# VII.

# Transportation System Improvement Recommendations

## *Street and Highway System*

The growth forecasts for the Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) are closely correlated to the transportation system improvements currently programmed or planned for the urban area. The projected expansion of urban area development to the 2030 planning area boundary also requires some increase in the capacity of the urban street and highway system to accommodate increased traffic volumes. The urban arterial and collector road network has expanded significantly since 2005 with the completion of USH 53 and STH 29 projects. Roadway capacity expansions are identified for only a small group of projects without the significant magnitude of those in the 5 years. Projects for new construction on new alignment include only two projects: Chippewa Crossing Boulevard and Gateway Drive extension.

All significant projects should be developed with community sensitive design, providing aesthetics that enhance the character of the project and represent a desired community image. A CSD process often involves the community in the identification of the corridor's opportunities, constraints, and features and develops the project based on the community's historic, social, natural resource, cultural, economic, visual qualities.

Consideration should also be given to the "complete streets" concept. Complete Streets are safe, comfortable and convenient for travel via automobile, foot, bicycle, and transit. Accommodations to reach a comfort level for all modes can vary depending primarily upon the traffic volume and speed of the facility. For instance, a lower volume minor arterial with may be comfortable for on-street bicycle lanes and sidewalks, but a high volume major arterial would better accommodate bicycles and pedestrians with a multi-use trail. Often right-of-way is a limiting factor, and efforts will be needed to eliminate conflicts between design standards published in the State's Facility Design Manual (FDM) and the intent of the Complete Streets concept.

The collective impact of the COMMITTED and PLANNED roadway improvement projects on reducing future traffic congestion and improving roadway safety within the planning area provides substantial support for the following street and highway system improvement recommendations:

A. The identified COMMITTED projects, programmed to be implemented through the year 2015, should continue to be developed and completed within the programmed time frame. They are illustrated on Map 31 and include the following:

1. The reconstruction of the STH 29/124 interchange to an at-grade two-lane roundabout.
2. The reconstruction of Park Avenue addressing capacity needs from Jeffers Street to Peterson Lane.
3. The reconstruction of Birch Street to four lanes from Starr Avenue to Pine Street.
4. The reconstruction of STH 37/85 to addressing capacity needs from the eastbound on-ramp of I-94 to the intersection of STH 37 and 85.
5. The reconstruction of USH 12 addressing capacity needs from Winchester Way to Shultz Road.
6. Intersection improvements along USH 12 from Vine Street to the North Crossing.
7. Address deficiency of Spring Street bridge over Duncan Creek.
8. The reconstruction of CTH "X" to address capacity needs from STH 29 to CTH K.
9. The construction of Chippewa Crossing Boulevard from E. South Avenue to old STH 29.

B. The PLANNED projects, identified for implementation within the 2030 planning time frame, should receive priority for implementation as funding becomes available for them. The PLANNED projects will further improve traffic flow and safety, and add over 35 new lane miles of additional capacity to the urban road system. They are depicted on Map 33 and include the following:

1. The reconstruction of CTH "AA" to address capacity needs from Gateway Drive to House Road.
2. Reconstruct and address capacity needs on USH 12 from Winchester Way to Elco Road
3. The reconstruction of CTH "T" to address capacity needs from Alpine Road to old STH 29.
4. The construction of a new diamond interchange at USH 53 and Bridgewater Avenue.
5. The reconstruction of CTH "S" to address capacity needs from the USH 53 interchange to STH 178.
6. The construction of Gateway Drive from Hamilton Avenue to 3rd Street East.

C. The remaining deficient street and highway segments that have not been addressed by either programmed or planned improvement projects should continue to be monitored and evaluated for the application of appropriate corrective measures to mitigate the capacity problems identified. Improvements for the identified segments may include actions ranging from

on-street parking restrictions to access controls to capacity expansions. The remaining deficient roadway segment that warrant further consideration for improvement are depicted on Map 34 and include the following:

1. Washington/Harding Streets from Farwell Street to Margaret Street. This deficiency is difficult to address due to natural constraints of the terrain. Harding Street, known as "Harding Hill" in this segment, is a steep slope and is also carved into the side of a steep embankment, with retaining walls on north side and a drop off to a dense, older residential neighborhood on the south side.
2. STH 93 from Interstate 94 to CTH II. This stretch of STH 93 show up as deficient due to projected development to the south along the STH 93 corridor and the resulting volumes access the interstate highway and those proceeding through into the City of Eau Claire. This are may require more specific study to determine the validity of the model's output and determine actual need and ability to address the issue, if deemed necessary.

