Chapter 6. Transportation Plan

Introduction

The various regions of Stearns County rely heavily on transportation, but in different ways. The 1998 Comprehensive Plan divided the county into three primary regions: the urban core, the recreational/lakes area, and the rural agricultural area. The urban core and rural agricultural regions depend upon a system that will allow the efficient movement of products and raw materials to sustain economic vitality. These trips are characteristically longer and served by roadways that have high mobility and controlled access, such as Interstate 94. The lakes region is typically served by roads with greater local access.

Because of the different transportation needs of the County, it is imperative that the County's transportation system complements the geographic and economic characteristics of the County. That is, the transportation system should efficiently move raw materials and products and provide access to recreational areas while nurturing the rural agricultural character of the area that is one of the main attractions of living in Stearns County.

The purpose of the Transportation Plan is to provide the foundation for the development of a transportation system that will serve the anticipated growth and projected travel needs of the County's residents and businesses over the next 20 years. The Transportation Plan is closely related to the Land Use Plan, which establishes the underlying pattern of growth and preservation within the County. It also takes into account the transportation plans and projects of state and regional agencies and cities.

Existing Transportation Conditions

Transportation Planning Agencies

Stearns County Public Works

The Public Works Department is responsible for the construction, inspection, maintenance, and repair of the Stearns County road and bridge system, which consists of:

- 635.88 miles of County State Aid Highway (all of which is paved)
- 332.22 miles of County Road (280.88 miles of paved road, 51.34 miles of gravel road)
- 220 bridges (this includes bridges owned by townships that the County inspects)

Public Works also partners with the St. Cloud Area Planning

Organization, MnDOT, and cities and townships on road improvement projects, discussed later in this chapter.

St. Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO)

As the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for the St. Cloud area, the St. Cloud APO's participation in the Plan development is important to ensure consistency between the metropolitan area plan and county plan. Stearns County cities and townships that are part of the APO include Sartell, St. Joseph City and Township, St. Cloud, Waite Park, Brockway Township, St. Stephen, St. Wendel Township, St. Augusta, Rockville and Le Sauk Township.

The APO is responsible for maintaining a continuous, comprehensive and coordinated transportation planning process. These provisions include development of a 20-year transportation plan every four years as required by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and its successor legislation, the Safe, Affordable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The APO is also responsible for developing and maintaining a St. Cloud metro area Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Approximately two million dollars is available annually to cities and counties within the APO planning area for programming in this TIP. MnDOT and St. Cloud Metro Bus projects are also included.

The APO adopted its updated 20-year transportation plan in December 2005. The St. Cloud 2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan includes land use, socioeconomic and traffic projections, and projects proposed to provide additional capacity to the roadway system.

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)

MnDOT is responsible for interstate highways, U.S. Highways and state trunk highways, which provide cross-country routes for both regional and interstate travel. MnDOT also works with counties to designate, design and maintain the county state aid highway (CSAH) system. These roads are part of a network of about 30,000 miles of county-owned highways in Minnesota. Counties receive money from the county state-aid highway fund for the construction, improvement, and maintenance of these highways.

Stearns County is located within MnDOT's District 3, which covers all or part of thirteen counties in central Minnesota. The County is also part of the Region 7W planning area, which is part of District 3's Area Transportation Partnership. The Transportation Partnership program was established by MnDOT to provide for additional public involvement in the preparation of transportation plans and programs.

The Region 7W Transportation Policy Board sets priorities for federally-funded projects in those areas of Stearns, Sherburne, Benton and Wright Counties that are outside the St. Cloud Metropolitan Region (the APO's jurisdiction). The Board is also responsible for preparing and updating a long-range plan for Region 7W, last updated in 2005. The plan covers county and city roads classified as collectors and higher that are eligible for federal Surface Transportation Program funding.

Functional Classifications

A major element of the 1998 transportation plan was the development of a future functional classification plan for the roadways in Stearns County. The concepts and guidelines in the Federal Highway Administration's manual, *Highway Functional Classification – Concepts, Criteria and Practices,* were used to develop an updated functional classification plan for Stearns County. The proposed 1998 functional classification plan has been partially implemented to date. Current functional classifications as defined by Stearns County are shown in Figure 6.1. The following roadway and system characteristics are considered in the functional classification process:

- Trip length characteristics of the route as indicated by route length, type and size of traffic generators served, and route continuity.
- Route's ability to serve regional population centers, regional activity centers and major traffic generators.
- Route spacing to serve different functions (need to provide access and mobility functions for entire area).
- Route's ability to provide continuity through individual travelsheds or between travelsheds.
- Route's role in providing mobility or land access (number of accesses, access spacing, speed, parking, traffic control).
- Route's relationship to adjacent land uses (location of growth areas, industrial areas, and neighborhoods).

Municipalities with population greater than 5,000 are considered "urban areas" by the U.S. Census Bureau. Cities may define an urban roadway system and obtain additional funds to maintain and construct the roadway system. The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that the cities of St. Cloud, Waite Park and Sartell are the three municipalities within Stearns County with a population of more than 5,000. Population estimates for 2004 indicate that the City of St. Joseph has also exceeded the 5,000 population mark.

What are Functional Classifications?
Federal regulations require that each state classify roadways in accordance with Federal Highway Administration criteria. Functional classification defines the role each road plays within the transportation network. The functional classification hierarchy consists of Freeways, Expressways, Principal Arterials, Minor Arterials, Collectors and Local Streets.

- **Freeway:** A limited-access highway with no traffic stops and with grade-separated interchanges at major thoroughfares. Intended for high volume, high speed traffic movement between cities and across the metropolitan area. Freeways are not intended to provide direct access to adjacent land.
- **Expressway:** A limited access highway with some grade crossings and signals at major intersections. Intended for high-volume, moderate to high speed traffic across the metropolitan area with minimal access to adjacent land.
- **Primary Arterial:** A street primarily intended to provide for high volume, moderate speed traffic between major activity centers. Access to abutting property is subordinate to major traffic movement and is subject to necessary control of entrances and exits.

The boundary of the established urban area is shown in Figure 6.1. The established urban limits do not have any real impact on a route's function; however, they do trigger a change in functional classification terminology. It is common practice that major collectors and minor arterials are upgraded one classification when entering an urban area. For example, minor arterial routes normally become principal arterial routes in the urban area, and major collector routes may become minor arterial routes.

Rural and urban areas also have differences with respect to classifying collector streets. For example, in rural areas, collector routes are split into major collectors and minor collectors. Major collector routes are generally longer and connect smaller rural communities, carry intra-county traffic, and connect to arterial routes. Minor collector routes connect less developed rural areas with major collector routes and arterial routes. Within the urban area there is a single classification called urban collectors. These routes feed traffic to the arterial routes and provide important access functions to major traffic generators within the urban area.

- **Minor Arterial**: A street which augments and feeds the Principal Arterial system and is intended for moderate volume, moderate speed traffic. Access to abutting property is partially controlled.
- **Collector:** A street which collects and distributes traffic to and from local and arterial streets. Collectors are intended for low to moderate volume, low speed, and short length trips while also providing access to abutting properties. At the time a collector street is platted, it may be designated as a residential or commercial/industrial collector, depending upon the predominant land use it will serve. A commercial/industrial collector must be constructed to higher standards in order to serve truck traffic.
- **Local:** A street for low volume, low speed, and short length trips to and from abutting properties. During the platting process a local street may be designated as an industrial, commercial, high-density residential, normal residential, or low volume residential street, depending upon the predominant land use it will serve.

Jurisdictional Classifications

Roads in Stearns County fall under State, County or local jurisdiction. Interstate Highways and US Highways are also managed by MnDOT and considered part of the State system for this analysis. Road jurisdiction is shown in Figure 6.1. Primary thoroughfares and their mileage within Stearns County are:

- Interstate Highways: I-94 – 115 miles (divided)
- U.S. Highways: US 71 – 56 miles
- Minnesota Trunk Highways (TH): Highways 4, 15, 22, 23, 28, 55, 237 and 238 – 212 miles
- County State-Aid Highways (CSAH) – 635.88 miles
- County Roads (CR) – 332.22 miles

(Note that divided highways such as I-94 will be counted as two separate roadways.) Roads may fall under the jurisdiction of the State or County regardless of their location, while local roads fall under the jurisdiction of city or township. Those roads identified as Municipal State Aid routes or County State Aid Highways are eligible for state transportation funds.

Adequacy of Existing Roadways

Existing Traffic Volumes

Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes on major highways and road segments in Stearns County were collected using 2005 Traffic Volumes provided by Mn/DOT. Figure 6.2 identifies 2005

6.1 Roadway Classification and Jurisdiction

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6.2 2005 Traffic Counts

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and 2000 AADT volumes for State and County roads. Approximately 22 percent of the 2005 volumes are based on estimates from counts taken in either 2004 or 2003, while almost 78 percent of the AADT volumes listed are based on actual 2005 counts.

