

## Chapter 5: TRANSPORTATION

### INTRODUCTION

A well-designed and maintained transportation system provides safe, efficient, and reliable ways for people and products to get to where they need to go. Furthermore, it provides recreation opportunities and it contributes to the overall image of the community. This chapter provides an inventory and analysis of Washburn's transportation system and it describes goals, objectives, policies, maps, and programs to maintain and enhance the transportation system.

### INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

#### ROAD SYSTEM

The road system is the most important component of Washburn's transportation system. It provides the primary links within the community and to surrounding areas. The following provides an overview of the key components of Washburn's road system.

##### Functional Road Classification

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) classifies roads as principal and minor arterials, major and minor collectors, and local streets. The following provides a brief description of the classification system as it applies to Washburn. Refer to Figure 5-1: Existing Transportation System – 2007 for additional information.

Principal Arterials. Principal arterials provide connections between cities or regions. They move large volumes of traffic along reasonably direct routes. Consequently, private property access, parking, street intersections, and traffic signals are often limited to help facilitate smooth traffic flow. There are no principal arterials in Washburn.

However, WisDOT identifies US Highway 2, south of Washburn, as a principal arterial road.

Minor Arterials. Minor arterials connect to principal arterial roads. Like principal arterials, minor arterials carry large volumes of traffic, but unlike principal arterials, minor arterials generally allow more access to private property and they may allow on street parking. WisDOT identifies Bayfield Street (State Highway 13) as a minor arterial road.



*State Highway 13 (Bayfield Street) – Minor Arterial (SWB, Inc.)*

**Collectors.** Collectors generally provide major connections within a community or region. They link local streets to arterial roads and allow on street parking and access to private property. WisDOT identifies Bayfield County Road C as the only major collector road in Washburn.



*County Road C – Major Collector Road (SWB, Inc.)*

**Local Streets.** Local streets handle the least amount of traffic volume, but provide direct access to private property. They are generally the narrowest roads in the road system and they usually allow on-street parking.

### **Road Jurisdiction and Maintenance Responsibilities**

State Highway 13 (Bayfield Street) is under the jurisdiction of the State of Wisconsin, but Bayfield County maintains the highway. Bayfield County has jurisdiction of, and maintenance responsibilities for, County Road C. The City of Washburn has jurisdiction of, and maintenance responsibilities for, all local streets in Washburn. The City is also responsible for maintaining the parking lanes on Bayfield Street.



*Typical Local Street in Washburn (SWB, Inc.)*

### **Traffic Counts and Congestion**

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) defines the “annual average daily traffic” (AADT) as the number of vehicles that are expected to pass a given location on an average day of the year. Table 5-A: Annual Average Daily Traffic for Key Locations by Year shows traffic counts from 1980 through 2003 for three key locations in Washburn. While the traffic counts vary from year to year, the data shows a general increase in traffic counts over the past twenty years. There are several likely reasons for this increase, including increased tourism in the area, increased automobile use in general, and increased single occupancy vehicle use. If current trends continue, the City can expect traffic counts to rise in the future. In 2006, WisDOT did not identify State Highway 13 (Bayfield Street) as a congested road. However, the Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020, anticipates that State Highway 13 will have a moderate level of congestion in 2020, assuming no capacity expansion.

One could view increasing traffic counts with optimism or concern. Increasing traffic counts may indicate an increase in tourists and passersby, which, in turn, may help businesses on or near Bayfield Street. On other hand, increasing traffic counts may suggest that people are not carpooling or using alternative modes of transportation to the degree that they could. In addition, without appropriate mitigation, increasing traffic counts may potentially lead to negative side effects, including increased traffic accidents and increased difficulty in providing safe pedestrian crossings.

The City should also keep in mind that traffic counts reflect anticipated traffic on an “average” day of the year. However, the traffic on State Highway 13 increases during the tourist season (most notably on summer weekends). The City of Washburn, Bayfield County, and WisDOT should coordinate monitoring and addressing issues associated with traffic counts and traffic congestion.

