

# TRANSPORTATION

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

A community’s transportation network is the backbone upon which its economy, access to resources, and connectivity for inhabitants and enterprises to the region are based upon. Maintenance and repair, in addition to periodic upgrades and enhancements, are essential for retaining its function to residents, visitors, and local businesses. Understanding transportation trends is important for planning future improvements to the roadway system.

Vehicular travel is the primary form of transportation within the Town of Blaine as few other forms of transportation are available. Mass transit options are substantially limited due to the rural nature of the town.

## 3.2 FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

The Town of Blaine’s roadway network is comprised of approximately 66 miles of highways and town roads (Table 3.1). Roads within the town are classified according to their primary function and by the amount of traffic they carry. In the Town of Blaine, State Trunk Highway 35 serves as the primary corridor providing residents and visitors access to and through the town. Local roads provide routes to homes and recreational destinations both within and beyond the town. All the roads described in this section are illustrated on Map 3.1, Town of Blaine Functional Road Classification.

Functional road classifications for rural areas include principal arterials, minor arterials, major collectors, minor collectors, and local roads.

- **Principal arterials-** Serve interstate and interregional trips. These roads generally serve urban areas greater than 5,000 in population.
- **Minor arterials-** Serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators providing intra-regional and inter-regional traffic movements.
- **Major collectors-** Provide service to moderate sized communities and links traffic to nearby larger population centers.
- **Minor collectors-** Collect traffic from local roads and links them to all remaining smaller communities. All developed areas should be within a reasonable distance of collector roads.

Table 3.1: Functional Classification	
Classification	Miles
Principle arterials	0
Minor arterials	6.14
Major collectors	10.05
Minor collectors	3.13
Local roads	46.91
Total	66.23

Source: WisDOT, District 8

- **Local roads-** Provide access for travel over relatively short distances. All roads not classified as arterials or collectors are classified as local roads.

### 3.3 TRAFFIC VOLUME AND TRENDS

Table 3.2 depicts change in Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) at the one recording site on STH 35 for the time period 1982 to 2000. As is indicated in the table, traffic volume has been surveyed at only one site on STH 35 and Big McGraw Road. There has been a steady increase in traffic flow at this site over the eighteen-year period represented.

The increase in traffic in and around the Town of Blaine and throughout Burnett County can be attributed to two main factors. First, residents of the town and surrounding towns are making more frequent vehicular trips for shopping, commuting to work, and to recreational sites. Secondly, some areas of Burnett County have seen increases in the development of second homes owned by seasonal residents of the town.

	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1997	2000	Change 1982-2000*
Site 1	530	630	1050	730	900	840	920	+390

Site 1: STH 35 at Big McGraw Road

\* No counts have been taken since 2000.

### 3.4 HIGHWAY ACCESS CONTROL AND BILLBOARDS

Billboards or signs along highways can provide a convenience to the motoring public regarding upcoming commercial opportunities. However, the development of billboards can also negatively impact an areas rural character. The placement of billboards along state and county highways is managed by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Burnett County respectively. Both agencies have regulations and application processes that must be followed prior to approval and construction of billboards.

### 3.5 COMMUTING PATTERNS

A total of 66 residents 16 years and older commute to work, with the largest percent of persons (36%) commuting to the Town of Swiss for employment. Twenty-four percent commute to destinations within the Town of Blaine. Twenty-six persons also commute to multiple communities across the region. Chapter 6, Economic Development, explores more details on commuting patterns.

### 3.6 PASER ROAD EVALUATION

The Town of Blaine has completed a Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) for all town roads in accordance with WisDOT requirements. PASER is an important tool for government planning because it gives a picture of road conditions on all roads and can identify roads in the most need for maintenance and rehabilitation. Surface defects, cracking, potholes, and drainage are all examined during a typical PASER evaluation. The Town of Blaine is required to evaluate and report town road conditions to WisDOT in every odd calendar year.

