

III COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Everyone has an opinion on transportation. Whether they drive to work, take a bus to class, or walk to the train station, the entire public has a solution for making their trip better. However, not everyone gets a chance to share these opinions, even during the planning process. Previous planning efforts for the Transportation Plan focused on large, public meetings. While a lot of effort went into these meetings, they were not always well attended, and did not represent the broad spectrum of stakeholders that live and work in McHenry County.

The goal of this plan was to hear from as many people as possible. With a larger group of participants, the plan would reflect the transportation needs and desires of the County's residents, businesses, and leaders. A multi-faceted outreach approach was developed that would provide a number of different ways to make their voice heard. The primary way to accomplish this was to remove the barrier of entry that most public processes require.

The result of the community outreach allowed thousands of residents and workers in McHenry County to make their opinion on transportation heard. Participants ranged from the youngest to the oldest stakeholders in the County. Many ideas in this plan were derived directly from them to address many transportation challenges identified.

The following details the individual outreach activities that were conducted during the time frame of the project.



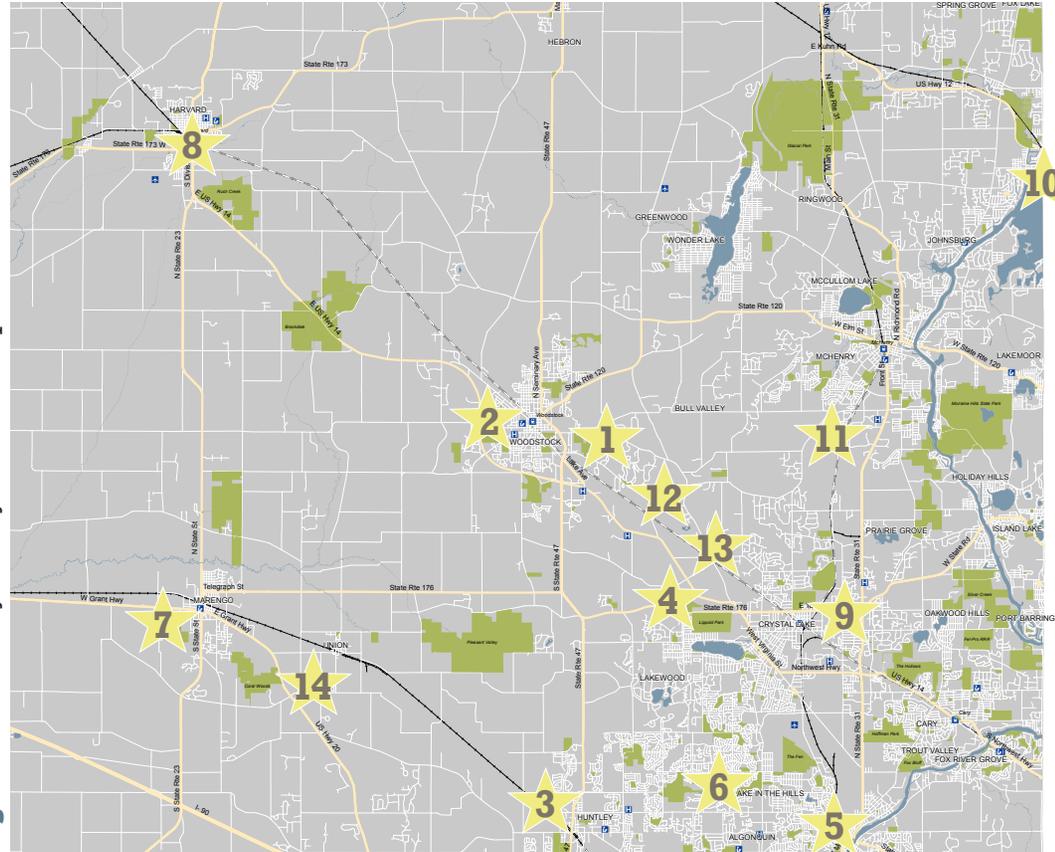


Pop-Up Public Meetings

Most public meetings or open houses typically occur at night and only occur once or twice during the project's lifetime. These limitations can make it difficult for many people to attend due to other responsibilities. Regardless of the number of people that attend the public meeting, there are many more people who have an opinion on a project but can't voice it because they can't attend the meeting.

