

# MCHENRY COUNTY 2040 LONG RANGE

*Transportation Plan*

Adopted by:

**MCHENRY COUNTY BOARD**

March 2014



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The McHenry County 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (Plan) was written by the McHenry County Division of Transportation (MCDOT) guided by the opinions and comments expressed by the public. The Plan followed a unique and extensive public involvement process. The Plan was funded with competitive federal and local grants and developed through the combined efforts of the Transportation Committee of the County Board, two consultant teams, many government agencies, and local organizations.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) awarded a federal Unified Work Program (UWP) grant of \$200,000 to fund these efforts. A consultant team led by Sam Schwartz Engineering was awarded the contract and successfully guided, developed materials, and completed the public involvement process. Other companies on the team included: Baxter and Woodman to help with local engineering coordinating, Shaw Center to help facilitate focus groups, Urban Insight to develop and maintain the project web site, Active Transportation Alliance to undertake high school classroom outreach, and Interface Studio to create information graphics and design public involvement documents.

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) awarded a Sub-regional Planning Grant of \$120,000 to the County in order to undertake an analysis of existing transit services and develop a plan to restructure those services. The County hired TranSystems Inc. with Fish Transportation Group to undertake this work. A focus group met regularly to guide the process. Members of the focus group included Pace, Metra, the RTA, the Illinois Department of Transportation, McHenry County Council of Governments, McHenry County Council of Mayors, Pioneer Center for Human Services, and MCDOT. The group worked with the consultant team to study and develop the transit components of the Plan. The modeling and forecasting of future vehicle volumes throughout the County was undertaken by Civiltech Engineering. CMAP awarded \$53,270 in UWP grant monies for the County to develop a computerized model of existing and future travel patterns in the County. This model was then used to forecast future conditions along major highways and performance of the entire highway system in terms of vehicle delay and vehicle miles traveled.

The Transportation Committee of the County Board guided the development of this plan from the beginning. The Committee determined the scope of analysis and public involvement needed, set the Plan's Goals and Objectives, reviewed and edited the individual sections of the Plan, reviewed and discussed the public input, and submitted a draft plan to the County Board. The Committee is chaired by Anna May Miller (District 1); the Vice Chair is Paula Yensen (District 5). Other members include Nick Chirikos (District 1), Kenneth Koehler (District 2), Nick Provenzano (District 3), Sandra Fay Salgado (District 4), and Diane Evertsen (District 6).

Many County agencies volunteered to help develop this plan. Twelve libraries (Algonquin Area, Cary Area, Harvard Diggins, Johnsburg, McHenry, Nippersink, Hebron, Huntley, Marengo, Crystal Lake, McHenry Nunda, and Woodstock), volunteered to have kiosks set inside to enable patrons to mark areas of concern and detail typical travel times. Six High Schools (Crystal Lake Central, Prairie Ridge, McHenry West, Marengo Community, Woodstock, and Marion Central), volunteered class time and made field trips to study transportation planning. The City of Crystal Lake hosted a bicycle and pedestrian workshop to explore local street and highway issues and an open house to present the plan's goals and objectives. In 2013, the draft plan open houses were hosted by and held at the Village of Lake in the Hills, the City of Woodstock, the City of Harvard, the City of Crystal Lake, the City of Marengo, and McHenry Township.

Other local organizations provide key support throughout the process as well. The McHenry County Farm Bureau welcomed the County to share booth space at the County Fair in 2012. The McHenry County Economic Development Corporation played an important role in organizing meetings between industrial and real estate development groups to discuss the County's transportation needs. The Environmental Defenders of McHenry County provided MCDOT two opportunities to include plan articles in their quarterly publication, 'Earth Connect', and helped arrange two focus group meetings with local environmental groups. The Bicycle Advocates of McHenry County helped arrange meetings between MCDOT and the Illinois League of Bicyclists to discuss bicycle policies in neighboring counties.

Last but certainly not least, it is important acknowledge that thousands of residents in the County took the time to participate in activities and meetings held throughout this process. The Plan is a better reflection of the community's needs and desires because these individuals took the time to participate. The comments received from the public facilitated deep conversations between all the groups involved in developing the Plan. These conversations are reflected in the Plan and will most certainly continue and evolve between now and the year 2040.