Insert Figure 5-1: Existing Transportation System - 2007



**TABLE 5-A: ANNUAL AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC FOR KEY LOCATIONS BY YEAR**

Location	Annual Average Daily Traffic by Year							
	1980	1983	1986	1990	1994	1997	2000	2003
State Highway 13 between W. 8th Ave. and W. 7th Ave,	5,350	5,500	7,440	8,450	6,100	6,900	7,400	9,400
State Highway 13 between W. 2nd Ave. and W. 1st Ave.	5,340	4,960	7,850	6,130	7,300	8,100	6,300	5,800
W. 8th Ave. (County Road C) at Pine Street	1,680	1,280	1,410	1,670	740	2,000	2,000	3,100

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Chapter 6 of the Bayfield County Land Use Plan

### Commuting Patterns

The 2000 U.S. Census identified that of the 966 workers in Washburn 16 years of age or older, 74% drove alone to work, 10% carpooled, 10% walked, 4% worked at home, 1% used public transportation, and 1% used some other means of transportation. The Census also reported that the mean travel time to work was 13.8 minutes. This finding indicates a significant number of Washburn residents are commuting to work in other communities, most notably the City of Ashland. In fact, the Census found that 1,927 Bayfield County residents worked in Ashland County, whereas only 301 Ashland County residents worked in Bayfield County.

### Traffic Accidents

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) maintains a database of traffic accidents. According to the database, there were 338 accidents in Washburn between 1995 and 2005. Most accidents resulted in property damage only, but 17% of the accidents involved injuries. There were no fatal accidents during this period (see Table 5-B: Annual Number of Crashes by Type). The majority of accidents occurred along Bayfield Street, in particular at the intersection of Bayfield Street and West Fifth Avenue.

**TABLE 5-B: ANNUAL NUMBER OF CRASHES BY TYPE**

Type of Accident	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Property Damage	34	43	27	23	14	14	22	28	26	28	23
Injury	7	6	10	12	5	4	4	4	2	0	2
Fatality	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Annual Total	41	49	37	35	19	18	26	32	28	28	25

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Superior District 8 Office

### State and Regional Highway Plans

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has not adopted state or regional highway plans that will have a significant effect on Washburn. However, WisDOT's 2006-2011 Highway Improvement Program identifies that State Highway 13 (Bayfield Street) will be milled and resurfaced sometime between 2009 and 2011. WisDOT is also planning to do maintenance work on the State Highway 13, Thompson Creek Bridge in 2008.

There has been an effort by some to designate State Highway 13 and part of US Highway 2 as a scenic byway. Such a designation could provide grant opportunities for resource protection, safety improvements, trails, and so on. Washburn should be an active participant in discussions relating to the scenic byways program or to any state or regional highway plans that may affect Washburn.

## RAILROAD

From an historical point of view, the railroad greatly influenced the growth and development of Washburn. In the late 1800s through the early 1900s, the railroad was one of the primary means of transporting raw materials and manufactured goods to and from Washburn. However, by the mid 1900s, rail service to Washburn was no longer feasible given the demise of the industries that used the railroad and given the growth of the road system and trucking industry. The railroad abandoned service to Washburn in 1983. The City purchased the majority of the railroad right-of-way in the city and designated it for snowmobile and all-terrain vehicle use. The nearest working railroad to Washburn is located in the City of Ashland.



*Former Railroad Right-of-Way currently used as a Snowmobile and ATV Trail (SWB, Inc.)*

## AIRPORT

Although the City of Washburn does not have an airport, Washburn has easy access to John F. Kennedy Memorial Airport in Ashland, Wisconsin. The City of Ashland and Ashland County jointly operate the airport, but because the airport is important to the region, not just Ashland, Bayfield County helps fund airport operations. The airport has two paved runways. The primary runway is 5,200 feet long by 100 feet wide, and the secondary runway is 3,400 feet long by 75 feet wide. Both runways are adequate for twin-engine aircraft. The airport has a log cabin style terminal building, 21 hangars, and a full time airport manager.

