

## 5.0 TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT



### Introduction

The Town of Buffalo's transportation system consists of local roads, low use roads, a minor arterial, and major and minor collectors. Certain areas of the town can also accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic. However, private vehicles are the primary means of transportation in, through, and around the Town of Buffalo.

### Transportation Vision

*Well-maintained local roads and county trunks serve the Town of Buffalo. Residents enjoy easy access to nearby communities via STH 22 and other connecting highways. Residents depend on their own vehicles to meet their transportation needs and use the Town's interconnecting bike trails in good weather. Residents without vehicles rely on the kindness of friends, families and neighbors. Volunteer groups (i.e. churches, etc.) and the county provide transportation opportunities for seniors and other transit dependent residents. Conflicts between vehicles and the Amish have been minimized through effective signage and education programs.*

### Inventory of Existing Transportation Facilities

Transportation facilities in the Town of Buffalo are basic facilities ranging from rural town roads to state highways. Residents enjoy easy access to town roads, county trunk highways, and STH 22. Opportunities for safe pedestrian travel are limited given a lack of sidewalks and few trail facilities to connect developed areas. Residents of the Town of Buffalo rely on their personal vehicles to meet most of their transportation needs. Other modes of transit, including light rail and air transportation are not available in the town, nor are they likely to be developed prior to 2020 given that the population and local businesses do not demand, nor can they support, these types of transportation services.

#### PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Most local roads in the Town of Buffalo have limited shoulder areas and the posted speed limits are usually more than 45 miles per hour. These conditions hamper safe pedestrian travel opportunities. Moreover, given the relatively low-density development pattern and the fact that nearly all goods and services are located several miles away in nearby cities and villages, walking to places of work, shopping or entertainment is not realistic for most residents. It is simply much easier to drive. This situation is not anticipated to

change over the planning period. As a result, people without access to vehicles face severe transportation challenges in obtaining services and employment, especially given that there is no public transportation service available in the town. Seniors and the disabled are particularly challenged to find adequate transportation.

Limited opportunities for walking and hiking exist at county park facilities located in the Town of Buffalo. In addition, if conservation and /or cluster development subdivisions are developed in the town, these developments could include multiple-use (walking, hiking, skiing) trails.

### **CYCLING OPPORTUNITIES**

As part of its *State Highway Plan 2020*, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) completed a bicycling conditions assessment in conjunction with planned state highway priority corridors, to identify key linkages in Marquette County.

The WisDOT Map provided on the next page only suggests possible bicycle routes along state, county, and local roads. Although the plan does not establish bicycle routes in these areas, routes along state highways will be included in WisDOT's State Highway 2020 Plan and WisDOT will control their development.

The WisDOT Plan Map ranked several roads in the Town of Buffalo based on their appropriateness for bicycle traffic. The road ratings are primarily based on the road width (i.e. ability to accommodate a shoulder path) and traffic volume. Secondary considerations include the percent of truck traffic and site distance restrictions. CTH O and CTH B were given a "green" rating, which indicates the best conditions for bicycling. CTH F is also identified as a potential local bicycle connection route. WisDOT indicates that STH 22 is considered undesirable for bicycle traffic because of its high speed limits and traffic volumes.

The WisDOT suggestions for bicycle paths along county and town roads are simply suggestions. Marquette County is under no obligation to adopt these suggested routes as official trail routes. Currently, **Marquette County Bike Tour Routes through the Town of Buffalo** (as identified by the Marquette County Citizens Recreation Committee, Marquette County Highway Department and Marquette County Board) **exist along Gillett Drive, 10<sup>th</sup> Road and CTH F**. Efforts are also underway to extend a 10-mile segment of **Wisconsin's Ice Age Trail** through Marquette County, between Portage and John Muir County Park. A potential route is shown on the *Transportation Network Map*.