In general, traffic volumes tend to increase as they approach larger cities such as St. Cloud, and a significant amount of "through traffic" moves across the County along I-94. Major river crossings within the St. Cloud metropolitan area play an important part in connecting various parts of the County and region. They include TH 15, TH 23, CSAH 4, CSAH 1, CSAH 75, and CSAH 133 across the Mississippi and Sauk Rivers. To gauge changes in traffic volumes of county routes over time, both 2000 and 2005 AADT volumes of selected road segments are shown for comparison in Figure 6.2.

Congestion (Level of Service Analysis)

The St. Cloud APO determined the level of service for existing conditions and 2030 conditions for the St. Cloud metropolitan area. The APO's travel forecasting model was used to determine the level of service of each roadway segment based on the following capacity assumptions. The LOS analysis was based on Level of Service (LOS) "D" capacity thresholds. A Volume to Capacity Ratio (V/C) was then calculated for existing conditions (i.e. 2000 AADT volumes) and future conditions (i.e. 2030 travel demand model forecasts). A V/C ratio greater than 1 indicates a level of Service of E or F.

It should be noted that the St. Cloud APO is currently in the process of updating its 2030 Transportation Plan to a 2035 Transportation Plan. Therefore, much of the information from the 2030 Transportation plan will soon be outdated. However, at this time, this is the most current information available.

Planning Level Threshold Average Daily Traffic (ADT) Volumes*

Roadway Section	Threshold Volume
2-Lane Urban Street	10,000
3-Lane Urban Street	15,000
4-Lane Undivided Urban Street	20,000
4-Lane Divided Urban Street	35,000
4-Lane Expressway	40,000
6-Lane Divided Urban Street	50,000
6-Lane Expressway	55,000
4-Lane Freeway	60,000
6-Lane Freeway	100,000

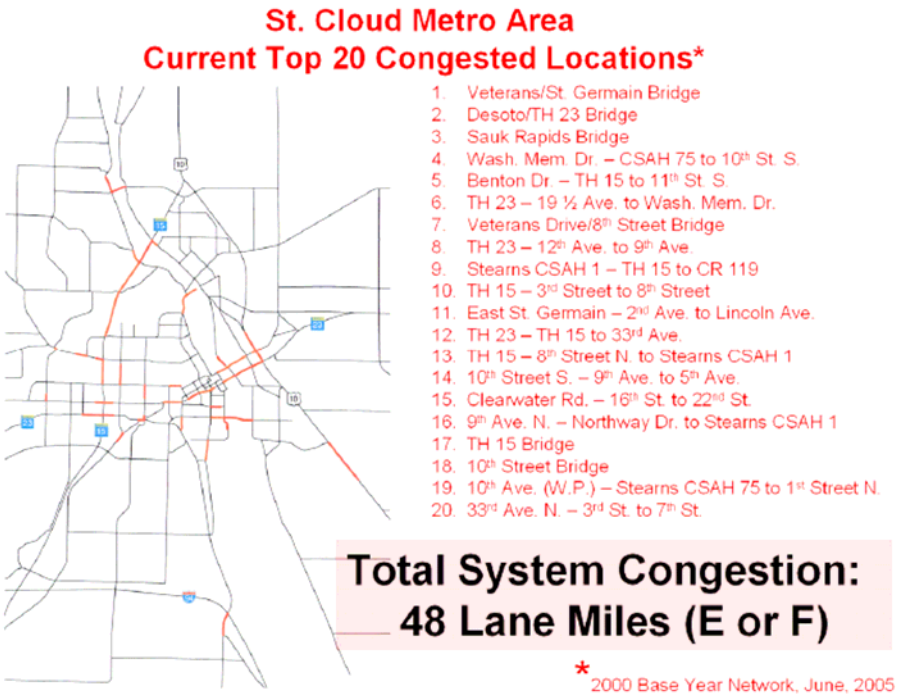
* These thresholds vary for individual roadway segments, depending upon access control, signal spacing, parking conditions, sight distance and other roadway characteristics.

Figure 6.3 presents congested locations identified by the APO in the 2030 Transportation Plan. The analysis assumes the completion of expansion projects scheduled to be completed through 2008. By identifying segments with potential congestion or operational problems, better planning decisions can be made in terms of right-of-way preservation and development of alternate routes. In addition,

access controls and other management tools can be targeted for these corridors to improve their traffic operations until major improvements are planned. The APO estimated that in the year 2000, 48 miles of Metropolitan Area Roadways were potentially congested, operating at LOS E or F.

The map highlights routes in the St. Cloud metropolitan area determined from the existing level of service analysis to be potential areas of congestion (i.e. LOS E or F).These locations have changed in some respects since the analysis in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. For example, congested segments include a much longer segment of TH 15 extending through Sartell to the river crossing, the Sauk Rapids Bridge and adjacent segment of CSAH 1. Congestion has been alleviated at some other close-in locations in Saint Cloud and Waite Park.

Figure 6.3: Congested Locations, St. Cloud Metropolitan Area (APO)



The methodology described above is a planning-level analysis, which may not be appropriate for unique traffic and/or roadway design conditions. For example, traffic conditions that do not fit the average daily traffic criteria such as summer recreational volumes and holiday travel periods are likely to produce different levels of service (congestion). Likewise, congestion relating to specific traffic operations will not appear in a planning level analysis.

In general, there are few if any capacity issues outside the metropolitan area. Spot congestion may exist in some areas and under some conditions, and roadway design and access management issues can also cause congestion. However, the type of analysis required to quantify congestion relating to specific traffic operations is outside the scope of a comprehensive plan.

Weight Restrictions

One of the key transportation elements facing rural areas is the ability to move goods economically and efficiently to and from markets. Each year, roadways throughout the County become susceptible to heavy loads as the upper roadbed layers thaw more quickly than lower layers. This results in lower pavement strength. As a result, the County restricts loads in the spring so that roadways are not damaged. Road restrictions are usually in effect from March through May, but weather conditions may extend or adjust those time periods. Notices are sent out to make truck drivers aware of any weight restrictions. Agriculture vehicles are exempt from weight restrictions if they diverge for no more than one mile from the nearest 9-ton road.

Figure 6.4 indicates Stearns County's road weight restrictions. Roads with weight capacities of seven tons or less are subject to spring weight limits. All State routes through Stearns County have ten-ton weight capacities except for TH 22 between TH 55 in Eden Valley and TH 23 in Richmond, which has a seven-ton limit during the Spring Load Restriction period.

Currently, 11 percent of County State Aid Highways are 10-ton roads, 56 percent are 9-ton and 29 percent are 7-ton (see Table X). Only two percent of designated County Roads are 10-ton roads and 47 percent are 9-ton roads. Fifty-one percent of designated County roads are 7-ton roads and thus subject to spring load restrictions. Thus, 35 percent of the County's total road system is subject to the spring load restriction.

Table 6.1: County Highway and Road System Weight Capacity Mileage

	County Roads		CSAH		Total County System	
Weight Capacity	Miles	Percent	Miles	Percent	Miles	Percent
7-ton	121.71	51%	174.93	29%	296.64	35%
9-ton	113.2	47%	359.65	60%	472.85	56%
10-ton	3.65	2%	67.01	11%	70.66	8%
Total County System	238.56	100%	601.59	100%	840.15	100%

Source: Stearns County

Figure 6.4 also shows areas of the County that are most distant from 9-ton roads (no areas are more than 3 miles from a 9-ton road). While most of these areas are agricultural or rural in character, this issue should be considered if more intense agriculture-related industry or residential development is planned for these areas. A common problem is that weight restrictions on the County road system can cause vehicles to divert to commonly less-enforced township roads, causing additional wear and tear on these roads.

Safety and Accident Analysis

Public safety is a high priority for all agencies that are responsible for improving and maintaining public transportation facilities. To determine potential safety problems in the primary study area, an accident analysis was performed using Department of Public Safety (DPS) accident records for the years 2001 through 2005. Individual crash records for the most severe crashes (i.e. fatal and incapacitating injuries) were plotted in GIS (See Figure 6.5) and higher than average crash rates were highlighted for road segments.

Crash rates are based on number of crashes per million vehicle-miles traveled, which controls for the fact that roads with higher traffic volumes will have more crashes. However, a single crash on a very lightly-traveled road can result in a calculated crash rate that may distort a road's safety problems. Therefore, Figure 6.5 shows many county or township road segments with very low traffic volumes as having high crash rates.

Table 6.2 presents the same information as Figure 6.5 classified by category of injury and road jurisdiction.

Table 6.2. Crash Data by Road Jurisdiction, 2001-2005

Classification	Property Damage	Possible Injury	Non-incapacitating	Incapacitating	Fatality
Interstate	805	209	135	11	15
US Hwy	158	38	24	2	0
State Trunk Hwy	1532	678	342	77	18
CSAH	1687	526	350	113	27
MSAH	1127	483	366	77	1
County Road	222	64	61	18	10
Township Road	134	28	20	9	5
Municipal Road	609	138	98	18	1

Source: MnDOT, URS

Access Management on the County Road System

As described in the St. Cloud APO's *2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan*, "Access management is the planning, design and implementation of land use and transportation strategies in an effort to maintain the safe flow of traffic, while accommodating the access needs of adjacent land development. Proper location and spacing of

Figure 6.4: 2006 Stearns County Road Restrictions

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Figure 6.5: 2006 Stearns County Crash Analysis

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access along roadways, a well designed local street network (serving adjacent land development), and implementation of quality control guidelines within a community will support desired development, expand the local business community market area, and sustain tax base and land values. Access management possesses the ability to enhance a community's appearance by allocating more space for landscaping while providing landowners and businesses with safe, convenient access-augmented by pedestrian and bicycle travel. In addition, it protects neighborhoods from unplanned through trips, which may postpone and/or prevent the costly practice of widening roadways."

