

CHIPPEWA-EAU CLAIRE

MPO QUARTERLY

August 2023
Edition #11

Urban Area
Boundary
*Update Process
Continues*

Regional Transit
*Exploratory
Committee
Meets To Discuss
Options*

Pedestrian
Involved Crashes
*New Data Show
Large Increase In
Fatalities*



Urban Area Boundary Update

As we updated in the last newsletter, MPO staff met with WisDOT to discuss the process of updating the MPO Urban Area Boundary (UAB). That meeting was in April. The UAB consists of all the incorporated areas and any areas outside the incorporated areas that are or have a potential to be developed at an urban density in the next 10 years. In addition, this is the area eligible for federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding.

MPO staff have now met with most and discussed with all of the two counties and four incorporated communities regarding where urban density growth is expected to happen in the next ten years. Since those meetings, staff adjusted the draft UAB and sent that draft to the WisDOT working group for them to review and have them set up the next WisDOT/MPO meeting.

Our anticipation is that after that meeting is held, we will have a presentable draft of the next UAB and will be able to bring that to the TAC and Policy Council, and we will then be able to start updating the new Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundary shortly after that as well.

Project Updates

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Story Maps - [Chippewa Falls 2023-2026](#), [Chippewa County 2023-2026](#), [Lake Hallie 2023-2026](#), [Eau Claire County 2023-2026](#) - Completed.

Village of Lake Hallie Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan - Started in June. Ongoing.

MPO Title VI Plan three-year update - Ongoing. Approval in September/October.

Enhanced transit connections in urban area - Meeting 1 was held in July. Exploratory group will continue to meet.

Vision Zero Plan - Starting in September.

Urban Area Boundary adjustments - Ongoing.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 2024-2028 update - Started in June. Draft in late August.

City of Chippewa Falls Wayfinding Plan - Ongoing.

Chippewa Valley Safe Routes To School (SRTS) Partnership - Ongoing. Completed Eau Claire SRTS Plan. Facilitated and hosted second annual Chippewa Valley Walk and Roll Challenge.

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

Urban Work Program (2024) - Ongoing.

Cover Photo: Entrance to Chippewa Valley Regional Airport.

Pedestrian Crash Data

More attention is being given to the increasing rate of pedestrian and bicycle deaths in the U.S. Recently, numerous news organizations had articles about pedestrian deaths in the U.S. being at a 40 year high. This included [CNN](#), [Fox News](#), [NPR](#), [New Your Times](#), [VOX](#), and countless others.

The Governors Highway Safety Association 2022 Report regarding pedestrian deaths shows that pedestrian deaths have increase 77 percent between 2010 and 2022, while all traffic fatalities increased by a still significant increase of 25 percent. In addition, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), pedestrians account for 17 percent of all traffic deaths, despite only 2 percent of all people injured in traffic crashes being pedestrians.

Although national and state data are important, it is more important for us to know, understand, and take into account our local data, as the transportation system in our urban area is where we can have positive impacts and make conditions safer for all users. As of July 30th, since January 01, 2020, there have been 125 total reported pedestrian and bicycle crashes in the MPA, of which five were fatal and 16 had at least one serious injury. That is an average of six fatal or serious injury pedestrian or bicycle crashes per year, and 35 total pedestrian or bicycle crashes per year. Our community crash [reports](#) in our Long Range Transportation Plan show locations of pedestrian/bicycle crashes between 2014-2018.

In the past we have shared a few [Freakonomics](#) podcasts about the economics and functions of a host of transportation topics. Most recently, in July they had a podcast specific to pedestrian fatalities:

[*Why Is the U.S. So Good at Killing Pedestrians?*](#)

[*Actually, the reasons are pretty clear. The harder question is: Will we ever care enough to stop?*](#)

The 40-minute podcast discusses a wide range of issues including how the U.S. differs from most other countries, how and why we design our streets the way we do, the 85 percentile concept, the increased size of vehicles in the U.S., and more. In addition, the podcast looks at how we can make changes to reduce pedestrian and non-pedestrian traffic fatalities. This brand new podcast comes nine years after their initial podcast about pedestrian deaths, titled [*The Perfect Crime*](#).

[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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Transit Connections in the Planning Area

While working on a wide assortment of projects over the past few years, MPO staff have experienced many comments and conversations regarding transit in the Chippewa Valley. One issue, heard over and over again, is why is there not a way to take public transportation through Chippewa Falls-Lake Hallie-Eau Claire? Driving the perceived need for better connectivity is the desire for better transportation options for employment, health care, grocery shopping, and other day-to-day activities. With the Chippewa Valley's growing senior population and the need for employees at new businesses, interest in facilitating a public transportation option in the area is coming from a broad range of stakeholders.

This past winter, MPO staff hosted a meeting with representatives from Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, and Lake Hallie to see if they had interest in looking at the existing conditions of transit in our Metropolitan Planning Area and if there is interest in exploring expanded service that would connect the communities. All agreed that there is.

The next step was a meeting with an expanded and more diverse exploratory committee. Working with the three

communities, MPO staff invited sixteen stakeholders from the areas of Health Care, Education, Aging and Disability service providers, Economic Development, Transit Providers, and Elected Officials to the kickoff meeting. The first meeting had fourteen attendees. The next steps include:

- Exploring opportunities for grant funding of a transit feasibility study for the MPA.
- Researching funding options for expanded service including from foundations and private parties.
- Conducting a survey of area residents to gauge public demand for expanded service.

Map Of The Quarter

Thanks for all the comments regarding the water main map in the last newsletter. We appreciate it. As you update your water main data, please feel free to send us that data to update the regional map. We could even do an individual map for your community. In addition, if you have any ideas for future Map of the Quarter maps, please contact us. If for some reason you didn't look at the water main map in the last newsletter, here is the [link](#) to it again. Did you know that there are still at least 51 miles of water main in the urban area that was installed between 1880-1939?

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MPA Geography - 101

How good is your geography in the MPA? This one might be really easy for some, but it might be a little challenging, if you are not familiar with this specific area. Good luck!!



MPA Geography 101 Answer: This photo is from the south side of Lake Wisconsin, where CTH J and CTH X meet at the roundabout. In addition, the railroad line can be seen along the lake. Here is a [link](#) to the map.