

Minnesota Safety Rest Area Programs  
**Market Research Focus Groups**

February 1995-October 1998



Minnesota Department of Transportation

Office of Technical Support

Site Development Unit

December 1998



**Minnesota Safety Rest Area Programs  
Market Research**

**Market Research  
Focus Groups**

**February 1995 - October 1998**

**Prepared By:**           **Market Research Unit - M.S. 150**  
**Minnesota Department of Transportation**  
**395 John Ireland Boulevard**  
**St. Paul, MN 55155**  
**and**  
**Site Development Unit - M.S. 686**  
**Office of Technical Support**  
**Minnesota Department of Transportation**  
**395 John Ireland Boulevard**  
**St. Paul, MN 55155**

**Prepared with**  
**Assistance from:**   **Cook Research & Consulting, Inc.**  
**6600 France Avenue South**  
**Minneapolis, MN 55435**

# Preface

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) operates a network of 55 full-service safety rest areas along the Interstate and high-volume non-interstate highways. Since 1969, Mn/DOT has conducted surveys at safety rest areas throughout the state. This data has provided the basis for determining the size of buildings and parking lots and has also been used to validate and identify services that the public uses and desires to have available at safety rest areas.

To supplement this information and to improve the level of understanding of safety rest area users as well as non-users, the Site Development Unit, with assistance from the Market Research Unit, conducted several market research studies during 1997 and 1998. Each of these studies were designed to expand Mn/DOT's understanding of a specific market segment in order to improve the delivery of safety rest area services.

The following studies were conducted:

1. Review of Historical Data

The review of historical data assembled all of the information that Mn/DOT had already collected in order to identify trends and to provide a summary of existing information.

2. Focus Groups

Focus Groups were held with Minnesota citizens to identify public attitudes towards rest areas, identify the kinds of services that rest area users expect and utilize at rest areas and to identify issues surrounding the maintenance and operation of rest areas.

3. Statewide Telephone Survey

A statewide telephone survey was conducted to identify the proportion of Minnesota citizens who use rest areas and to identify reasons why some citizens do not use rest areas. This survey also included ratings of the importance and quality of the services currently available at safety rest areas.

4. Evaluation of Nighttime Truck Parking

The nighttime truck parking study identified where there is greater demand for nighttime truck parking at safety rest areas than there are available spaces.

Separate reports are available from the Site Development Unit to document this research.

This report summarizes the information gathered in the four focus groups held with Minnesota citizens.

## INTRODUCTION

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) operates a system of rest areas on state highways throughout Minnesota. The Office of Technical Support, Site Development Unit provides comprehensive systems analysis and planning recommendations, design standards and program management guidelines for the statewide service network of rest areas. To assist in the planning for and management of these rest areas, the Site Development Unit requested a comprehensive market research study to integrate past data collection efforts with new approaches to studying customer attitudes.

## STUDY PURPOSE

The overall purpose of the focus group portion of this research was to identify concerns the public may have regarding rest areas as well as to elicit suggestions for improvement. Specific objectives were as follows:

- 1) To identify under what circumstances the respondents use rest areas.
- 2) To understand why the respondents decide to use rest areas in contrast to the reasons why motorists stop at other locations.
- 3) To understand how Minnesota rest areas compare with one another and to rest areas in other states.
- 4) To assess how satisfied respondents are with the condition of the rest areas.
- 5) To identify concerns that respondents have about rest areas.
- 6) To determine if the signage directing travelers to rest areas is satisfactory.
- 7) To identify what changes or improvements the respondents would make to rest areas.

## METHODOLOGY

Four focus groups were held, three in Minneapolis and one in the Moorhead area. The Minneapolis groups were held on July 30th and July 31st, 1997. The Moorhead group was held on August 4, 1997.

Respondents for two of the Minneapolis groups and for the Moorhead group were residents of Minnesota who stop at a Minnesota rest area at least twice a year. Respondents attending the fourth group were long-haul truckers based in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region who stopped regularly at rest areas when driving a truck.

