

3 Transportation

This element includes a compilation of background information, goals, objectives, and recommendations to guide the future development of Shelby's transportation system.

Existing Road Network

U.S. Highway (USH) 14 & 61

USHs 14 and 61 share a common roadway from their entry point into Wisconsin from Minnesota via La Crosse's Cass Street and Cameron Avenue Bridges, to Vernon County. Within the City of La Crosse, as well as a small segment of the Town of Shelby, the urban street carrying these two highway designations, as well as STH 35, is Mormon Coulee Road. At a location which long time residents of La Crosse still refer to as the "Five Mile Hill", USH 14/61 splits off to the east while STH 35 continues south designated as "The Great River Road". This intersection is now entirely within the City of La Crosse.

At the Five Mile Hill, USH 14/61 has a four-lane, 52-foot wide pavement, with curbed urban cross section. East of Five Mile Hill grade, USH 14/61 has a two-lane, 24-foot wide pavement with an eight foot shoulder on each side and three feet of which is paved.

Every parcel of land that has a property line common to the state right of way for USH 14/61 has an access control restriction entered onto the property description at the La Crosse County Recorder's records. This severely restricts the placement of additional access points onto highway right-of-way, and also places similar restriction on town road access within 300 feet of the USH 14/61 centerline. While not totally prohibited, any additional access requests will be closely scrutinized by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) and internal road connections to an existing access point on the state road or a local road will be the preferred solution. This access control project reaches from Brickyard Road eastward to the La Crosse-Vernon county line.

State Trunk Highway (STH) 33

This highway, known as State Road in the City of La Crosse and a portion of Shelby, enters the Town of Shelby at 32nd Street, with the south side of the street being in the Town, although the City limits extend another 1,000 feet or so along the north side of the road. The Highway has high traffic volumes which reflect the heavy local service use this part of State Road receives by serving the Wedgewood Terraces, Wedgewood Valley, and Greenwald Coulee subdivisions, as well as the Towns of Greenfield and Barre, and the Village of West Salem.

From the City limit eastward to Wedgewood Drive, State Road is 48 feet wide, four lanes, with an urban curb cross section. A paved pedestrian walkway is located on the north side of the road, separated by the curb. This pathway also serves as a bicycle path, although there are no restrictions against a bicycle exercising its legal right to ride in the roadway at this point. East of Boma Road STH 33 pavement narrows to 36 feet, and an east bound climbing lane continues to the top of Irish Hill. The paved pedestrian way ends, but a ten foot wide paved shoulder continues on the north side of the roadway to within 150 feet of Forest Drive. At the top of the hill the roadway continues as a two-lane, 24-foot wide pavement with each shoulder ranging from three to five feet to the Town of Greenfield Town line.

STH 35-Great River Road

This highway is concurrent with USHs 14 and 61 from the Five Mile Hill junction, whereupon STH 35 continues south for about 1.8 miles to the Vernon County line. This pavement and shoulder width has been determined adequate for the existing traffic volumes but the constraining feature is the access points from public streets and private drives.

The Great River Road in Wisconsin is designated and administered by the Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission. This Commission is part of the international commission composed of delegates from the ten Mississippi River states plus the province of Ontario in Canada. The purpose of the Parkway is to develop a travel route dedicated to leisure travel with an emphasis on the scenic and historical qualities of the Mississippi River, which acts as the common thread binding the road together. This must occur on a public roadway which, in the case of STH 35 south of La Crosse, is also the principal link between La Crosse and Prairie Du Chien. These two goals are sometimes at cross purposes as the desire of one group is to maintain a scenic roadway for leisure travelers and the other group wants a direct truck and auto route for commercial purposes. This road is scheduled to be improved to a four lane cross section starting in the next ten years.

CTH F

This 2.18 mile segment of Rural Major Collector begins/ends at STH 33 near the top of Irish Hill. Within the Town of Shelby it provides access to a condominium project, eight Town roads, CTH FO, four residential subdivisions, and a multi-family residence. At the road's northern end there is approximately one mile of length in the Town of Medary where access is made to CTH FA, then it enters the City of La Crosse and is known as Bliss Road, which is the city street providing access to Granddad Bluff Park up the bluff from Main Street.

