

CHAPTER 3: Transportation

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 Carson. 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 minimize 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 Carson; 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 networks 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 road network within Town of Carson consisted of a total of 106.27 miles of public roadway. Federal and State roads accounted for 17.4 miles (US Highway 10 - 11.0 miles; State Highway 34 - 6.4 miles). Of the remaining 88.87 miles, County Roads (Cty Rds) C, E, G, M, O, and S accounted for 26.83 miles, with local Town roads covering the final 62.04 miles.

1. Principal Arterials

The only principal arterial in Carson is USH 10, which is aligned parallel to the northern Town boundary, then turns to the southeast at Marsh Rd in the northeast part of the town, where it is aligned parallel to the Wisconsin River. According to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the **Average Daily Traffic** volume (ADT) reported in 2002 for USH 10, east of STH 34, is 19,400 vehicles, while the ADT west of STH 34 is 23,800 vehicles. Traffic mobility and servicing major economic centers are major functions of this road.

2. Minor Arterials

State Highway 34 is the only road currently designated as a minor arterial. The ADT count in 2002 for STH 34 south of USH 10 was 2,600 vehicles.

3. Major Collectors

County Roads C, E, M (east of Cty Rd O), O and S, are designated as major collectors. The ADT in 2002 was as follows: Cty Rd C - there was no count in 2002, but the 1999 ADT count was 790 vehicles, Cty Rd E - no count available, Cty Rd M - 480 vehicles, Cty Rd O - 1,200 vehicles (south of Cty Rd M), 1,200 (north of Cty Rd M), Cty Rd S - no count vehicles. Providing access to attractions such as schools, parks and airports is one set of criteria used in assigning major and minor collectors.

4. Minor Collectors

None of the roads in Carson are designated as minor collectors.

5. Rural Local Roads

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

B. Transit and Transportation Options for the Elderly and Disabled

The Portage County Department on Aging provides transportation services for transit-dependent adults and people with disabilities to the Carson area through a busing and volunteer escort service. Bus rides are provided to mealsites, grocery shopping, senior center services, essential personal business, and adult day care. 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

There is one designated bike route in Carson according to the Portage County Trails Map. This route passes through the southwestern portion of the Town along County Roads O and M as part of the Stevens Point to Rudolph bike ride.

D. Railroads

Two major rail lines are located in the Town of Carson. One line is oriented northeast to southwest and is aligned between STH 34 and Cty Rd O. The other line has a northwest to southeast orientation and runs parallel to USH 10 (See Map 3.1). Approximately 25 to 30 trains travel through the Town each day carrying materials such as: coal, potash, wood, and pulp products. The lines are owned by Canadian National Railroad and the primary carriers are Canadian National and Union Pacific.

E. Air Transportation

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

The Central Wisconsin Airport is located approximately 20 miles northeast of the Town of Carson in Mosinee and is a full service, all weather airport offering around-the-clock service. Four 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

The Stevens Point Municipal Airport is located on 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 is available for private aircraft (100 octane low-lead), but there are no repair services.

F. Trucking

Semi traffic in the Town generally consists of through traffic on USH 10, STH 34, and normal delivery services for area businesses. There are no designated truck routes, however, the Portage County Highway Department posts weight limits on county roads in spring to mitigate potential damage from the thawing frost layer in the soil.

The majority of truck traffic in rural Portage County (County Roads and local roads) comes from agricultural, non-metallic mining, and some logging operations.

G. Water Transportation

The Wisconsin River is not used as a mode of transportation, even though it can be navigated from the DuBay Dam in northern Portage County to the Clark Street Bridge in Stevens Point. The river, which bounds the Town of Carson on its eastern border, is used for recreational purposes.

Section 3.3 Inventory of Applicable Transportation Plans and Programs

A. Six-Year Highway Improvement Plan (2003-2008)

WisDOT's Corridors 2020 Plan identifies USH 10, from Appleton to Marshfield, as a planned, multilane, "backbone and connector" highway. The construction schedule was supposed to complete the multilane corridor between Appleton and Stevens Point by the year 2005. However, the specific route the highway will take west of the Village of Amherst remains undetermined. In the interim, WisDOT will be upgrading the existing USH 10 alignment to four lanes between Amherst Junction and Stevens Point beginning in 2006.

Improvements between Stevens Point and Marshfield are slated for completion by 2015. The new USH 10 will intersect with Interstate 39 at Cty Rd X in the northern part of the Town of Hull. This alignment will be oriented parallel to the Town of Carson's northern boundary.

B. Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2020

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

C. Wisconsin State Rail Plan (SRP)

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 consist of six major components:

1. Intercity passenger rail
2. Freight rail
3. Highway-rail crossings
4. Funding
5. Economic benefits
6. 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 will become the rail component of the State's Connections 2030 Plan. (Wisconsin DOT)

D. State, Regional and Local Bicycle and Trail Plans

1. 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 Carson 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

The following transportation issues were identified through the planning process:

- Rail
 - How can the Town accommodate another railroad crossing, between Cty Rd O and Cty Rd M to aid emergency services?
- Highway
 - There is a need for longer turn lanes on USH 10 into subdivisions for safety issues.
 - How will the Town address the increased maintenance cost of local roads created through jurisdictional transfers?
- Bike
 - There may be a desire to extend the bike path to STH 34 and maybe a need for a path along the river.
- How will the Town address major road damage occurring from flooding and major rain events?

- A possible safety issue exists from trucks transporting fuel from the refinery located at USH 10 & STH 34.
- On which roads should the Town reduce the speed limit to enhance public safety? (currently unposted road speed limit is 55 mph)

Section 3.6 Transportation Goals/Objectives/Policies

Goal A Strive to provide a safe transportation network.

Objective A.1 Protect public safety through the creation of longer turn lanes on US and County roads when roads are upgraded.

Objective A.2 Encourage the creation of a second railroad crossing between Cty Rd O & Cty Rd M for increased public safety.

Objective A.3 Reduce the amount of time that railroad crossings are closed due to long trains.

Policy A.1 Encourage railroad users to comply with federal standards for stopping at crossings.

Policy A.2 Continue communicating with State and County transportation officials to improve road infrastructure and safety concerns.

Policy A.3 Review speed limits on Town roads.

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

Objective B.1 Encourage the development of maintenance and condition criteria for gravel roads.

Policy B.1 Continue to use PASER system to determine road condition.

Goal C Encourage human powered transportation options.

Policy C.1 Examine the need for designation of bike routes as the Town's population increases.

Goal D Public transportation options are available to the residents of Carson.

Policy D.1 Provide information to Town residents regarding transit options.