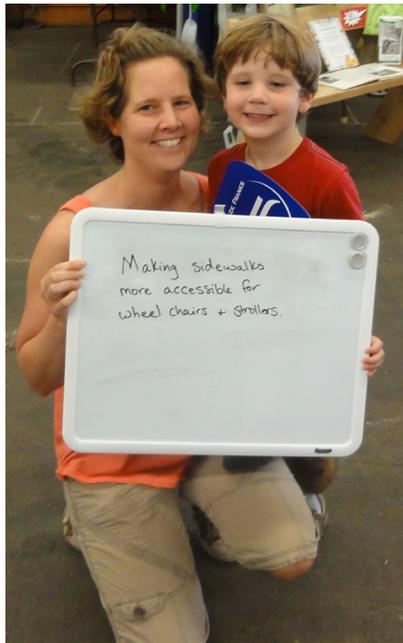
To remove this limitation, the outreach process was developed to go to where people already were. These "pop-up" public meetings were held across the County in 2011 to hear from as many people as possible on the future of transportation in McHenry County. Staff set up these mini-meetings at events where people already were attending, such as the County Fair, the Senior Fair, group meetings, or local farmers markets. Each pop-up meeting included a number of activities that people could participate in and gave staff an opportunity to speak to stakeholders on a one on one basis to learn about their thoughts on transportation and the Long Range Plan.

Figure 4: McHenry County Outreach Map



- ★ 1 McHenry County Fair
- ★ 2 Woodstock Farmers Market
- ★ 3 Huntley Fall Fest
- ★ 4 Centegra Senior Fair
- ★ 5 Algonquin Farmers Market
- ★ 6 Lake in the Hills Summer Sunset Festival
- ★ 7 Marengo Family Fest
- ★ 8 Harvard Farmers Market
- ★ 9 Crystal Lake Farmers Market
- ★ 10 Fox Lake Oktoberfest
- ★ 11 McHenry County Economic Development Meeting
- ★ 12 McHenry County GIS Day
- ★ 13 McHenry County College
- ★ 14 McHenry County Council of Governments

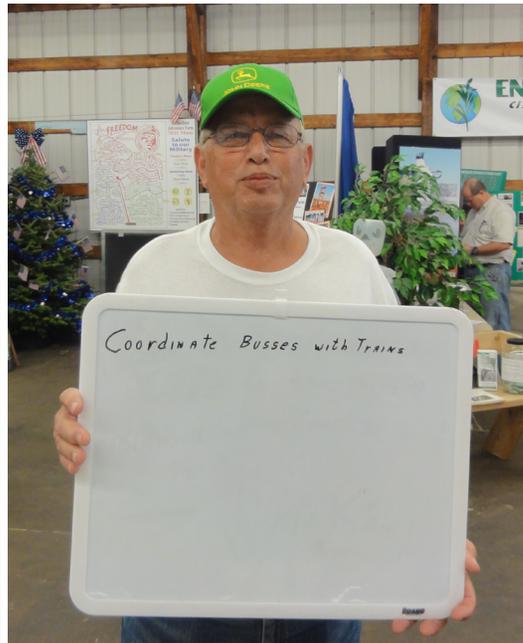
The pop-up meetings were a tremendous success. Over 1,200 people participated in the pop-up meetings and many thousands more were exposed to the project. Hundreds of rich conversations were held with a diverse range of residents.



PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES



ROADS



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



BICYCLE FACILITIES

Figure 5: The Big Ideas for improving transportation in McHenry County reflected the community's desire to improve all modes of transportation.

POP-UP ACTIVITIES



Vote for Which Transportation Mode Needs Investment



Informing McHenry County



"More scooters, more walking"

The Piggy Bank

The meetings also featured an activity that allowed residents to “vote” (by putting three coins in piggy banks) on what kind of improvements they would like to see in the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan: bicycle, pedestrian, public transportation, or roadway improvements. Residents had to make the choice of spreading their coins over multiple areas or focusing on just one area for improvement. The end results showed a desire to dedicate limited resources to meet a variety of transportation needs. Although certain groups may favor one type of transportation over another, the public in general recognizes the need to make improvements to all types of transportation in the County.

Information

In addition to County staff, representatives from other agencies and organizations that are involved in transportation provided information and attended the meetings to engage with participants.

Your Big Idea

Participants were asked to give their one BIG transportation idea for improving transportation in McHenry County. Ideas ranged from improving intersections to flying cars. All of the ideas were posted on a map.