### **RAILROAD CORRIDORS**

**One railroad line** extends into the eastern portion of the Town of Buffalo. It is owned and operated by Union Pacific Railroad. Currently, this rail corridor is in active use as a shipping route across the state of Wisconsin. There are no plans to abandon this railroad corridor. This railroad corridor route crosses STH 22, 16<sup>th</sup> Road, 17<sup>th</sup> Road, and Golden Road in the Town of Buffalo.

# Bicycling Conditions

## Marquette County





## MASS TRANSIT

Mass transit service is **not available** in the Town of Buffalo given its low density of development. Simply put, the density of development in the town cannot provide the rider ship needed to support a bus route.

There are no high-speed trains or other means of mass transit to serve residents of the Town of Buffalo. There is **no local demand** for these services and no plan exists to establish these facilities and services in the future.

The Town of Buffalo has **no plans to establish** its own transit service. Transit dependent residents of the town must rely on the assistance of friends or family, hire private transportation providers, or utilize Marquette County programs for seniors and disabled residents.

## STREETS AND HIGHWAYS

Streets and highways are classified according to their primary function, either to move vehicles or to serve adjacent land. Arterials accommodate the movement of vehicles, while local roads are designed to provide direct access to individual parcels of land. Collectors serve both local and through traffic by providing a connection between arterials and local roads. Facilities classified under the Federal Aids Secondary System (county trunks and state highways) qualify for federal aid for capital projects involving construction, reconstruction or repair. State highway aids are available to communities for construction and maintenance. Aids cannot exceed 85% of expenditures based on a 3-year average.

Principal Arterials. There are no principal arterials in the Town of Buffalo.

Minor Arterials. STH 22 is the only minor arterial road in the Town of Buffalo. STH 22 runs north and south from the City of Montello past the Columbia County line.

Major Collectors. There are several county roads in the Town of Buffalo that are classified as minor collectors. Specifically, CTH B, CTH O, CTH F and CTH CM.



*Streets and highways are classified according to their primary function, either to move vehicles or to serve adjacent land.*

- ✓ *Principal Arterials – serve interstate and interregional trips.*
- ✓ *Minor Arterials – accommodate inter-regional and inter-area traffic movements, often in conjunction with principal arterials.*
- ✓ *Major Collectors – provide service to moderate sized communities and other intra-area traffic generators. Many county trunk highways fall into this classification.*
- ✓ *Minor Collectors – these roads collect traffic from local roads and provide links to all remaining portions of smaller communities and other higher function roads.*
- ✓ *Local Roads – provide direct access to residential, commercial and industrial development.*

Minor Collectors. There are 17.4 miles of minor collectors in the Town of Buffalo. Specifically, the following roads are classified as minor collectors:

- 13<sup>th</sup> Road (between CTH O and 14<sup>th</sup> Road)
- 14<sup>th</sup> Road between CTH O and Grouse Road)
- 16<sup>th</sup> Road (between STH 22 and CTH B)
- 18<sup>th</sup> Road (between 17<sup>th</sup> Road and CTH B)
- 17<sup>th</sup> Road (between Gillett to HWY 22)
- Gem Road (between STH 22 and 14<sup>th</sup> Road)
- Gillett Road (between 17<sup>th</sup> Road and CTH B)

Local Roads. The remaining 32.5 miles of roads in the town are local. They provide access to residential, commercial and farm uses within the Town of Buffalo.

Low Use Roads. There are 2.3 miles of roads classified as low use in the Town of Buffalo. Specifically, these roads include:

- 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- 15<sup>th</sup> Lane
- 18<sup>th</sup> Court
- 14<sup>th</sup> Court
- Parks Road

All the roads described in this section are illustrated on the *Transportation Network Map*. The town does not own any road maintenance equipment, nor does the town have any plans to acquire any. All town road construction, reconstruction and improvement projects are completed by Marquette County through contract agreements with the Town of Buffalo. Other maintenance (snow removal, etc.) is handled through contracts with Marquette County and private contractors. The town plans to utilize contract services indefinitely in the future because these arrangements provide quality, timely, cost effective services for the town.