All other deficiencies shown on Map 34 are very minor, mostly intersection related segments that would require very specific determination of deficiency and consideration of geometric or other solutions if improvements are deemed necessary. They are not the sort of corridor capacity issues that are best determined by the regional level traffic model, but could be determined to benefit from some of the management treatments shown below.

D. Transportation System Management actions to improve vehicle flow can be applied at selected locations to increase the safety and efficiency of the road system. These actions should be evaluated for their impact and applied where they are determined to improve traffic conditions at specific locations.

**Traffic signals** can be installed at intersections where heavy volumes of traffic exist in two conflicting directions or where there exists little or no gap between vehicles on a major roadway and vehicles cannot enter the major roadway. Although installation of a traffic signal at an appropriate location may decrease the capacity of a major arterial which has no stop at that intersection, it should increase the capacity of the intersecting street, and by reducing conflicts, increase the safety and efficiency of the entire network.

**Roundabouts** are an increasingly acceptable form of traffic management at intersections. They incorporate safety features, while accommodating the continuous movement of traffic. Roundabouts move traffic safely and efficiently through an intersection because of lower speeds, fewer conflict points, and easier decision making for drivers.

**Conversion to one-way streets** generally decreases the number of vehicular conflicts at intersections because there are no turning movements from the opposite lane. The capacity of one-way streets also is substantially greater than two-way streets. Use of one-way streets can increase street capacity in congested areas and improve network efficiency. However, total

vehicle miles may also be increased because motorists must sometimes travel out of their way to reach their destinations.

**Removal of on-street parking** greatly increases the capacity of a street, thus improving traffic flow and improving safety in congested areas. However, unless adequate alternative parking or suitable transit service is available, removal of on-street parking may cause adverse reactions from affected local businesses and residents.

Varying the price and time limits of parking is also an important method of controlling traffic. For example, by increasing price and time limits for parking in a particular area, traffic may be reduced.

**Traffic channelization** involves using islands, pavement markings or other means to direct traffic onto specific paths on roadways. This technique increases roadway capacity and, at intersections, can be used to reduce turning conflicts. When used in combination with signalized turning arrows, traffic channelization is especially effective in facilitating turning movements and improving traffic flow.

**Turn restrictions** are a valuable method of improving traffic flow where turning movements impede through traffic and space limitations make individual turning lanes unfeasible. Left turn restrictions are most effective when there are a larger number of left turns at an intersection or when through traffic is so heavy the left turns become hazardous or impede progress in the intersection. Right turn restrictions are often used to reduce vehicle/pedestrian conflicts.

**Street reconstruction**, where narrow intersections or street segments constrict traffic flow, may be the only way to increase its capacity. Cost of reconstruction, however, generally exceeds what is considered a "low cost" improvement.

E. Transportation Demand Management actions to reduce peak period vehicular travel can be implemented, where feasible, to assist in reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality.

**Rearranging employee work hours** and student school hours so that they do not coincide with peak period traffic reduces traffic congestion in mornings and evenings and distributes it more evenly throughout the day. Work/school rescheduling is especially useful where large traffic generators are concentrated in a relatively small area. Flexible scheduling, however, often meets with employee resistance and may inhibit carpooling.

**Ridesharing** usually takes the form of carpooling, where participants take turns using their own vehicles and/or pay the driver; and vanpooling, where

the van is owned by an organization such as the employer and riders pay for the ride. Ridesharing is most effective when people travel from nearly the same origin to nearly the same destination.

Ridesharing reduces the number of vehicle miles traveled without greatly reducing mobility. With fewer vehicles on the highway system, traffic flow and parking demand are reduced. Fewer vehicle miles driven also means less energy consumption and air pollution.

Communities can promote ridesharing by urging automobile drivers to carpool, informing employers of ways to encourage employees to carpool and initiating a matching service for individuals wishing to carpool.