CTH FO

This Rural Minor Collector begins at CTH F and extends 1.07 miles to the east Town line. After entering the Town of Greenfield it connects to CTH OA, and provides access to Barre Mills and West Salem.

CTH GI

This Rural Minor Collector of 2.74 miles serves the Goose Island County Park, and it includes spurs and its own dead-end, all within the park. It has a 22-foot pavement except for one segment of 20 feet, and 2 foot shoulders either side. The average daily traffic varies by season, with the heaviest volume being in the summer and fall. There are a large number of bicyclists on the road; however the slow speed of motor vehicles and the general recreational character of the road does reduce the potential motor vehicle/bicycle conflict. A proposal to widen the shoulders to better accommodate bicycles has been discussed, but the road bed is located mostly in marsh. Adding the additional fill required for widening the roadway would be both very expensive and environmentally challenging.

CTH K

Located at the extreme southern border of the Town, and La Crosse County, CTH K, a Rural Major Collector, enters the Town for 0.78 miles while primarily serving Vernon County as a link between USH 14 and STH 35. The surface width of the pavement is 20 feet, with 2 feet of shoulder on both sides.

CTH MM

This 4.22 mile road is classified as a Rural Minor Collector and has also been designated a Rustic Road by the Wisconsin DOT. This designation results from a petition from the local unit of government having jurisdiction of the road, and an evaluation by DOT to determine if it meets program standards. The Rustic Road encourages the use of the road for leisure travel by motorists, bicyclists, and hikers. The jurisdiction having responsibility for the road maintains it for safe public travel, but is encouraged to preserve the unique scenic qualities through appropriate design standards and maintenance practices, and the encouragement of appropriate zoning to protect compatible adjacent land use. The roadway is currently 20 to 24 feet wide, with a pavement width of one 0.47 mile segment of 18 feet, to 20 feet for the major length of the road. CTH MM connects at each of its ends to USH 14/61 and travels along Brinkman Ridge more or less parallel to the major highway in Mormon Coulee. The area served is a mixture of agricultural fields and woods with little development.

CTH YY

A 0.19 mile segment of this Rural Minor Collector extends north from USH 14/61 right on the Shelby/Greenfield Town line. CTH YY extends through Greenfield to connect with STH 33 about two miles west of the unincorporated village of St. Joseph. There are no buildings in the Town of Shelby on this road.

Town Roads

Shelby has over 40 miles of local streets roads which are credited to the Town’s mileage base by DOT for mileage payments. These roads range all the way from 0.11 miles of Losey Boulevard, a four lane, 52 foot wide urban street with an ADT of 22,000 to 0.94 miles of crushed rock surfaced rural roads, spread among four separate dead end lanes, each serving one or two houses, or out-buildings.

Maintenance on urban streets, especially snowplowing or sanding, is coordinated with the City of La Crosse, and on occasion a snow plow from one or the other jurisdiction may handle the neighboring jurisdiction’s street for a short distance. Some other Town roads, such as North Chipmunk Road, also pass in and out of neighboring jurisdictions, and require maintenance coordination. North Chipmunk is the longest stretch of Town road, with 1.83 miles before passing into Vernon County, to reenter into Shelby farther west. Four other roads, Bloomer Mill, Skyline, Breidel Coulee, and Hagen Road are all over a mile long; all other Town roads are less than a mile long, with about 15½ miles of “final segments” being dead ends or cul-de-sacs.

Table 3.1 Average Daily Traffic, 1996-2002

	1996	1999	2002	Change 1996-2002
STH 35/USH 61/14	9,600	10,400	10,600	+1,000
STH 35/CHY K	9,500	10,400	9,900	+400
USH 61/14/CTH YY	7,600	6,300	5,800	-1,800
STH 33/CTH F	3,900	3,900	4,300	+400

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Transportation of Goods and Freight

A 1996 study showed that Wisconsin’s freight movements were accommodated through three modes: trucks on highway (58 percent), rail (33 percent), and water (9 percent). All three cargo modes are available in La Crosse County. The convergence of highway, rail, and water cargo facilities in La Crosse County provides the opportunity for a fully intermodal terminal for freight distribution. The County’s closest intermodal terminals are in Minneapolis/St. Paul and Chicago.