**In 2000 and 2001, Marquette County completed a series of traffic counts** at several intersections in the Town of Buffalo. Table 16 provides a summary of the information obtained.

<b>TABLE 14 TRAFFIC COUNTS</b>				
<b>Road Name</b>	<b>Date of Count</b>	<b>Daily Average</b>	<b>Weekday Average</b>	<b>Weekend Average</b>
Barry Road (east of STH 22)	Wk of 8/27/00	340	404	214
CTH F (1/10 <sup>th</sup> mile north of county line)	Wk of 9/23/01	1,109	1,224	879
CTH O (1/10 <sup>th</sup> mile east of CTH F)	Wk of 10/29/00	622	253	683
18 <sup>th</sup> Rd (1/10 <sup>th</sup> mile south CTH B)	Wk of 9/3/00	119	129	79
Grouse Rd (1/10 <sup>th</sup> mile west STH 22)	Wk of 8/27/00	111	100	131

Source: Marquette County Highway Department, 2002

## TRUCK TRANSPORTATION

There are no freight or trucking companies located in the Town of Buffalo, nor are there plans to locate such a facility in the town. These types of facilities are more likely to be established in communities having more direct access to major transportation corridors not found in the Town of Buffalo. The **primary truck route is the STH 22 corridor**, which provides a north-south travel route through the town.

## WATER TRANSPORTATION

Many residents and visitors to the Town of Buffalo utilize waterways for recreational travel along the Fox River and Grand Rivers. Therefore, continued access to these waterways for recreation and recreation-based travel is an important local priority for the future. The town believes that the available lake access is adequate to meet local demand for the next 20 years.



## AIRPORTS

There are **no airport facilities** in the Town of Buffalo and no plans to establish any such facility. The nearest major airport facilities are located in Madison (Dane County Regional Airport) and Portage (Portage Municipal Airport). Both of these airports are accessible from the Town of Buffalo via USH 39/51 and I-90/94.

## Summary of Existing Transportation Plans

### WISDOT STATE HIGHWAY PLAN 2020

Wisconsin's State Trunk Highway system, consisting of approximately 11,800 miles of roads, is aging and deteriorating at the same time traffic is increasing. In response to this critical issue, WisDOT, in partnership with its stakeholders, has developed the ***WisDOT State Highway Plan 2020***, a 21-year strategic plan which considers the highway system's current condition, analyzes future uses, assesses financial constraints and outlines strategies to address Wisconsin's preservation, traffic movement, and safety needs. The plan is updated every six years to reflect changing transportation technologies, travel demand and economic conditions in Wisconsin.

The plan only addresses STH 22 in the Town of Buffalo. This corridor is not expected to experience major congestion through 2020. As a result, no major improvements or expansions are planned. Beyond basic maintenance, the corridor is expected to remain roughly the same as it exists today over the next 20 years. In accordance with this, ***WisDOT 2002-2007 Highway Improvement Program*** for District 4, identifies the

completed STH 22 bridge replacement project as the only planned improvement through 2007.

## MARQUETTE COUNTY

The Marquette County Highway Department has a five-year plan for improvements. This plan indicates two projects in the Town of Buffalo. Specifically, the county plans to pave CTH 0 in 2004 and crack seal CTH F in 2004.

## MIDWEST REGIONAL RAIL INITIATIVE

Since 1996, the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) advanced from a series of service concepts, including increased operating speeds, train frequencies, system connectivity and high service reliability, into a well-defined vision to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century regional passenger rail system. This vision has been transformed into a transportation plan known as the Midwest Regional Rail Systems (MWRRS). The primary purpose of the MWRRS is to meet future regional travel needs through significant improvements to the level and quality of regional passenger rail service. The major MWRRS elements will improve Midwest travel. The major plan elements include:

- ✓ Use of 3,000 miles of existing rail rights-of-way to connect rural, small urban and major metropolitan areas throughout Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin.
- ✓ Operation of “hub-and-spoke” passenger rail system through Chicago to locations throughout the Midwest.
- ✓ Introduction of modern train equipment operating at speeds up to 110 mph
- ✓ Provision of multi-modal connections to improve system access
- ✓ Improvements in reliability and on-time performance

The cost to provide the improvements needed to facilitate a Chicago-Milwaukee-Minneapolis/Green Bay Route would be \$978 million, including rolling stock (i.e. passenger cars) and infrastructure improvements (i.e. track improvements). The current schedule provided in the MWRRS plan calls for the entire project to be completely on-line by 2012. The first phase of the MWRRS plan in Wisconsin calls for 110 mph rail service between Madison and Milwaukee, and continuing to Chicago by 2003.





