

CHAPTER 3 Transportation Element

66.1001(2)(c) Wis. Stat.:

Transportation element. A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development of the various modes of transportation, including highways, transit, transportation systems for persons with disabilities, bicycles, electric personal assistive mobility devices, walking, railroads, air transportation, trucking and water transportation. The element shall compare the local governmental unit's objectives, policies, goals and programs to state and regional transportation plans. The element shall also identify highways within the local governmental unit by function and incorporate state, regional and other applicable transportation plans, including transportation corridor plans, county highway functional and jurisdictional studies, urban area and rural area transportation plans, airport master plans and rail plans that apply in the local governmental unit.

Section 3.1 Transportation Inventory

The transportation network is a vital component of both the urban core and overall Portage County development. Efficient and economic growth depends on a transportation system capable of moving people, goods and services to, from and within Portage County. Different types and intensities of development impose varied demands on streets and highways. New transportation facilities can also significantly affect the development potential of adjacent land. The coordination of land use and transportation improvements will result in a more attractive community functioning with greater efficiency, at less expense.

Transportation uses, including road and rail right-of-way, occupy 15,629 acres, or 3% of total unincorporated land use. Streets and highways account for 14,812 acres, 95% of the total.

Portage County is well connected to the region through the existing roadway network and other facilities of freight rail, and bike and pedestrian trails.

A. Streets and Highways

Portage County is served by Interstate 39, US Highway 10 and seven State Highways (66, 54, 34, 22, 49, 73 and 161), all of which link Portage County to the surrounding region. These regional links are vital to the economy, tourism, and recreation of the area. As of October 2005 Portage County contained approximately 1,919 miles of public roadway of which 1,642 miles were contained in the rural area and approximately 276 miles were contained in the Urban Area. Table 3.1 details the distribution of roadway miles.

Table 3.1: Portage County Roadway Miles, By Type

	Local Street	County Road	State Trunk Highway	U.S. Highway	Interstate Highway	Municipal Total
Rural Area Totals	1,076.2	430.8	76.7	32.1	26.7	1,642.5
Urban Area Totals	237.8	9.2	5.3	17.6	6.5	276.4
Portage County Totals	1,314	440	82	49.7	33.2	1,918.9

Source: Portage County Planning & Zoning Department Geographic Information System, October 2005

Interstate 39 serves as the main north-south route through the center of Portage County, connecting the area to Madison and the Northwoods. USH 10 runs east and west connecting Portage County to Appleton and Marshfield and beyond. State Trunk Highway 54 connects Portage County to Wisconsin Rapids and Waupaca, while STH 66 provides direct access for the northeast portion of the County into Stevens Point (See Map 3.1)

The County's rural areas are served by a 430.8 mile network of County Roads and 1,076.2 miles of local roads. These local roads and County Highways serve rural land uses and bring local traffic to the County's arterial system.

1. Functional Classification

The Portage County street and highway system is designed and maintained so that each facility performs a function relative to the overall transportation network. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) utilizes a "functional classification" system which 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 at higher volumes between destination points, while "local streets" provide a land access function (Town roads that lead to homes, farms etc.). "Collectors" serve both local and through traffic by providing a connection between arterials and local streets. WisDOT's functional classification of Portage County roads, along with average daily traffic volumes (ADT) for roads of local significance, are illustrated in Map 3.1.

B. Bridges

Portage County contains 84 state-maintained bridges, located either along Interstate 39 or US and State Highways. The County also has 31 County maintained bridges and 33 local government (Town, Village and City) maintained bridges. See municipal Comprehensive Plans for more details.

C. Trucking

Portage County has many different kinds of trucking operations, from agricultural trucking (transportation of vegetables, and potatoes), timber production, and non metallic mining operations to general transportation of goods and services across the County and region. Portage County does not have any identified trucking routes. The Portage County Highway Department posts weight limits on some County roads in spring to mitigate potential damage from the thawing frost layer in the soil. In addition to these postings, local municipalities can designate local truck routes through their jurisdiction. See local municipal Comprehensive Plans for more detail.