Development and upgrading of **bicycle and pedestrian facilities** encourages increased use of these modes and decreases the number of motor vehicles on the road system. On-street and off-street bikeways can be signed or constructed, bicycle parking facilities can be installed near major trip generators, promotional campaigns stressing bicycling or walking as an alternative can be initiated, and pedestrian facilities such as walk lights, overpasses/underpasses, malls and skywalks can be constructed where pedestrian traffic is heavy.

**Auto restricted zones** discourage vehicles from traveling through specified zones, primarily in the central business district, and decreases congestion in the area by routing traffic around the congested area. If these zones are reconstructed with a pleasing appearance and pedestrian amenities, they can encourage pedestrian travel and improve the quality of the environment in the area. Often, however, the capacity of the surrounding roadway is insufficient to handle additional traffic and major reconstruction projects are necessary.

## *Public Transit System*

The Eau Claire Transit (ECT) System *Transit Development Plan and Long Range Plan Element*, completed in 2003, and to be updated in 2011, developed recommendations to guide both the near-term and long-range operation of the transit system. That plan and its findings and recommendations are incorporated by reference as part of this broader long-range transportation plan for the MPA. The following summary will briefly describe the service goals and improvement recommendations identified for the Eau Claire Transit System.

The Eau Claire Transit System Plan identified four service goals with supporting objectives and performance standards to guide both the development and implementation of the plan. These goals direct the transit system to:

1. Provide safe, effective mobility options throughout the community.
2. Provide cost-efficient and effective transit service to the community.

3. Maintain a strong ridership base and look for opportunities to increase ridership.
4. Increase participation in and influence on planning decisions in Eau Claire.

Given this direction, the plan was developed to address short-term, mid-term and long-term service changes. The short-term plan recommended several changes in routing, night time and weekend service, a transition from a flag stop system to designated bus stops, an increase in marketing efforts, establish bus shelter standards, and increased participation and influence in the City's planning and development decisions that impact transit service delivery. These short-term recommendations addressed operational changes that required immediate attention to reduce the fiscal burden of the system, and are fairly easily implemented.

The mid-term service plan continued to support the need for ECT to participate in the City's planning and development process, pursue initiatives to reduce paratransit costs, implement fare increases, evaluate the potential to provide a higher level of service to the City of Altoona, complete the capital improvements for a relocated downtown transit center, and consider the potential for providing service on Sunday. These mid-term recommendations acknowledge the need for further analysis and a longer time period to determine the feasibility of implementation.

The long-term service plan for the ECT recommended the continued participation of the transit system in the long range planning and urban development of the City. It further recommended the evaluation of the potential to expand transit service to the Village of Lake Hallie and City of Chippewa Falls. The long-term service plan also recommended the evaluation of the potential for the construction of a mini transit hub located at the Oakwood Mall.

Additional recommendations that have come through the regional comprehensive planning effort and through general recognition of capital needs, or potential need, by ECT are: (1) the need for a new transfer center, and (2) the possible need for adjustments to make the system work as a feeder system to the proposed passenger rail service in Eau Claire.

The existing transfer center is well past its expected lifespan as "temporary" structure. After approximately 30 years, it is in disrepair and is inadequate to serve the number of buses currently in the system. The prospect of passenger service to the region provides an opportunity for the transit center to be a part of a larger multi-modal transportation center serving passenger rail, bus transit, taxis, intercity buses, airport shuttles, etc. This scenario would also provide for seamless transfers, providing the foundation for the transit system to function as a feeder system to the rail service. Plans that are underway to consider the route

alternatives for passenger rail service will clarify the need for this investment. More should be known on this issue within the next year.

The Chippewa Falls Shared-Ride Taxi (SRT) System faces the same funding predicament as similar subsidized demand-response systems throughout the state. Unlike fixed route transit, where most increases in demand just add passengers to a bus that is already there, demand response systems see cost increase as demand increases. The municipality typically reacts by increasing fares and limiting service to maintain budget constraints. These actions can often negatively impact the productivity of the system and reflect poorly on overall performance. Unfortunately, there are no simple solutions to address the cost-efficiency of providing demand-response public transportation. Limitations in federal and state public transit funding programs shift more of the financial burden for municipal transit systems to local funding sources. A broadened base of local revenue support is needed to address local transit needs. In addition to the standard local sources of municipal funds and user fees, increased marketing efforts could be pursued to increase ridership and to develop public/private partnerships with local employers and retailers who recognize the community value of the transit system and are willing to participate in a cost sharing venture that contributes to community livability.

