

3. Transportation

The land use patterns of a community and a region are tied together by the transportation system including roadways, railroads, airlines, trails, and waterways. Residents, visitors, and commerce all rely on a dependable transportation system to function and provide linkages to areas beyond their community's borders. The town's transportation network plays a major role in the efficiency, safety, and overall desirability of the community as a place to live and work.

3.1 Existing Road System

The existing road system for the Town of Delta is illustrated on Map 3-1, Existing Transportation Facilities. The town's road configuration is irregular as influenced primarily by the natural features of the landscape. Town roads and forest roads comprise the vast majority of roadway miles, with County Roads E and H being the only exceptions.

The general traffic circulation patterns through the Town of Delta are as follows:

- ◆ County Road H provides for east/west travel in Delta, and serves as a primary transportation route. County Road H connects to County Road E to the east which then provides access to U.S. Highway 2. County Road H connects directly to U.S. Highway 2 to the west in the community of Iron River. These routes connect the town with the major regional centers of Ashland and Duluth-Superior.
- ◆ Delta-Drummond Road serves as the primary north/south route in the Town of Delta. This collector road provides connection to U.S. Highway 63 in the community of Drummond. This is an important route for travel to local schools and connects the town with the communities of Cable and Hayward to the south.
- ◆ Scenic Drive serves as a secondary east/west collector route providing access to additional developed properties around the lakes and connections to forest roads to the south.
- ◆ The remaining town roads and National Forest roads serve as local roads and provide access to resource lands and developed areas within the town.

National Forest roads are significant travel routes in the Town of Delta. Forest roads provide access for general public transportation, fire prevention and suppression, recreation, timber management, and administration of the Chequamegon National Forest. Maintenance levels for these roads are prescribed by the unit of government that has jurisdiction over them, or in cooperation between the Forest Service and the unit of government. The town maintains approximately 34 miles of roadway jointly with the U.S. Forest Service.

According to a 2002 *Roads Analysis* conducted by Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest staff, recreational use now dominates motorized traffic on National Forest roads. Nation-wide, there has been a five-fold increase in recreational use of forest roads since 1950. Logging currently accounts for only one-half of one percent of all forest road use. Trends on U.S. Forest Service

roads include increasing road closures on less traveled routes, less soil disturbance during road maintenance activities, and lack of funding to create new roads.

3.2 Road Functional/Jurisdictional Classification

The town's roads, which are the principal component of the circulation system, may be divided into three broad categories: arterial roads, collector roads, and local roads. The function that the road serves in relation to the existing traffic patterns, the adjacent land use, the land access needs, and the average daily traffic volumes determines its functional classification.

Principal Arterial Roads

Principal arterial roads serve interstate and interregional trips. These routes generally serve all urban areas greater than 5,000 population. The rural principal arterials are further subdivided into 1) Interstate highways and 2) other principal arterials. There are no principal arterials within the Town of Delta.

Minor Arterial Roads

In conjunction with the principal arterials, minor arterial roads serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators providing intra-regional and inter-area traffic movements. There are no minor arterials within the Town of Delta.

Major Collector Roads

Major collector roads provide service to moderate sized communities and other intra-area traffic generators and link those generators to nearby larger population centers or higher function routes. In the Town of Delta, County Road H and Delta-Drummond Road are major collectors.

Minor Collector Roads

Minor collector roads collect traffic from local roads and provide links to all remaining smaller communities, locally important traffic generators, and higher function roads. All developed areas should be within a reasonable distance of a collector road. Scenic Drive is a minor collector.

Local Roads

Local roads provide access to adjacent land and provide for travel over relatively short distances. All roads not classified as arterials or collectors are local roads. All roads within the town that are not classified as arterial or collector roads are classified as local roads.

Map 3-1, Existing Transportation Facilities

3.3 Traffic Volume Trends and Forecasts

Town of Delta annual average daily traffic (AADT) counts for 1994, 1997, and 2000 are provided in Table 3-1 and shown on Map 3-1. There are two sites within the town where AATD counts were performed.