Stearns County approved the Highway Department Access and Right-of-Way Width Guidelines in 2001. These apply to new access points (streets, subdivision entrances, field accesses and residential and nonresidential driveways. Minimum separation distances between access points range from 300 feet along collector roads to 1,250 feet along principal arterials. Access points within cities or rural townsites with reduced speed zones must be separated by at least 125 feet.

The County Guidelines also limit the number of new access points that may be permitted for any new residential development. Subdivisions with more than six homes must provide a single common access; smaller subdivisions must provide shared access points, up to a maximum of three.

The St. Cloud APO has adopted access management guidelines for the St. Cloud metropolitan area. These guidelines are shown below. Stearns County is following these guidelines within the St. Cloud metropolitan area.

APO Planning Area Access Management Guidelines

Exhibit 6B

	Urbanized				Urbanizing				Rural			
	Principal Arterial		Minor Arterial	Collector	Principal Arterial		Minor Arterial	Collector	Principal Arterial		Minor Arterial	Collector
Typical Facility Characteristics	Interstate / Freeway	Non-Freeways	4-Lane Divided, 4-Lane Undivided	4-Lane Undivided, 3-Lane, 2-Lane	Interstate / Freeway	Non-Freeways	4-Lane Divided, 4-Lane Undivided	4-Lane, 2-Lane	Interstate/ Freeway	Non-Freeway	4-Lane, 2-Lane	2- Lane
Example of Facility	I-94	T.H. 10, 15 & 23, CSAH 75	3rd St. N. 10th St So, Pinecone Rd, & Benton Dr	Lincoln Ave, 6th Ave No, Rolling Ridge Rd (SC), 18th St N (SR), & C.R. 119 (Sartell)	I-94	T.H.10, T.H. 15 & 23, CSAH 75	C.R. 1 (Benton), Golden Spike Rd, C.R. 137, C.R. 2 (St. Joseph)	65th Ave Sartell, C.R. 6 (Stearns), C.R. 121 (Stearns)	I-94	T.H. 10, 15 & 23, CSAH 75	C.R. 3 (Benton), C.R. 4 (Stearns), C.R. 8 (Sherburne)	C.R. 8 (Benton), C.R. 115 (Stearns), C.R. 3 (Sherburne)
Facility Spacing (Miles)	4 + Miles	1-4 Miles	1/3 - 1 Mile	1/4- 1/2 Mile	2-5 Miles	2-3 Miles	2/3 - 1.5 Miles	1/3 to 1 Mile	5 + Miles	3-5 Miles	2-3 Miles	2/3 - 1.5 Miles
Trip Lengths (Miles)	>10 Miles	5-10 Miles	1-5 Miles	<1 Mile	10-20 Miles	4+ Miles	2-4 Miles	1-2 Miles	20-100 Miles	15-30 Miles	10-20 Miles	5-10 Miles
Roadway ADT	20,000-70,000	15,000-50,000	10,000-30,000	<10,000	20,000-70,000	10,000-25,000	5,000-10,000	1000-5000	20,000-60,000	5,000-15,000	3,000-5,000	500-1,000
Mobility Hierarchy	Highest	Higher	High	Moderate	Highest	Higher	High	Moderate	Highest	Higher	High	Moderate
Posted Speed Limit (MPH)	60	35-50	30-40	30	70	55-65	35-45	30	70	55-65	35-55	35-55
Large Trucks	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted
Accessibility Hierarchy	Severely Restricted	Highly Restricted	Restricted	Permitted	Severely Restricted	Highly Restricted	Restricted	Permitted	Severely Restricted	Highly Restricted	Restricted	Permitted
Arterial Street Access Allowance	All Arterials	All Arterials	All Arterials	Non-Freeways & Minor Arterials	All Arterials	All Arterials	All Arterials	Non-Freeways & Minor Arterials	Principal Arterials & Non-Freeways	All Arterials	All Arterials	Non Freeways & Minor Arterials
Collector Street Access Allowance	None	Non-Freeway & Minor Arterials	Restricted	Unrestricted	None	Restricted	Restricted	Unrestricted	None	Restricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted
Local Street Access Allowance	None	Highly Restricted	Restricted	Unrestricted	None	None	Restricted	Unrestricted	None	None	Restricted	Unrestricted
Driveway Access Allowance	None	Highly Restricted	Restricted	Unrestricted	None	None	Restricted	Permitted	None	None	Restricted	Unrestricted
Intersection Design/Control	Interchanges Only	Interchanges / Traffic Signals	Traffic Signals	Traffic Signals, 4-Way Stop	Interchanges Only	Interchange/ Traffic Signals	Traffic Signals	4-Way Stop, X-St Stops	Interchanges Only	Interchange Traffic Signals	Traffic Signals	4-Way Stop, X- Street Stops
Signal Locations	NA	Arterials, Collectors, & Major Generators	Arterials, Collectors, & Major Generators	Non-Freeway, Minor Arterials & Other Collectors	NA	Arterials, Collectors, & Major Generators	Arterials, Collectors, & Major Generators	Arterials & Other Collectors	NA	Other Arterials, Collectors	Arterials & Collectors	Minor Arterials & Other Collectors
Signal Spacing (Feet)	NA	2310-4400'	1760-2930'	1760'	NA	4840'	2310-3665'	1760'	NA	4840'	2310-4840'	2310-4840'
Interchange Spacing (Miles)	1 Mile Minimum	1 Mile Minimum	NA	NA	1-4 Miles	1-4 Miles	NA	NA	4+ Miles	2-4 Miles	NA	NA
Right-Of-Way (feet)	300'	200'	100-120'	80'	300' +	200' +	100-150'	80'	300' +	200' +	80-120'	80'
Parking	None	None	None	Restricted	None	None	None	Restricted	None	None	None	None

NOTES
1) These guidelines are intended to reflect "Best Practices" in Access Management (IDFAI.)
2) When addressing State owned and operated facilities, please refer to MnDOT Guidelines

Transit System

The St. Cloud Metropolitan Commission (MTC) and the Tri-CAP Transit and Volunteer Driver Program are the two public transit providers in Stearns County. This section also summarizes regional bus service, park-and-carpool locations, and the planned Northstar Commuter Rail. Transit service areas are shown in Figure 6.6.

Fixed Route Transit

The Metro Bus fixed route transit system (operated by the MTC) operates in the cities of St. Cloud, Waite Park, Sauk Rapids and Sartell. Fixed route service runs Monday through Friday 6:00 a.m. to 9:45 p.m. and Saturdays from 7:45 a.m. to 6:45 p.m., with thirty and sixty minute headway schedules on 14 all-year routes and 7 seasonal routes. Twelve of the 14 all year routes operate on a timed transfer system out of the Transit Center in downtown St. Cloud. The other two routes operate out of Crossroads Shopping Center on the city's west side near TH 15. Six of the seven seasonal bus routes operate out of St. Cloud State University, operating only when SCSU is in session (September through May). The seventh is a summertime Downtown Trolley service that operates in downtown St. Cloud.

Fixed route fares were increased in November 2007 to $0.85 cash, with the $0.25 transfer fee remaining unchanged. Other fare elements were increased proportionally, including tokens, ride cards and passes. Metro Bus fares are determined largely by a long-standing policy that 20% of the overall operating expenses be paid though fare box and operating contract revenues. Future fare increases are programmed through 2008 by a fare adjustment plan adopted by Metro Bus in 2004.

The fixed route fleet consists of 36 buses, with an average age of approximately 4 years. Metro Bus expects to get 12-15 years and over 500,000 miles out of the fixed route fleet.

Dial-a-Ride Service

Metro Bus directly operates complementary paratransit service, as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act through its Dial-a-Ride system, in addition to general public services. Paratransit Service provides door-to-door service for persons with disabilities and mobility impairments. Four unique services are provided by the Dial-a-Ride system: Specialized Service, later weeknight, extended area, and Sunday services. Driver-assisted Specialized Service for persons with disabilities is available seven days a week; weekdays from 5:30 a.m. to midnight, Saturdays from 7:45 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. and Sundays from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. General public riders can also use Dial-a-Ride throughout the four-city area weeknights from 9:00 p.m. to midnight. Dial-a-Ride is also available to the general

Figure 6.6: Stearns County Transit Services

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public in extended service areas in all four cities where fixed route does not operate on weekdays and Saturdays, and is available on Sundays in all four cities.