For all transit services, unstable federal and local support, and resulting fluctuations in local cost share levels, make it difficult to provide a stable and reliable service over time. Local budgets are typically constrained making the maintenance of the current system challenging, much less meeting the increasing demands that are likely in future decades. This all leads to the recommendation for the establishment of an RTA. An RTA would ideally take local transit funding off the cities general budget and provide a more reliable and dedicated source of funding through sales tax revenues in the RTA district. (This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter III.)

## *Specialized Transportation*

The funding and programmatic limitations of specialized transportation services are not unique to the Chippewa-Eau Claire MPA. Special transportation providers statewide are seeking increased funding and efficiencies of service to try to accommodate the unmet needs of special transportation users. Specialized transportation services within the planning area are coordinated through service contracts, cooperative agreements and countywide transportation coordinating committee activities. Improved special transportation services will require increased levels of funding and increased efficiencies through improved cooperation and coordination between special transportation providers. The current federal transportation act, SAFETEA-LU, requires the development of public transit/human services transportation plans to help ensure the coordination and efficient delivery of specialized transportation services.

These plans have been developed by the counties in the west central region, with some reaching out to neighboring counties outside the region, where opportunities exist for coordination. The volunteer services coordinated by the Center for Independent Living of Western Wisconsin (CILWW) has provided a safety net for those persons who fall through the cracks of the other established programs, either due to eligibility issues, or due to the nature or destination of their trip. The CILWW program, funded through the New Freedom Program, is also facilitating regional coordination meetings and, in this arena, intends to continue identifying gaps in services and shortcomings of the specialized transportation system.

One shortcoming repeatedly heard at coordination meetings, particularly in Eau Claire County, is the need to simplify the system for riders, reducing confusion over multiple programs and encouraging mobility, both in the rural and the urban areas. It is recommended that further examination be made into the feasibility of establishing a single point of contact for trip information. The single contact would have a good knowledge of all available programs, and be able to give clear and concise direction to anyone needing a ride in, and well beyond, the urbanized area. Like other models in the State, such as "Making the Ride Happen" in the Appleton area, this one-stop shop concept could evolve into a larger role, as appropriate, potentially becoming a centralized dispatching center for a fully-coordination system of specialized transportation service in the Chippewa Valley and west central Wisconsin.

## *Bicycle Facilities*

The bicycle transportation recommendations for improvements to the proposed bikeway system that would paved shoulders on the rural road network as reconstruction is needed, increase the capacity on 46 miles of urban streets to accommodate a wide curb lane/bike lane, and develop 30 additional miles of new bike paths. Specific recommendations for improved roadway maintenance and the installation of bicycle-safe storm drainage grates and rubberized railroad crossings appear in the City of Eau Claire's Bicycle Plan. Additional recommended improvements to supporting facilities included adding bicycle parking facilities, and developing a bikeway system map.

This plan supports the recommendations of the bicycle plans adopted by the cities of Eau Claire, Altoona, and Chippewa Falls, as well as the connections between the urban systems and to the trail system in the rural areas. These are shown on Map 22.

## *Pedestrian Facilities*

Sidewalk improvements are normally incorporated with street and highway construction/reconstruction projects and as such should be planned for and financed as part of a street project. A more diligent adherence to municipal sidewalk policies is recommended to ensure the uniform installation and maintenance of sidewalks throughout the urban area. Particular attention should be focused on areas of high pedestrian/vehicular traffic to ensure that the appropriate pedestrian safety mechanisms are in place. These may include signed and marked walkways through areas of joint pedestrian/vehicle usage, adequate timing of walk lights and pedestrian signals with a countdown display feature at signalized intersections, and special pedestrian facilities such as bridges, overpasses, and underpasses at select locations where needed to safely facilitate pedestrian crossings.