# LETTER *from the* COUNTY BOARD CHAIRWOMAN 5

## **This plan was written for you and your future in McHenry County.**

As Chairwoman of the County Board, I am happy to announce the completion of the 2040 McHenry County Long Range Transportation Plan (Plan). Over the last three years, the public has provided information to the Transportation Committee of the County Board regarding the community's transportation needs and desires. The public involvement process followed to develop the Plan far exceeded past planning efforts. This was done because the transportation needs in the County are great and diverse. Many of our residents and businesses unfamiliar with the planning process were engaged in a positive and constructive manner. Their input into the opportunities and challenges of the County caused the Transportation Committee to have very healthy discussions on new areas of transportation policy. (I understand that the Committee especially enjoyed working with area high school students to explore how they envision streets and highways could be designed better to meet the needs of all users).

The Plan builds off of the opportunities unique to McHenry County. The County has great access to national and international transportation facilities and its soils are incredibly important for global food production. The County also has a strong agriculture heritage, rare environments, and unique communities. In order to take advantage of these opportunities, six Goals and objectives were established by the Transportation Committee to develop the Plan: 1) mitigate highway congestion; 2) make transportation safer; 3) promote mobility for all residents; 4) provide transportation choices 5) preserve environmental quality; 6) link transportation and land use.

After three years of soliciting input from the public, four transportation projects have been identified and consistently supported by the public, local agencies, and local businesses. If considerable progress is made on these projects in the next several years, this Plan will have successfully addressed the County's greatest transportation needs. The top four projects identified as part of this planning process are: 1) Illinois Route 47 between Reed Road in Huntley and U.S. 14 in Woodstock; 2) Illinois Route 47 between U.S. 14 and Charles Road in Woodstock; 3) Illinois Route 31 between IL 176 in Crystal Lake and IL 120 in McHenry; 4) Metra's Union Pacific Northwest Commuter Rail Line Upgrades.

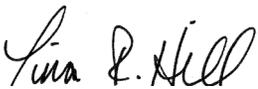
In addition to realizing these projects, the Plan calls for a greater focus on addressing congestion on local streets. Future traffic models indicate that the local streets will likely see more dramatic changes in congestion levels than regional highways. The Plan calls for transportation infrastructure and operations to be coordinated in order to enhance free movement in our towns for all roadway users.

The Plan asks the County Board to look towards the distant future and preserve corridors for future highway expansion. The continued input from the public regarding future transportation needs will be important to realizing this goal. Additionally, it will be important to partner with the Illinois Department of Transportation, the County's Planning and Development Department, municipalities, townships, and property owners to establish and preserve strategic corridors where sensible and possible.

In total, the Plan includes approximately \$1 billion in projects for motorists, \$660 million for transit projects, and \$63 million for bicycle and pedestrian projects. To implement these projects and to best prepare for the future, the following strategies will be key: 1) build legislative support for Metra service upgrades; 2) prioritize preventative maintenance on roadways; 3) leverage State funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and corridor preservation along State and U.S. Highways; 4) build more robust local road networks including accommodations for all users to mitigate local traffic congestion.

The County Board looks forward to realizing the vision laid out in this plan. As projects are proposed and evaluated in the future, this plan will provide an excellent point of reference to facilitate the needed conversations. In this spirit, the plan is being submitted for public use.

Yours truly,



Tina R. Hill  
County Board Chairwoman

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# Welcome to the McHenry County **2040** Long Range Transportation Plan

## I INTRODUCTION

Good communities do not happen by accident. They are built by an active and engaged population willing to confront challenges head-on and willing to ask many questions and seek answers. Transportation infrastructure shapes our communities and determines how we live. Its characteristics can make travel easier and less costly for some while making it harder and more costly for others. This plan was developed by thousands who engaged in the planning process to dream and express their ideas about how transportation can be improved in McHenry County.

This plan has been developed by the McHenry County Division of Transportation (MCDOT) with guidance provided by the Transportation Committee of the County Board. The MCDOT builds, operates, and maintains over 500 lanes of highway built with over 30,000,000 square feet of pavement. The agency is a global leader in de-icing, snow removal, and other winter highway operations. It partners with other transportation agencies to develop special projects such as working with the Illinois Department of Transportation to design the West Algonquin Bypass and working with Pace suburban bus, Crystal Lake, McHenry, Woodstock, McHenry Township, Dorr Township, and Greenwood Township to create a new dial-a-ride transit service called MCRide. The agency manages the use of over \$20,000,000 in annual transportation maintenance and new project funding. The County is required by state statute to periodically update its long range transportation plan to best manage the use of these transportation funds.