## EAST CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

The East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) has adopted a transportation goal and supporting objectives, which it uses to evaluate transportation plans developed in the area. As part of the comprehensive planning process, these goals were reviewed to ensure consistency with the *Town of Buffalo Comprehensive Plan*. Many of the ECWRPC goals relate to services and facilities that are not available in the Town of Buffalo (i.e. airports, etc.).



The overall goal for the regional transportation program is “to provide a safe, efficient and environmentally sound transportation system that provides personal mobility for all segments of the population and supports the economy of the region.” This statement is consistent with the vision and goals set forth by the Town of Buffalo. To support this goal, the ECWRPC has outlined a series of objectives pertaining to: integrated planning, maximum street effectiveness, an efficient street and highway system, safety, minimum environmental disruption, compatibility with land use patterns, conservation of energy, and multi-modal interaction. Each of these objectives is addressed to the fullest extent practical in this chapter of the *Town of Buffalo Comprehensive Plan*.

### PASER RATING SYSTEM REPORT<sup>1</sup>

In 2001, the Town of Buffalo had the Marquette County Highway Department complete its Pavement Surface Evaluation and Ratings (PASER) for all town roads in accordance with WisDOT requirements. PASER is a visual inspection system to develop a condition rating for community roads. PASER is an important tool for smaller government unit planning because it gives a picture of road conditions on all roads and can identify candidates for maintenance and rehabilitation. Surface defects, cracking and potholes are all examined during a typical PASER evaluation. Roads are rated 1 – 10 based on their condition.



- Rating 9 & 10 no maintenance required
- Rating 7 & 8 routine maintenance, crack sealing and minor patching
- Rating 5 & 6 preservative treatments (seal coating)
- Rating 3 & 4 structural improvement and leveling (overlay or recycling)
- Rating 1 & 2 reconstruction

<sup>1</sup> A detailed summary of the 2001 Town of Buffalo PASER results and a map are provided as an appendix to this plan.

Table 17 provides the total number of miles of roadway in the town by each PASER ranking. In total there are **52.34 miles of roads in the Town of Buffalo that were evaluated, 0.25 miles of which are gravel. The majority of town roads rated as a 3 in the PASER results.**

<b>TABLE 15 MILES OF ROADWAY BY PASER RATINGS</b>	
<b>PASER RANK</b>	<b>TOTAL MILES OF ROAD</b>
1	0
2	2.15
3	24.00
4	10.93
5	2.84
6	0
7	1.27
8	8.04
9	3.11
10	0

Source: 2001 PASER Rating System Report, Town of Buffalo

**According to the PASER manual, it is recommended that communities strive to attain a rating of 7 for all paved roads, and a rating of 3 for unpaved roads.**

Likewise, the Town of Buffalo places a strong priority on maintaining local roads. To achieve this goal, a representative of the Marquette County Highway Department conducts an annual review of all town roads. The result of the process is an accurate assessment of conditions and an identification of improvement priorities. This system has worked well for the town for many years.

If, in the future, the town decides that additional tools are necessary to determine the best course of action with respect to annual road improvements to maximize available funds, it is recommended that the town further analyze its PASER results using PASERWARE. This software program is designed to help communities consider different scenarios for extending their money with respect to road maintenance and improvements. Using PASERWARE, a community can determine what sequence of improvements is recommended to meet a certain goal (i.e. get all roads to a 7 rating). PASERWARE also will provide cost estimates for maintenance and construction projects. If desired, the town can provide the PASERWARE with the total funds available for roads in a given year, and the program will recommend ways to best spend the money to obtain the greatest return.