The discussion guide for these focus groups is available in the Appendix. The focus groups were conducted by Cook Research & Consulting, Inc. of Edina, MN. Resident respondents of Minnesota were paid \$50.00 each for their participation; long-haul truckers received \$75.00 each for participating.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### 1) Reasons for Using

- Although the primary motivation for stopping at a rest area is to use the rest room, there are a wide variety of other motivations including to rest, to sleep, to eat (sometimes with a picnic-type meal) or to change a child's diaper.
- Respondents from Moorhead indicated that they often use the Maple Grove rest area to contact the people they are visiting in the Twin Cities and even to change clothes, especially if they will be attending a special event.
- Travel Information Centers (TICs) are considered reliable sources for directions, maps, road conditions and weather information.

### 2) Reasons for Preferring

- Rest areas are particularly well suited to the following groups of people:
  - Those traveling with children.
  - Those traveling with pets.
  - Drivers of large vehicles, especially trucks.
  - Anyone wishing to avoid the congestion and distraction of busy interchanges.

### 3) Comparison to Other States

- With few exceptions, Minnesota rest areas are said to be among the cleanest, safest, most scenic and best maintained in the country.

### 4) Concerns

- Even though Minnesota rest areas are not considered unduly hazardous, security is still a concern. Respondents indicate that they notice such things as the visibility of the rest area from the highway, how accessible the rest area is, how well lit the rest area is and whether the shrubbery is arranged and trimmed to prevent it from concealing possible predators.
- When traveling at night, especially when alone, some respondents find an empty rest area threatening.
- Truck drivers are concerned about maneuverability in rest areas, particularly when they are crowded with trucks. Often, the angle of the parking stalls makes it difficult to park within the lines or to maneuver into or out of a stall when other vehicles are parked nearby.

### 5) Signage

- A five-mile notice of an upcoming rest area would be preferable to the current one- and two-mile markers. The additional warning would give drivers more time to alert passengers and to prepare to exit safely.
- Signs that give the number of miles to the next rest area, and possibly indicate the type of facilities available would help motorists plan their stops more efficiently.

## 6) Improvements

- Respondents suggest that the grounds and buildings should have better lighting, security cameras and a more obvious police/Highway Patrol presence. Establishing a State Patrol substation, providing a 24 hour attendant or an emergency call box are also suggested as possible safety precautions.
- In addition to adding safety features such as lighting and security cameras, suggestions for improving the State's rest areas include adding diaper changing stations in both the men's and ladies' rest rooms, having real glass mirrors, having paper towels to dry hands and having more maps and travel information. The truck drivers would appreciate more indoor telephones with a shelf to write on and shelves in the rest room for shaving kits, etc.
- The residents from the Twin Cities and Moorhead are adamant that commercial restaurants should not be allowed to open at rest areas. They expect that doing so will destroy the natural and scenic nature of the rest areas, increase traffic and encourage vandalism. The truck drivers, who lament the fact that Minnesota has a shortage of truck stops, are slightly more interested in having restaurants or gas stations at rest areas. However, these drivers point out that as they are, the rest areas are too small to handle the extra traffic restaurant and/or gas stations would generate.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### CURRENT USAGE OF MINNESOTA REST AREAS

#### Frequency of Rest Area Use

The rest areas that the Twin Cities area respondents use most often are those located on interstate highways, such as on I-35 north to Duluth and south to the Iowa border; on I-94, both west to Fargo and east to the Wisconsin border. Other rest areas frequently mentioned by these participants are on US-169 between Minneapolis and Mankato and on US-169 north of the Twin Cities.

Moorhead area residents say that they are most familiar with the rest areas they encounter on trips to and from the Twin Cities.

Comments are made that there are not nearly as many rest areas on state and county roads as on interstate highways. Where rest areas do exist on secondary roads, they are typically more primitive than those on major thoroughfares. The groups' members are accustomed to the availability of "waysides," which are expected to provide "outhouses" to the traveling public.