## HARBOR

The harbor and shipping industries flourished in Washburn from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. The City's port facilities included a coal dock, a merchandise dock, and a grain elevator dock. Sawmills also lined the waterfront. During this period, large quantities of lumber, brownstone, and grain were shipped from Washburn and large quantities of merchandise were shipped to Washburn from eastern states. But by the early 1900s, much of the forests in the region had been depleted, the demand for brownstone had diminished, and the grain elevator moved to Duluth, Minnesota. Consequently, harbor shipments declined dramatically. The merchandise dock and the grain elevator dock no longer exist, but the coal dock (also known as the commercial dock) still exists and is used to transport and store bulk materials, including aggregate.



*Washburn Marina (SWB, Inc.)*

Although the harbor no longer functions as a thriving industrial port, it does support a thriving marina. The Washburn Marina was built in 1982 on the remnants of the commercial waterfront just west of the City's commercial dock. The 138-slip marina includes a boat launch ramp, a support building with marina offices, indoor and outdoor boat storage, restrooms and showers, a boat maintenance shop, fueling and pump out stations, parking, a store, a lounge, and a lifting basin. Refer to Chapter 4: Waterfront Plan for additional information.

## TRAILS

The City of Washburn and the surrounding region has numerous trails to accommodate a variety of users. The following provides an overview of the key trails in Washburn.

### Washburn Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail

The Washburn Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail follows the Lake Superior shoreline from Thompson's West End Park to the City's Athletic Fields. The trail surface consists of limestone screenings. The western portion of the trail is consistent with the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), but the eastern portion is not. The trail provides good views of Lake Superior and includes interpretive signs and benches. Refer to Chapter 4: Waterfront Plan for additional information.



*Lakefront Parkway and Walking Trail (SWB, Inc.)*

### Washburn Snowmobile and ATV Trail

The Washburn Snowmobile and ATV Trail follows the former railroad right-of-way between Memorial Park and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue West. The trail links to other snowmobile and ATV (all-terrain vehicle) trails in the city and the surrounding region. Signs direct trail users to nearby businesses and other connecting trails in the region.



*Washburn Snowmobile and ATV Trail (SWB, Inc.)*

### Other Trails and Routes in the City

Several streets in Washburn are designated as snowmobile and ATV routes. The Bayfield Snowmobile Alliance also maintains snowmobile trails on private property in and around Washburn. Refer to trail maps from snowmobile and ATV organizations for more detailed and current information.

Bicycling is also popular in Washburn and the surrounding area. The Superior Vistas Bike Tour is an annual bike tour event that starts at Thompson's West End Park in Washburn, goes through the surrounding region, and returns to Washburn. In Washburn, the routes generally follow County Road C and State Highway 13.



*Typical Snowmobile/ATV Route on a City Street (SWB, Inc.)*

### Surrounding Trails

There are many trails in the surrounding area. The Washburn School Forest and Environmental Education Center at the north end of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue West has hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country ski trails. The Mt. Valhalla Recreation Area, located in the Chequamegon National Forest roughly ten miles west of Washburn, has snowmobile trails, ATV trails, horseback riding trails, cross-country ski trails, and hiking trails. The Tri-County Corridor Trail is a multi-use trail that runs from Superior, Wisconsin to Ashland, Wisconsin. The trail is roughly 12 miles south of Washburn and can be accessed via existing snowmobile trails from Washburn.



*Snowmobile Trail west of Thompson's West End Park showing connections to Surrounding Trails (SWB, Inc.)*

### PUBLIC AND PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) system provides bus service to Washburn and the surrounding area. BART buses stop at the Washburn Civic Center and at the intersection of 5th Avenue West and Bayfield Street. All BART buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts and bike racks. The Blue Goose, a subsidiary of BART with financial support from the City of Washburn and Bayfield County Human Services, offers rides to anyone needing transportation within Washburn. The Blue Goose can be used to get to BART bus stops, stores, and other areas in the community. Bay Area Transport, LLC and Bay Area Taxi, LLC (private taxi services based in Ashland) also offer transportation services to Washburn and the surrounding area.



