CHAPTER 3   Transportation Element

Section 3.1   Introduction

Movement of people, goods, and services within and through the Town is an integral part of everyday life for the citizens of Belmont. Decisions made regarding transportation can have a direct impact on the community's growth and quality of life. These decisions should be made to include choices that will most efficiently serve the community as a whole, maximize investment in transportation infrastructure, as well as minimizes conflicts between modes of transportation as well as jurisdictions.

This chapter will assess the current inventory of transportation options, list goals, objectives, and policies that guide future development of various modes of transportation in the Town of Belmont, and compare local transportation goals to existing County, Regional, and State transportation plans.

Section 3.2   Transportation Facility Inventory

A. Roads and Highways

Current road classifications for the County transportation network are officially designated in the document entitled "The Functional Classification of Highways, Roads, and Streets in Portage County, Wisconsin"; adopted in 1989. The existing functional class system (Map 3.1) categorizes streets and highways according to their two primary purposes: 1) to move vehicles (traffic mobility), and 2) to serve adjacent land (land access). "Arterials" accommodate the movement of vehicles, while "local streets" provide a land access function (neighborhood streets that lead to homes, etc.). Collectors serve both local and through traffic by providing a connection between arterials and local roads.

As of 2002, the Belmont road system includes a total of 64 miles. State Highway 22 accounts for 1.7 miles of 2-lane roadway, County Roads (Cty Rds) A, D, AA, GG, TT account for 21 miles, with the rest, 41.2 miles, being Town roads.

1. Rural Interstate: No rural interstates are located in Belmont.

2. Principal Arterials: No principal arterial highways are located in Belmont.

3. Minor Arterials

   State Highway 22 is the only highway in the Town that is designated as a minor arterial. According to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, there was no Average Daily Traffic volume (ADT) count done in 2002, however, the ADT count in 1999 was 2,900 vehicles. Traffic mobility and serving major economic centers are minor arterial functions.

4. Major Collectors

   County Roads A, D, and AA are considered major collectors. The ADT for Cty Rd A north of Cty Rd D was 380 vehicles, while the ADT for Cty Rd D south of Cty Rd A was 880 vehicles. The average daily traffic volume for Cty Rd AA west of STH 22 in 2002 was 260 vehicles. Providing access to attractions such as schools, parks and airports is one set of criteria used in assigning major and minor collectors. (County Roads GG & TT have not been deemed major collectors by the Portage County Highway Department due primarily to ADT counts being too low for this classification.)

5. Minor Collectors

County Road AA, south of Cty Rd D, and Cty Rd GG, east of CR A, are considered minor collectors. ADT data available from 2002 for Cty Rd AA shows 210 vehicles.

6. Rural Local Roads

The remaining roadways are classified as rural local roads. Their primary function is land access.

B. Transit and Transportation Facilities for the Disabled and Elderly

The Portage County Department on Aging provides transportation services for transit-dependent adults and people with disabilities to the Belmont area through a volunteer escort service. Volunteer drivers may also be requested for those persons going to medical appointments or those otherwise not able to use the busing service. Persons requiring such services must call to make a reservation and are picked up and dropped off at their home. There is no set fee for this service, however, passengers are asked to make a donation.

C. Bicycle/Walking Routes and Trails

The Ice Age Hiking Trail is an all-season recreational trail, running throughout the entire state of Wisconsin, made to accommodate hikers, cross-country skiers, backpackers and all other people who enjoy the outdoors. When completed, it will total approximately 1,000 miles in length. The trail, some of which passes through private lands, is for non-motorized traffic only.

The Ice Age Trail through the Town of Belmont is one of two completed segments in Portage County (the other being in the Town of New Hope). The Belmont segment starts on 2nd Avenue and meanders through the Emmons Creek State Fishery toward Hartman Creek State Park in Waupaca County.

The Ice Age Bike Trail route has a north-south orientation in the western part of the Town. The route follows Cty Rd AA to Cty Rd D, and then continues along Cty Rd A to Cty Rd GG (Map 3.1).

D. Railroads

There is no rail service within the Town of Belmont.

E. Air Transportation

The two main airports that serve the Town of Belmont are the Central Wisconsin Airport and the Stevens Point Municipal Airport.

The Central Wisconsin Airport, located approximately 40 miles north of Belmont on Interstate Highway 39 in Mosinee, WI, is a full service, all weather airport offering around-the-clock service. Several airlines offer regular commuter and passenger service with connections anywhere in the world. Air cargo service is also available. These airlines offer overnight delivery and connections throughout the world.

Map 3.1   Transportation Networks and Functional Class

Map 3.2   Highway Construction and Maintenance Plan

The Stevens Point Municipal Airport is located at the intersection of I-39 and STH 66 in Stevens Point and has two runways, one of which is 6,000 feet long. There are 37 private hangers at the airport. No passenger or freight service is available. Jet fuel and repair services are available for private aircraft.

