Executive Summary

The Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Area encompasses approximately 162 square miles with an estimated 2010 population of 111,905 people. The planning area includes the cities of Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls, and Altoona; the Village of Lake Hallie; as well as portions of the towns of Brunswick, Pleasant Valley, Seymour, Union, and Washington in Eau Claire County; and Anson, Eagle Point, Hallie, Lafayette, Tilden, and Wheaton in Chippewa County.

Urban Growth Forecasts

Growth forecasts prepared for the planning area indicate a 23% increase in population from 2010, reaching 138,105 by the year 2045. This growth in population will equate to an additional 15,839 households during the planning period, totaling 61,306 households in 2045. Employment forecasts project growth of 50% in total employment by 2045 to reach a total of 102,346 employed people in the labor force. The combination of population and employment growth will place increased demands on the transportation system. Automotive travel represents the dominant mode of personal transportation for planning area residents, as represented by the 88.6% of workers who drive to work. Based on population growth and the increased availability of automobiles, the planning area's street and highway system will be required to accommodate an additional 16,612 automobiles by 2045. Total vehicle miles traveled in the planning area will increase by approximately 33% by 2045, reaching 4.2 million miles per day.

Other modes of transportation also contribute to the overall mobility of planning area residents. Public and private transit and paratransit, bicycling and walking are all important components of the total personal transportation picture.

Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Area
Growth Trends & Projections
2010-2045

	2010	2020	2030	2040	2045	Growth	% Change
Population	111,905	119,391	126,876	134,362	138,105	26,200	+23%
Households	45,467	49,992	54,518	53,817	61,306	15,839	+35%
Automobiles	77,533	82,279	87,025	91,772	94,145	16,613	+21%
Employment	68,016	77,825	87,633	97,442	102,346	34,330	+50%

Source: U.S. Census, 2010, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

Land Use Impacts

The projected population and employment growth will have a substantial impact on land use and development patterns in the planning area. Currently, developed land uses

occupy approximately 86,788 acres (83%) of the 104,170 acres of potentially developable land within the planning area. The most significant category of the total developed acreage is residential land use, which accounts for 38% of the Metropolitan Planning Area. Future land use projections, incorporated from municipal plans, indicate significant growth in residential, commercial, industrial, and parks land uses. These land use plans typically indicate what *could* be developed during their planning horizon, not necessarily what would be warranted by the 2045 population forecast. To meet this growth in developed land, the land devoted to the transportation system will also need to grow, though that growth should be efficient and minimal.

The continued expansion of the urban area also raises concerns over land use and growth management issues. Such issues include: the impacts of urban sprawl, the cost-efficiency of providing urban services, protection of the environment, ensuring public safety and social equality, and trying to alleviate jurisdictional problems resulting from rivalries over tax base enhancements. These issues are growing focal points for both land development and the investment in transportation infrastructure and services.

The Transportation System

The Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Area contains approximately 857 miles of streets and highways. Approximately 296 miles, or 34.5% of that road system, is comprised of higher functioning urban arterials and collectors. Traffic volumes on those streets have generally increased between 2008 and 2014, but that is not universally true. Traffic volumes vary considerably along the length of most streets, so presented here is the road's highest 2014 count:

- Hastings Way: 23,900
- Clairemont Avenue: 32,500
- Bridge Street: 16,100
- Main Street (Chippewa Falls): 8,400
- U.S. Highway 53: 41,300
- State Highway 29: 21,400
- State Highway 312: 24,700
- Interstate Highway 94: 27,900

Both vehicle miles traveled and vehicle hours traveled by motorists are expected to increase by 33% and 37%, respectively, by 2045, resulting in increased traffic congestion and a higher incidence of vehicular conflicts.

Public transit and specialized transportation services in the planning area serve the needs of both those who choose to ride transit and those who are transit-dependent. The Eau Claire Transit System and the Chippewa Falls Shared-Ride Taxi System, together, provided 1,115,777 revenue passengers rides in 2013. Both public transit and paratransit providers are facing increasing challenges in maintaining cost-efficient services due to expanding service areas and funding limitations.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities also play an important role in the personal mobility of planning area residents. Physical and man-made barriers and an incomplete network of safe routes are the primary factors restricting bicycle and pedestrian movement in the

planning area. In many instances, the lack of connecting segments and supporting facilities serve as impediments to bicycling and pedestrian use.