Fares for Dial-a-Ride services range from a one-way cash fare of $1.60 through $16.00 10-Ride and $54.00 31-Day passes. Service billed to a sponsoring organization or facility through the agency fare rate is done so at the rate of $2.90 per trip. Future fare increases are programmed through 2008 by a fare adjustment plan adopted by Metro Bus in 2004.

Tri-Cap Services

Tri-County Action Programs Inc., a multi-purpose social services agency, provides public transit services to rural Stearns County. Buses and volunteer drivers are used in coordination to provide completely accessible transportation to all areas of the County. Tri-CAP Transportation offers flexible fixed route and community-based dial-a-ride service with their bus fleet. In general, most of the cities within Stearns County have service at least one day per week, with most routes starting from Sauk Centre.

Trips for passengers whose schedules do not fit with the bus service as well as those away from regular designated routes are filled by volunteer drivers. Rides can be scheduled out as far as 2 weeks in advance. For the more rural routes the schedules are not created until approximately 3 days ahead of time.

The cost for rural transportation in Benton and Stearns County is $5.00 per day for up to 2 stops (if schedule permits). The cost for in-city transportation is $1.00 per boarding. Children under 5 ride at no cost. Any Stearns County resident outside the St. Cloud Metro Bus service area may ride. Tri-CAP offers curb to curb service on most routes, although some "fixed scheduled" routes have assigned pick up locations.

Inter-City Bus Service

Inter-City Bus service is available via Greyhound Bus lines or Jefferson Bus Lines. Greyhound hubs out of the Downtown Metro Bus transit station (501 1st St. S, St. Cloud) offering two scheduled pickups to Minneapolis and Fargo. Jefferson Lines also hubs out of the Downtown Metro Bus transit station offering one scheduled pickup to Minneapolis and one to Grand Forks.

Park-and-Ride Facilities

There are currently several park-and-ride facilities for carpool commuters in Stearns County. One at St. Joseph off of 1-94 and CSAH 2, another is located in Albany off of 1-94 and CSAH 10, another is in St. Cloud at 8th St. & 54th Ave. N, and there is one in

Cold Spring South of TH 23 just east of Chapel Hill Road. The first two lots were created with the cooperation of MnDOT.

Informal park-and-ride usage is also occurring at the Holiday Station off of 1-94 and CSAH 75 in St. Cloud, and at the Travel Information Center located on TH 10 in southeast St. Cloud. Other informal park-and-ride usage is also occurring along the 1-94 corridor at Sauk Centre, Melrose, Freeport and Avon.

Northstar Corridor Commuter Rail

The Northstar Corridor is an 82-mile transportation corridor that runs along Highway 10 from the St. Cloud/Rice area to downtown Minneapolis, and is considered one of the fastest growing corridors in Minnesota and the nation. The Northstar Commuter Rail project is being developed to serve a 40-mile portion of that corridor from Big Lake to Minneapolis. Project planners hope to extend the line to the full corridor in the future.

In June 2006, $60 million in bonding authority was approved for the commuter rail line, and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) notified Congress of its intent to grant the project permission to enter final design, moving the project a major step closer to securing federal matching funds for construction. The first phase of the Northstar commuter rail line from Minneapolis to Big Lake is anticipated to be operational in 2009. A second phase of the project would extend the line to and through Saint Cloud.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails and Routes

The Section addresses the County's bike and pedestrian conditions and issues. Bicycle and pedestrian modes have increasingly become a more important part of transportation planning. While the development of multi-use trails has primarily focused on recreation, bicyclists and pedestrians need to be considered from both utilitarian and recreational trip perspectives. While biking and walking may not be viable for most utilitarian trips in the rural areas, in urban areas and towns these modes need to be considered and accommodated in the design of the transportation system at all jurisdictional levels.

The area has had some significant investments in bicycling since 1998, such as the expansion of the Lake Wobegon and Beaver Island Trails, which are eventually planned to be connected. Existing and proposed trails are shown in Figure 5.1, Parks, Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Recent trail improvements include:

- **Lake Wobegon Trail:** This 54-mile portion of the 62-mile trail, located on a former Burlington Northern rail corridor and 13 miles of the former Soo Line corridor, currently

extends from the City of St. Joseph to Sauk Centre and the Todd County line. (Eight miles of the trail is within Todd County.) The trail also extends from Albany through Holdingford to the Morrison County line where it links to the Soo Line Trail. It is used for non-motorized recreation, and for limited snowmobile use in winter. The trail was a cooperative effort using federal, state, Stearns County and foundation funds and private contributions, with the first segment opening in 1998.

- **Soo Line Corridor:** This 39-mile /485 acre abandoned rail corridor extending from the Morison County line to Brooten was acquired by Stearns County in 1999. Thirteen miles were developed as an extension of the Lake Wobegon Trail; the remaining 26 miles is currently undeveloped.

Planned regional trail improvements include:

- **The extension of the Lake Wobegon Trail** through the cities of Waite Park and St. Cloud east to the Mississippi River.
- **Future expansion of the Glacial Lakes State Trail** into the St. Cloud Metro Area. The Glacial Lakes Trail is located along on a former railroad grade, and currently extends from Willmar to Paynesville, with a planned extension to Cold Spring.
- **Soo Line Corridor**: This rail corridor is not proposed for regional trail use at present, but select segments should be developed for specific uses, including hiking, biking, horseback riding and snowmobile use.

Proposed locally-initiated trail improvements include:

- **Beaver Island Trail:** 1.5 miles of former rail corridor was purchased in Lynden Township; the trail currently is being planned between St. Cloud and Warner Lake Park;
- **Koronis Trail:** This trail is being extended around Lake Koronis, and should include a connection to the Glacial Lakes State Trail
- **Rocori Trail:** This trail is proposed to extend from Richmond (connecting to the Glacial Lakes Trail) to Rockville, and ultimately could extend to Waite Park
- **River Country Trail:** Primarily in Wright County, this trail is proposed to extend from Lion's Park in Clearwater to Warner Lake Park and the Beaver Island Trail.

The area is also along the route of the Mississippi River Trail (MRT). The MRT is a 10-state cycling route that will eventually travel over

2,000 continuous miles between the headwaters of the Mississippi at Lake Itasca and the Gulf of Mexico. For more information on the MRT, see http://www.mississippirivertrail.org.

Trails are an important parks and recreation issue, particularly in the rural areas, where trails are less likely to be used for utilitarian trip purposes (i.e. commuting, school trips, etc.).

Existing Bicycle Facilities

Listed below in Table 6.3 are existing bicycle facilities, including paths, lanes and designated routes, with an approximate breakdown of facility mileage in the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. This information is drawn from the St. Cloud APO's 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan. There are many gaps in this existing designated network, but there are also many proposed projects that will address these gaps.

Table 6.3. Existing Bicycle Facilities

Facility	Existing Facility Mileage	Proposed Facility Mileage	2030 Total Facility Mileage
Bicycle Route	74 Miles	75 Miles	149 Miles
Bicycle Lane	11 Miles	20 Miles	31 Miles
Bicycle Path	40 Miles	166 Miles	206 Miles
Total Mileage	125 Miles	261 Miles	386 Miles