The overall results of the pop-up events indicate a broad desire by the community to invest in all types (or modes) of transportation. The results of these exercises were surprising to the Transportation Committee of the County Board. Public transportation received the most votes, followed by bicycling improvements. Additionally, the Transportation Committee noted that economic development professionals in the area view motor vehicle needs as the most important. A pop-up event held at the Shaw Center for the McHenry County Economic Development Corporation was the only pop-up event that supported this view. At the Shaw Center, the numerous votes placed in the roads piggy bank led to the use of an additional piggy bank to distinguish road maintenance (See Figure 8). The road maintenance category received the second most votes at this event. Former Congressman Donald Manzullo, who had worked for many years to secure funding for transportation projects throughout the County, was the only person to vote for pedestrian facilities.



Figure 6: Former Congressman Donald Manzullo

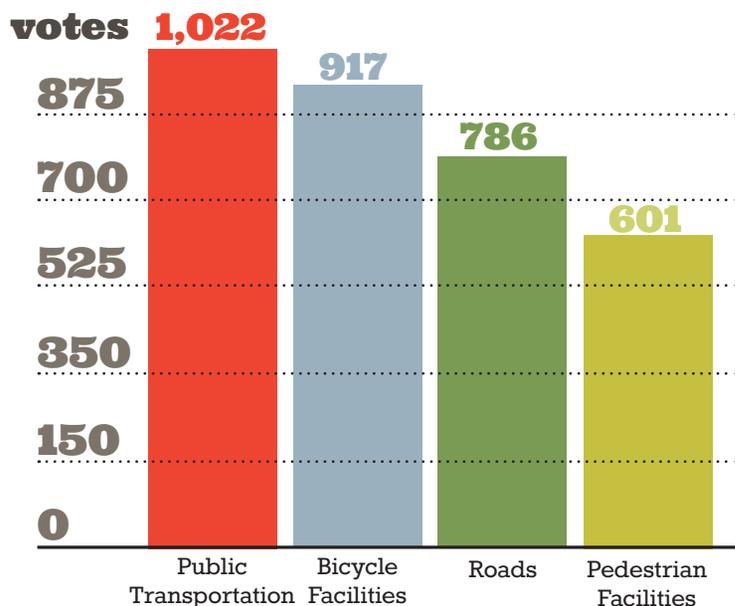


Figure 7: Overall Piggy Bank Results Support a Change of Current Practice

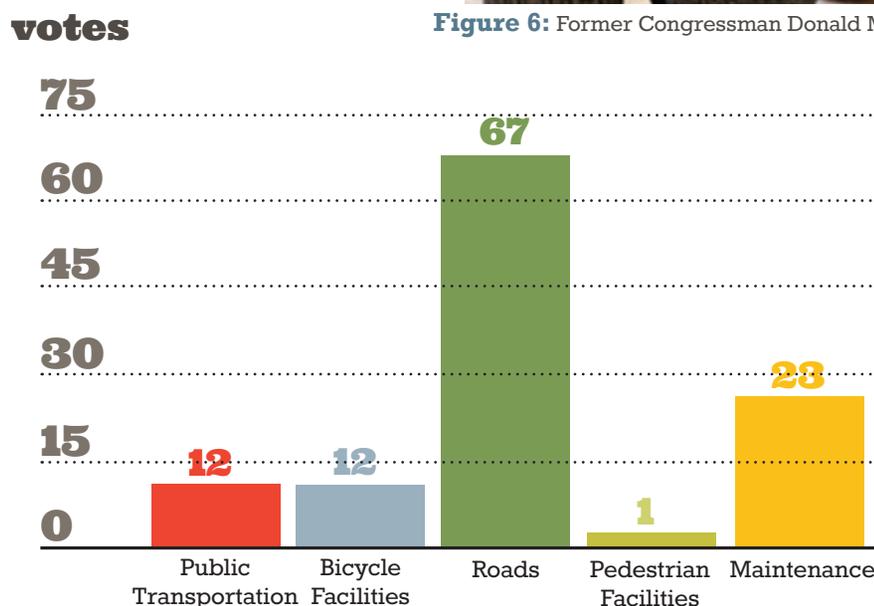


Figure 8: McHenry County Economic Development Corporation results illustrate current practice