Understandably, the commercial truck drivers are more familiar with a greater number of the State's rest areas, as well as those in other regions. They rely on the availability of rest areas to quickly and conveniently make telephone calls, rest and use the rest room facilities. One of the primary disadvantages they see of the interstate rest areas is that they are often too full to safely accommodate the high volume of traffic, and parking is often difficult. When and how frequently the truckers use rest areas depends on a variety of factors. For example, remarks are made that a driver who has not driven recently may decide to stop more frequently than someone who has been on the road for a period of time and has

settled into a routine. Other drivers say that they plan to stop driving for the day relatively early to ensure that they will be able to find space at a rest area before dark.

### Rest Area Use Motivation/Alternatives to Rest Area Usage

As they discuss the possible options available to them when they look for a place to pull off the highway, the respondents indicate that, in addition to rest areas, convenience stores, fast food outlets, restaurants and gas stations are all common possibilities. Most say that they stop to use at least one of these types of establishments on occasion. For example, if passengers need to use rest room facilities, and the timing seems appropriate for a meal, the participants will forego a rest area and seek out a fast food or other restaurant. If motorists are in need of fuel, they might optimize the stop by seeking out an exit that offers gas, food and/or groceries as well as rest room facilities. Although doing so can save time by consolidating stops, breaks at busy exits also present some disadvantages. For example, meals at the restaurants on interstate highways can become expensive, especially if feeding children. Parents also mention that the stores tempt their children with additional and possibly unnecessary items. Business travelers are often looking for a more subdued and private environment than the busy restaurants and gas stations can provide. These types of exits also create busy intersections and force travelers to contend with stop lights, traffic and congestion. Therefore, several respondents say that, unless they need gas, they prefer to utilize rest areas in an effort to save time and avoid the added distractions.

Moorhead residents stated that they use the rest area near Maple Grove as a convenient stopping place to change clothes on the way to the Twin Cities or to contact family or friends with estimated times of arrival. The rest areas near Alexandria are also frequently used by Moorhead residents. They also mention using rest areas on US-10 near Detroit Lakes and on US-2 between Duluth and Grand Forks.

The respondents use and appreciate the rest areas primarily for the ease of use and convenience, the cleanliness and the fact that the experience is relatively comfortable. Many rest areas are thought to be particularly appropriate for those traveling with children or pets. Several participants say that, when taking relatively long trips, they pack lunches with the intention of stopping at rest areas. Parents of small children say that they are more comfortable at rest areas than taking "screaming kids" and a diaper bag into a restaurant.

Many rest areas in Minnesota are said to have a park-like atmosphere that is pleasant and relaxing. The open areas also afford motorists an opportunity to stretch, walk around and revive themselves. Several comments are made that the facilities at Minnesota rest areas are typically more pleasant and clean with rest rooms that are more carefully maintained than at many gas stations. Parking is also thought to be more plentiful and accessible at rest areas. Truck drivers say that it is not uncommon for them to share rest areas with traveling salespeople who are reportedly there to prepare for their next appointments, rest and catch up on paperwork.

The professional truck drivers say that they often have no alternative to stopping at rest areas, particularly in Minnesota. There are reportedly very few good truck stops in the State, and the drivers can not be sure that they will be able to negotiate the parking lots at restaurants or gas stations. A few of the commercial drivers say that, given the option, they would stop at weigh stations to rest. Several will avoid noisy, busy truck stops unless they need fuel, food or a shower. Comments are made that, if rest areas had attendants on site and included some additional facilities, the truckers would gladly pay five dollars for a shower.

The primary disadvantage of rest areas is said to be that they are often crowded. Remarks are made that, "They're full by 8:00 [p.m.]," and "When the weather's bad, forget it." At least one group member says he prefers to

drive at night and sleep during the day in an effort to avoid the congestion at rest areas. Crowded rest areas are particularly a problem for drivers of tall, wide and heavy trucks that are constrained by regulations that restrict their driving at night and on weekends in some states. In the absence of available parking at rest areas, the truck drivers will look for vacant parking lots, perhaps at closed restaurants. They will, however, only park at a remote location without rest room facilities as a last resort and often feel uncomfortable doing so.