D. Rail Transportation

Canadian National Railroad (CN) serves Portage County. CN operates 19,560 miles of track, across North America, including approximately 68 miles of main line track through Portage County, which is a vital link for traffic coming out of Canada through the Chicago gateway and beyond. Current rail activity through Portage County is 16 to 20 trains per day on the main line; this number of trains is anticipated to grow at the same rate as the U.S. economy.

Map 3.1 Portage County Functional Classification and ADT numbers 2002

Map 3.2: USH 10 By-pass Alternatives and West Side USH 10 Improvements

E. Air Transportation

1. Stevens Point Municipal Airport

Stevens Point Municipal Airport has two paved runways. The primary runway (03/21) is 6,028 feet long by 120 feet wide. Lighting aids on this runway include a Medium Intensity Approach Lighting System (MALS), High Intensity Runway Lights (HIRLs), and Runway End Identifier Lights (REILs). The secondary runway (12/30) is 3,642 feet long and 75 feet wide. Lighting aids on this runway include HIRLs. Owned and operated by the City of Stevens Point, the airport is classified as a Transport Corporate Airport in the *Wisconsin State Airport System Plan: 2020 (SASP)*.

In 2003 the airport recorded 36,750 aircraft operations and was home for 45 based aircraft, including 4 jets, 40 single-engine, and 1 multi-engine propeller airplane. Travel Guard, Med Topics Unlimited, Sentry Insurance, Pegasus Aviation, Freight Runners, and the Rettler Corporation all operate business aircraft from Stevens Point Municipal Airport. UPS operates flights on a daily basis that provide essential cargo services to the local and regional community. St. Michael's Hospital uses the airport on average of once a week to transport administration to and from Milwaukee. The airport has one Fixed Base Operator (FBO), Sentry Aviation Services Inc., four industrial and corporate flight departments based on the airport, in addition to 22 T, 12 individual and four larger corporate hangars.

Instrument approaches to the airport include VHF omni-directional radio range (VOR) and Global Positioning System (GPS) approaches to runways 03, 30 and 31. In 2004, the city was notified that the airport will receive a \$1,500,000 grant from the FAA for an instrument landing system (ILS) to be installed in 2005. As a result of this improvement, the airport will be accessible to aircraft in low visibility conditions. The impact is anticipated to increase the use of the airport as well as improve the attractiveness of the Stevens Point area to businesses utilizing airport facilities. The grant is expected to free up some of the airport entitlement funds for other improvements to the airport which in turn will make the facility even more attractive to business.

The Stevens Point Municipal Airport has recently updated the "airport improvement plan". The plan includes: the new ILS, taxiways, terminal improvements/addition, additional hangars, additional aeronautical related enterprise facilities, aeronautic industrial sites, a group hangar, security fencing and an aircraft maintenance facility.

Significant portions of these improvements would be eligible for funding under the airport entitlement funds. However, the local share must still be funded in order to build them. While the plan is not a commitment, it is an indication of the vision the community holds for the airport and is a reflection of the importance of the airport on the economy of the area.

2. The Central Wisconsin Airport

The Central Wisconsin Airport CWA (C-Way), located 15 miles north of Stevens Point adjacent to I-39 in Mosinee, is a joint venture of Marathon and Portage Counties. The Airport was constructed during the mid 1960's to provide a regional facility to ensure continued quality air service for North Central Wisconsin. The facility opened for operation in October of 1969. The terminal has been modernized and the highway access has been reconstructed and made more convenient.

The Airport has two runways that are grooved concrete, precision instrument landing procedures to both runways for all weather operations, an air traffic control tower and all the

other amenities of a twenty-first century airport. Three airlines provide 21 flights per day which connect through Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit and Milwaukee. There are also nine air freight and express flights daily. Since 1982, more than \$40,000,000 has been spent to keep the airport ready to serve the business and private air travel needs of the region.

