I. Introduction

**Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Organization**

A formal transportation planning process was first conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) in the Chippewa-Eau Claire Urban Area in 1975. All urban areas over 50,000 population that receive federal transportation funds must have a continuous, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process. In November of 1982, the Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was formally established to carry out that transportation planning process. The MPO provides a forum by which elected officials, professional transportation staff, and citizens can jointly plan the future transportation system. The MPO is comprised of representatives from the cities of Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls, and Altoona; the Village of Lake Hallie; Chippewa and Eau Claire counties; and portions of the surrounding towns of Anson, Eagle Point, Hallie, Lafayette, Tilden, and Wheaton in Chippewa County, and Brunswick, Pleasant Valley, Seymour, Union, and Washington in Eau Claire County.

The MPO’s geographical area of responsibility for transportation planning and programming is delineated by two principal boundaries, as depicted on Map 1. The Urbanized Area (UZA) Boundary originates from the 2010 Census-defined urbanized area and has been expanded upon by the MPO to include additional adjoining areas of concentrated urban development. The UZA defines the limits of eligibility for federal urban transportation funding assistance under the Urban Surface Transportation Program. The adopted 2010 Chippewa-Eau Claire UZA boundary encompasses approximately 104 square miles with an estimated population of 102,852 persons. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census).

The Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) Boundary is established for long range transportation planning purposes and encompasses the area that is presently urbanized and that area which is expected to become urbanized within the long range planning horizon. The year 2045 is the horizon date for this new planning effort. The Chippewa-Eau Claire MPA boundary for the year 2045 encompasses approximately 162 square miles with an estimated 2010 population of 111,905. Figure 1 presents the estimated distribution of area and population by minor civil division for both the UZA and MPA boundaries.

Much of the analysis for future travel demand in the MPA has been simulated by a computer model. That model uses estimates for growth in employment and households in particular traffic analysis zones (TAZs). The model uses that socioeconomic data to generate simulated traffic which is distributed on the roadway network. Those TAZs are shown in Map 2 and will be described and used further in coming chapters.
Figure 1
Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Area
Population and Area Distribution by Minor Civil Division
2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minor Civil Division</th>
<th>Population Estimates</th>
<th>Area Estimate (square miles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urbanized Area</td>
<td>Planning Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altoona (c)</td>
<td>6,698</td>
<td>6,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa Falls (c)</td>
<td>13,334</td>
<td>13,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire (c)</td>
<td>65,593</td>
<td>65,931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Hallie (v)</td>
<td>6,155</td>
<td>6,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anson (t)</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>1,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick (t)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagle Point (t)</td>
<td>1,045</td>
<td>1,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallie (t)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lafayette (t)</td>
<td>3,803</td>
<td>4,092</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pleasant Valley (t)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seymour (t)</td>
<td>1,695</td>
<td>3,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilden (t)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union (t)</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>1,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington (t)</td>
<td>3,329</td>
<td>6,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheaton (t)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>102,852</td>
<td>111,905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: U.S. Census, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The Purpose of This Update

Previously cited federal transportation legislation relative to MPO long range transportation planning requires that plans be updated every five years, but also that plans have a minimum 20-year horizon at the time of adoption. As the last plan update was made in 2010, this new plan is being produced five years later, in 2015. The new plan includes data from the 2010 decennial census that were not available for the last plan. A 30-year horizon has been adopted for this plan, out to 2045. This document serves to review and revise topics from the 2010 plan and make projections to 2045 for the metropolitan planning area. These include socioeconomic, land use, and the transportation network. By analyzing and evaluating conditions and performance indicators in the area, recommendations can be made to support the maintenance and development of the transportation system for the next 30 years. It is anticipated that this plan will be updated in 2020.
The latest federal transportation act, the FAST Act, passed in December 2015 is described in the box below. Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), the previous federal transportation act, prescribes eight broad “areas” to be considered in urbanized area long range transportation plans. They are:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight.
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements.
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
7. Promote efficient system management and operation.
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

These elements were addressed in the 2010 plan, along with sections discussing sustainability and livability and performance measures. These elements are, again, all updated in this plan, with the additional discussion of performance targets.