### Comparison of Rest Areas

The respondents agree that the rest areas in Minnesota are some of the nicest in the country. This is attributed in large part to the fact that the residents and the attendants take pride in the appearance and condition of the rest areas. The facilities and grounds are said to be well maintained and the sites are often scenic. Remarks are made that the rest areas in Minnesota are "convenient, quiet and relaxing." Minnesota is also said to have more rest areas than many other states, particularly North Dakota. Participants take note of both subtle and obvious differences in the rest areas of other states. For example, the rest areas in the more populated areas of eastern states are said to be busier and more likely to combine gas stations, restaurants, etc. The facilities in Indiana are believed to be "the worst" in terms of cleanliness and upkeep. In some states, the soft drink vending machines are "behind bars," giving the impression that personal safety may be compromised by stopping there. Some participants have this perception concerning the two rest areas just south of Duluth on I-35. Conversely, Iowa is commended for its rest area information booths. A North Dakota rest area west of Fargo on I-94 has current weather information available electronically. On I-29 near Watertown, South Dakota, there is said to be a well kept rest area with shelters and barbecue grills. Travel Information Centers are expected to be larger than ordinary rest areas and have more travel information, such as road maps available.

There was some criticism of specific rest areas. There is a Minnesota rest area near Moorhead that is reportedly small and in need of maintenance. A few suggest that the rest area on US-169 between the Twin Cities and Mankato should be plowed more diligently and aggressively in the winter.

The truck drivers are more critical of rest areas, even those in Minnesota. Remarks are made that "they never build them big enough." These group members would like the parking slots intended for trucks to be longer, wider and positioned with less severe angles. They point out that trucks are increasingly being built larger than in the past, and it is difficult to maneuver their large trucks into crowded parking lots. Although it is seen as an advantage to have parking areas for trucks separate from four wheel vehicles, the commercial truck drivers say that they often must contend with recreational vehicles that obstruct drive areas because they are parked improperly. Comments are made that smaller state and county roads do not have any rest areas large enough to accommodate semi-trucks, and a suggestion is made that the shoulders should at least be wide enough for a truck to pull over. These drivers also single out the rest areas just south of Duluth on I-35 as needing more regular maintenance and better lighting. A rest area 40 miles south of Rockford, IL on I-39 is cited as an example of a rest area that is comparatively well designed and equipped to handle truck traffic. It apparently has abundant lighting, ample parking slots and wide entrance/exit lanes.

Respondents in each of the groups mention that they prefer the types of rest areas that can be seen from the road and that do not require them to drive out of their way or too far off the main highway. They like to be able to see how busy a rest area appears to be before pulling into it. The truck drivers' primary objective is to avoid crowded situations that might be difficult to navigate. The other participants want to be sure that there are other motorists present for security purposes.

Naturally, the preferred rest areas are those that are kept neat and clean. Odor in the rest rooms is a concern; however, the groups' members add that it is less of a problem in Minnesota than in other states. Poorly lit rest areas or those with obvious signs of vandalism give the impression that the area lacks sufficient security. A few participants say that they would like some indication of whether there is an attendant on duty before stopping at a rest area, particularly when traveling alone.

## EVALUATION OF CURRENT REST AREAS/ SUGGESTIONS FOR REST AREA DESIGN

### Safety Concerns

Safety is a definite concern for the respondents as they discuss rest area usage. Several respondents say that they will not stop at rest areas when they are alone, especially after dark, and will continue on to the next exit. Women, in particular, are not comfortable at rest areas unless there are other motorists present. One woman will not stop if it appears that the only other vehicles are trucks. She does not want anyone, especially truck drivers, to realize that she is traveling alone. Other participants say that there have been occasions when they would have liked to stop at a rest area, but decided against doing so because it appeared deserted, poorly lit and somewhat foreboding. A few participants remark that they feel more comfortable at rest areas in rural areas than at those near the Twin Cities metro area.

The commercial truck drivers think that the rest areas in Minnesota are safer than those in other states. Comments are made that the rest areas in eastern and southern states seem more threatening. Florida, in fact, reportedly stations armed security guards in rest areas at night. Some respondents attribute the increased level of safety in Minnesota to an increased Highway Patrol presence, more traffic and improved lighting. One trucker suggests that the rest areas here are safer because the climate

discourages transients. Although they are more comfortable at the rest areas in Minnesota, the truck drivers do mention that there are areas in the state where drug trafficking and prostitution are problems. For safety reasons, at least one driver prefers to stop at truck stops where there usually are more trucks and people around.