F. Transit

1. Urban Area Transit

The City of Stevens Point provides two types of transportation service to the City of Stevens Point and the communities of Whiting and Park Ridge. A fixed-route bus service is available to all residents in set service areas. A specialized door-to-door Para-transit service is available to individuals who qualify for the service under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. These services are available only within these three communities.

2. Rural Area Transit

The Portage County Department on Aging provides transportation services for transit-dependent adults and people with disabilities within Portage County through a busing and volunteer escort service. Bus rides are provided to meal sites, grocery shopping, senior center services, essential personal business, and adult day care. Buses will bring residents into Stevens Point to the Lincoln Senior Center or other destinations on Tuesdays and Thursdays. 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.

G. Hiking/Biking Trails

Portage County is home to a number of hiking and biking trails.

1. The Ice Age Trail, which is part of a National Trail System, is an all-season recreational trail running throughout the entire state of Wisconsin. It is intended 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 designated 7 miles of the Ice Age Trail bike route, separate from the Ice Age Trail hiking route, starts in the southern portion of the Town of Stockton and follows Custer Road north, east on Standing Rocks Road, north on County K and meets up with the Tomorrow River State Trail and follows it to the east (Map 4.7 of the following Chapter).

2. The Tomorrow River State Trail - The Tomorrow River State Trail follows an abandoned rail line from the Village of Plover in Portage County to the Village of Scandinavia in Waupaca County (14 miles). The trail is surfaced with crushed limestone and is open to bicyclists, joggers, and hikers in the spring, summer, and fall, and to skiers, snowmobilers, and dog sledgers in the winter. A separate trail for horseback riders is located adjacent to the limestone bike path from the Village of Plover to the Village of Amherst Junction. Parking and access to the trail is available in the Village of Amherst Junction and at Cate Park, approximately one half mile north of the Village of Amherst. A paved shoulder has been installed along Pond Street, from Mill Street north to the Cate Park trail head, to provide safer pedestrian and bike access to the Tomorrow River State Trail from the Village of Amherst.

3. Standing Rock Park – Standing Rock Park provides approximately 15km (10 miles) of mountain biking trails. Mountain bike trails are open daily from May 1 to October 31.
4. Green Circle Trail - The Green Circle Trail is a collection of 14 continuous segments that wind through forests, river and lake shores, and other natural areas located in all four of the incorporated Urban Area communities, making up a unique trail that is over 30 miles in length. The completion of this trail was made possible through a cooperative effort of private, public and business interests that include donated easements on 25 private parcels of land. The trail is for non-motorized traffic only; however, some sections of the bike route are included on existing roadways.
5. Other Hiking areas in Portage County
 - Mead Wildlife Area
 - Emmons Fishery Area
 - Dewey Marsh
 - Hartman State Creek

See the Portage County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plan for more information on hiking and biking trails in Portage County.

H. Water Transportation

Public access to waterways is available throughout Portage County, including the Wisconsin River, Plover River, Little Plover River, Tomorrow River, and various County lakes and streams.

Section 3.2 Inventory and Analysis of Applicable Transportation Plans and Programs

A. Six-Year Highway Improvement Plan

The WisDOT’s Corridor 2020 Plan identified USH 10 as a “Backbone route” from Hwy 41, near Appleton, west to I-39 and a “multi-lane connector” from I-39 west to Marshfield.

The proposed Stevens Point east bypass for USH 10, originally planned to be finished within this 20-year planning period, had been put on hold due to lack of available funding at the State DOT level. Funding will need to be obtained throughout the Transportation Projects Commission (TPC) process while competing with other projects throughout the state. The bypass project is now scheduled to proceed beyond the planning period for this document. In the interim, the DOT will use approximately \$20 million of previously authorized funding to upgrade the existing 2-lane route between County Road J interchange and Amherst Junction to a 4-lane divided expressway. Road intersections will be at-grade, and turning lanes provided at most intersections. Some existing driveways will be closed, with alternative access to USH 10 being provided to those locations.