*BART Bus Stop at Washburn Civic Center (SWB, Inc.)*

### ACCESSIBILITY

The City has strived to make Washburn fully accessible to those with disabilities by providing accommodations such as curb cuts and ramps. However, parts of the City are not fully accessible. For example, some existing sidewalks are in poor shape and present access challenges. Also, portions of the trail system are inaccessible to those with physical disabilities. Nevertheless, the City has addressed and will continue to address accessibility issues in Washburn.

### PUBLIC INPUT

The following summarizes key transportation items from the community survey conducted as part of this planning process. Refer to Appendix A for detailed survey results.

- 7.4% of the survey respondents reported that they use public transportation, 92.6% stated they did not;
- 27.7% of respondents reported that public transportation services in the City are adequate to meet the needs of the general public, 28.4% felt that they were not adequate, and 43.9% did not know;

- 74.1% of respondents indicated that the City should encourage bicycle lanes and paths, 32.7% of respondents felt the City should encourage carpool parking; and
- 27.9% of respondents rated the overall condition of streets and highways in Washburn as good or very good, 47.9% rated them as average, and 23.9% rated them as poor.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following goal is a broad statement that reflects the City's vision for land use. It represents the end that the City is striving to attain. The following objectives are specific, measurable, intermediate ends that are achievable and mark progress towards the goal. The following policies are key actions intended to accomplish the stated objectives.

**Goal: Washburn has an integrated, multi-modal transportation system that provides healthy, safe, efficient, environmentally sensitive, and economical movement of people and goods.**

Objective 5.1: Provide a functional, safe, accessible, and economical transportation system that meets the transportation needs of Washburn's residents, businesses, industries, and visitors.

Policy 5.1.a: Integrate transportation and land use planning to help reduce transportation costs associated with conventional automobile-based development. For example, promote mixed-use development that allows residents to live, work, shop, and recreate within walking distance, thereby reducing the need for more roads, automobiles, and associated parking. Also, integrate park and ride opportunities, trails, and walks into land use planning efforts, where appropriate.

Policy 5.1.b: Work with public, semi-public, and private transportation providers to ensure effective transportation services to businesses, residences, institutions, and other destinations.

Policy 5.1.c: Provide a functional and safe trail system in the City and to surrounding destinations, that provides a safe, cost-effective alternative to the road system.

Policy 5.1.d: Ensure continued use of the commercial dock as a means to transport goods to and from Washburn via watercraft.

Policy 5.1.e: Work closely with government agencies and others regarding key issues relating to Highway 13, including the need to provide safe pedestrian crossings.

Policy 5.1.f: Ensure that Washburn's multi-modal transportation system is safe by separating incompatible modes of transportation. For example, separate motorized trails from pedestrian trails. Also, ensure safe crossings where roads and trails intersect.

Policy 5.1.g: Ensure that Washburn's multi-modal-transportation system is consistent with the provisions of the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Objective 5.2: Provide an attractive transportation system that offers recreation and economic benefits.

Policy 5.2.a: Seek highway beautification grants to provide enhanced entrance signs, informational/directional signs, landscaping, and streetscaping to beautify the Highway 13 corridor.

Policy 5.2.b: Consider the unique character of a neighborhood and the environmental conditions of an area when planning, constructing, and maintaining transportation routes and facilities.

Policy 5.2.c: Provide strong pedestrian links between the waterfront and the downtown core.

Policy 5.2.d: Address issues and concerns that may arise relating to snowmobiling and ATV use on trails and along the waterfront.