Source: St. Cloud APO

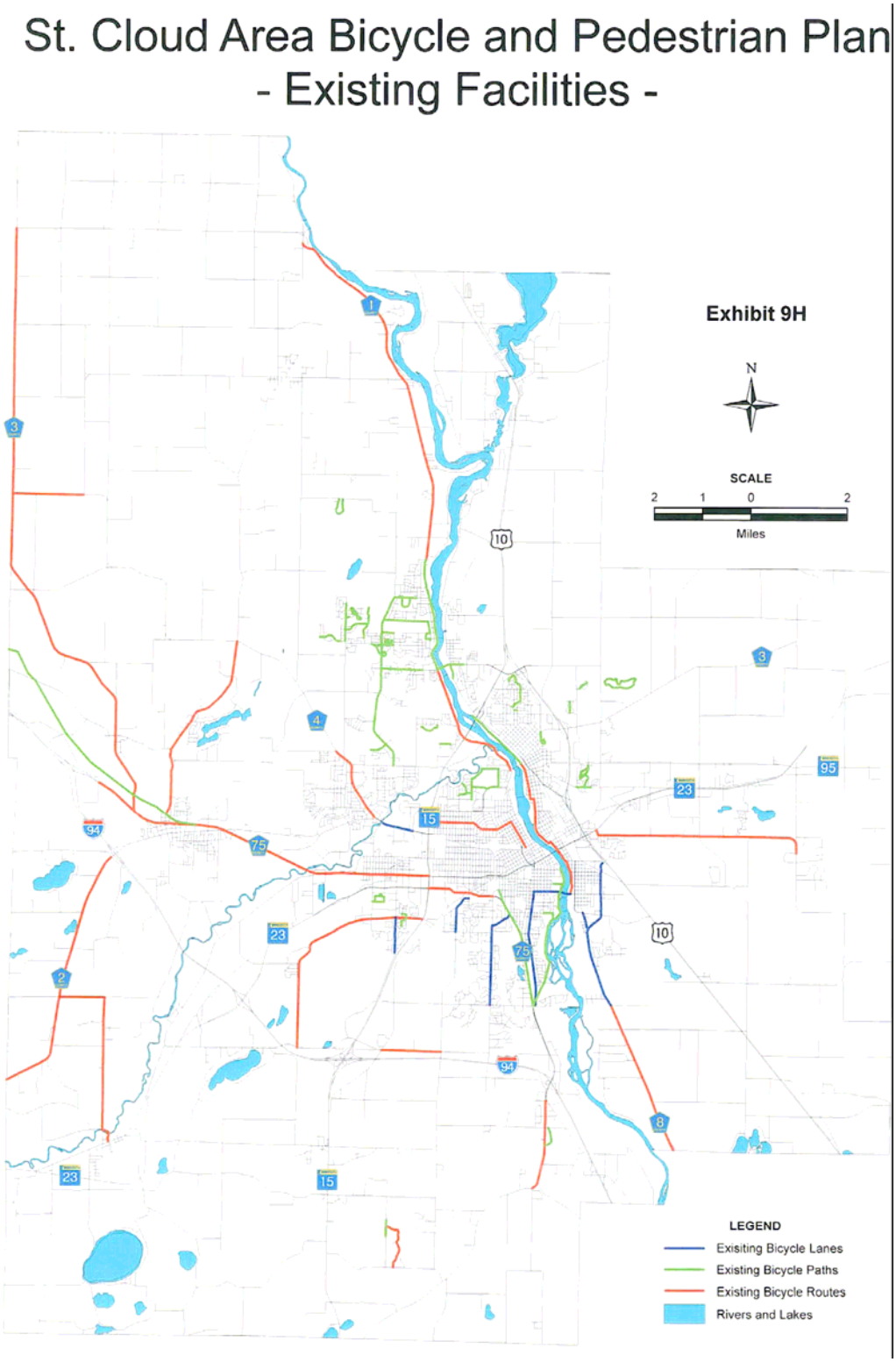
Within urban areas, the goal of bicycle and pedestrian plans is to establish the safest and most direct route to major trip generating areas, which requires looking at existing land use and transportation infrastructure. Pedestrian and bike trip generators are similar to auto trip generators. However, because many pedestrians and bicyclists are young adults and children, additional attention needs to be paid to schools, libraries, recreation centers, park and recreation areas, and residential areas.

In rural areas, wider paved shoulders can provide space separating vehicle traffic from bicyclists and pedestrians. Lower volume County roads can provide attractive rural bike routes where paved shoulders are in place. These facilities need to be reviewed with respect to existing and planned trails in order to provide system connections to trails.

Planned Facilities

Figures 6.7 and 6.8 (Exhibit 9H and 9I) are from the St. Cloud 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and show existing designated bikeways and the proposed bikeway facilities that the individual jurisdictions have identified in the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area.

Figure 6.7


St. Cloud Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Existing Facilities -
Exhibit 9H
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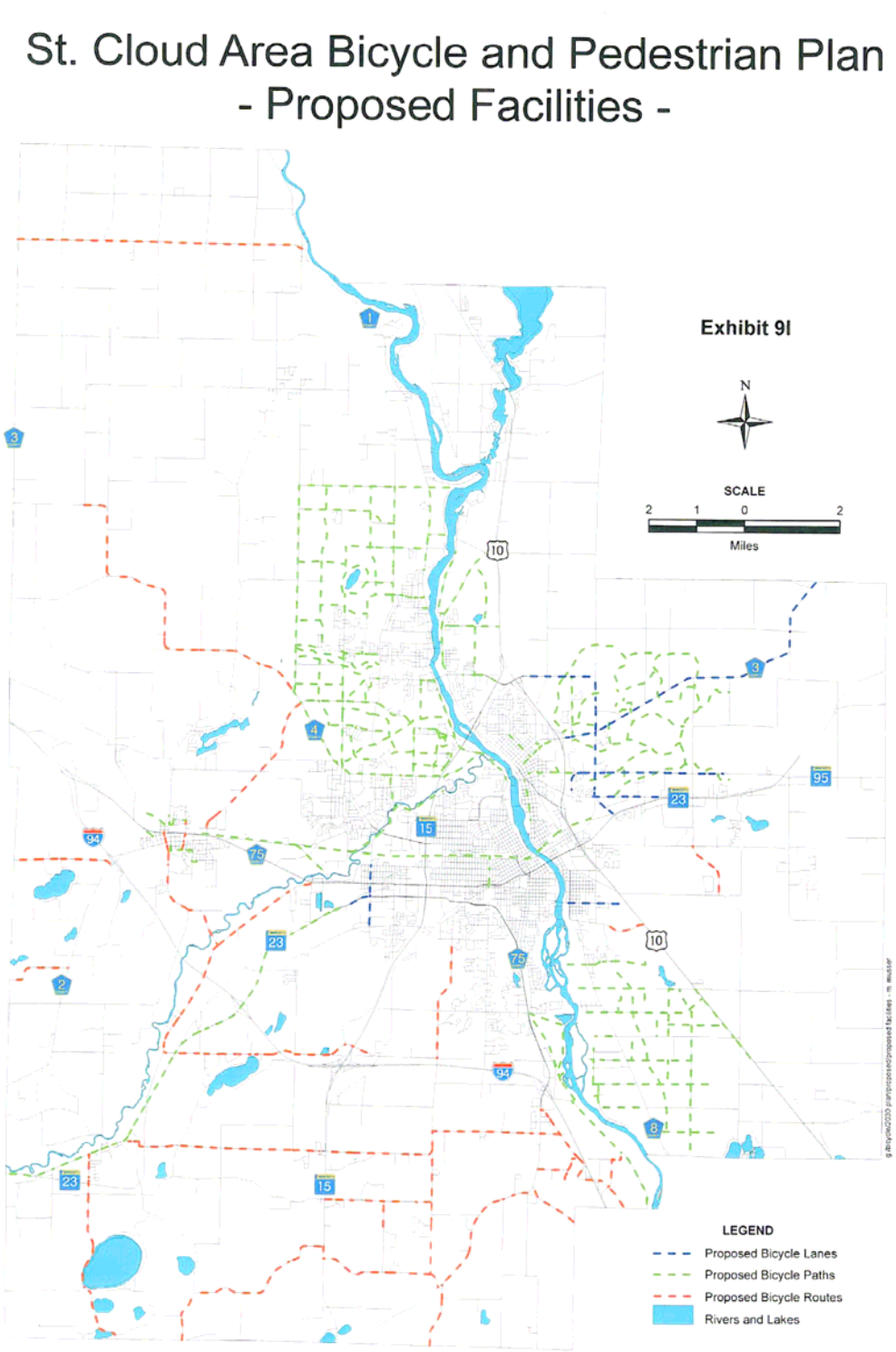
Existing Bicycle Paths
Existing Bicycle Routes
Rivers and Lakes

Figure 6.8


St. Cloud Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Proposed Facilities -
Exhibit 9I
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Miles
LEGEND
Proposed Bicycle Lanes
Proposed Bicycle Paths
Proposed Bicycle Routes
Rivers and Lakes

Trucking

In Stearns County, the major sources of truck traffic are the movement of agricultural commodities and year-round movement of commodities and manufactured goods by over-the-road trucks. Trucking, manufacturing, and wholesale businesses with more than 75 employees can be expected to generate substantial truck traffic. The majority of these are located along the I-94, TH 23 and CSAH 75 corridors or in the St. Cloud metro area. Routes that are heavily used by trucks include Interstate 94, TH 15, TH 23, TH 28 and TH 71.

Stearns County does not have specified truck routes. Seasonal weight restrictions, discussed previously, may hinder truck uses during the spring. However, some municipalities may have designated truck routes, which direct trucks to more appropriate routes.

Railroads

The Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad are the two railroads that operate within Stearns County (see Figure 6.9). The main line of the CP railroad runs along the southern edge of Stearns County. In 1998, the CP averaged 14 trains per day, transporting a variety of goods such as agricultural products, ballasts, lumber, grain and coal. The BNSF railroad runs between St. Cloud and St. Joseph and St. Cloud and Cold Spring. In 1998, these lines were active two to three times a week, carrying granite, gas and fertilizer.

The Lake Wobegon Trail was initially developed along the former Ottertail Valley Railroad alignment between Avon and Sauk Centre. It has now expanded to include the former BNSF line between Avon and St. Joseph and the former CP line between Albany, Holdingford and the Stearns County line. The Ottertail Valley Railroad between the City of Avon and the northwest Stearns County line has also been developed as an extension of the Lake Wobegon Trail.

Other abandoned railroad lines include the CP line between Brooten and Genola and the BNSF lines between Cold Spring and west of Paynesville.

Aviation

There are four general aviation airports, heliports or approved airstrips within Stearns County (see Figure 6.9) including:

Public airports

- Brooten Municipal Airport
- Paynesville Regional Airport
- Sauk Centre Municipal Airport
- Saint Cloud Hospital Heliport

There are also a number of private air strips, but these are not officially designated as such by MnDOT. These include:

- Don's Landing Field
- Fedor Airport
- Guggenberger Airport
- Skalicky Airstrip
- Thens Airstrip

The St. Cloud Regional Airport, owned and operated by the City of St. Cloud, is located off Trunk Highway 10, on Del Tone Road (Sherburne County Road 7) in Sherburne County. The regional airport, located 50 miles northwest of the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Area, serves as the gateway to central Minnesota for air travel. The airport is widely regarded as the fastest growing airport in the region-serving private, commercial and corporate operations.

