot of people that, get in their late eighties and nineties, they can't drive. They need help getting to the doctor and the grocery store. My husband and I, we take different friends to the doctor's appointments in Lacrosse and uptown here because so many older people don't have kids that live nearby. Then they depend on their neighbors to... And friends to help them out

**Tiffany Michaels** (06:53): To interview workers in Houston County, conduct research and edit the story on transportation, I traveled 917 miles. Together, my fellow students and instructors traveled 1,872 miles, traveling individually to participate in Stories: Yes Houston. Wow. That's equivalent to a trip from Houston to Seattle with some miles to spare. Hey, that would have been a fun trip and we all would've saved on gas, had we all carpooled to Seattle. Speaking of carpooling, the city of Houston is interested in looking into creating a ride share program for workers traveling daily to Lacrosse. I hope this story helps them to get it started.