Truck Routes

The officially designated state or federal trucks routes within the Town of Shelby are: USH 14/61, STH 35, and STH 33. A discussion of these routes can be found at the beginning of this chapter.

Water

Direct access for waterborne freight is available through both public and private terminals in the City of La Crosse and the Town of Campbell. The Port of La Crosse serves incoming and outgoing barge traffic on the Mississippi River. The port handles nearly 1.2 million metric tons of commodities annually and offers connections to the Upper Midwest and the world, including Russia, South America, Mexico, China, and other regions.

Rail Freight

La Crosse County has rail cargo service through three Class I railroad companies, all of which provide direct access to Chicago and connections to eastern points. The Chicago-Twin Cities mainline of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad passes through Shelby in a north-south direction. About 1 1/2 miles of this right-of-

way lies within the Town parallel to STH 35. The public crossing of this busy rail line is CTH GI which services Goose Island County Park. This is a flashing light-gate protected crossing. The main passes through Shelby in an intersection where the Rail Road maintains the signal and the Town maintains the road.

The line has an industrial spur which leaves the mainline at a location in the City and travels north westerly along Diagonal Road. Within or at the edges of the Town “island” this spur crosses 27th Street, Losey Boulevard, and Ward Avenue. The Losey and Ward Avenue crossings have a flashing light warning. The City maintains all three crossings.

The Canadian Pacific Railway connects La Crosse to Milwaukee and Minneapolis/St. Paul. This company provides service, or potentially could provide service, to Rockland, Bangor, West Salem, and the north side of La Crosse. The Union Pacific Railroad operates with trackage rights on the Canadian Pacific between Tomah and Winona. The Wisconsin Rail Issues and Opportunities study in 1996 forecasted that rail cargo lines that serve La Crosse County will continue to serve as higher density lines.

Air Cargo

The La Crosse Municipal Airport serves as an air cargo facility. The airport is not one of the state’s six primary air cargo airports, but it does function as a feeder air service. Rather than maintain and operate a fleet of small aircraft, the integrated express carriers contract for on-demand service with a variety of aircraft operators. The Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2020 forecasts for all-cargo aircraft operations at La Crosse Municipal Airport to continue to grow. In 2020, state forecasts predict that the La Crosse Municipal Airport will have the second highest aircraft operations by commercial air cargo carriers, second to General Mitchell International in Milwaukee, but that the La Crosse Municipal Airport’s share of the state’s air cargo operations will be less than 12 percent.

Analysis on Regional Movement of People

Highway Network

The following street types move people throughout the region:

- Principal Arterials – Serve longer intra-urban trips and traffic traveling through urban areas. They carry high traffic volumes and provide links to major activity centers.
- Minor Arterials – Provide intra-community continuity and service to trips of moderate length, with more emphasis on land access than principal arterials. The minor arterial system interconnects with the urban arterial system and provides system connections to the rural collectors.

Air Transportation

The La Crosse Municipal Airport, is one of nine Wisconsin airports that have commercial air passenger service on a year-round basis. The airport is located on French Island and it serves passenger air travel through connections to regional hubs. American Eagle serves the airport with three flights per day every day of the week, connecting through Chicago. Northwest Airlines has eight flights per day, connecting through Minneapolis. Skyway Airlines, with service to Milwaukee and a connection to Midwest Airlines ended its service on October 31, 2005.

The Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2020 forecasts an increasing number of enplanements. The plan forecasts 201,000 thousand enplanements in 2010 and 231,000 enplanements in 2020.

At the airport, the multimodal connection opportunities are to rent a vehicle from three national car rental companies (Avis, Hertz and National), or to use local city bus Route 4 (French Island/Industrial Parks).

Passenger Rail

Intercity passenger rail is available through Amtrak service in the City of La Crosse. The Amtrak Empire Builder serves La Crosse, with regional connection to Chicago, Milwaukee, Columbus, Portage, Wisconsin Dells, Tomah, Winona, Red Wing, and St. Paul. The Empire Builder also connects to the West Coast (Seattle, WA and Portland, OR). Through a connection in Chicago, the national Amtrak network is available. The passenger rail station is located at St. Andrew and Caledonia Streets (601 St. Andrew Street in the City of La Crosse).