To improve the safety at rest areas, the respondents suggest that the State Patrol and local law enforcement agencies should have a more frequent and visible presence. Some participants think that the State Patrol should open sub-stations at rest areas or have reserved parking spaces. A suggestion is made that there should be attendants in the rest areas more often. Comments are also made that rest areas that are kept clean and free of graffiti and debris give an impression of security and surveillance that may discourage vandalism.

The manner in which the surrounding grounds are maintained is also an important safety concern. The participants caution that shrubbery or bushes that could conceal a predator or provide hiding places should not be used around rest areas.

### Signage

The respondents would prefer to have more than two miles' notice when they are approaching a rest area. A five mile warning would give them more time to prepare children, wake sleeping passengers, discuss whether a stop is necessary, etc. The truckers point out that it often takes more than two miles to change lanes, and an earlier notice would give drivers a better opportunity to move safely into position to exit, particularly on unfamiliar roads, in heavy traffic or in inclement weather.

The motorists prefer the signs that include the mileage to the next rest area. Signs that indicate the type of rest area or exit, such as whether it is truck accessible or has flush toilets, are also appreciated. This added information helps them schedule their stops more efficiently.

Although there is some apprehension raised regarding additional signage "cluttering" the roadsides, most participants agree that the road signs are helpful and aid in the safe flow of traffic. A remark is made that advertising billboards, rather than directional signage, are problematic from an aesthetic standpoint.

### Suggestions for Rest Area Improvement

When asked what changes or improvements they would make in the design of Minnesota rest areas, the respondents frequently mention safety issues. Plentiful lighting is considered a necessity. Many participants would like to see an attendant on duty 24 hours a day; however, they realize that such a measure is not a cost effective solution. In lieu of doing so, a suggestion is made to post the hours that an attendant would be available. An increased police or State Patrol presence and an emergency call box are also recommended. Several group members would like to see security cameras installed at all rest areas.

Rest areas should be close to, and visible from, the highway and easily accessible. The groups' members often determine whether they will stop at a particular rest area by observing how many and what types of vehicles are already parked there. Although they appreciate the natural beauty of the plantings and shrubbery, the respondents say that the landscaping should be kept open and should not provide hiding places or areas where people could "lurk." Additionally, the architecture of rest area structures should be large and open with plenty of large glass windows, rather than the small, dark cinder block-type buildings at some rest areas.

Other suggestions for improvements at rest areas include the addition of paper towels, real glass mirrors, and diaper changing stations in both the men's and ladies' rest rooms and ice machines for travelers to refill

coolers. Some participants would also like to see maps, current weather, road and construction information available.

The Twin Cities and Moorhead residents are somewhat divided regarding the appropriateness of vending machines at rest areas. Some say that they rarely or never use the vending machines when they are available. They either pack lunches and refreshments for long trips or purchase what they need at convenience stores or gas stations. A few parents assume that the vending machines would not offer milk, juice boxes or other items for small children. Other participants think that rest areas should have vending machines available, at least for soft drinks, water and coffee. Some would like to see the machines carry juice, such as Everfresh<sup>®</sup>, and light snacks, such as chips, popcorn, etc. They do agree, however, that any vending machines that are available should be kept to a minimum. They think that "huge banks" of machines are likely to tempt vandals, and the quality of the more elaborate food items may be questionable.

These respondents are adamant that commercial operations and franchise restaurants not be permitted to open in rest areas. They feel that the added traffic, odors, garbage, etc. would destroy the natural beauty of the State's rest areas. Security is also a concern with regard to the possibility of commercializing rest areas. Doing so is expected to encourage an "undesirable element" and "kids to hang out there." One participant asserts that "if you add people, you add stress and that defeats the purpose of a rest area." A point is also made that allowing Mn/DOT to open restaurants would give them an unfair competitive advantage over the other businesses in the area.