The planning process created an opportunity for everyone who lives, works, or travels through McHenry County to share their thoughts about transportation with the County's planners, engineers, and leaders. Whether it's a road that should be improved, or how transit service could operate



**Figure 1:** Need for Public Input in the Plan

better, or what could be done to make it easier to walk and bike in the County, we asked for your input, and you provided it.

This plan was developed by the thousands of people who engaged in the planning process to dream, offer constructive criticism, and express their ideas about how transportation can be improved. This plan was written to document your concerns and reflect your ideas. It was written for you and for our collective future in McHenry County by the McHenry County Division of Transportation.



**Figure 2:** Algonquin Road, Looking East to the Fox River

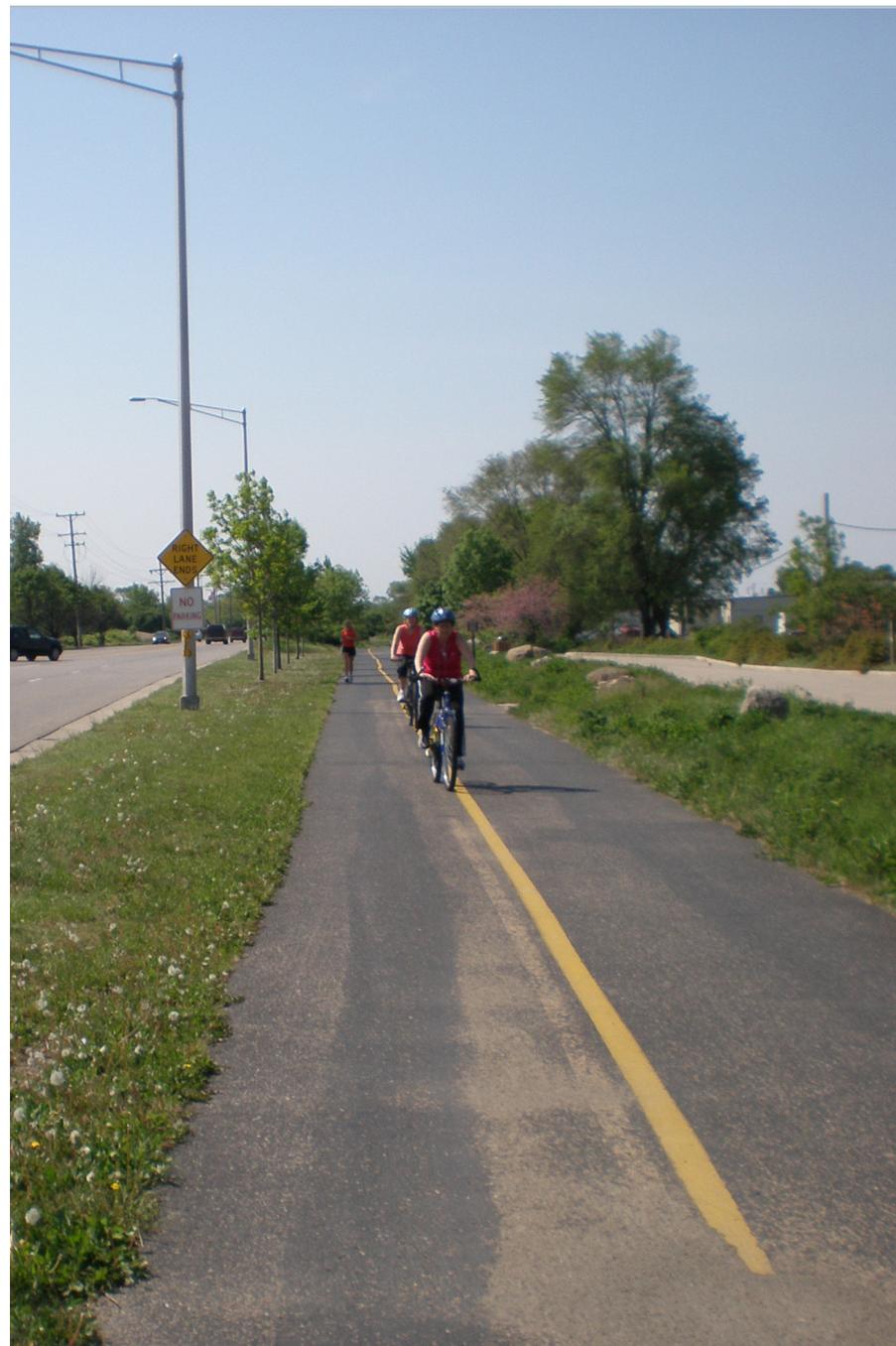
## II PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