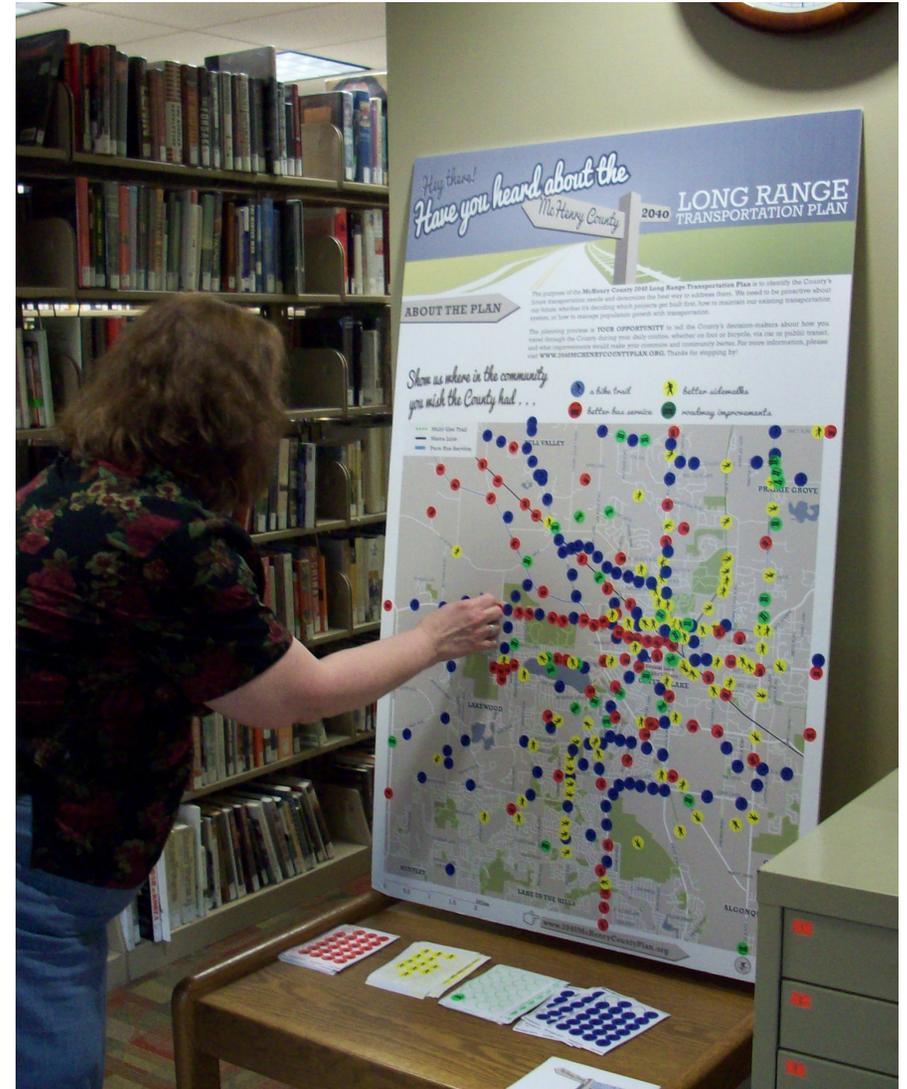
Library Boards

The County's libraries are a popular gathering spot for residents of all ages. This provided another excellent opportunity to involve people in the project that typically would not participate in a planning process. The following libraries provided support for the project by allowing an interactive display to be placed:

- Algonquin Area Public Library
- Cary Area Public Library
- Harvard Diggins Library
- Johnsburg Public Library
- McHenry Public Library
- Nippersink Public Library
- Hebron Public Library
- Huntley Area Public Library
- Marengo Public Library
- Crystal Lake Public Library (pictured right)
- McHenry Nunda Public Library
- Woodstock Public Library

At each library, the display included a large board with a map of that library district. Patrons were asked to place stickers on areas they thought needed improvements for different modes of travel. An additional display was provided at some libraries that had enough space. It asked patrons to show how long it took them to get to common destinations.

Over 1,700 stickers were placed on the maps, and each one was recorded so they could be spatially analyzed. For the eight libraries that had the travel time boards, the single most frequent response for recreation and shopping trip length was 5 - 15 minutes, while 30 - 60 minutes was the single most frequently cited trip length for work or school trips.





Focus Groups

In addition to the broad outreach campaign, focused in-depth conversations were held to better understand the transportation needs of specific groups. These groups included businesses, government agencies, seniors, municipalities, residents, and people who speak English as a second language, were also included as part of the planning process. Each of these stakeholder groups has a unique perspective on how transportation affects their day-to-day life, and the groups were able to articulate the challenges and strengths of the County's transportation system. For example, the business focus group discussed the absolute need for the transportation network to be able to handle freight-hauling trucks efficiently and dependably. These types of insights helped guide projects and goals outlined in the Plan.