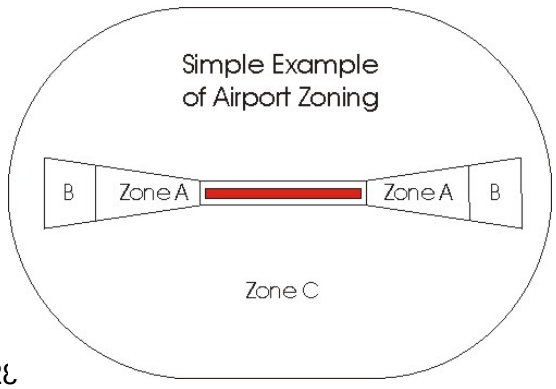
The Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport (MSP), a large metropolitan area airport offering a multitude of destinations and scheduled flights, is located about 80 miles from Saint Cloud, and serves as the primary airport for most business and leisure travel for travelers originating or destined for Stearns County.

Airport Safety Zoning

Land use safety zones and other Airport zoning standards are established in Minnesota Rules Chapter 8800.2400. Minimum Standard Zones are established to restrict land uses that may be hazardous to the operational safety of aircraft using the airport, and to protect the safety and property of people on the ground in the area near the airport. These zones are classified as Safety Zones A, B and C. All communities within these safety zones are required to adopt Airport Safety Zoning.

Typically, only low-intensity uses such as cultivation of crops are permitted in Zone A. Zone B restricts uses that involve concentrations of people, such as schools, campgrounds or hospitals. Zone C is a projection of the horizontal surface of the airspace that surrounds each public airport. A height limit applies to buildings and objects, lighting is regulated, and uses that could interfere with radio or electronic communications are restricted.

Zone C



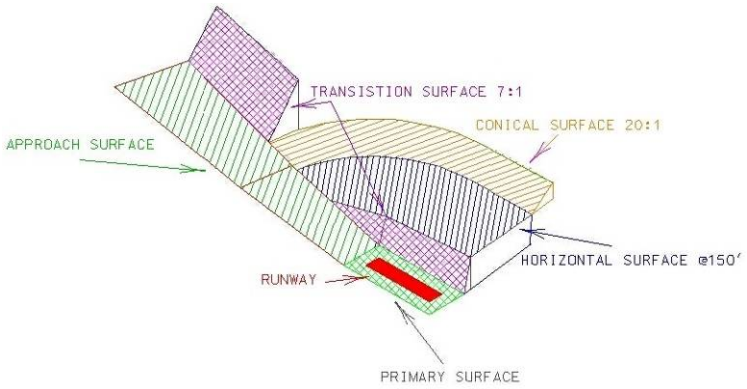


Figure 6.9: Stearns County Railroads and Airports

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Issues Identification

A major portion of the 1998 study involved identifying and discussing transportation issues, and determining how to address them in the Plan. Study issues were identified based on input from county staff, small-group meetings, public meetings, and issues raised by the consultant as part of the analysis of existing and future conditions. Most issues are related to specific roadways, but some issues pertain to other transportation modes. These issues were documented and organized into the following categories:

- Administration
- Jurisdiction
- Maintenance
- Management & Operations
- Rail
- Reconstruction/Design
- Safety
- System
- Trails
- Transit

These issues were then mapped[1] and numbers were assigned to each issue for reference and sorting. The comprehensive issues database is presented in Appendix VI-A of that Plan. Each issue included the agency with jurisdiction and primary responsibility over the issue, and a list of agencies with which to coordinate.

For this update, issues were reviewed with a focus on continuing relevance of the issue and whether the issue was one that would be most appropriately addressed through the Comprehensive Plan Update. This list has now been updated, and is included as Appendix A of this chapter.

Many issues identified in 1998 have now been addressed through the County's road improvements program. Other transportation issues relate to State highways (MnDOT responsibility) or to city streets and township roads (local government responsibility). Still other issues relate to relatively minor problems relating to traffic operations, minor roadway maintenance or design considerations. While these are important issues, they are not necessarily best addressed through the comprehensive planning process. The location of specific transportation issues and their current status are summarized in Figure 6.10.

Additional transportation issues were identified at a series of Township Cluster meetings held in five defined areas of the County (see Chapter 1) in summer of 2006. These are summarized in Appendix C.

[1] They are shown in Figure VI-7, VI-8 and VI-9 of the 1998 Plan.

Analysis of Future Transportation Needs

Forecast Traffic Volumes

Traffic forecasts, shown in Figure 6.11, were provided by the Traffic Forecasting and Analysis Section of MnDOT's Office of Transportation Data and Analysis for Trunk Highways, Municipal State Aid routes, County, and County State Aid routes, for system wide planning or district wide planning purposes. The projections are estimates calculated from annual growth rates based on ten years of historic traffic/trend analysis data. MnDOT projected average annual growth rates ranging from 0 to 4 percent. (A 4 percent annual growth rate corresponds to about a 35 percent total increase in traffic over the 25-year time period.)

It should be emphasized that traffic is a function of human activity, specifically land use changes. As development occurs in undeveloped areas, traffic increases from those new activities. Looking at historical traffic counts to predict future growth provides some indication of trends, but should be considered with reservations.

In the Saint Cloud metropolitan area, a travel demand model is used to forecast future traffic demand. These models are based on increases in population, employment, and changes in land uses resulting from growth and development. Travel demand models provide a better correlation between traffic increases resulting from growth in a community. However, because these models are data-intensive and costly, their use is difficult to justify in rural areas, where significant development and traffic increases resulting in capacity problems are generally not a problem.

6.10 Transportation Issues

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Figure 6.11: 2030 Projected Average Daily Traffic Volumes

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Future Congestion (2030 Level Of Service Analysis)

An analysis of the St. Cloud APO roadway network was performed by the APO to identify future transportation system operational deficiencies. The analysis used the APO's 2030 travel forecasting model. The analysis assumed the existing roadway network would be improved with roadway improvements that have been committed for completion through the year Fiscal Year (FY) 2008. This 2030 "augmented" network includes the following significant programmed expansion projects assumed to be in place by 2030:

- New 4-lane 44th Avenue alignment from 8th Street to 3rd Street at Waite Avenue
- New 4-lane undivided East St. Germain Street from Mississippi River to TH 10 (now complete)
- New 4-lane undivided 7th Street South from 2nd Avenue in Waite Park to West St. Germain Street in St. Cloud
- Sauk Rapids Bridge expansion to 4 lanes (now complete)

Level of service information is normally used to either plan additional capacity improvements or to manage the corridor more effectively through access controls, right-of-way preservation, setback requirements, and land use and development controls. The analysis determined the ratio of the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volume to an approximate daily roadway capacity to determine level of service. This ratio is also known as the volume to capacity ratio (V/C). A roadway with a v/c ratio that exceeds 1.0 is considered Level of Service (LOS) "E" or "F" and likely to experience congestion.

As previously mentioned, this is a regional planning-level analysis, which does not account for abnormal or atypical traffic conditions and congestion relating to specific traffic operations will not appear in a planning level analysis.

Figure 6.12 highlights routes in the St. Cloud metropolitan area forecast to be potential areas of congestion (i.e. LOS E or F) in 2030. The APO estimated that in 2030, there will be approximately 256 lane miles of roadway operating at LOS E or F in the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area.

It should be noted that the St. Cloud APO is currently in the process of updating its 2030 Transportation Plan to a 2035 Transportation Plan. Therefore, much of the information from the 2030 Transportation plan will soon be outdated. However, at this time, this is the most current information available.