Transportation plans adopted by the McHenry County Board have been successful in directing the MCDOT to swiftly execute work. The last long range transportation plan was adopted by the County Board in 2005. The last transit plan was adopted by the County Board in 2006. Although these plans sought to solve different but related problems, successful projects in each plan had the same traits. Projects with the greatest level of detail in these plans were the ones most likely to be implemented.

The plans helped to successfully implement the Western Algonquin Bypass, the ramp additions to the IL 47 and I-90 interchange, the Algonquin Road widening, the IL 47 widening in Huntley, the Rakow Road widening, the Walkup Road widening, the MCRide dial-a-ride transit program, the restructuring of the Pace fixed bus routes, the redesign of the IL 31 and IL 176 intersection, a crash database to monitor safety, and a pavement management system to identify best treatments to extend the useful life of our roadways. The plans have been successfully integrated into the County's 2030 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the County's Highway Access Management Ordinance, and the Unified Development Ordinance.

Certain projects like a new arterial to the west of IL Route 47 that were vaguely drawn into the transportation plan, and policies such as corridor preservation of strategic regional arterials were not implemented. In the transit plan, the idea of implementing a taxi voucher program was proposed without much discussion regarding administrative responsibilities and costs. These obstacles have not been overcome.

In 2009, the County Board adopted a Strategic Plan directing the MCDOT to focus on replacing aging bridges and to advocate for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit modes of transportation. The Strategic Plan also called for strategic use of limited County funds to leverage funding to help implement projects. In response, an aggressive program for replacing weight-restricted bridges using federal Highway Bridge Replacement Funds has been undertaken. A 110 spot park-and-ride lot at IL 31 and Virginia Road was funded 100% with federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funds. The County partnered with the Village of Algonquin to build a bicycle and pedestrian structure over Randall Road using Village and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funds. Existing transit programs contracted between Pace Suburban Bus with the City of Crystal Lake, the City of McHenry, and the City of Woodstock were merged with a County program into a new dial-a-ride service called MCRide. Federal Job Access and Reverse Commute and New Freedom grant monies from the Regional Transportation Authority were used to facilitate the creation of MCRide. In July of 2013, the County Board adopted a new Strategic Plan asking the MCDOT to continue funding MCRide, to focus on working with the State to enhance access to the Interstate Highway System, to create a Volunteer Driver and Transit Enhancement Program to fund cost effective transit solutions, and to create a Community Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Program to fund locally needed projects which would have been unlikely to be funded otherwise.



**Figure 3:** Users of the Prairie Trail in Crystal Lake



## ROLE OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE OF THE COUNTY BOARD

The Transportation Committee of the County Board served as the lead steering committee for the development of the plan. The Committee selected the consultant team to undertake the public involvement process and received regular updates on the results of the public input process. The consultant team included Sam Schwartz Engineering, Active Transportation Alliance, Baxter & Woodman, Urban Insight, Interface Studio, and the Shah Center. Following the initial public involvement efforts, the Transportation Committee approved the goals and objectives of the plan before a public hearing was held. The Transportation Committee reviewed and discussed all draft materials and ultimately decided which projects and policies were to be included in the plan.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE 2040 PLAN DOCUMENT

The 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan begins with an explanation of the public involvement process and the results of that process. Second, the plan details current demographic trends in the County important for transportation planning. These trends include population and employment forecasts, travel patterns, automotive traffic projections, and the mix of economic activity. Then a chapter details the financial resources and policy considerations to help levy existing and additional resources necessary to realize the plan. This is followed by three chapters detailing the plan's project priorities: a chapter for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; a chapter on transit services; and then a chapter regarding automotive infrastructure.