In the spring of 2004, WisDOT finalized the location for the four-lane divided Highway 10 route west of Interstate 39/51 to the City of Marshfield (see Map 3.2). The new western route will start just north of the current County Road X interchange on Interstate 39/51. It will travel directly west from there, and will be positioned along North Limits Road through the Village of Junction City. The stretch of USH 10 between Interstate 39/51 and River Road is scheduled to be constructed in 2007; from River Road to Highway 34 North is scheduled for 2008. The section of four-lane highway that includes the Village of Junction City is located between Highway 34 North and Trestik Road. This will be constructed in 2009, with the exception of the portion of USH 10 at Highway 34 South, which will be constructed in 2010. There will be on/off ramps at Highway 34 North and South, providing full access to the Village. Improvements between Stevens Point and Marshfield are slated for completion by 2020.

B. Stevens Point Urban Area Transportation Plan

The purpose of the Stevens Point Urban Area Transportation Plan (currently in progress) is to identify portions of the roadway network within the Urban Area that are likely to need upgrading over the next 20 years. Preliminary computer traffic modeling projecting 2030 traffic volumes is not yet available at this writing. Based on the results of this modeling, Urban Area communities will identify possible over-capacity links within the road network, and prioritize the maintenance and construction projects that will prevent or alleviate these traffic volume issues.

C. Bicycle / Pedestrian Plan

The 1997 Plover and Stevens Point Bicycle / Pedestrian Plan outlined recommendations to improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities within the Urban Area. The plan recommends that sidewalks be placed on both sides of the street in commercial areas, along arterial roadways, and within a five-block radius of any school. Bicycle facility improvements such as “Bike Lanes”, “Paved Shoulders”, and “Route Signs” were also identified for specific roadways throughout the Urban Area to improve mobility and connectivity. Refer to the 1997 Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan for detailed information.

D. State, Regional and Local Highway Improvement Plans

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has begun to prepare its long-range transportation plan through the year 2030. Connections 2030 will set forth a broad vision as well as strategies and policies for all the state’s transportation modes: highways, rail, air, water, pedestrian, bicycle, transit and local roads.

Connections 2030 will build on the existing modal plans:

1. Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020

The Central focus of this plan is on the State Trunk Highway System. The SHP 2020 does not identify specific projects, but broad strategies and policies to improve the state highway system over the next 21 years. Given its focus, the plan does not identify improvement needs on roads under local jurisdictions.

2. Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2020

The 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 (Transport/Corporate) are not projected to change through 2020.

3. State Railroad Plans 2020

The final SRP 2020 will be used to communicate the condition of Wisconsin's rail system, the rationale for proposing certain improvements, and the financial needs and system-wide implications of proposed funding levels.

The State Rail Plan will comprise six major components: Intercity passenger rail, Freight rail, Highway-rail crossings, Funding, Economic benefits, Environmental evaluation.

Work to be done under the passenger rail component will be coordinated with the efforts of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, the Wisconsin-Minnesota High Speed Rail Corridor Study, and the Milwaukee-Madison Corridor Study. In addition, the findings of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Passenger Rail Service will be incorporated in the State Rail Plan.

The freight rail component of the plan will have a policy focus, reflecting the recognition that the majority of Wisconsin's railroad system is owned and maintained by the private sector. The highway-rail crossing element will refine and/or build upon the statewide assessment of highway-rail crossing needs initially developed by the State Highway Plan. The State Rail Plan was scheduled for completion in 2003, but is still being finalized. (Wisconsin DOT)

4. 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 bicycles and motor vehicles.

5. Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020

Goals of the plan: 1) Increase the number and improve the quality of walking trips in Wisconsin; 2) Reduce the number of pedestrian crashes and fatalities; 3) Increase the availability of pedestrian planning and design guidance and other general information for state, local officials and citizens.