Figure 9: A separate focus group was held with engineers that do work in the County to learn from their technical expertise

Date	Group
Nov. 7, 2011	Transit
Jan. 19, 2012	McHenry County Community College
Jan. 24, 2012	Transit
Feb. 22, 2012	Engineering
March 8, 2012	Businesses, County/Other Agency, Residents
April 9, 2012	Transit
April 20, 2012	Seniors in Crystal Lake
April 25, 2012	League of Illinois Bicyclists
May 2, 2012	English as a Second Language
July 24, 2012	Transit
Aug. 22, 2012	McHenry Township Seniors
Aug. 23, 2012	General Public Open House in Crystal Lake
Aug. 25, 2012	Seniors in Woodstock
Aug. 30, 2012	Crystal Lake Bicycle Tour
Sept. 4, 2012	Environmentalists
Sept. 20, 2012	Bicycle and Pedestrian
Sept. 24, 2012	County/Other Agency, Residents
Sept. 26, 2012	Engineers, Municipalities
Oct. 24, 2012	Environmentalists
Nov. 16, 2012	McHenry County Planner's Forum in Algonquin
Nov. 27, 2012	Economic Development/Municipalities
Dec. 17, 2012	Horizon's for the Blind
Dec. 20, 2012	McHenry County Economic Development Corporation
Jan. 26, 2013	People in Need Break-Out Session
April 10, 2013	Transit
April 30, 2013	Seniors in Crystal Lake

Figure 10: List of Meetings Held with Specific Groups



Student Outreach

High school students are rarely considered a stakeholder group for planning projects, even though they are the future residents and business owners of the County. This project provided an opportunity to develop an innovative program that would allow students to learn about transportation planning and provide their own ideas for potential improvements. The concept of including young people in an important plan is not without precedent. For example, Daniel Burnham's Plan of Chicago was taught in schools for years after it was written.

For the 2040 plan, students went on field trips to speak to planning organizations, and they were tasked with choosing a local street or intersection to study and make recommendations. Many students recommended safety improvements on their studied roadways and intersections, including safety improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians. A number of bold, fresh ideas came out of the conversations with the participating students. Students also participated in a field trip to Chicago to visit and hear representatives from CMAP (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning), UIC School of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, Active Transportation Alliance, and CNT (Center for Neighborhood Technology) and spent a day learning at the McHenry County Division of Transportation.

A description of each of the programs at the six participating schools is listed on the following page.



Figure 11: Students presenting their “complete streets” ideas to the Transportation Committee of the County Board

Crystal Lake Central High School

Ten students in the Honors Environmental Science class at Crystal Lake Central High School participated in the instruction portion of the transportation program. Students examined the connection of infrastructure to transportation choices, mentioning that they would be more likely to choose alternate forms of transportation to travel to and from school if they felt safe doing so. The final projects focused on the intersections of Crystal Lake Avenue/Walkup Road and Illinois Route 31/Illinois Route 176.

Prairie Ridge High School

Eighteen students in Architectural Design class at Prairie Ridge participated in the eight week learning program. One particularly good discussion during the program centered on the “true cost of driving” to both the individual and society. Students were paired up to develop their final projects, which focused on a variety of different improvements.

McHenry West High School

A group of Key Club students at McHenry West High School met once a week after school to discuss transportation issues at and around the school. Students engaged in discussion and learned from County staff about transportation planning projects. They decided to examine the neighborhoods surrounding the school, and specifically analyzed the intersection of Dartmoor Drive and West Crystal Lake Road, south of the school, for potential improvements. Students also explored ideas related to public engagement and creating and conducting successful surveys.

Marengo Community High School

Students in the Drafting Occupations class at Marengo Community High School participated in the transportation program. According to their teacher, “students have really been getting into what they feel are the ‘problem areas’ in Marengo.” Students used their knowledge to create suggestions for improvements in Marengo at five corridors and intersections and two general projects on pedestrian improvements and traffic calming.

Woodstock High School

For 5 weeks, students from the Civil Engineering and Architecture class and Engineering Design and Development (EDD) class in Woodstock High School class participated in the Long Range Transportation Plan program. The program was conducted by a Woodstock staff member with an engineering background. After they completed the initial program, students from the class developed a project that focused on Complete Streets.

Marian Central Catholic High School

Students in the engineering club at Marian Central Catholic High School spent two months learning about transportation planning issues and strategies. Students attend the school from across the County, so participants bring a variety of experiences to the program. The club worked during December and January to learn about transportation planning issues and strategies. They created multiple project suggestions for the County plan.