Figure 6.12: 2030 Level of Service Analysis of St. Cloud Metropolitan Area (APO)

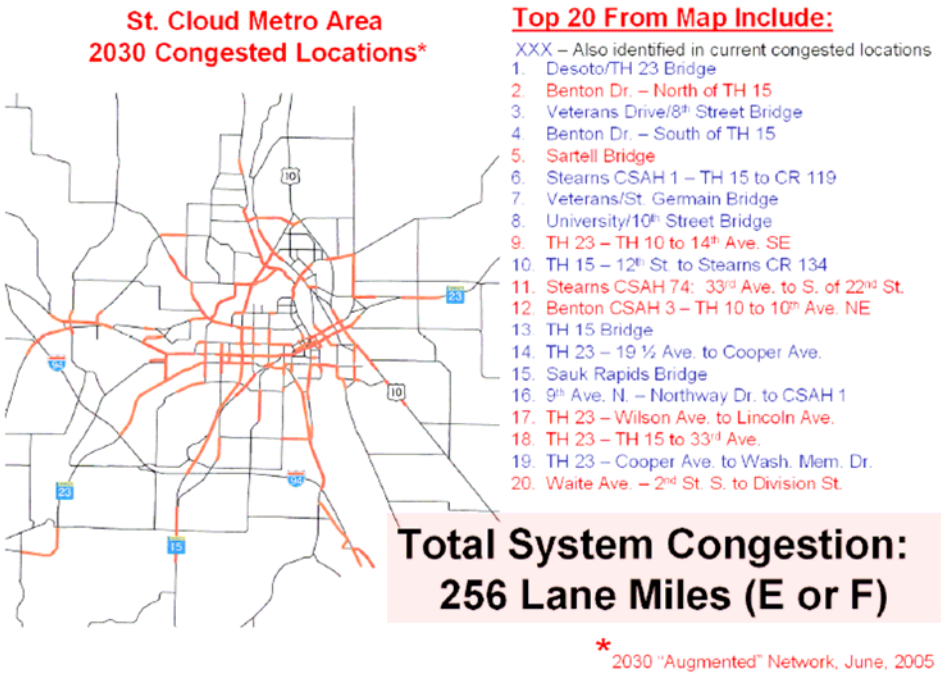

Figure 6.9 shows 2030 traffic projections based on a calculated linear trend line of historical traffic volumes. This methodology has many limitations over the standard traffic forecasting practice of travel demand modeling, which tends to be data intensive and costly. Still, this methodology does provide some indication of what could occur over a 25 year period outside of the St. Cloud metropolitan area if current trends continue. In general, a typical two-lane undivided highway has a daily capacity of around 10,000 – 15,000 vehicles per day (vpd), depending on number of access points, turning lanes, and percent of vehicles traveling in the peak period.

In general, the farther west, away from the twin cites, and St. Cloud metropolitan areas, the lower the traffic volumes. Most rural County highways and roads are forecasts to have ADTs under 1,000 vpd in 2030. Rural US and State highways generally do not have traffic forecasts surpassing 10,000 vpd. However, there are some exceptions near some of the urban centers. State highways also have shown some historical traffic growth that has translated into higher 2030 forecasts, including TH 23 between St. Cloud and Paynesville and TH 15 between St. Cloud and Kimball.

Transportation System Plan

The Relationship of Transportation and the Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan (Chapter 3) establishes policies for broad "Policy Areas" within the County. A policy area is defined as **a general area within Stearns County with distinctive characteristics, where specific policies will be applied, in addition to the land use policies that apply across the entire county.** They include geographic areas with common elements, such as the Southwest part of the County or the Avon Hills area, and highway-oriented corridors along I-94 and Highway 23.

The Land Use Plan also designates all land within the County outside of the cities into one or more land use categories. Each category is described in terms of primary uses (agricultural, residential, etc.) and density or intensity of development. It is understood that land use designations for a specific area must be closely related to the level of transportation facilities and services that are or will be provided to that area. How will these land use designations and policies affect the County's transportation system? And what changes should be made to the transportation system to encourage the pattern of development identified in the land use plan? This Transportation System Plan addresses these questions by establishing goals and objectives, general transportation policies, and specific recommendations covering several topics:

- Functional classification changes
- Jurisdictional transfers
- Roadway improvements, including improvements already planned by the APO, MnDOT and Stearns County
- Access management
- Weight restriction upgrades

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Balance mobility and access.

Objective 1: Minimize roadway congestion through system expansion

Objective 2: Ensure appropriate route spacing and functional classification.

Objective 3: Improve efficiency and minimize indirection by addressing system gaps.

Objective 4: Maintain and update access management

guidelines for County Roads.

Goal 2: Preserve the existing system.

Objective 1: Maximize the useful life of existing County Roads through a roadway preservation program.

Objective 2: Upgrade roadways to meet higher weight restrictions where feasible.

Goal 3: Maximize system safety.

Objective 1: Continue to implement safety improvements on existing and new County Roads to minimize serious injuries and fatalities.

Objective 2: Continue the policy of requiring warrants for installation of signals on County Roads.

Goal 4: Maintain a transportation system that supports county development goals and objectives.

Objective 1: Anticipate population, employment and commercial growth to ensure the necessary road system capacity.

Objective 2: Ensure that the County transportation system can support the needs of the agricultural community.

Objective 3: Identify system improvements needed to accommodate development and improve service to growth areas.

Objective 4: Provide County Road access to recreational and tourism opportunities.

Goal 5: Strive to meet the needs of the public for multiple modes of travel, including transit, bicycle and pedestrian movement.

Objective 1: Continue to expand the regional trail system, with a particular focus on trail linkages between the Metro Area and regional trails.

Objective 2: Identify transit system improvements needed to provide alternatives to single-vehicle transportation, with a particular focus on the regional corridors of I-94 and TH 23.

Objective 3: In all roadway improvement projects, consider how needs of pedestrians and bicyclists can be met through right-of-way improvements, safety improvements, and involvement of these users in the planning process.

Goal 6: Consider the social, economic and environmental impacts of road improvements.

Objective 1: Minimize societal and environmental impacts resulting from County Road improvements, to the extent possible.

Objective 2: Minimize construction and right-of-way costs and the loss of County tax base resulting from County Road improvements, to the extent possible.

Goal 7: Maximize intergovernmental cooperation and coordination.

Objective 1: Coordinate with MnDOT, the APO and local governments to resolve any differences between the County Transportation Plan and other approved transportation plans.

Objective 2: Strive to integrate the County Transportation Plan with plans of adjacent counties.

Objective 3: Coordinate with local jurisdictions to ensure that the County is given early notification of development proposals involving Stearns County highways.

Goal 8: Effectively and efficiently use available transportation funding.

Objective 1: Invest in preservation and safety improvements on the County highway system as a first priority.

Objective 2: Invest in capacity improvements on the County highway system as financial resources allow.

Goal 9: Maximize opportunities to leverage additional transportation funding.

Objective: Coordinate with the St. Cloud APO, State legislators and Congressional representatives to secure sources of additional transportation funding.

General Transportation Policies

1. County Road System Improvements. Prioritize improvements to the County road system based on projected available funds, pavement life and functional classifications, taking into account the goals and policies of the Land Use and Economic Development plans. These include:

- The transportation needs of the agricultural industry;

- Rural economic development goals;
- Natural and scenic resource protection;
- Urban and rural residential growth areas;
- Coordination with cities on their urban expansion areas;
- Service to recreational and tourism attractions.

2. Access Management Improvements. Work with cities to alleviate access problems along county roads within cities, through measures such as consolidation of access points, creation of frontage or service roads, joint site plan reviews, and coordination of city land use plans with county access management goals.

3. Intersection Improvements. Work with cities and MnDOT to consider the feasibility of modern roundabouts as alternatives to signalized or signed intersections. Roundabouts can provide significant safety benefits compared to standard intersections. The primary drawback to roundabouts is the public's unfamiliarity with driving them. Additionally, some locations have traits more desirable for roundabout installation than others. Each potential location should be examined separately to determine if a roundabout is the best alternative.[2]

4. Weight Restriction Upgrades. Work to upgrade county roads affected by weight restrictions to unrestricted status (9-ton or higher) to serve the needs of agricultural operations and agriculture-related industries. In general, roads classified as collectors and higher should receive priority for upgrades.

5. Transit Improvements. Support and encourage coordinated planning by regional transit agencies and non-profit/governmental social service agencies to enhance service to cities outside the St. Cloud urban area.

6. Bicycle, Pedestrian and Recreational Improvements. Support the creation and expansion of regional and local non-motorized trails that serve not only recreational and tourism but also daily transportation needs. Integrate bicycle and pedestrian facilities as part of County road improvement projects, whenever these projects provide connections to urban areas, community facilities such as schools or parks, or access to regional or local trails. Work with the APO Trails Advisory Committee to identify needs and provide connections to regional trails. When County roads are rebuilt, add shoulders that will accommodate bicycles where feasible. Work with the County Parks Department whenever

[2] MnDOT, "Trunk Highway 14 Roundabout Study," October 2003.

new bridges are proposed over designated canoe routes to identify potential canoe landing sites.

7. Corridor Protection. Where future roadway corridors have been identified by State, County or city agencies for improvements, Stearns County will not approve subdivisions adjacent to those corridors unless it can be demonstrated that the corridor will remain adequately protected and that access management guidelines can be met.

8. Airport Zoning. Stearns County will continue to work with cities and townships to ensure that airport zoning is adopted by all jurisdictions within airport safety zones.

Functional Classification Changes

Figure 6.1 in the first section of this chapter shows current functional classifications used by Stearns County. Comparing these classifications to those that were proposed in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, it appears that many of the recommended changes have been incorporated into the current system.

Table 6.4 indicates the County's functionally classified roadways by mileage and percentage of total miles.