F. Trucking

Semi traffic in the Town generally consists of traffic related to agriculture, logging, and normal delivery services for area businesses. There are no designated truck routes; the Portage County Highway Department, however, posts weight limits on County Roads in spring to mitigate potential damage from the thawing frost layer in the soil.

Agricultural traffic, specifically during harvest and planting seasons, is especially heavy within the Town. The equipment used in the potato industry is very large and presents unique hazards on roadways when present. In many cases, traffic must use the shoulder of the road to get around field equipment that is using the roadway. This equipment can also damage road surfaces due to the extreme weight.

Section 3.3   Inventory of Applicable Transportation Plans and Programs

A. Short Term Highway Improvement Plans

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation produces a six-year Highway Improvement Program Plan that is updated every two years. According to the DOT Highway Improvement Program Plan produced for the period 2003-2008, there was only one section of road within Belmont identified for improvement: Cty Rd A (between Cty Rd D and 3rd Avenue) was scheduled for reconditioning in 2003 as a County project.

The Portage County Highway Department also prepares short term Construction and Maintenance Plans for County Roads. These plans are updated on an annual basis, as compared to the DOT's bi-annual revision. A number of County Roads within the Town have been identified for maintenance ranging from crack-filling to reconstruction in the Highway Department's 2005-2009 Maintenance Plan (Map 3.2). The Town should continue to monitor both the State and County documents for the most up-to-date road maintenance proposals.

B. State Railroad Plans

The Wisconsin State Rail Plan 2020 (now incorporated into the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's *Connections 2030 Plan*) does not apply as Belmont has no rail facilities.

C. Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2020

The State Airport Plan determines the number, location, and type of aviation facilities required to adequately serve the state's aviation needs through 2020. The plan also forecasts the level of public investment required to: upgrade substandard features such as widening of existing runways, replace existing systems to meet Federal and State standards, and enhance the airport system through runway extension and new construction. The classifications for Central Wisconsin Airport (Air carrier/Air Cargo) and Stevens Point Municipal Airport (Transit/Corporate) are not projected to change through 2020.

D. Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020

Overall plan goals are: to increase the level of bicycling in Wisconsin and to reduce the number of crashes involving bicycle and motor vehicles.

Section 3.4   Transportation Related Programs

The Town of Belmont uses the PASER (Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating) road condition rating system to assess the physical condition of local roads. The PASER software can help prioritize road maintenance, calculate project costs, evaluate consequences of alternative budgets and project selection strategies.

Section 3.5   Transportation Issues

- How can the Town safely accommodate parking near access points of the Ice Age Trail?
- Heavy equipment on roads (construction, garbage trucks, logging, semis)
  - How are weight restrictions / capacities determined?
  - Signs in spring
  - Should they build specific roads to meet designated loads?
- ID existing DOT road plans
  - Current policy- fix to need
- What impact will businesses that require truck traffic have on local roads?
- Commuter traffic - How can speed limits on County Roads be better enforced?
- How can conflict between farm/non-farm vehicles, even though it is limited, be addressed?
- To what extent should shoulders be better maintained for bike traffic?
  - Bike traffic fairly light in Belmont
- What entity (someone/company) is liable for damage caused to roads from various activities? (i.e. putting in new road)

Section 3.6   Transportation Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal 1: Priority is given to maintaining and enhancing existing infrastructure before adding new.

Objective 1.1: Roads are maintained to the best possible extent.

Policies:

1.1(a): Continue to use the PASER program to help ensure that local roads are properly maintained.

1.1(b): Local road standards will comply with the Town of Belmont Road Ordinance.

1.1(c): Work with Portage County Highway Department to increase focus on maintenance of County Roads within the Town.

Goal 2: A local road system provides efficient traffic flow and safely accommodates different types of vehicles.

Objectives:

2.1: Identify primary heavy traffic corridors.

2.2: Designate truck routes in the Town.

2.3: Adhere to state, county, and local road plans.

2.4: Work with County Sheriff's Department to monitor and enforce speed limits on County Roads within the Town.

Policies:

2.1(a): Future road locations, extensions or connections should be considered when reviewing development plans.

2.1(b): Post signs within the Town to raise awareness of the presence of agricultural traffic.

2.1(c): Use the Town newsletter to raise awareness of transportation safety issues.

2.3(a): Town road ordinances shall guide the construction or reconstruction of roads for new development. Developers are to be responsible for the cost of any new roads or the improvement of existing local roads associated with new development.

Goal 3: Encourage safe, human-powered transportation options.

Objectives:

3.1: Improve the safety of access points for the Ice Age Trail.

3.2: Educate the public about human-powered transportation options in the Town.

Policies:

3.1(a): Work with bike clubs to identify safe bike routes.

3.2(a): Work with adjacent units of government to ensure safety along designated bike routes.