In December 2015, the U.S. Congress passed and President Obama signed into law the **Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act**. It is the new funding and authorization bill to govern United States federal surface transportation spending. The $305 billion, five-year bill is funded without increasing transportation user fees. (The federal gas tax was last raised in 1993.) Instead, funds were generated through changes to passport rules, Federal Reserve Bank dividends, and privatized tax collection.

The impact of the bill on the operations of Metropolitan Planning Organizations is still being determined. Several initial changes to the performance-based planning process have been identified:

- Adds two new planning factors: Resilience and Reliability, Travel and Tourism
- Requires long-range transportation plans to consider public ports and freight shippers.
- Encourages consideration of intermodal facilities that support intercity buses as part of the metropolitan and statewide planning process.

The MPO will include these planning changes in their work, amending this plan, if necessary, as guidance is issued.
Public Involvement

The metropolitan transportation planning process for the Chippewa-Eau Claire MPO has developed and adopted (October 8, 2014) a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs). The plan is consistent with all applicable federal regulations relating to the fair and equal treatment of all segments of the population. In addition to traditional public notices, input is solicited from stakeholder contacts (see Appendix A). For this update, the stakeholder contacts were notified of the plan update in its early stages. They were made aware of the 2010 plan’s availability on the WCWRPC website, and asked for any input on issues for consideration in the plan update process. They were also made aware of the availability of draft update documents, and given opportunity to review and comment. Appendix A chronicles the public involvement process employed in the development of this update of the Long Range Transportation Plan for 2045.

Public Survey

The MPO conducted an online survey to get input from the public on transportation in the metropolitan planning area. The survey was not scientific, nor are its results being used as authoritative. The survey was available from February to April, 2015. During this time, 147 members of the area completed the survey. The following are some of the key findings from the survey.

The questions asked participants about what modes of transportation they use and how well those modes met their transportation needs. The four modes that were given as options were automobile, public transit, walking, and biking. The survey asked participants for specific suggestions about how to improve transportation in the area. Participants gave input about what types of improvements would make them more likely to take public transit. Other questions asked participants about their commute to work and about how their children traveled to school. The survey also collected demographic information about participants. Charts compiled from the survey results are available in Appendix H.
When respondents were asked to select all modes of transportation they use, automobile came out far ahead, followed by walking and biking, and far behind was public transit. See Figure 2 for the results.

**Figure 2: Modes of Transportation**

![Bar chart showing the modes of transportation used by respondents.](image)

Respondents were also asked to choose one mode of transportation that was their primary mode. Automobile was the primary mode for more than three-fourths of respondents. Biking, walking, and public transit together accounted for less than 23%. See Figure 3 for the results.

**Figure 3: Primary Mode of Transportation**

![Pie chart showing the primary modes of transportation chosen by respondents.](image)
After respondents selected their primary mode of transportation, the survey directed them to questions about that mode of transportation, rather than the other modes. Questions included the following:

- How well are your needs met by the transportation system for that mode?
- How would you rate the transportation system for that mode?
- What is the most important reason you use that mode to meet your transportation needs?
- What kinds of improvements do you think are necessary for the transportation system of that mode?
- For those who did not select public transit as their primary mode, what would make you more likely to use public transit?

Charts for all these questions are included in Appendix H.

In general, respondents were satisfied with their primary mode of transportation system and the transportation system for that mode. Figure 4 shows what percentage of respondents said the transportation system for their primary mode met their needs well or very well. Drivers were the most satisfied, followed by bikers, then people who ride transit and people who walk. It is important to keep in mind that the number of people who responded about driving (114) is much higher than the people responding about public transit (7), walking (11), and biking (15).