County Board Charrettes

Individual charrettes were conducted in November of 2011, for the board members in each District of McHenry County to present what staff had learned during the outreach process and get their perspective on the goals and priorities of the plan. Activities included a “build a street” workshop, and asking board members to figure out how to get to a destination if they did not own a car.



Figure 12: McHenry County Board Members give their input on the Plan



Open House

A large Open House was held at the Crystal Lake City Hall on August 23, 2012 to provide an overview of the planning process, results from the outreach events, and present the goals of the plan. Over 100 people attended the Open House and provided input through a variety of activities.



Figure 13: Open House Allowed the Public to View Outreach Results

Bike Workshop

On August 30, 2012, a bike workshop was held to discuss and learn about issues facing bicyclists and pedestrians in McHenry County. DOT staff led participants on a short bike tour of Crystal Lake, stopping frequently to discuss elements of “Complete Streets” that make biking and walking a safer transportation option. Approximately 20 people participated in the bike workshop.



Figure 14: Bicycle Workshop Helped Inform the 2040 Plan



Online Outreach

An interactive website was created for the Plan, www.2040mchenrycountyplan.org. Approximately 4,000 people visited the website since its launch in August 2011. The site included information about the plan, alerted visitors on upcoming events, and allowed for residents to leave feedback at their own pace. The site included three transportation surveys: a survey about transit usage, a survey about issues facing bicycle and pedestrians in the County, and a survey about general transportation habits. The surveys provided insight on how residents view transportation in the County. For example, the general survey results stated that increasing traffic and aging infrastructure were the top two overall transportation concerns of participants. The transit survey resulted in participants saying the top two reasons they do not use transit more often are that services are not available to desired destinations and that they are not convenient. Lastly, the bike and pedestrian survey gave insight on popular reasons for both biking and walking.

The website also included a collaborative map for users to pick specific areas that are in need of improvements or to highlight areas that users think currently work well. The map showed users where others have left comments, and DOT staff regularly updated the online map with comments from other outreach efforts (for example, the library boards) so all requests would be in one location. The map was a modified Google map and was fully exportable, so the data could be further analyzed and incorporated into other maps.

2013 Draft Plan Open House Materials

ABOUT THE PLAN

So why are we doing a plan? And why do we need your help?

The purpose of the Transportation Plan is to identify the County's



TOP 5

- IL 47 In US 14 i
- IL 47 Ir Wood:
- Metra | District
- Metra | District
- IL 47 Ir Wood:

LATE!

Successful Fri, 22 Nov

Draft Plan Thu, 24 Oc

Public Met Thu, 24 Oc

More >

When asked to select the top three biggest transportation problems from a list, “Increasing traffic/congestion delays” ranked the highest, followed by “Aging and deteriorating infrastructure” and “Lack of transit options” (See Figure 16). Although parking is very commonly cited as inadequate in commercial areas, the survey respondents selected “Lack of parking” less than any other category.

These results suggest that those filling out the survey are aware of basic transportation planning principles. The transportation planning field has recognized that increasing highway congestion and rising transportation costs are linked to having a lack of transit, bicycling, and walking opportunities. These conditions are made worse by a development pattern consisting of large residential, commercial, and industrial areas built separately from each other. The public’s concern of aging and deteriorating infrastructure indicates an understanding of underinvestment in the highways and/or financial stress of the agency’s responsible for maintenance. This understanding is correct. Funding for highway infrastructure is declining in terms of total tax receipts, while material and labor costs are increasing. This problem has been described as a problem of revenue and building more highway infrastructure than can be adequately maintained.

In short, the three biggest problems indicated by the on-line survey are related and their solutions are related. This demonstrates the need for a plan aimed at understanding how short-comings in one area of transportation can be compensated by strengths in another area. Given the pop-up event, library kiosk, focus group, high school engagement, and website results, six goals were created for the plan to comprehensively consider and address the County’s transportation short-comings and advantages.



Figure 15: McHenry County Residents are Hoping for Options

Transportation Problem	Total Selections
Increasing traffic/congestion delays	86
Aging and deteriorating infrastructure	66
Lack of transit options	63
Suburban development pattern	42
Rising transportation costs	40
Travel needs of the elderly	20
Safety	18
Increasing truck traffic on our highways	17
Reliability of our public transportation system	13
Increasing distances we have to travel	13
Other	7
Lack of parking	5

Figure 16: Three biggest problems survey results