Table 3-1: Annual Average Daily Traffic Counts, Town of Delta, 1994-2000

Location	1994	1997	2000	# Change 1994-00	% Change 1994-00
A CTH H, just east of Delta Drummond Road	260	300	300	40	15.4%
B CTH H, just west of Delta Drummond Road	350	390	280	-70	-20.0%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts 1994, 1997, and 2000.

Average Annual Daily Traffic counts are calculated by multiplying raw hourly traffic counts by seasonal, day-of-week, and axle adjustment factors. The daily hourly values are then averaged by hour of the day and the values are summed to create the AADT count.

3.4 Additional Modes of Transportation

Air Service

According to the Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2020, the airport nearest to the Town of Delta is located in Cable. The Cable Union Airport is classified as a Basic Utility-B airport indicating that the airport is designed to accommodate aircraft of less than 12,500 pounds gross weight, with approach speeds below 121 knots and wingspans of less than 49 feet. A transport/corporate classified airport can be found in Ashland and Hayward. The nearest airports with commercial air passenger service are Duluth International and Gogebic County Airport located in Michigan.

Rail Service

There are no rail lines in the Town of Delta.

Waterways

There are no waterways used for transportation purposes within the Town of Delta. Lake Superior and the St. Lawrence River provide an extensive waterway network for the upper Midwest, the state of Wisconsin, and the county. The Duluth/Superior Harbor is the closest large-scale harbor that handles large vessels with a primary function for shipping and economic development.

Truck Routes

The Wisconsin Truck Operator Map identifies and designates a list of qualifying highways for operation of vehicles and combinations of vehicles the overall lengths of which cannot be limited. According to the map, as provided by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, there are no officially designated highways or other state truck highways identified as being located within the Town of Delta.

Transit

There are no transit facilities or services in the Town of Delta. The only major source of public transportation in Bayfield County is the Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) system. The BART system provides on demand commuter type transportation to rural residents and links the outlying communities with the larger populated areas. Funding for the rural transportation system is divided between federal assistance (50%) and local tax base or other unrestricted state and federal funds.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes

Although there are no sidewalks or bicycle lanes maintained by the Town of Delta, biking and walking are important modes of transportation, primarily for recreational purposes. In addition to the many trails found within the Town of Delta, all roads are available to some extent for biking and walking due to low traffic levels and the rural nature of the community. Trails are described in more detail in the *Utilities and Community Facilities* element.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation *Bicycle Route Map*, County Road H is considered a bike route within the town (see Map 3-1). East of Delta-Drummond Road, County H is considered a “Best Condition Route.” To the west of this intersection, it is considered a “Moderate Condition Route.”

3.5 Planned Transportation Improvements

State Highway Projects

Bayfield County is located in Transportation District 8 of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT). According to the WDOT website, there are no studies or projects currently being planned or conducted in or near the town.

County Highway/Road Projects

The Bayfield County Highway Department has planned for future highway improvement projects in the Town of Delta. Improvements to 3.4 miles of County Road H from Hilder Lake to Finger Lake Road have been tentatively approved by the Bayfield County Highway Committee for 2005. Improvements to 6.4 miles of County Road H from U.S. Highway 2 to Eagle Lake Road would extend partially into the town. These improvements are tentatively scheduled to take place in 2006 as part of the long-range improvement plan, so this project may be revised or adjusted.

Town Road Projects

The Town of Delta utilizes the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) system and has a Multi-Year Transportation Improvement Plan in place to help prioritize road improvement needs. The current plan, which was last updated in 2008, indicates several proposed projects including:

2008–Delta Drummond road begin work on middle seven miles. Replace five culverts as needed. Gravel as needed. Pave Basswood Road Culvert. Begin base prep work on Camp One Rd LRIP project. CaCl one load applied.

2009 – Delta Drummond Road: finish work with forest service funds on both ends. Camp One Road reconstruct and pave first hill 800ft. at junction with County H.(LRIP Project). This project is on hold due to budget constraints. CaCl one loads. Gravel as needed.