Table 6.4: Functional Classification Summary

	State		County		Local		Total	
Functional Classification	**Miles**	**Percent**	**Miles**	**Percent**	**Miles**	**Percent**	**Miles**	**Percent**
Urban Principal arterial - Other freeways or expressways	3.3	1.4%	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	3.3	0.1%
Rural Principal arterial - Interstate	57.8	24.3%	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	57.8	1.9%
Urban Other Principal Arterials	5.7	2.4%	8.3	0.9%	0.0	0.0%	14.0	0.5%
Rural Principal arterial - Other	91.0	38.3%	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	91.0	2.9%
Principal Arterial Subtotal	**157.8**	**66.4%**	**8.3**	**0.9%**	**0.0**	**0.0%**	**166.1**	**5.4%**
Urban Minor arterial	0.0	0.0%	38.2	3.9%	36.5	1.9%	74.7	2.4%
Rural Minor arterial	32.4	13.6%	63.6	6.5%	0.4	0.0%	96.4	3.1%
Minor Arterials Subtotal	**32.4**	**13.6%**	**101.8**	**10.5%**	**36.9**	**2.0%**	**171.1**	**5.5%**
Urban Collector	0.0	0.0%	1.8	0.2%	23.1	1.2%	24.9	0.8%
Rural Major collector	46.4	19.5%	342.6	35.2%	3.0	0.2%	392.0	12.7%
Rural Minor collector	0.0	0.0%	253.5	26.0%	18.1	1.0%	271.6	8.8%
Collectors Subtotal	**46.4**	**19.5%**	**597.9**	**61.4%**	**44.2**	**2.3%**	**688.5**	**22.3%**
Urban Local	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	209.7	11.1%	209.7	6.8%
Rural Local	0.9	0.4%	265.7	27.3%	1592.2	84.6%	1858.8	60.1%
Local Subtotal	**0.9**	**0.4%**	**265.7**	**27.3%**	**1801.9**	**95.7%**	**2068.5**	**66.9%**
GRAND TOTAL	**237.5**	**100.0%**	**973.7**	**100.0%**	**1883.0**	**100.0%**	**3094.2**	**100.0%**
Jurisdiction Percent	8%		31%		61%		100%	

FHWA Recommended Targets:

- Total Rural Principal Arterials:..... 2% to 4%

- Total Rural Principal and Minor Arterials: .6% to 12%
- Total Rural Collectors: ..... 20% to 25%
- Total Rural Local: ..... 65% to 75%
- Total Urban Principal Arterials:.....2% to 4%
- Total Urban Principal and Minor Arterials: 6% to 12%
- Total Urban Collectors: ..... 20% to 25%
- Total Urban Local:..... 65% to 75%

Stearns County's future mileages are on the upper limit of these guidelines for Principal and Minor Arterials, with 11%. It should be noted that the percentages shown in Table 6.4 do not include increases in local mileage due to future development.

Figure 6.13 shows recommended changes in current functional classifications, based upon a review of the 1998 recommendations, taking into account existing development patterns and the policies of the land use plan. Most of these changes would fill gaps in the existing system of rural major and minor collectors or provide alternative parallel routes to principal arterial roads. There is an emphasis on completing the network of minor collector roads in the western third of the County, consistent with the goal of encouraging economic development in this area. These changes would be made gradually as land use changes occur and based on the level of funding available for road upgrades.

Jurisdictional Transfer Priorities

The jurisdiction of roads is an important element in the Transportation Plan because it affects a number of critical organizational functions and obligations (regulatory, maintenance, construction, and financial). The primary goal in reviewing jurisdiction is to match the function of the roadway with the organizational level that is best suited to handle the route's function. The 1998 Comprehensive Plan went through an extensive review process to identify jurisdictional transfer candidates, which is outlined below:

1. A functional classification plan was developed for the study area.
2. Jurisdictional transfer candidates were identified through small-group meetings and the functional classification study. They included only existing routes.

Guidelines were developed for route jurisdiction (1998 Plan Appendix VI-B).

Figure 6.13. Future Functional Classifications

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3. Jurisdictional transfer candidates were reviewed against the jurisdictional guidelines, and reasons for and against the jurisdictional changes were noted (1998 Plan Appendix VI-C).
4. Jurisdictional transfer candidates were prioritized according to how well they met the jurisdictional transfer guidelines. These rankings and their rationale were discussed. The transfer priorities were defined as follows:
    - Priority 1: Transfer candidate definitely meets transfer guidelines.
    - Priority 2: Transfer candidate substantially meets transfer guidelines.
    - Priority 3: Transfer candidate marginally meets transfer guidelines or the transfer candidate is dependent on future growth and development of area.
    - Priority 4: Transfer candidate does not meet transfer guidelines, and therefore is not recommended as a future transfer.

This plan update included a review of the status of the recommended jurisdictional transfers that were identified as high priorities and noted jurisdictional transfers that had occurred. The review also looked at whether the list accurately reflected current conditions, adjusting the priority of transfer where appropriate or adding roadways segments as high priorities that had not been included in the 1998 plan. Summarizing this information, it appears that:

- 7 roadway segments have been transferred. Of these, 3 were township-to-county transfers; 3 were county-to-township transfers, and one was state-to-county.
- 11 roadway segments have been added to the list
- 7 County Roads have been changed to County State Aid Highways; transfers to local jurisdictions are still pending
- 4 roadways segments have been removed from the list
- 3 County Roads have been reconstructed; transfers to local jurisdictions are still pending
- Transfers are still pending for all remaining segments; priorities have changed in a few cases.

The complete list of jurisdictional transfer priorities is included in Appendix 6B.

Roadway jurisdiction is shown in Figure 6.1 along with Functional Classification. The current mileage breakdown by jurisdiction is indicated below.

Jurisdiction	Miles	Percent
State	241	8%
County	974	31%
Local	1883	61%
Total	3097	100%

Jurisdictional transfer is a slow process and is generally not acceptable to the receiving party until a major improvement has been completed, to ensure that the jurisdiction is not inheriting a fiscal liability, at least in the immediate future. While the jurisdictional transfers recommended are logical and understandable, actual implementation of all recommendations could literally take decades, unless there is a focused effort and the political will among all participating parties to make it happen in a more timely and comprehensive manner.

Weight Restriction Upgrades

As shown in Figure 6.4, there are many areas of Stearns County that are located more than one mile from a 9-ton or higher capacity road, and several mainly north-south corridors that are two to three miles distant from the nearest unrestricted road. When comparing road capacities to the existing functional classification system, it appears that many 7-ton roads are classified as major or minor collectors. In general, roads within these classifications should receive priority for pavement upgrades. Specific road segments that cross underserved areas and would be appropriate for upgrading are:

- CSAH 17 for most of its length across the County, through Melrose, Millwood, Krain and Brockway townships
- CSAH 10 in Albany and Krain Townships
- CSAH 4 in St. Wendel Township
- CSAH 22 in Getty Township
- County Road 201 in North Fork Township
- CSAH 34 in Eden Lake Township
- CSAH 21 in Luxemburg Township

Priority Road Improvements

Road improvements within Stearns County are the responsibility of several agencies and levels of government.

- The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has responsibility for the state trunk highway system. Stearns County works with MnDOT's Region 7W (discussed on page 6-2) on planning for long-range transportation projects outside the St. Cloud Metropolitan Region.
- The Stearns County Public Works Department has responsibility for the County State-Aid Highway and County Road system.
- The St. Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO) acts as the regional planning agency for the St. Cloud Metropolitan Region. Stearns County is a member of the APO and participates in its transportation planning activities.
- City and township governments are responsible for the local street systems.

Many projects are undertaken collaboratively among state, county, city and township agencies and governments, often coordinated by the regional planning agencies – the APO and MnDOT Region 7W. This section summarizes improvements that are in the planning

stages and are likely to be completed within the time frame of this Comprehensive Plan.

County Road Improvement Projects

Stearns County Public Works programs road improvements through a Capital Improvements Plan. Figure 6.14 shows current capital improvement projects for the 2008-2012 period. As of 2007, most scheduled projects involve resurfacing or reconstruction of existing roadways. Two projects involving new construction are currently scheduled in the capital improvement program (see discussion below under Stearns County and APO Studies):

- The CSAH 2 - St. Joseph bypass, providing a direct connection between CSAH 2 at I-94 and CSAH 75 (currently scheduled for 2009).
- A new interchange at 33rd Street South and TH 15 (currently scheduled for 2011).

MnDOT Projects

Stearns County falls within MnDOT's District 3, which covers all or part of thirteen counties in central Minnesota. The district is divided into northern and southern segments; headquartered in Baxter and St. Cloud. The major ongoing project in the region is the continuing expansion and improvements to **Trunk Highway 23.** To date, TH 23 has been widened to four lanes from St. Cloud to just west of Richmond. The next phase of this project is the proposed Paynesville Bypass, discussed below.

The **Paynesville TH 23 Bypass** will primarily be funded through MnDOT's District 8, headquartered in Willmar and covering southwest Minnesota. Although Paynesville lies outside the district, the bypass is viewed as part of a key four- lane link between Willmar and St. Cloud. In February 2006, the district's Area Transportation Partnership requested $22 million in additional federal funding for the project, now planned to begin in 2009. The new alignment is planned to run north and west of the city boundary, although final details are still under discussion.

Additional major highway projects currently planned in Stearns and adjacent counties include:

- **TH 23** in downtown St. Cloud; reconstruct highway and Lake George overpass, 2009.
- **TH 24** from I-94 to U.S. Highway 10; new freeway river crossing, 2015-2023.