Other modes of transportation addressed in the Long Range Plan include passenger and freight movement by air, rail, and highway. The availability of intercity passenger travel by air or bus, as well as freight movement by air, rail, or truck, are largely influenced by external market conditions. Intercity passenger travel by air and bus, along with freight movement by air, has not experienced appreciable growth over the years. Freight rail has grown, particularly with the increase in frac sand mining and the need to ship western Wisconsin sand to hydraulic fracturing mining operations around the country, though that appears to be tapering as a result of low oil prices. Freight movement by truck, however, has grown substantially and provides 73% of the total freight tonnage shipped into or out of Eau Claire and Chippewa Counties. These trends are expected to continue, and the Chippewa-Eau Claire metropolitan planning area is well-positioned for this with its well-connected highway system.

Goals

The goals and objectives are intended to guide the development of the long range transportation plan and, ultimately, to influence the design and operation of the transportation system serving the Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Area. The goals and objectives provide the basic tenets on which the details of the implementation actions will be developed. Shown here are just the goals; the objectives are in Chapter VI, page 143.

1. Develop and maintain the transportation system to support the economic and community development of the area while minimizing negative social and environmental impacts.
2. Develop and maintain a balanced multimodal transportation system which will allow for the safe, economical, and efficient movement of people and goods, while optimizing the financial resources of area communities.
3. Practice and encourage the joint planning of transportation facilities and services with land use development plans and policies.

Transportation System Improvement Recommendations

Highway

The Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) has seen numerous major highway projects over the past 15 years, with the completion of USH 53 and STH 29. The result is a network with relatively few capacity issues, now and forward to 2045. Travel demand model results show that, for the most part, future capacity concerns are in very small areas of the network, and are largely dependent upon local development decisions. Capacity expansion recommendations are more along the line of monitoring and further study with appropriate resulting actions, as warranted. Future efforts should concentrate on maintenance and preservation of the system, safety of all transportation system users, and providing transportation mode choices.

The travel demand model for the base year (2010) indicates that none of the roads in the functionally classified system are even moderately congested. Projecting to 2045, the model shows that, if both the committed and planned projects are completed, 0.1% of the system could become severely congested, and if only the committed projects are completed, 0.3% of the system could become severely congested. In other words, the risk of future congestion is low, and it is likely that this low level of congestion can be managed. This plan recommends transportation system management and transportation demand management actions. Transportation system management actions seek to improve vehicle flow and can be applied at selected locations to increase the safety and efficiency of the road system. Transportation demand management actions seek to reduce peak period vehicular travel and can be implemented, where feasible, to assist in reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality. Additionally, this plan recommends some capacity expansion that will require construction of additional travel lanes.

Among the capacity expansion alternatives, several have already been programmed for construction in the short-term, while others are identified as planned projects or potential projects recommended for further study, with possible future implementation later in the planning period. These projects are listed in the following table and depicted on Map 38 in Chapter V.

Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Area
Future Highway Projects
2016-2045

Committed		**Planned**	
1	Short St: Bridge to STH 37	13	Gateway Dr.
2	CTH AA: House to USH 12	14	CTH AA: Gateway Dr. to House Rd.
3	Bartlett: 10th to 7th	15	USH 12: Winchester to Schultz
4	Melby - 115th to Victor	16	USH 12: 3rd to Winchester
5	Park Ave: Main to 0.75 mi. west	17	Bike trail gap
6	CTH S: USH 53 east 1640 ft.	**Potential (further study required)**	
7	Half Moon Lake Bridge: Grand Ave	18	I-94 Interchange at CTH E
8	UP RR Bridge: Eddy St	19	USH 53: River Prairie to North Crossing
9	Paint Creek Bridge: 195th	20	USH 53 Frontage road
10	Otter Creek Bridge: AA	21	Crossing of I-94
11	Spring Street Bridge		
12	I-94/Hobbs Rd		