As the possibility of eliminating features of the rest areas in an effort to improve them is discussed, the group members say that the amenities are all fairly basic as they are and should be left in place. Picnic tables, for example, are low maintenance features that contribute to the comfort of travelers. A few participants think that they could do without the weather information that is available at some rest areas, since they have been, and

will be, driving and can stay apprised of any new developments on their car radios. Respondents in the Moorhead group, however, feel strongly that the *Singles* publications that are distributed at the rest areas are completely out of place in that setting.

The truck drivers have slightly different views of what a rest area should offer. Their primary issue is that the parking area for trucks should be expanded and the diagonal lines should be placed specifically with larger (65+ feet, double- and triple-trailer) trucks in mind.

Security is also an issue for the commercial drivers, since they typically spend more time at rest areas to rest and/or sleep and are frequently there after dark. They repeatedly mention that the areas should have sufficient lighting and security cameras. These respondents are also interested in a 24 hour attendant and/or more frequent law enforcement patrols.

Another consideration which is somewhat unique to the professional drivers is the need for regular access to telephones. Because they are on the road for long periods of time, they frequently need to check their answering services, contact telephone dispatchers, call ahead for directions, etc. They refer to the telephone as their "livelihood" and would like to see more telephones available at rest areas. Although they may have them available for emergency use, the drivers say that their bills would be "ridiculous" if they used cellular telephones on a routine basis. It would be a further advantage to the drivers if the telephones were located indoors, out of the elements, away from the traffic noise, preferably with a small desk or shelf on which to write. Some of these respondents also suggest that the rest rooms should also be equipped with shelves or counters for shaving kits or toiletries and paper towels should be available.

The truck drivers feel that there is a shortage of good truck stops in Minnesota. Comments are made that "if you're coming from Chicago, you have to stop in Wisconsin." Due to the lack of restaurants that cater to

large trucks, these participants are more interested in the possibility of allowing cafeterias, fast food restaurants or a wider variety of vending machines at rest areas. They do, however, realize that the rest areas would have to be enlarged to accommodate the anticipated increase in traffic. The idea of an "Oasis-type" rest area, such as those near Chicago on I-90, do not seem practical for Minnesota. The respondents find it difficult to envision that type of complex, even in or near, the metro area.

## CONCLUSION

Minnesota rest areas are recognized as some of the "nicest" in the country. The respondents refer to the cleanliness and maintenance of the structures, the relative safety, the attractiveness of the grounds and the scenic sites. Several participants, particularly those traveling with children or pets, prefer to use rest areas to avoid the congestion, traffic, "hassles" and the distractions that tempt children at busy exits. They may pack lunches with the intention of stopping at rest areas when on extended trips. The rest areas allow travelers to use the rest room facilities, stretch their legs, relax and eat an inexpensive, leisurely meal.

The commercial drivers rely on rest areas to give them a break from driving, since there are a limited number of other sites that are able to accommodate large trucks. Many of the truckers actually prefer rest areas to truck stops, which are said to be busy, noisy and disruptive.

Safety is an important consideration for all the participants. Several of the Moorhead and Twin Cities residents will not stop at a rest area at night, if there are not plenty of other vehicles visible or if they are alone. The respondents would like to see an attendant on duty 24 hours a day or the installation of a State Patrol sub-station. Rest areas should also have adequate lighting, and the foliage should be kept trimmed and thin enough to prevent it from providing hiding places.

As the Minnesota rest areas are discussed, some of the commercial drivers' most significant objections are that there typically are too few truck parking spaces, and the narrow slots make it difficult for large trucks to maneuver. The truckers would also like to see more indoor telephones, additional lighting and a more constant State Patrol presence at the rest areas.

Although a few vending machines at rest areas are thought to be a convenient amenity, attempts to provide more elaborate fare would be seen as a nuisance by most of the group members.