### 3.7 ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Improvements to local roads are critical for maintaining an adequate and safe roadway system. Future road improvements are generally based on current road conditions with the intent to keep all roadways intact and useable. Future roadway improvements need to be flexible because of the possibility of unforeseen emergencies or disasters that may arise from year-to-year. The Town of Blaine has developed a schedule of road improvements with four scheduled road improvements over the next several years (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Scheduled Road Improvements				
Year	Road/Street	Location	Mileage	Type of Improvement
2005	North Markville Road	One mile north of N. Markville Road	1 mile	Blacktop
2005	North Markville Road	Remaining mile of N. Markville Road	1 mile	Blacktop preparation
2006	North Markville Road	Remaining mile of N. Markville Road	1 mile	Blacktop
2006	Perkins Trail	Same	NA	Blacktop preparation

### 3.8 METHODS OF TRANSPORTATION

#### Air Transportation

There are no airports located in the Town of Blaine and a total of six located in Burnett County (Table 3.4). No scheduled passenger flights are available in Burnett County. The nearest airports providing regular scheduled passenger flights to domestic and international destinations are in Duluth, Minnesota or Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. The town does not anticipate the need for an airport in the foreseeable future.

**Table 3.4: Burnett County Airports/Airfields**

<b>Airport</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Owner/Operator</b>	<b>Status</b>
Grantsburg Municipal Airport	Town of Grantsburg	Village of Grantsburg	Public
Burnett County Airport	Town of Siren	Burnett County	Public
Voyage Village Airport	Town of Jackson	Voyager Village Property Owners Assoc.	Private
Burnett Medical Heliport	Village of Grantsburg	Burnett Medical Center	Private
Alfa Hotel Airport	Town of Webster	David Littfin	Private
Circle T Airport	Town of Grantsburg	Danny Tagg	Private

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Bureau of Aeronautics, 2002

### **Airport Improvements**

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Bureau of Aeronautics Five-Year Airport Improvement Plan (2003-2007) released in October 2002 contains plans for improvements to both the Burnett County Airport and Grantsburg Municipal Airport (Table 3.5).

**Table 3.5: Scheduled Airport/Airfield Improvements**

<b>Airport</b>	<b>Type of Improvement</b>	<b>Date of Improvement</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
Burnett County Airport	EA & ALP for Runway 13/31 Extension	2004	\$30,000
	Design Recst. & Ext of Rwy and Apron Rect.	2005	\$100,000
	Recst. Rwy 13/31	2007	\$1,000,000
	Recst. & Expand Apron	2007	\$420,000
	Extend Rwy 13/31 to 5,000 ft.	2007	\$700,000
	Land Reimbursement for Rwy Extension	2007	\$100,000
<b>Total Cost</b>			<b>\$2,220,000</b>
Grantsburg Municipal Airport	Sealcoat Airfield Pavements	2004	\$50,000
	Design Runway for Extension	2006	\$50,000
	Extend Rwy 12/30 to 4000'	2007	\$500,000
	Rehab. Rwy Lighting	2007	\$180,000
	Land Reimb. For Rwy Extension	2007	\$75,000
	Develop Hanger Area & Const. Hanter Twys	2007	\$50,000
<b>Total Cost</b>			<b>\$855,000</b>

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Bureau of Aeronautics *Five-Year Airport Improvement Program*

### **Pedestrian Facilities**

There are no designated pedestrian facilities in the Town of Blaine. Most roadways have minimal shoulder areas, speed limits greater than 45 miles per hour unless posted otherwise, and some are gravel roads, which at times can cause dusty conditions. These conditions hamper safe pedestrian travel opportunities. Moreover, given the low-density development pattern, lack of commercial or industrial development, and the limited employment opportunities in the Town of Blaine, walking to places of work, shopping, or entertainment is not realistic for most residents.

The Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020 provides a statewide framework to increase walking and to promote pedestrian safety. The plan establishes goals, objectives, and actions regarding the provision of pedestrian accommodations that could be implemented locally. The plan also serves to help communities identify actions they can take to establish pedestrian travel as a viable, convenient, and safe transportation choice throughout Wisconsin. No specific recommendations to the Town of Blaine exist.