Transit

Eau Claire Transit (ECT) adopted a Transit Development Plan (TDP) in 2014. The TDP presents recommendations for ECT that strengthen the current route network and

provide targeted service increases where there will be the greatest return on investment. These changes include the following, listed in order of priority:

- Neutral Cost Improvements
  - Route adjustments, consolidations, and improvements
- Targeted Frequency Investment
  - Add frequency to selected routes
- Capital Investment
  - New buses, new transfer center, more bus storage spaces
- Full System Development
  - Better serve existing markets and serve new markets by strategically deploying new service as resources become available
    - Expand Saturday service, initiate Sunday service
    - Regional Service to Lake Hallie, Chippewa Falls, Menomonie

Across the state, specialized transportation providers of demand-response transit and paratransit services are seeking increased funding and efficiencies of service to try to accommodate the unmet and growing demands for specialized transit users. Two commonly expressed needs are to simplify the system for riders and provide more rural and cross-boundary services.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

Bicycle recommendations deal with enlarging the network of safe bicycle routes (urban and rural), improving the safety of bicycling on streets, and providing bike parking. This plan recommends efforts to accommodate bike lanes/wide curb lanes where possible as urban street reconstruction occurs and to develop 35 additional miles of new bike/pedestrian paths throughout the planning area. Pedestrian recommendations include sidewalk construction and improvement, addressing safety at pedestrian crossings (at-grade and grade-separated). The MPO can support member municipalities in TAP applications and similar efforts to implement these types of projects.

Transportation and land use are recognized as inter-related issues. They each can have a significant influence over the development and functioning of the other. Adverse land use impacts and growth management concerns, as discussed in the plan, can result from a lack of coordination and planning for growth. One of the principle goals that has been adopted to guide the development and implementation of the long range plan focuses on the need to coordinate the provision of transportation facilities and services with land use development plans and policies.

Financial Plan for Implementation

Cost estimates for the implementation of the plan have been developed using life-cycle costing methodology and annual inflation factors to depict the longer term expenditures that may be needed to support the urban transportation system. For the purposes of this analysis, costs have been projected to increase by 2.3% annually over the 30 year planning period, while revenues are represented with a 1% annual increase. Anticipated

funding for the plan's implementation have also been identified from available federal, state, and local sources based on current funding levels and cost-sharing formulas. This cost estimating process, applied to the transportation system needs identified through the planning process, would require an average annual expenditure of $116.1 million in the Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Area through the 2045 planning period. A breakdown of the projected annual expenditures by mode of transportation identifies the following distribution of costs and anticipated funding availability:

Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Area
Transportation System Financing
2016-2045

	Estimated Costs ($ million)	Anticipated Funding ($ million)
Streets and Highways		
• Operations & Maintenance	$1.6	
• Preservation (3R)	$103.0	
• Expansion	$0.5	
Subtotal	$105.1	$70.1
Transit		
• Operating	$9.0	$7.1
• Capital Acquisition	$1.6	$0.3
Subtotal	$10.6	$7.4
Bicycle/Pedestrian	$0.4	$0.1
TOTAL AVERAGE ANNUAL	**$116.1**	**$77.6**

The availability of existing and anticipated future transportation funding to address these needs is of increasing concern through the planning period. Currently available funding from combined federal, state, and local sources only addresses two-thirds ($70.1 million annually) of the identified street and highway needs in the planning area. While modest expansion projects have been programmed in the near term, longer range projects will face funding uncertainties that will depend on federal, state, and local transportation funding priorities. The availability of future transit funding also faces those same uncertainties if federal and state support does not keep pace with growing transit demands, increasing the financial responsibility of municipalities for the operation and upkeep of local transit systems. Similar uncertainties concerning the availability of transportation funding to support the bicycle and pedestrian needs identified in the plan will place an increased burden on local municipalities in prioritizing and funding their transportation projects. **Faced with these funding uncertainties, the MPO will continue its policy that emphasizes system preservation over capacity expansion in its project prioritization process utilized in the development of the Transportation Improvement Program.** See Chapter X for examples of additional sources of transportation revenue and estimates of their funding potential.