WisDOT has been studying ways in which Wisconsin's intercity passenger rail system could be expanded and developed into a more robust component of the state's overall transportation system. WisDOT, along with Amtrak and eight other Midwestern state DOTs, is currently evaluating the Midwest Regional Rail System, a proposed 3,000-mile, Chicago-based passenger rail network in the Midwest. The regional rail system would provide 6 round trips at peak times between Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, La Crosse, and St. Paul. Modern trains operating at peak speeds of up to 110-mph could produce travel times competitive with driving or flying.

Intercity Bus

Intercity passenger bus service in the La Crosse area was provided by Greyhound Lines; however, in August 2004, Greyhound discontinued service to the La Crosse area as part of its route restructuring. Intercity bus transportation is now provided by Jefferson Lines, a connecting carrier to Greyhound Bus Lines. Jefferson Lines runs daily scheduled bus service that connects to Greyhound's national service in Madison and Minneapolis/St. Paul. The intercity bus terminal is located at 601 St. Andrew Street in the City of La Crosse.

Analysis on the Local Movement of People

The street network shapes access and circulation through the community. Public streets in the area are classified by their primary function, as described below:

- Collectors – Provide both land access and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and industrial areas. These facilities collect traffic from local streets in residential neighborhoods and channel it onto the arterial system. In the central business district, and in other areas of like development and traffic density, the collector system may include the street grid which forms the basic unit of traffic circulation.
- Local Streets – Local streets primarily provide direct access to adjacent land and access to higher order systems. Local streets offer the lowest level of mobility and through traffic movement on this system is usually discouraged.

Public Transportation and Transit

The Town currently does not participate financially in supporting mass transit service but two La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU) routes pass through the edges of the Town, and one other route passes close enough to parts of the Town to provide reasonable service to at least some Town residents. The Town briefly subsidized an extension of MTU Route 3, but ended the subsidy because of low fares and ridership.

Paratransit

Paratransit, in its broadest sense, includes all modes of “public” or “mass” passenger transportation systems other than privately driven automobiles or regularly scheduled bus/train service. To meet the special needs of persons with disabilities and to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, MTU operates lift-equipped buses on its regular fixed route system. La Crosse County Department of Aging contracts with a private operator to provide “mini-bus” service to all residents of La Crosse County age 60 or over, or 18 and over who are disabled, or otherwise unable to use conventional mass transit if it is available. In the Cities of La Crosse

and Onalaska this service is provided on a daily basis but in other parts of the County it is available certain days of the week on a demand response door-to-door, with a hierarchy of trip purposes determining the priority for space and time.

Taxis

There are three taxi cab companies operating in the La Crosse area that will provide chauffeured taxi service from or to anywhere in the County, or to or from other destinations, with a La Crosse County starting or ending point, at market rates.

Biking

The La Crosse area has an extensive system of both on-road bicycle and off-road multipurpose facilities, especially in the more urbanized areas. The 2030 Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan describes in detail each of the off-road and on-road bicycling facilities.

On-road bicycle routes include both intracity and intercity routes, with intercity routes achieving state and national significance. On-road intracity routes tend to align with minor arterial streets in order to take advantage of signalization and connectivity. Greater directness could be achieved by following major arterials; however, those alignments are more heavily trafficked and pose a greater danger to bicyclists.

Walking

Pedestrian facilities are not mapped by most local governments in La Crosse County, including the Town of Shelby. However, the 2030 Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan makes the following generalizations about the pedestrian network:

- For the most part, the roadways in suburban and urban-fringe areas of the planning area are constructed with curb and gutter; yet, these roads generally lack sidewalks, and have a narrow, 3-ft gutter pan and/or a wide curb lane within which a pedestrian might travel (not recommended). The lack of sidewalks forces pedestrians to walk in the roadway, increasing the likelihood of pedestrian/motor vehicle crashes.
- The cities and villages have gaps in the sidewalk system or lack sidewalks entirely in their fringe areas. This is due mainly to the incorporated areas annexing unincorporated areas that were not under development requirements to provide sidewalks.

Transportation Plans

South La Crosse Transportation Study

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the La Crosse Area Planning Committee, City of La Crosse, and Town of Shelby, completed a study to identify a long-term vision for the future of South Avenue/Mormon Coulee Road.

