The Twin Cities Mobile Market (“the Mobile Market”) is a grocery store on a bus, bringing affordable, healthy food to under-resourced neighborhoods across the Twin Cities. Launched in 2014 as a program through the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, the Mobile Market sells a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy, meats, and staple dry goods year-round at below-market prices at sites throughout the Twin Cities. The program was designed to address local inequities in healthy food access by changing the food environment and bringing fresh foods to communities.

The Twin Cities Mobile Market in 2017

Since its launch, the Mobile Market has made weekly stops in Saint Paul neighborhoods where residents otherwise have limited access to affordable, high quality, and healthy food. In 2017, the Mobile Market launched a second bus to serve Minneapolis communities. During 2017, the Mobile Market had 20 Saint Paul and 15 Minneapolis stops.

Sales summary

- 18,875 transactions
- Nearly $215,000 in net sales
- 46% of sales from fresh produce
- 37% of sales from Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) transactions

282 customers provided feedback in a customer survey about their experience shopping at the Mobile Market.

Because of shopping at the Mobile Market:

- 87% have more access to healthy foods
- 87% of customers eat more fruits and vegetables
- 78% learned how to choose or prepare healthy foods
- 76% feel more connected to their neighborhood
- 69% met people in their neighborhood

The top three reasons people shop at the Mobile Market include:

- The stop is at a convenient location: 78%
- The staff are friendly and helpful: 66%
- It is affordable: 61%

1 This figure does not include non-EBT sales from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
In 2018, the Mobile Market scaled back operations to explore changes to more sustainably serve the community while keeping food affordable. Initial steps included reducing the number of stops from 35 to 28 and the frequency of stops from weekly to biweekly. The Mobile Market is also continuing to innovate in ways to increase access to fresh, healthy, and affordable foods. Current efforts include:

- Piloting the Fruit and Veggie Rx program, in partnership with Fairview Health Services and HealthEast, which provides patients with prescriptions for fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Providing a free bag of produce with every $10 purchase through a partnership with Loaves and Fishes.
- Piloting the Fresh Bucks program in collaboration with Northside organizations, which provides 50 percent off all fruit and vegetable purchases for North Minneapolis SNAP and EBT customers.
- Continuing to offer Market Bucks, which provide a dollar-for-dollar match (up to $10) to SNAP and EBT customers for every fresh produce purchase.
- Offering more volunteer opportunities and ways for corporations and others to support the Mobile Market’s work.

Moving forward

For more information about the Mobile Market, visit www.twincitiesmobilemarket.org

2 The last quote is from a customer survey administered by the Mobile Market and Wilder Research. All other quotes are from focus groups conducted with customers as part of a research study led by M. Horning through the University of Minnesota School of Nursing and funded by a Grant-in-Aid from the University.

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