**Figure 4: Satisfaction with Primary Transportation System**

Respondents also responded to a question about public transit. For non-transit-riders – those who selected automobile, walking, or biking as their primary mode – the question asked what improvements would make them more likely to ride public transit. The top three suggestions provided by the 131 respondents were more routes, more frequent service, and better route information. All the results can be seen in Figure 5.
Survey respondents who said public transit was their primary mode had a somewhat different set of priorities for improvement. The five respondents ranked Sunday service, more routes, and later-evening service as their top suggestions. All the results can be seen in Figure 6.
With respect to commuting, 108 respondents (79% of the total) worked outside the home or were full-time students. The distance of the commute varied considerably, as shown in Figure 7. Of the four distance categories, the largest proportion (36%) commuted 3 to 10 miles.

**Figure 7: Commute Distance**

The 108 respondents commuting to work or school had the transportation mode share shown in Figure 8. These results indicate that the survey respondents may not have been well representative of average commuters in the metropolitan area. This conclusion comes from the survey results that show 68% commute by car (62% alone, 8% by carpool), whereas results from the American Community survey indicate that 89% of commuters in the Eau Claire urbanized area go by car (81% alone, 8% by carpool).

**Figure 8: Commute Mode Share**
Finally, 36 survey respondents who had school age children answered questions about how their children travel to school. Their travel mode share is show in Figure 9. Almost 89% of parents were satisfied with the travel arrangement they had for their children.

![Figure 9: Travel Mode to School](image)

**Public Input Meeting #1**

The MPO held its first Public Input Meeting on Monday, April 13, 2015. The meeting was held in the Eau Claire Room at the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library in Eau Claire. The meeting had been advertised through the media by VolumeOne, the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram, and the Chippewa Herald. Emails were also sent out to local social service agencies, educational institutions, and government entities. Seventeen members of the public attended and signed in to provide input.

The meeting began with a presentation from Ms. Schell. She explained the meaning and purpose of the Long Range Plan update. She gave an overview of the different modes of transportation in the area and identified some of the characteristics of each. This information served to give introduction to the participants who proceeded to various stations around the room after the presentation. The stations each had a board or poster with maps and other content related to a mode of transportation or aspect of the plan. Stations were:

- Bike and Pedestrian
- Demographics
- Freight
- Goals and Objectives
- Passenger Rail
- Roads and Highways
- Transit
At each station, participants were encouraged to submit written comment in the form of suggestions, questions, comments, and observations. The complete listing of comments from this meeting can be found in Appendix H. Some comments were repeated by various participants, and some themes came up several times, including the following:

- Support for passenger rail
- Focus on road maintenance rather than new construction
- Public transportation is important for vulnerable people and a growing population
- Public transit improvements such as Sunday service and late evening service
- More bus routes, both within the Eau Claire Transit service area and beyond
  - Chippewa Falls and Lake Hallie
  - Far west side of Eau Claire, like former E12 route
  - Menomonie and Elk Mound
  - More service to Altoona
- Connect the Old Abe Bike Trail between Lake Hallie and Chippewa Falls
- Use a Complete Streets approach: make streets safer to ride on and cross
- Build more designated trails and sidepaths
- Improve wayfinding, signage, and maps (a metropolitan bike map has subsequently been completed)

Public Meeting #2

The MPO held its second Public Input Meeting on Monday, January 18, 2016. The meeting was held in the Eau Claire Room at the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library in Eau Claire. The meeting had been advertised through the media by VolumeOne, the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram, the Chippewa Herald, and WQOW TV news. Emails were also sent out to local social service agencies, educational institutions, and government entities. Fourteen members of the public attended and signed in to provide input.

The purpose of this meeting was to get feedback on the recommendations that had been developed for the plan. Mr. Duba gave a presentation explaining the Long Range Transportation Plan process and then summarized the recommendations for the various modes of transportation. There was some Q&A and then participants were encouraged to review information boards and the posters with the recommendations. Comments included:

- Climate change and the need to reduce fossil fuel use: 3 comments
- Biking and pedestrian improvements to connect trails, make the Oakwood Mall area safer, cross West Clairemont, and improve roundabouts for blind people
- Public Transportation to connect Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire (by bus and/or rail), improve access to healthcare facilities, improve rural transit into cities, enhance transit rider training, recognize the future demand that a growing aging population will place on the public transit system, and connect to CVTC’s Energy Education Center