Improvements to the rural road system to address vehicular safety and travel needs also provide an improved level of safety for joint usage by bicyclists and pedestrians. The same recommendations to widen travel lanes and add paved shoulders to improve road conditions for vehicular travel also improve the facility for use by bicyclists and pedestrians on lower traffic volume roads.

While many pedestrian and bicycle improvements should be an integral part of highway improvement projects, the MPO supports member municipalities in applications for funding to plan for and improve both pedestrian and bicycle safety and to increase pedestrian and bicycle usage in the MPA. As mentioned earlier, the federal Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program has been a good source of funding for planning, infrastructure improvements, education, and enforcement aimed at safe bicycle and pedestrian activity in the vicinity K-8 schools. While the future of SRTS funding is currently unknown, planning for, and improvement of, bicycling and walking facilities in the urbanized area continues to be a driving force in the increase of these activities, with benefits far beyond the transportation system. Improved pedestrian and bicycle connections to create a continuous and seamless pedestrian system, will help create a more walkable, bikeable, and healthy community.

## *Intercity Passenger Transportation*

The impact of a broad range of economic forces has limited the modal options available to residents of the MPA for intercity travel. The convenience and accessibility of the automobile has made it the most heavily preferred choice to accommodate these travel needs. The limited and inconvenient intercity bus service currently available through Greyhound Bus Lines further restricts travel options. Similarly, the limited routing of the regional air passenger carrier places a greater demand on highway travel. The continued growth of automotive travel will place a greater emphasis on the safety and efficiency of the state's highway

system. To keep pace with the growth in highway travel, the state's highway system will require increased efforts to preserve the system and provide the necessary improvements. Improved year-round maintenance activities and preservation treatments, along with added capacity where needed, are recommended for the statewide highway system. Major intercity corridors passing through the planning area that are recommended for improvement include I-94 and USH 53. Other important intercity routes that have identified improvement needs include STH 93, STH 85/37, and USH 12.

In addition to facility improvements to increase highway safety and efficiency, timely travel information would significantly enhance trip planning activities and enable intercity travelers to make more informed travel decisions. This activity also needs to be coordinated on a statewide basis and it is recommended that the state continue to pursue improvements to the development and delivery of timely and relevant travel information to assist the motoring public with intercity travel.

It is strongly recommended that studies and advocacy efforts by state and local agencies and organizations be fully supported with the end result of the Chippewa-Eau Claire MPA becoming a stop on reestablished intercity passenger rail service between Chicago and the Twin Cities, and on any additional services in the busy corridor between Eau Claire and the Twin Cities. Federal funds, garnered under the American Reinvestment and Rehabilitation Act of 2009, are now being used to examine several potential routes to extend 79 mph passenger service. That same funding source is currently assisting with the engineering needs between Milwaukee and Madison with expected service commencing in 2013. This plan supports the ongoing studies and recommends the route along the Union Pacific lines through Eau Claire, and through St. Croix County to the Twin Cities. This line would serve three major state university campuses, several technical college campuses, a rapidly growing region, a large currently unserved passenger market to the north, and would parallel the State’s busiest section of Interstate 94, between Eau Claire and the St. Croix River. This route has garnered strong local support and should continue to be pursued as a viable intercity passenger travel corridor.

In addition to providing higher speed intercity service on the proposed line between Chicago and the Twin Cities, improvements to the track in this corridor would provide a potential a commuter-oriented service into the Twin Cities. Already noted as a high-priority route in the Minnesota State Rail Plan, the Eau Claire-Twin Cities corridor has a high incidence of commuter traffic, and experiences significant peak hour congestion on Interstate 94 and on the bridges crossing the St. Croix River. This plan recommends that study continue and funding be pursued to further this effort.

It is also recommended that the City of Eau Claire consider the likely need for a passenger rail station and the potential for a multi-use facility that would serve as downtown transfer facility for Eau Claire Transit, intercity bus service, as well as

a passenger rail station. A multimodal transit center would best serve the urbanized area population with a downtown location, and could greatly advance the area toward many city and regional goals concerning the development of a higher density, vital and walkable environment in the downtown area.