## **APPENDIX**

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

M-335

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Moderator
- B. Focus Group
- C. Facility
  - 1) Mirror/Observers
  - 2) Microphones/Audio Taping
  - 3) Video Taping
  - 4) Notes From Observers
- D. Respondents
- E. Topic For Focus Group

### II. CURRENT USAGE OF MINNESOTA'S SAFETY REST AREAS

- A. How often use a rest area in Minnesota?
  - 1) Where are the rest areas you have used in the past year?
    - a. Were these rest areas or were they wayside stops?
    - b. What, if anything, is the difference between a rest area and a wayside stop?
  - 2) Were you alone or was someone else with you when you stopped?
    - a. Who was with you?
    - b. Did you stop for yourself or for the other(s) with you?
  - 3) Why do you stop at rest areas in Minnesota?
    - a. Other reasons?
    - b. For what reason do you most often stop?
- B. Where would you stop if you had not decided to stop at a rest area?
  - 1) Why there?
  - 2) What things are offered/available to you that are not offered/available at a Minnesota rest area?
  - 3) How important are these to you? Why?
- C. Does the amount of time it takes to reach the next rest area enter into your decision about whether to stop at a rest area or at some other place?
  - 1) What amount of time is permissible for the distance to the next rest area to be acceptable?
    - a. Is it the amount of time? Is it the distance?

2) When you have decided to stop, how long are you willing to drive before you reach a rest area?

a. Is it the time spent? Is it the distance?

D. Have you noticed any differences among rest areas in the State of Minnesota?

1) What are the differences?

2) Why do you suppose there are any differences?

3) Are the differences acceptable? Why? Why not?

E. How do the rest areas in Minnesota compare to those in other states?

1) Which ones? Which states?

2) Why better? Why not as good?

F. When you plan a trip out-of-town, do you ever select or avoid a route because you will/will not find rest areas on the route?

1) Why do you say this?

2) How important are the rest areas to you?

### III. CHARACTERIZATION OF THE REST AREA/REST AREA USER

A. For whom is the rest area intended? Is there any one type of individual more than the others for whom the rest areas are designed?

1) Who is that person? What type of person?

2) Why do you believe the rest areas are designed more for that type of person than others?

B. Tell me the characteristics of the person whom the rest areas are designed? Give me some information about who that person is. Physical/demographic/age/gender characteristics? Why do you say that?

1) For whom is the rest area not designed? Why?

2) Characterize that person for me. Why?

### IV. EVALUATION OF THE CURRENT REST AREAS

A. How attractive are the rest areas in the State of Minnesota? How well designed are they?

1) Do you like the design/the layout of the rest areas? Plantings? Amenities? Buildings?

- 2) What do you like about the look of the rest areas? Dislike about the look? Why?
- 3) What about the look of the different types of rest areas? What do you notice that is different?
  - a. Does it make any difference to you?
  - b. Why?
- 4) What would you want to see changed about the appearance of the rest areas? Why?

B. How well maintained are the rest areas in the State of Minnesota?

- 1) Are the buildings well maintained? Clean? Odor free?
  - a. Why?
  - b. Why not?
- 2) Are the grounds well maintained? Litter cleaned up? Trash containers emptied frequently enough? Snow/ice removed promptly/well?
  - a. Why?
  - b. Why not?
- 3) What would you want to see changed about how the rest areas are maintained? Why?

C. How up-to-date are the rest areas in the State of Minnesota?

- 1) Why do you say that?
- 2) As compared to the rest areas in other states? Why?
- 3) What would you want to see changed about the rest areas in the State of Minnesota to make them more up-to-date? Why?

D. Considering the current rest areas that exist in the State of Minnesota, . . .

- 1) what is an acceptable level of upkeep/maintenance?
- 2) what would you consider an exceptional level of upkeep/maintenance?
- 3) Why do you say that?

E. How valuable are the signs and materials that direct you to/those available at the rest areas?

- 1) Do you notice/make good use of signs that notify the driver that the next rest area is 20 - 40 miles ahead? Are these valuable? why?