### **Bicycling Facilities**

Bicycling is limited to undesignated bicycle routes on the state, county, and town roads. The *Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020*, presents a blueprint for improving and expanding bicycle transportation routes in the state. There are no plans to expand state bicycle routes into or through the Town of Blaine.

In the Town of Blaine, STH 35, from the Douglas County line to Riverside is rated as having moderate conditions for bicycling. Most of the rural State Trunk Highway system now has a three-foot or wider paved shoulder. While shoulders were generally paved for maintenance and safety purposes, they also provide suitable accommodations for bicycle travel.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has compiled a Wisconsin State Bike Map that highlights bicycling conditions on select roadways in Wisconsin. Information on these conditions can be found at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's website, [www.dot.state.wi.us](http://www.dot.state.wi.us). Check on the "Bicycles" link for maps.

### **Railroads and Ports**

There are no rail or port services available within the Town of Blaine. The closest rail and commercial port services are located in the City of Superior, Douglas County. There are no current plans for railway expansion into the town.

### **Transit**

Currently, no bus service exists within the Town of Blaine. The closest access to commercial bus transportation is available by Greyhound Bus Lines in Duluth, MN, or Eau Claire, WI. Northwestern Taxi provides taxi service that covers an area between Blaine and Danbury.

Burnett County and the Town of Blaine are served by the Burnett County Health and Human Services, Unit on Aging Program. The Unit on Aging provides volunteer services to meet elderly and persons with disabilities, transportation needs.

### **Trucking**

The local road network and its connection to the county and state highway system provide adequate trucking access for sending and delivering products in and through the town. In the spring, the Town of Blaine imposes weight restrictions on town roads to lower the allowable weight due to the instability caused by frost and to prevent road damage. Concerns have been raised by citizen survey input and committee members regarding the damage done to forest access roads by logging trucks working in forested areas of the town.

## **Trails**

Throughout the county, there are several hundred miles of multi-use trails maintained by Burnett County and local trail user groups. This network is used most intensely during the winter months for snowmobiling and in the summer months it is used primarily by ATVs. There are six designated ATV trails in the town: Trail #18, #19, #20, #121, #151 and Corridor 41. Trails #5, #8, #925, #151 and Corridors 41 and 45 are designated for snowmobile use. Some trails may be used for both types of recreational use. Maps and further trail information can be obtained from the Burnett County Snowtrails Association, phone – 1-800-788-3164.

## **Neighborhood Designs and Mobility**

Due to the Town of Blaine being primarily rural in nature, the ability to functionally provide a full range of transportation choices to its residents has limitations. However, it is the desire of the town that when possible and financially feasible, alternative transportation modes be investigated and developed into new neighborhood designs. A number of the objectives and action statements made by the town support the overall development of a multi-modal transportation system. Due to the rural nature of the town, full implementation of a town-wide pedestrian/trail system may be difficult. Little development is anticipated in the town over the next two decades, however designs targeted to better pedestrian movement may be created and/or adapted should expanded development occur. There are currently no “main street” areas located in the town.

Transportation costs to a developer for minimum road standards can have an impact on total project development costs. The total cost saving can be significant to the developer when considering transportation access to a development, and in turn, can reduce for the town the total mileage required to maintain when designated as a town road. In the future, as commercial development may occur, the placement of frontage roads with limited access to local, county, and state roadways will minimize traffic congestion and have the potential to increase safety.

## **3.9 OTHER TRANSPORTATION PLANS AND PROGRAMS**

Several state and regional organizations develop plans and programs for the management and systematic update of transportation facilities that may include the Town of Blaine. Based on a review of these plans and programs, no land use conflicts or policy differences were identified. A listing of these plans and programs is provided below. No regional transportation plan has been developed.