The area under evaluation includes South Avenue/Mormon Coulee Road from the junction with Green Bay Street (by Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center) to the intersection of USH 14/61/STH 35. Two additional highway segments also will be examined:

- STH 35 from the USH 14/61/STH 35 intersection to the La Crosse County line (near Goose Island).
- USH 14/61 from the USH 14/61/STH 35 intersection to the junction with County M (near Ten Mile Hill).

Alternatives generated for the study include a Four-lane Variable Width Median, Five-lane Two-Way-Left-Turn-Lane, Hybrid Alternative, and the No-build Alternative. Major intersections with public streets were evaluated and three potential intersection options developed including a signalized intersection, two-lane roundabout, and three-lane roundabout. The potential intersection options would be contained within the mainline alternatives. It was not within the scope of this study to determine a preferred alternative.

In addition to mainline alternatives for the urban segment of the corridor, six intersection alternatives for the US 14/61/WIS 35 intersection were developed. These alternatives were developed as a system of intersections including 33rd Street, Old Town Hall Road, Riverview Drive, and Sunnyside Drive. Though each of the intersection alternatives would provide good operations at the US 14/61/WIS 35 intersection, other intersections function differently depending upon the intersection alternative.

Long Range Transportation Plan for the La Crosse Area

The La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) has completed the 2030 La Crosse and La Crescent Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan, which is the new long-range transportation plan for the La Crosse and La Crescent area, including Shelby. The plan was adopted by the LAPC on August 17, 2005. Chapter 5 of the plan contains a highly detailed analysis and description of all transportation modes available in La Crosse County. Any reader of this section of the Existing Conditions Report seeking further details should consult Chapter 5 of the Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan.

Scheduled Transportation Improvements

STH 35: According to the South La Crosse Transportation Study (September 2005), there are planned improvements to STH 35 in 2010. “The WIS 35 South corridor is tentatively scheduled for reconstruction as a four-lane facility in 2010, and is expected to exceed the WisDOT FDM threshold for a two-lane facility some time near 2025.”

US 14/61: According to the South La Crosse Transportation Study (September 2005), there is a plan to reconstruct US 14/61 to a four-lane facility, though “changes to WisDOT policy have resulted in the need to reexamine the need for implementation of the plan.”

Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations

Goals and objectives identify what the plan should accomplish. Goals are statements that describe a desired future condition, often in general terms. Objectives are statements that describe a specific future condition to be attained, to reach the established goals.

Recommendations identify the action necessary to achieve goals and objectives. For this reason, recommendations should be actionable, attainable, and specific. Not all recommendations can be achieved in the short-term, so they should be specific enough so that any individual or group wishing to achieve a stated goal can take action.

The following goals, objectives, and recommendations were jointly developed by the Town of Shelby Land Use Planning Committee and its consultants.

Transportation Goal: Maintain a safe, efficient, and economical transportation system by proactively addressing the varied vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit needs.

Objectives:

- a. Assess impact of future development on the Town and region’s transportation infrastructure.
- b. Better connect the region’s walking and biking infrastructure through trails, paths, and on-street routes.
- c. Monitor the feasibility of again participating in mass transit programs.
- d. New streets and reconditioning of existing streets will seek to implement the provisions of the adopted "Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Element" of the "La Crosse Area Long-Range Transportation Plan".

Recommendations:

1. Support and assist the work of the La Crosse Area Planning Commission (LAPC) in developing regional cooperation to provide the most cost effective public transportation countrywide.
2. Encourage cooperative transportation efforts.
3. On an annual basis, continue to review and upgrade the roads under Shelby’s jurisdiction based on safety, level of service and pavement condition criteria.
4. Improve development review to ensure that all private and public development is undertaken in a manner which minimizes increased traffic congestion and land use conflicts.
5. Traffic calming techniques should be included in all new developments where appropriate.
6. When new roads are required, minimize the use of dead end roads and cul-de-sacs whenever possible. New driveways shall continue to be regulated to ensure sufficient emergency vehicle access and to maintain safe driveway spacing standards.
7. Require developments to provide appropriate areas for future transit and transportation facilities.

8. Work with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation as they develop and make modifications to State and Federal Highways to create “limited access highways” so that their actions to promote safer travel do not mean increased speed limits on local highways.