2010–Replace five culverts as needed. Gravel as needed. CaCl on roads.

2011– Knutsen Road - pulverize and pave 20' wide 2.5" asphalt, saw and seal, .36 miles. Ditching on roads. Pave Delta Cemetery road. Replace five culverts as needed. Gravel as needed. CaCl on roads.

2012- Replace five culverts as needed. Gravel as needed. CaCl on roads.

See Map 4-2, Planned Community Facility and Transportation Improvements, in the *Utilities and Community Facilities* element for the approximate location of planned town road maintenance and improvement projects.

Forest Road Maintenance

National Forest Roads are maintained according to an assigned maintenance level. Maintenance levels are assigned for all roads within the National Forest in the Town of Delta, including town and county roads.

Maintenance Level 5 is assigned to roads that provide a high degree of user comfort and convenience. They are double-lane, paved, and connected to other public highways. These include County Road H, Delta-Drummond Road, and Scenic Drive.

Maintenance Level 4 is assigned to roads that provide a moderate degree of comfort and convenience. These are generally double-lane and aggregate surfaced. These include Musky Lake Road, West Delta Road, Rocky Run Road, Beck Road, and Finger Lake Road.

Maintenance Level 3 is assigned to roads that are open to travel without consideration to user comfort or convenience. They are typically single lane, spot surfaced and only appropriate for low speeds. These include North Delta Road and Canthook Lake Road.

Maintenance Levels 1 and 2 are assigned to roads that are only open to high clearance vehicles and those used as intermittent service roads. These roads may be used for transporting timber. These include all other forest roads in the Town of Delta.

3.6 Coordination with Other Transportation Plans

Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020

According to the Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020, STH 63 was classified as a non-congested corridor in 2020, assuming no capacity expansion. USH 2 was classified as having a moderate congestion level in 2020. While neither of these corridors is located within the town, a indication of a moderate congestion level may suggest that USH 2 could be a source of increased traffic volume within Delta in the future.

U.S. Forest Service Road Management Policy, 2001

The U.S. Forest Service road management policy directs the agency to “maintain a safe, environmentally sound road network that is responsive to public needs and affordable to manage.” This policy also requires that all agency decisions regarding National Forest roads that “may affect access or generate adverse environmental effects be informed by a roads analysis.”

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest completed a forest-wide roads analysis in 2002. The analysis is a planning document that assesses present road conditions, road-related issues, access needs, environmental impacts, and road costs versus benefits. This analysis is not meant to be a decision making document, but rather a tool to prioritize roads within the forest that need further evaluation. Based on the evaluation conducted within the analysis, many forest roads in the Town of Delta were rated as having high levels of potential environmental, social, and economic impacts. This suggests that many forest roads in Delta are a high priority for future management decisions that could range from changes to road maintenance plans, to planned deterioration of roads, to construction of new roads.

3.7 Transportation Goals and Objectives

Community goals are broad, value-based statements expressing public preferences for the long term (20 years or more). They specifically address key issues, opportunities, and problems that affect the community.

Objectives are more specific than goals and are measurable statements usually attainable through direct action and implementation of plan recommendations. The accomplishment of objectives contributes to fulfillment of the goal.

Goal 1) 11Provide a safe, efficient, and cost effective transportation system for the movement of people and goods throughout the community.

Supporting Objectives:

- ◆ Require developers to bear an equitable share of the costs for the improvement or construction of roads needed to serve new development.

- ◆ Continue to prepare and annually update a multi-year transportation improvement plan to identify and prioritize short-term needs, long-term needs, and funding sources for road upgrades, new roads, and other transportation facilities.

3.8 Transportation Policies and Recommendations

Policies and recommendations build on goals and objectives by providing more focused responses to the issues that the town is concerned about. Policies and recommendations become the tools that the town can use to aid in making land use decisions.