The Chippewa Valley Regional Airport Authority has continued to pursue improvements to the airport in an effort to attract additional air passenger service. These efforts should be continued to expand upon intercity passenger travel options currently available to prospective air travelers.

## *Access to Air Transportation Facilities*

The only problem affecting highway access to the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport in the past, was alleviated with the completion of the USH 53 bypass and the extension of Melby Street. Congestion and safety problems on USH 53 have justified the need for the major highway improvement. The completion of this project in 2006 eliminated any potential problem with access to the airport resulting from traffic congestion on the old USH 53 alignment. The connecting arterial street system should continue to be maintained as conditions warrant.

Adjoining land use activities can have a significant impact on airport operations. Development activities around the airport should be regulated to maintain the operational effectiveness of the airport.

## *Freight Rail Transportation*

The deficiencies identified for the freight rail system in the planning area revolve around the impacts of at-grade rail/street crossings on the safety and operational efficiency of both transportation systems. The fact that the majority, 73%, of the most recent and most serious car/train collisions occurred on local streets would appear to warrant further investigation into the adequacy of the warning devices installed at these low traffic volume crossings.

In addition to the re-evaluation of the adequacy of railroad crossing warning devices, the preferred elimination of at-grade crossings, where possible, would further contribute to the safety and operational efficiency of both the rail and road systems. Land use planning and development activities play an important role in determining how well the transportation system functions. Development patterns influence transportation system usage and can conflict with the intended purpose of the transportation facility. Land uses that require rail service should be located within close proximity to existing rail lines to avoid costly and disruptive rail line extensions. To preserve the integrity of the existing rail system, and to accommodate potential new passenger rail service, new development should be planned and designed to avoid or minimize the need for additional at-grade street/rail line crossings.

## *Freight Transportation - Truck*

The predominance of trucking in the freight shipping industry is reflected in the freight movement activities in the MPA. The importance of a sound street and highway system is vital to the efficiency of truck freight shipping. The street and highway improvement recommendations developed earlier in this chapter address the primary infrastructure needs of truck freight movement in the planning area. In addition to the recommended internal road improvements, intercity corridor improvements to I-94, USH 53, STH 93, STH 85, STH 37, and USH 12 are essential to maintaining connectivity in the movement of freight throughout the state and country. The intercity infrastructure improvement recommendations apply to both the movement of people and goods.

An additional recommendation to improve freight movement within the planning area would be the designation and signing of truck routes to more efficiently guide truck shipments to destinations within the MPA. Further investigation is also recommended into the feasibility of an inter-modal facility to link truck and rail freight shipments within the planning area.

## *Land Use*

The connection between land use and the transportation system serving the metropolitan planning area is self-evident in the influence each has exerted in contributing to the expansion and development of the other. The development of either one serves as a catalyst for the growth of the other. As a land use, the present transportation infrastructure (roads and rail lines) occupies almost one-fourth of the developed land area within the planning area, second only to residential development. This system will continue to grow, although not at the same rate, as the urban area continues to expand.

The land use and growth management issues identified in Chapter III of this report can also be viewed as a summary deficiency analysis for the negative effects of uncoordinated and uncontrolled development. The six overlapping growth management issues impacting both land use patterns and the transportation system are summarized through the discussions on urban sprawl, the cost-efficiency of providing public services, environmental protection, public safety, social equality, and jurisdictional rivalry.

It is appropriate at this point to reiterate the goals and objectives identified in Chapter VI of this report that address the land use/transportation connection and to recommend adherence to these guidelines for promoting effective land use planning and growth management in concert with an efficient transportation system.

| ***Goal III*** | ***Coordinate the provision of transportation facilities and services with land use development plans and policies.*** |
|---|---|

*Objectives:*

A. Provide a transportation system which encourages growth patterns consistent with regional and local land use policies and plans.

B. Preserve and protect the functional utility of the highway system by coordinating land use with the proper degree of access control.

C. Consider transportation plans in developing and administering zoning and subdivision regulations.

D. Encourage growth in those areas that can be served by existing or planned transportation facilities and discourage development that is not compatible with existing or planned transportation facilities.

E. Promote the development of concentrated commercial, industrial and institutional employment areas that incorporate shared parking areas and appropriate access control.