Based on the 2001 PASER results, the **town should also consider developing a capital improvements plan and budget** to effectively plan for road improvements in relation to other town spending needs. A capital improvements plan and budget would use the PASER or PASERWARE information to plan for road improvements in a 5 – 6 year

cycle. For additional information about capital improvement plans and budgets, refer to the Utilities and Community Facilities Element.

## **Transportation Issues and Concerns**

### **CONFLICT BETWEEN AMISH AND VEHICLE USES**

The Town of Buffalo faces a somewhat unique transportation challenge associated with the Amish population. The Amish residents rely on horse-drawn buggies to travel throughout the region. These slow-moving buggies on the narrow, winding town roads present some potential for conflict with other passing vehicles. Moreover, at horse-drawn buggies traveling at night are very difficult to see.

Complicating matters, the Amish offer crafts, homemade foods and other products for sale from their residences. This brings tourists to the area, which increases the potential for conflicts.

### **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Over the life of this plan, additional development will occur in the Town of Buffalo. In particular, STH 22 has been identified as a potential development corridor. However, too much development along STH 22 may interfere with traffic flow and create additional traffic hazards. Likewise, significant levels of additional residential development will require supporting infrastructure, including well-maintained and constructed roads. These concerns were considered when the *Future Land Use Maps* were developed.

### **TRANSPORTATION BUDGETING**

A long-standing transportation issue in the Town of Buffalo, and many other rural towns is the ever-present concern of road maintenance and improvements costs. These types of municipal activities are a major expense and can consume a large share of the limited town budget. This plan recommends strategies, including a capital improvements program and budget, to help the town to effectively budget for these costs over time.

A capital improvements program in the Town of Buffalo would serve as the town's present and near-future financial plan to match future capital improvement costs, such as roads, to anticipated revenues. The Town of Buffalo Planning Commission should be given the authority to develop and review the CIP/B, thereby linking planning to the annual budgetary process. CIP/B are usually prepared for five or six years into the future and updated annually. The CIP/B process would first identify and then prioritize capital expenditures. An estimated cost and means of financing each capital expenditure would be included as part of the process. The desired expenditures would be compared to the budget to determine annual spending priorities. The process helps to ensure that

improvements are made in a logical order and do not “surprise” town officials or taxpayers.

## **Coordination with Other Required Plan Elements**

### **ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

How do transportation facilities affect the aesthetics of the Town of Buffalo? Aesthetics refer to the “appearance and character” of an area. Generally speaking, a transportation project should reflect the aesthetics of a community. For the Town of Buffalo the aesthetic character varies significantly from one area to the next. The lakefront subdivisions have a much different character than the forested or farmland areas in other portions of the town.

The Issues and Opportunities Element establishes the framework for planning – the overall future vision – the ideal from which this plan has been developed. That vision will impact the way the town considers and approves changes to the transportation network. It will also guide their participation in activities sponsored by WisDOT. To realize the vision, and support the transportation vision presented in this chapter, the town will seek to preserve scenic areas using easements, designing road projects to fit into the natural landscape and landscaping areas where necessary to retain the rural character after road construction is completed.

### **AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

This critical question with respect to the Transportation Element and this element is: How will changes to the transportation system impact the preservation /protection of farmland and natural areas? Given that the town only has jurisdiction over town roads, the answer to this question in many areas of the Town of Buffalo will likely be dictated by actions of Marquette County and WisDOT. As a result, it will be incumbent upon town residents and leaders to continue to participate in public hearings and other opportunities for input, to ensure that local interests are realized in new road projects in farmland, undeveloped and natural areas of the Town of Buffalo.

The key is to ensure that the road network is adequate to meet the needs of local farmers and landowners, but not overbuilt to draw a substantial amount of additional residential development to farmland and natural areas. Otherwise, the result may be a loss of farmland and natural habitats to subdivision development. If not controlled, this pattern may eventually lead to additional road improvements to support new residents moving into the area.