Section 3.3 Portage County Vision Statement and Guiding Principles for Transportation

A. Rural Area Vision Statement Related to Transportation *(adopted 6-26-02 by the RA Steering Committee)*

In 2025, residents of Portage County enjoy a well planned and maintained transportation system which offers a variety of ways to get from place to place. An excellent public transit system provides the general public, students, senior citizens, and the transportation disadvantaged with travel options. An extensive network of bicycle and walking trails provides access from urban neighborhoods and the rural countryside to schools, parks, and businesses. These measures, along with well-maintained roads, have greatly reduced automobile trips. They also provide freedom of movement, healthier lifestyles, and a realistic alternative to the automobile.

Key Vision Ideas for Transportation:

- Public transportation is available in some form countywide, and its use is encouraged as a way to reduce auto trips. Senior citizens and the transportation disadvantaged are a special emphasis for this service.
- Bicycle transportation planning has achieved a greater level of emphasis within the County, facilitating bicycle community as well as access to schools, parks and businesses.
- Sidewalks or pedestrian paths/trails are found across the County where access to commercial, residential and recreational areas is needed.
- Our road network is well maintained and safe. Emphasis is placed on use or expansion of existing road facilities before considering construction of new roads. The public is highly involved in the decision making process for locating new roads. Commercial development along new highways in rural areas is planned where appropriate.

- Abandoned railroad right-of-way is maintained for transportation services, either as bike or hiking trails or future rail.

Section 3.4 County-Wide Transportation Issues and Conclusions

The following transportation issues were derived with input from the local planning processes:

1. To what extent should bike and pedestrian paths and trails be provided?
 - *A committee should be formed to identify and selectively look at County Roads and local roads when they are being upgraded or adding new, and if it is appropriate to include or enhance bike facilities and pedestrian trails. This is particularly important for Old Hwy 18, which is a major route for bicyclists to the east of Stevens Point.*
 - *A joint effort between Portage County Departments, local municipalities, and private establishments is needed to provide these facilities.*
2. What is the need for rural public transportation services?
 - *A study should be conducted to identify and define the needs for rural public transportation, and recommend actions necessary to meet the needs. This needs assessment should be periodically updated.*
3. How can damage to roads associated with any use that is non-standard (heavy truck traffic, heavy farm equipment, snowmobiles etc.) be reduced?
 - *This has been identified as a local issue but it could be a County issue if municipalities would require or want the County to facilitate the requirement of bonds through the Board of Adjustment. The County could monitor and ensure that the Towns are getting paid. There would be assistance from the County in obtaining a financial guarantee through the approval process.*
4. The need to update the Functional Classification Designations of roads.
 - *The Planning and Zoning Department will work with the Highway Department to draft an update of this plan for County Board adoption.*
5. How can speed limit enforcement be enhanced?
 - *It is felt that the law enforcement through out the County is good, but with more and more people moving out to the rural areas of Portage County there is a need for better enforcement of speed limits.*
6. Is there a need for County-wide sign/billboard ordinance?
 - *A separate committee should be set up to review the current County-level regulations, and what was done recently in the Amherst area. Discussions should include what the residents of the County would like to see.*
7. Should consideration be given in the design of roadways to minimize impacts on waterways?
 - *Consideration should be given in the design of roadways to minimizing impact on waterways.*

8. Should consideration be given in the design of roadways to minimize impacts on agriculture?
- *Consideration should be given in the design of roadways, especially in consideration of new highways, to minimizing impacts on agriculture.*

Section 3.5 Guiding Principle and Preliminary Goals for Transportation

A. Guiding Principle for Transportation

Develop an area-wide transportation planning and funding approach that maximizes efficiency and minimizes conflicts between modes as well as jurisdictions.

B. Preliminary Goals: *(adopted 10-23-02 by the Rural Areas Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee)*

- Develop an area-wide transportation planning approach
- Priority is given to maintaining and enhancing existing infrastructure before adding new.
- Utilize and update existing transportation related plans.
- Develop a viable public transportation network.
- Encourage and accommodate human-powered transportation options.
- Decisions regarding transportation should be consistent with other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Transportation options are available for persons with disabilities.