- 2) Do you notice/make good use of signs that notify the driver that the next rest area is 1 - 2 miles ahead? Are these valuable? Why?
- 3) FOR THE TRUCKERS: Do you have available to you signs that notify you of truck parking space at the rest areas? If so, are these valuable? Why? Do you have available/would you want signs that notify you of truck parking space (offsite) in an off-the-road site? Are these valuable? Why?
- 4) Do you notice/make good use of signs that notify the driver that the next area is a Travel Information Center? Are these valuable? Why? What are they?
  - a. Do you pick up any information at the TICs? What?
  - b. What kind of information are you looking for at a TIC? Why?
- 5) Do you notice a rest area by what you can see of it from the highway? Does being able to see some of the rest area from the highway make you more/less likely to stop there? Why?
- 6) Do you typically stop at one or two rest areas more than others for a reason other than it is /they are the only one(s) on the roadway you are traveling? For what reasons?
- 7) Do you secure maps at rest areas?
- 8) Do you notice any symbols that are connected with rest areas? Which ones? Are they valuable?

F. What use of the rest areas do you make for . . .

- 1) . . . . short stops/short term stops?
  - a. For short term stops during the day, do you prefer to stop at a rest area or at a full-service truck stop? Why?
  - b. For short term stops during the night, do you prefer to stop at a rest area or at a full-service truck stop? Why?
- 2) . . . . longer, overnight stops?
  - a. For longer/overnight stops, do you prefer to stop at a rest area or a full-service truck stop? Why?
- 3) If you prefer to stop at a rest area for short term stops, do you save any time doing so? How? Why not? Is the savings of any value?

G. What use do you make of the pay phone(s) at a rest area?

- 1) Are they of value to you? Why?/Why not?
  - a. How much use do you make of the phone?
  - b. How much business do you conduct over the phone?

- c. Are you using a phone in your truck instead of one at a rest area?
- 2) Are any of these items needed/of value to you?
- a. A phone that is indoors/that is outdoors? How about noise?
  - b. A phone that is closer to the truck parking area?
  - c. A phone that includes a calling card/credit card slot? A tie-in to a fax modem?
  - d. Are there enough phones available at rest areas?

H. How convenient are the truck parking areas?

- 1) Relative to how far away the rest area building is?
- 2) Relative to where RV or vehicles pulling trailers/boats park?

V. IDEAS ABOUT CHANGES THAT COULD BE PROVIDED WITH THE REST AREAS

A. Would you have any interest in having some commercial ventures available at a rest area? (YES/NO; IF "NO", WHAT WOULD YOU WANT?)

- 1) Vending machines? No? - Why not? Yes? - Offering what? How many?
- 2) A food venture at a rest area (fast food/cafeteria)? No? - Why not? Yes? - How extensive?
- 3) Another type of sit-down restaurant? No? - Why not?
- 4) Fuel/oil/etc.? No? - Why not?
- 5) Other types of commercial ventures available? No? - Why not? Yes - Which ones?

B. How valuable could these ventures be?

- 1) Which, if any, are necessary? Why?
- 2) Which, if any, would be nice to have? Why?
- 3) Which, if any, would be nice to have but not worth it? Why?
- 4) How much, if anything, would you expect to pay for these services?
  - a. Should tax dollars go to providing these services?
  - b. Would you expect to pay for these services through the price you pay for an item? How much extra?
  - c. Would you expect private ventures to contract with the State of Minnesota and provide these services?

- C. How similar to what you see on some turnpikes/toll roads would you want the rest areas in Minnesota to be? Why? Why not?

#### VI. CONCERNS ABOUT MINNESOTA SAFETY REST AREAS

- A. How safe do you feel stopping at rest areas?
- 1) During the day? Why?
  - 2) During the night? Why?
  - 3) During season of the year? Why?
  - 4) During any days of the week? Why?
  - 5) IF "WOULD NOT STOP," Why would you not stop? for what reasons?
- B. Are there locations where you would not stop? Why? Are there any styles of rest areas where you would not stop? Why?
- C. How do rest areas in the State of Minnesota compare to the rest areas in other states regarding personal safety issues?
- 1) Why do you say that?
  - 2) Why is Minnesota better/ Why do the rest areas in Minnesota cause you more concern than those in other states?
- D. What would you want to see changed about the rest areas in the State of Minnesota to make them seem safer to you? Why?

#### VI. CONCLUSION

- A. Considering what is now available at rest areas, what could you give up and not miss? Why?
- B. What do you absolutely need to have added to the rest areas to make them more valuable to you? Why?