Policies identify the way in which activities are conducted in order to fulfill the goals and objectives. Policies that direct action using the words “will” or “shall” are advised to be mandatory and regulatory aspects of the implementation of *the Town of Delta Year 2030 Comprehensive Plan*. In contrast, those policies that direct action using the word “should” are advisory and intended to serve as a guide.

Recommendations are specific actions or projects that the town should be prepared to complete. The completion of these actions and projects is consistent with the town’s policies, and therefore will help the town fulfill the comprehensive plan goals and objectives.

Policies

- ◆ Developers shall bear the costs of constructing new roads to town standards as per the Policy for Minimum Highway Standards before any new road is accepted by the town.
- ◆ New roads should be designed and located in such a manner as to maintain and preserve natural topography, cover, and significant landmarks, and to preserve views and vistas.
- ◆ The Town of Delta will utilize erosion control and other appropriate best management practices when conducting road improvement work.
- ◆ Roads that serve multiple improved properties may be constructed to town standards, and private access points shall conform to the Town of Delta Driveway Ordinance.

Recommendations

1. Continue to utilize the town’s *Multi Year Transportation Improvement Plan* and the PASER system to prioritize and plan for town road improvements.

3.9 Transportation Programs

The following transportation programs are available to the Town of Delta to further the established transportation goals, objectives, and policies. The following list is not all-inclusive. Transportation programs and funding procedures will change over time, therefore the town should contact program sponsors for specific information on the listed programs.

Rustic Roads Program

The Rustic Roads System in Wisconsin is an effort to help citizens and local units of government preserve what remains of Wisconsin's scenic, lightly traveled, country roads for the leisurely enjoyment of bikers, hikers, and motorists. An officially designated Rustic Road shall continue to be under local control. The county, city, village, or town shall have the same authority over the Rustic Road as it possesses over other highways under its jurisdiction. A Rustic Road is eligible for state aids just as any other public highway. For further information visit the WisDOT's web-site.

Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) Program

The Transportation Economic Assistance program provides 50% state grants to governing bodies, private businesses, and consortiums for road, rail, harbor, and airport projects that help attract employers to Wisconsin or encourage business and industry to remain and expand in the state. Grants of up to \$1 million are available for transportation improvements that are essential for an economic development project. It must be scheduled to begin within three years, have the local government's endorsement, and benefit the public. For more information about this program, contact the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Division of Transportation Investment Management.

Transportation Enhancement Program (part of the Statewide Multi-Modal Improvement Program (SMIP))

Transportation enhancements (TE) are transportation-related activities that are designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of transportation systems. The transportation enhancements program provides for the implementation of a variety of non-traditional projects, with examples ranging from the restoration of historic transportation facilities, to bike and pedestrian facilities, to landscaping and scenic beautification, to the mitigation of water pollution from highway runoff. Most of the requests and projects awarded in Wisconsin have been for bicycle facilities. Examples of bicycle projects include multi-use trails (in greenways, former rail trails, etc.), paved shoulders, bike lanes, bicycle route signage, bicycle parking, overpasses/underpasses/bridges, and sidewalks.

Transportation enhancement activities must relate to surface transportation. Federal regulations restrict the use of funds on trails that allow motorized users, except snowmobiles. TEA 21 expanded the definition of transportation enhancements eligibility to specifically include the provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists, which had not been clearly eligible under ISTEA. Contact the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for further information.

Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER)

PASER is a simple method of rating asphalt and concrete roads on a scale of 1 to 10 and gravel roads on a scale of 1 to 5, based on visual inspection. PASER manuals and a video explain how and why roads deteriorate, and describe proper repair and replacement techniques. PASER rating can be put into PASERWARE, an easy to use pavement management software program. PASERWARE helps to inventory roads, and keep track of their PASER ratings and maintenance histories. It also helps to prioritize road maintenance and improvement needs, calculate project costs, evaluate the consequences of alternative budgets and project selection strategies, and communicate those consequences to the public and local officials. Both PASER and PASERWARE are available from the University of Wisconsin's Transportation Information Center at no charge. The Center also offers free training courses.