Policy 5.2.e: Expand Washburn's trail system and work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to connect Washburn's trails and bicycle routes to surrounding communities and destinations. Support and promote the regional trail system as a tourist attraction.

Policy 5.2.f: Encourage the creation of private businesses that can benefit from Washburn's transportation system (for example, a bicycle rental shop that caters to trail use, an electric rental car business adjacent to the marina or a park and ride, and so on).

Policy 5.2.g: Study the possibility of creating a public transportation node in Washburn with links to major cities in the Midwest. Coordinate with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions and the major event providers. Market the sustainable transportation options available to visitors.

Objective 5.3: Promote sustainable and healthy modes of transportation.

Policy 5.3.a: Work towards converting conventional fossil fuel burning City vehicles to cleaner, healthier, and more efficient vehicles that reduce the City's reliance on fossil fuels and that have minimal adverse affect on the natural environment. Make City government an outstanding example of how to convert to sustainable and healthy modes of transportation.

Policy 5.3.b: Promote efforts to reduce the use of single-occupancy, fossil fuel burning vehicles by promoting public transportation, carpooling, and non-motorized modes of transportation.

Policy 5.3.c: Promote land use planning that encourages healthy modes of transportation, including walking and bicycling.

Policy 5.3.d: Cooperate with Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) to provide local, regional, and national healthy, sustainable, transportation options.

## TRANSPORTATION PLAN

This section summarizes and expands on the key concepts and actions discussed in the inventory and analysis section, and the goals, objectives, and policies section of this chapter (see Figure 5-2: General Transportation Plan).

Insert Figure 5-2: General Transportation Plan



## ROAD SYSTEM PLAN

### State Highway 13 (Bayfield Street)

The first impression that most people have of Washburn is from State Highway 13 (Bayfield Street). Consequently, it is important that this road be attractive and functional. Parts of Bayfield Street have attractive banners, flower baskets, and street trees (see side photograph), but the City will develop and implement a more robust Streetscape Plan for State Highway 13 that includes energy efficient, ornamental street lighting, street trees and/or other plantings, street and sidewalk pavement patterns, seating, and signage. The City will actively seek highway beautification grants, grants from energy providers and energy programs, and other grants to help fund streetscape planning and construction efforts.

Washburn and WisDOT will coordinate planning efforts to ensure safe intersections and pedestrian crossings. Furthermore, the City and WisDOT will explore integrating bicycles lanes on State Highway 13, within the city and outside the city. Washburn will be an active participant in discussions relating to the possible designation of State Highway 13 as a scenic byway.

### Local Streets

The Plan promotes functional, attractive, cost effective, and environmentally sensitive local streets. The City will study the appropriate width and design of local streets and adjust the design standards if necessary. The City will also periodically review its standards for sidewalks and street tree plantings to ensure that local streets are attractive and functional. Washburn will apply design standards to new streets and to major reconstruction of existing local streets. The Transportation Plan, strongly promotes that the City enhance the appearance and function of the local streets that lead to Lake Superior from Bayfield Street. Refer to Chapter 4: Waterfront and Coastal Resources for additional information.

### Parking

The City will continue to ensure adequate parking for all land uses, while encouraging ways to reduce the total area needed for parking through shared and joint parking agreements and carpooling programs. Washburn will promote environmentally friendly parking that addresses storm water management issues and that provides attractive landscaping and screening. The City will also



*Existing Streetscape on Bayfield Street (SWB, Inc.)*



*Reconstruction of Existing Local Street (SWB, Inc.)*

explore developing a community parking lot in the downtown area to serve existing downtown businesses and to help promote infill development that might not otherwise have adequate onsite parking. The community parking lot could also support a park and ride program.

### **Street Lamps**

The City will replace existing, inefficient street lamps with energy efficient, city-owned street lamps. Lights will be located to promote safe pedestrian and vehicular circulation. The City will strive to reduce night sky light pollution.