F. Encourage the continuation of a coordinated and cooperative land use/transportation planning process between municipalities and governmental agencies participating in the MPO.

G. Facilitate the creation and adoption of land use/transportation planning policies which consider ecosystem sustainability and the protection of critical natural resources.

| ***Goal IV*** ***(Transit Plan)*** | ***Increase participation in and influence on land use planning and development decisions in the City of Eau Claire.*** |
|---|---|

*Objectives:*

A. Promote a higher-density development within the urban core of Eau Claire.

B. Ensure that the design of new subdivisions, offices, and commercial centers within ECT's service area will include access for transit vehicles and accessible walkways from potential bus stops.

There are also a number of land use goals and objectives that are included in the West Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan, adopted on September 9, 2010, that are pertinent to this section and to the Metropolitan Planning Area. They are summarized below:

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Goal I:*** ***(Regional Comp Plan, Land Use Element)*** | ***Our land use patterns will reflect: distinct urban centers of sustainable, mixed-use design, efficient and cost-effective infrastructure and services, and multi-modal transportation options; and, rural areas where working lands, natural resources and traditional rural character are preserved.*** |

*Objectives:*

A. Land use practices should maximize economies of services and infrastructure; reduce negative impacts on the environment, economic activity, and society; promote community identity; and employ incentives to achieve desired land use patterns.

B. Organize land use around vital, efficient activity centers with effective multi-modal transportation connections and systems.

C. Promote pedestrian-oriented mixed uses, traditional neighborhood design, and infill development for urban areas.

D. Encourage growth in those areas that can be served by existing or planned transportation facilities and discourage development that is not compatible with existing or planned transportation facilities.

E. Promote the development of concentrated commercial, industrial and institutional employment areas that incorporate shared parking areas and appropriate access control.

F. Encourage the continuation of a coordinated and cooperative land use/transportation planning process between munici-palities and governmental agencies participating in the MPO.

G. Facilitate the creation and adoption of land use/transportation planning policies which consider ecosystem sustainability and the protection of critical natural resources.

The following policy recommendations are also included in the Regional Comprehensive Plan land use element, and are of particular relevance to the relationship between land use and transportation systems in the MPA:

**West Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan**
**Land Use Element**

**Policy Recommendations**

- Transportation systems impact land use, and vice versa. Land use and proposed transportation projects need to be planned concurrently.
- Coordination between different levels of government to enhance urban centers and develop multi-modal transportation potential.
- Optimize multi-modal connectivity within and between communities.
- Evaluate higher urban density potential to promote transportation alternatives, such as light rail and intercity transit.

## *Sustainability and Livability*

There are number of efforts underway at every level of government and engaging much of the private sector to promote and implement concepts and projects to make our communities more livable and environmentally sustainable. One large, multi-departmental (HUD, DOT, and EPA), federal initiative, the Partnership for Sustainable Communities was formed in 2009 with the mission of "…ensure(ing) that housing and transportation goals are met while simultaneously protecting the environment, promoting equitable development, and helping to address the challenges of climate change." As is typically the case in such initiatives, transportation plays a major role in that mission. The implementation of recommendations regarding transportation mode options, such as passenger rail and transit recommendations included in this plan, are generally at the top of the list of principles guiding such programs. The improvement of alternative mode options could be expected to reduce green house gas emissions and reduce energy usage by transferring some auto trips to passenger rail, bus, bicycle, or walking. Other supportive recommendations, such as compact land use and economically healthy and active city centers help to make the alternative modes viable.

While many sustainability and livability programs address the environmental health of our communities and the residents of those communities, much of the popularity of "green" programs lies in the fact that communities have recognized that there are economic benefits to a green community. Livability is a key factor in the location decisions of young professionals, and it is therefore a key factor in attracting companies that will want to hire and retain the best young professionals. A number of transportation-related factors rank high in these important economic decisions, including a walkable and bikeable urban setting. Both, professionals and the companies that hire them are also showing an affinity

for rail options for intercity trips, allowing the employee to be productive during their travel time to out of town meetings.

