CHIPPEWA-EAU CLAIRE

MPOQUARTERLY

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CHIPPEWA-EAU CLAIRE
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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Transportation Culture

Over the winter holidays, our family (Eric) took a trip to Aruba for a week. While riding the bus from the airport to the condo, I quickly noticed the high number of roundabouts and didn't see any traffic lights. As the days went on and we explored different areas of the country, we continued to not see any traffic lights, even in the areas with the highest amount of tourist traffic. When we got back to Eau Claire, I looked on the Internet to see if there were any traffic lights in Aruba. I learned that Aruba, originally developed with both roundabouts and traffic lights, has replaced the majority of traffic lights with roundabouts, and plans to eliminate all remaining traffic lights.

In addition to not seeing any traffic lights, it was very interesting to witness and experience driver/pedestrian interactions. Over the course of a week, I never experienced or witnessed a driver not yielding to a pedestrian, and I saw literally dozens and dozens of these interactions. Not only that, but the driver would flash their lights and/or give a quick honk of their horn as a way to notify the pedestrian that they were stopping and it was okay for them to cross.

When I travel, I try to experience as much of the local culture as possible and see how life is similar to, and different from, to where I live. The lack of traffic lights and the driver/pedestrian interactions really stood out to me and got me thinking about the idea of a community's "transportation culture" or "transportation identity." We have all experienced and/or seen photos/videos of places that have a much different transportation culture than we do. Perhaps it is a lack of vehicle safety standards that we may see in some countries, what looks like absolute chaos in some big cities around the world, abundant bicycle infrastructure in countries like Denmark or The Netherlands, and/or what seems like everyone honking their horns at each other in places like New York or Chicago.

From there, my thoughts turned to what our transportation culture/identity is in our urban area, what are people's experiences and feelings about our transportation system when they come here, and what do locals think as well. Then from there, and more importantly, my thoughts went to what do we want our transportation culture/identity to be and are we able, willing, and motivated to do our best to create that desired transportation culture/identity. When reading about transportation in Aruba, one article mentioned it being a "friendly and mellow road culture" which I felt fit perfectly. And I have thought for a few days about what someone would use as adjectives to describe our road culture.

The people on this email list are an important group that can significantly impact what our transportation or road culture is in our community. How rewarding would it be to look back years from now and know that we helped create a transportation culture in our urban area that is looked at with envy by others. Personally, I find it equally frightening that someday we would look back and we would lack any sort of transportation culture that people would take notice of and appreciate.

Project Updates

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Story Maps - Chippewa Falls CIP Map 2024-2028 update - Completed in January.

MPA Boundary adjustments - Ongoing.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 2024-2028 amendment - Approved in January.

Village of Lake Hallie Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan - Completed in January.

Enhanced transit connections in urban area - Next meeting in February or March.

Vision Zero Plan - Starting in February.

City of Chippewa Falls Wayfinding Plan - Ongoing.

Chippewa Valley Bike Routes - Communities continue to purchase and install additional signage. MPO staff continues to facilitate.

Cover Photo: Construction in downtown Eau Claire.

Peak 65

In 2024, the U.S. will set a record for the number of people turning 65. An average of just over 11,000 people a day will turn 65 years old, which totals roughly 4.1 million people for the year. These annual increases will be the same through 2027. Using these numbers and incorporating them with our urban area (very similar 60-64 population percentage to the U.S. population), our urban area will experience approximately 1,300 people a year turning 65 from 2024-2027.

Transportation issues for the elderly population continue to be discussed and highlighted as a major issue that will only continue to get more severe. With what the media is calling *Peak 65* happening over the next four years, those transportation needs are not just coming to our area, but they are here and will only continue to grow.

The Chippewa-Eau Claire MPA includes:

The cities of Altoona, Chippewa Falls, and Eau Claire, the Village of Lake Hallie, and all or parts of the towns of Anson, Brunswick, Eagle Point, Hallie, Lafayette, Pleasant Valley, Seymour, Tilden, Union, Washington, and Wheaton.

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Airport Master Plan

As we mentioned in February 2023, the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport is currently undergoing its airport master planning process. The airport and its consulting team develop plans for improvements that include various options to meet the anticipated demand. This process culminates in the Airport Layout Plan, a map of the airport that shows all its existing and potential improvements to meet those forecasted needs, including future facilities. With so many different facets of airport facilities, coordination with and input from airport staff, the local public, airport tenants and businesses, and federal and state agencies occurs throughout the process.

Although a master plan looks at an airport holistically, each project usually has specific areas of emphasis. The focal points for this project consist of four items:
- Improve instrument approaches, which allow aircraft to land during inclement weather,
- Plan to make sure the runway facilities can accommodate the changing air carrier fleet,
- Develop areas for general aviation to operate efficiently,
- Plan local zoning that supports both airport and community needs.

Currently, alternatives for future facilities are in development. Airport staff, local tenants, and federal and state agencies will review these alternatives, which will be presented to the public during an open house, planned for late spring.

MPA Boundary Update

At their January 31st meeting, the MPO Policy Council discussed the adoption of the new Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) Boundary. After lengthy discussion, the Policy Council voted to table the adoption of the boundary until their May 1st meeting.

The process started with MPO staff drafting changes to the previous MPA boundary. These draft changes were the result of future land use maps in existing comprehensive plans and development trends in the MPA. Staff then sent the draft to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for review and comment six weeks before the scheduled TAC meeting. During the TAC meeting, TAC members discussed comments that were submitted. The TAC then recommended an updated draft map to the Policy Council.

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MPA Geography - 101

How good is your geography in the MPA? We have a new photo in each newsletter.

Good luck!!

MPA Geography 101 Answer: Click on this link to find the location.