## **HARBOR PLAN**

Although the harbor does not function as the commercial and industrial port that it once was, it still holds tremendous value for recreational transportation, as well as limited commercial transportation. The Transportation Plan envisions that the Washburn Marina will continue to serve as a strong asset to the community and that the commercial dock will continue to function as a commercial dock. However, future maintenance and improvements of these facilities will balance economic, environmental, and social considerations in a manner consistent with the vision of this Comprehensive Plan. Refer to Chapter 4: Waterfront and Coastal Resources, and the Harbor Commission's Strategic Plan for additional information.



*Washburn Marina (SWB, Inc.)*

## **TRAIL SYSTEM PLAN**

The City of Washburn will continue to enhance its trail system to provide recreation opportunities and alternative modes of transportation to residents and visitors. More specifically, the City will develop a detailed Trail System Plan that links existing trails and that provides new trails to key destinations throughout the City. In particular, the City will work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to develop an integrated regional trail system plan that provides links to Washburn's trails. Washburn will also plan and develop trails or walks that provide pedestrian links from Bayfield Street to the Washburn Parkway and Lakefront Walking Trail. The City will address conflicts relating to motorized trail use in the City.



*Washburn Parkway and Lakefront Walking Trail (SWB, Inc.)*

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

The City of Washburn will continue to plan and budget for improvements that will help make the transportation system accessible to all people regardless of their physical abilities. In particular, the City will develop a plan and apply for grants to make accessibility improvements to the eastern portion of the Washburn Parkway and Lakefront Walking Trail. Washburn will also regularly maintain

and repair existing walks and provide new, accessible walks so that all people can travel throughout the city without impediments.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The City will continue to support the Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) system in providing bus service to Washburn and the surrounding area. The City will also continue to support the Blue Goose, a subsidiary of BART with financial support from the City of Washburn and Bayfield County Human Services, in providing rides to anyone needing transportation in Washburn. The City of Washburn will coordinate with BART and the Blue Goose to enhance fuel efficiency, reduce costs, and ensure convenient access to residents.

## SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

Washburn's existing transportation system (like most transportation systems) is heavily dependent on fossil fuels. However, as an eco-municipality that promotes sustainability through the Natural Step framework, Washburn will strive to eliminate its dependence on fossil fuels. This Comprehensive Plan promotes several ways for Washburn to move towards more sustainable modes of transportation, including, but not limited to the following:

1. The Plan promotes converting the City's conventional fossil fuel burning vehicles to cleaner, healthier, and more efficient vehicles that reduce the City's reliance on fossil fuels and that have minimal adverse affect on the natural environment.
2. The Plan promotes public transportation and carpooling as a means to reduce the use of single-occupancy, fossil fuel burning vehicles.
3. The Plan promotes the creation of pedestrian and bicycle trails that not only reduce the community's dependence on fossil fuels for transportation, but that also enhance opportunities for social interaction and recreation, and that help promote a healthier lifestyle for residents.
4. The Plan promotes the economic benefits of having a compact, pedestrian-oriented community where people can live, work, and play within walking distance, thereby reducing the need to construct and maintain new roads, and thereby reducing the need to use fossil fuel vehicles. The Planned Waterfront Mixed-Use area is a prime example of this. The Plan

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*The Blue Goose*

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A subsidiary of Bay Area Rural Transit

Public Transportation – The Blue Goose (City of Washburn Website)



Eco- Art Exhibit at Thompson's West End Park that Illustrates the Ecological Values of Bicycling (SWB, Inc.)

also promotes potential economic benefits of new businesses that would capitalize on promoting alternative modes of transportation, for example, the creation of a bicycle rental shop or an electric rental car business for visitors to the marina or visitors that arrive via public transportation.

The Plan does not expect to eliminate fossil fuel use in Washburn during the scope of this Plan. However, the Plan recognizes that moving towards more sustainable modes of transportation is in the best interest of the community. The Plan promotes the above actions (and other actions) that will enhance Washburn's transportation system in manner that considers and optimizes economic, social, and environmental benefits.