The City of Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan and the West Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan both have elements addressing livability, sustainability, and/or energy that have been incorporated into the transportation and land use recommendations included in this plan. These implementation of these recommendations would take the Chippewa-Eau Claire MPA well down the road to being a very desirable place for economic development and growth in the coming decades. The following is a selection of the recommendations in the two noted plans, as well as this plan, incorporating elements of sustainability and livability:

**Sustainability and Livability Recommendations**

- Encourage growth in those areas that can be served by existing or planned transportation facilities and discourage development that is not compatible with existing or planned transportation facilities.
- Facilitate the creation and adoption of land use/transportation planning policies which consider ecosystem sustainability and the protection of critical natural resources.
- Evaluate higher urban density potential to promote transportation alternatives, such as light rail and intercity transit.
- Optimize multi-modal connectivity within and between communities.
- Inventory and coordinate park-and-ride lot and carpooling program development in appropriate locations, and the revenue to support and maintain them.
- Coordinate a transit service system that interacts effectively region-wide, accommodating trips within and beyond the MPA.
- Continue development of regional bike facilities, both on and off road, for recreation and utilitarian trip purposes.
- Improve pedestrian connections to create a continuous and seamless pedestrian system, and enhance the pedestrian environment to create a more walkable com-munity through human-scaled urban design, safe crossing signalization where appropriate, traffic calming measures appropriate to urban arterial and collector corridors.
- Encourage Safe Routes to School planning and plan implementation in the MPA.
- Participate in efforts to implement passenger rail service connecting west central Wisconsin to the Twin Cities and southeastward to Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago.
- Determine locations for multi-modal transfer sites within the Region (e.g. bicycle, pedestrian, rail, auto, transit).
- Ensure consideration of all transportation modes in development review processes and ordinances.
- Promote best design, fiscal, and management practices for carbon negative energy, food, and transportation systems.
- Actively work with municipalities and counties to ensure existing and future urban and suburban development be designed in a way that does not solely require automobile dependency and that allows for accessible mass transit and non-motorized modes of transportation.

## *Environmental Justice Considerations*

This Long Range Transportation Plan update and the transportation system improvement recommendations presented in this chapter, are in compliance with the environmental justice considerations enumerated in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969; Section 109 (h) of Title 23; the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended; the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century; and other applicable U.S. DOT statutes and regulations. These regulations pertaining to environmental justice can be summarized in the following three fundamental environmental justice principles:

- To avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.

- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.

- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

To ensure that the Chippewa-Eau Claire MPO is able to effectively adhere to these principles, the following actions have been taken to comply with the environmental justice considerations (refer to Environmental Justice Analysis on page 18 and accompanying Maps 6 through 9):

- The MPO has enhanced its analytical capabilities through the application of expanded census data bases and geographic information systems (GIS) technology. In cooperation with urban area municipalities, the MPO is able to maintain more accurate and up-to-date land use information that is incorporated into the transportation planning process. The MPO, in cooperation with WisDOT, has updated and improved its traffic modeling capabilities to identify transportation system deficiencies and to evaluate the traffic impacts of improvement alternatives. The MPO also relies on the local knowledge and input of local municipalities in identifying and addressing the concerns of minority and low-income populations.

- By applying the improved analytical capabilities identified previously, the MPO is better able to identify the residential location of minority and low-income populations in relationship to places of employment, education, medical services, child care, shopping, public transit service, and the travel patterns of the urban population on the street and highway system. The mapping of the recommended transportation system improvement projects, as well as public transit

routing, also enables the MPO to evaluate their potential impact on the minority and low-income populations in the urban area. The results of this evaluation provides the MPO with the confidence that the recommended transportation projects and services developed in the plan do not represent disproportionately high and adverse impacts on the urban area's minority and low-income populations. In fact, the identified urban-wide improvements to transportation-related air quality, safety, and mobility provided through the implementation of the plan's recommendations, indicate an overall benefit to the entire urban population.

- The MPO's actions to facilitate a participatory public involvement process are addressed in detail in its Public Involvement Plan, which is reviewed annually and updated as necessary. In addition to the direct public involvement actions employed by the MPO in its planning and programming process, the MPO also relies on the public involvement processes of its member units of government and transportation providers and partners to ensure the public the opportunity for input into the transportation decision-making process.