### **UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

How will the Town of Buffalo ensure that the decisions made for the transportation system preserve the existing facilities and potentially reduce the need for expansion or realignment? The answer to this question is realized in the Land Use Element whereby

the location of future development, and associated transportation improvements, is correlated to the location of adequate utilities and community facilities.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Providing a quality transportation system is important to the success of any business. Just as businesses need good access, employees also want to be able to efficiently access places of employment and shopping areas. Lack of access to employment opportunities may affect individual decisions to seek employment or live in a community. In the Town of Buffalo these issues were carefully considered. The local solutions to these issues are reflected on the *Future Land Use Maps*.

## **LAND USE**

While transportation improvements generally respond to changes in land use, they also have the potential to directly and indirectly affect land development either by inducing new development or altering the pattern of existing development. However, land use changes are dependent on other factors as well. These include local plans, zoning, taxation, and the provision of public services.

What steps will be taken to ensure that transportation decisions and land use decisions are compatible? Although transportation is not the only influence on land use, it is important to be aware that decisions regarding the transportation system may impact land use both directly and indirectly. Therefore, efforts were made to plan accordingly for land uses along STH 22 and other developing areas of the town. These considerations and other are reflected on the *Future Land Use Maps*.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Through the development of a capital improvements plan and budget the associated costs of the transportation element can be addressed. The town's capital improvements plan and budget will seek to not only plan for town expenditures but also to locate grant and low interest loan opportunities that may exist to fund needed improvements.

## **Goals and Objectives**

It is the goal of the Town of Buffalo that residents will enjoy safe roads with minimal traffic congestion and safe bike/pedestrian routes and trails. Because the Town of Buffalo has a minimal amount of control over county roads and state highways, the goals in this section are related to actions that the town can control. The Town of Buffalo will work, in accordance with the Intergovernmental Cooperation Element of the Wisconsin "Smart Growth" Law, with Marquette County and WisDOT to ensure that adequate community transportation facilities are available to serve the area.

## **GOALS**

1. To maintain and improve town roads in a timely and well planned manner.

2. Seek to expand opportunities for alternative transportation in the Town of Buffalo.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. Develop a Capital Improvements Plan and Budget (CIP/B) to coordinate and plan for annual roadway improvements and maintenance as well as and other capital improvements.
2. Coordinate with Marquette County to ensure that proposed trail routes, road improvements and other transportation facilities outlined in the Marquette County Transportation Element of the County Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan are completed in the Town of Buffalo in a coordinated fashion with the visions, goals and objectives expressed in this plan.
3. Develop a local policy to support access control standards to limit ingress and egress from county roads in order to protect the function of these corridors.
4. Annually review accident reports for the town to identify priorities for town transportation improvements to protect public safety.
5. As part of the Town's effort to develop a subdivision ordinance, seek to ensure that the residential road design standards are adequate for legal speeds, sizes and weights of vehicles, but also consider ways to minimize overall road width to promote slower speeds, enhance rural character, minimize runoff and limit adverse impacts on natural areas.
6. Using the future land use plan as a guide, seek to prevent the location of roadways through environmentally sensitive lands in the Town of Buffalo.
7. Seek to protect scenic areas when constructing new or improving existing transportation facilities. To support this effort develop an inventory or catalogue, including photos, of scenic areas to be protected in the Town of Buffalo.
8. Encourage the development of bicycle and pedestrian trails, in accordance with WisDOT recommendations and the *Transportation Plan Element of the Marquette County Comprehensive Plan*.
9. To improve safety on town roads associated with potential vehicle and horse-drawn buggy conflicts:
  - a. Work with the county to post traffic hazard and warning signs as needed
  - b. Work with the county to consider lower posted speed limits in these areas as needed
  - c. Maintain ditches to improve visibility
  - d. Coordinate with the Amish community leaders to ensure that they are aware of the dangers, minimize their travel at night, and use required reflectors as needed.