### **Burnett County Road Improvement Plan**

The Burnett County Highway Department has a road construction schedule in place for scheduled county road improvements for the next seven years. There are presently no county roads in the town of Blaine.

### **Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020**

The *Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020* (1998) presents a blueprint for improving and expanding bicycle transportation routes in the state. There are no plans to expand state bicycle routes into the Town of Blaine. The WisDOT, along with the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin,

has compiled a Wisconsin State Bike Map that highlights the most favorable bicycling conditions in northern Wisconsin.

### **Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020**

This plan provides a statewide framework to increase walking and to promote pedestrian safety. The plan establishes goals, objectives, and actions regarding the provision of pedestrian accommodations that could be implemented. The plan also serves to help communities identify actions they can take to establish pedestrian travel as a viable, convenient, and safe transportation choice throughout Wisconsin.

### **Wisconsin State Highway Plan**

The *Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020* focuses on the 11,800 miles of State Trunk Highway routes in Wisconsin. The plan identifies no traffic congestion in the next 20 years on highways within the Town of Blaine.

### **Corridors 2020**

*Corridors 2020* plan sets criteria for selected routes that go beyond traditional highway planning with the intent to enhance and improve all two-lane and four-lane highways connecting cities of 5,000 inhabitants or more.

### **2003 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

The *2003 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (CEDS) provides an analysis of local conditions; identifies problems, needs, and opportunities of the ten-county region; and defines the vision, goals, and objectives of the region. Within the document, specific transportation objectives and activities have been identified on a regional basis.

### **Elderly and Disabled Transportation**

Section 5310, Wisconsin State Statute-**Elderly and Disabled Transportation Program** provides for capital assistance to be used in serving the special transportation needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities for whom public transportation services are unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate. The grants available through this program cover up to 80 percent of the cost of purchasing vehicles that will be used in specialized transportation service for elderly and/or disabled persons as well as for anyone for whom room is available in the vehicle. The town is planning to research cooperative ventures with the county to accomplish possible expansion of such programs to the town.

## **3.10 TRANSPORTATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

A set of recommended transportation goals, objectives, and actions has been developed for the Town of Blaine. Implementation of the identified actions will allow the town to achieve the identified objectives and overall goal of ensuring an appropriate transportation system for the town.

Due to the rural character of the community and its low-density development pattern, the ability of persons to travel by foot, bicycle, or other mode of transportation, other than by automobile, is very limited. This results in difficulties in implementing significant design standards for low-density developments. However, in development proposals where higher-density developments

are proposed, a compact roadway network will assist in reducing road development costs and in turn costs related to maintenance and future reconstruction.

**Goal: Develop a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system that accommodates the movement of people and goods.**

**Objective and Action Statements:**

- 1: Request that the town be given adequate input into decisions regarding snowmobile/ATV usage and trail development.
  - a. Maintain communications with all interested parties including clubs, trail developers and the county forestry department.
- 2: Investigate regulations to control the usage of boats, ski-jets, hovercraft, and floatplanes on town waters.
- 3: Continue to maintain and improve the town roadway system.
  - a. Continue to conduct PASER analyses and develop road improvement plans.
  - b. Investigate rustic road requirements for town roads.
- 4: Research road requirements for new development areas.
  - a. Develop requirements for new development areas.
- 5: Develop hiking, biking, and cross-country ski trails.
  - a. Contact appropriate agencies regarding future plans for the development of such trails.
- 6: Pursue more cooperation from federal, state, and county agencies regarding public land issues and usage.
  - a. Request that federal, state, and county agencies report to the town when changes or future plans are developed.
- 7: Investigate the possibilities of future shuttle transportation for the town.
  - a. Contact the county regarding future shuttle transportation throughout the region.
  - b. Contact pertinent agencies regarding the initiation or enhancement of shuttle transportation serving the disabled and elderly.
- 8: Inquire as to possible increase in traffic regulation enforcement in town.
  - a. Contact appropriate county departments to increase traffic regulation enforcement in the town.