

CHAPTER 4

Transportation

Introduction

Having access to a quality transportation system is essential to residents in the Town of Erin Prairie. An excellent road network makes the Town a desirable place to live because it allows residents to enjoy rural living yet have access to a wide variety of job opportunities in other communities. Farming is an important industry in the Town and there is a need for a good transportation system in support of the agricultural economy, for moving machinery, the delivery of supplies, and the movement of livestock and commodity crops.

The Transportation element will inventory and evaluate local modes of transportation and identify possibilities for the future development and improvements.

Functional Road Classification and Jurisdiction

Roads and highways provide different levels of service. Highways provide for the movement of through traffic while streets provide access to property. Most public roads in Wisconsin are classified according to their function and jurisdiction. A functional classification system groups roads and highways according to the service that they provide. It also helps determine eligibility for federal aid. Classifications are divided into urban and rural categories, based on population. The Town of Erin Prairie falls under the rural functional classification system.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation uses population figures, land uses, spacing between classified roads, and average daily traffic counts to determine the functional classification. Classifications are updated every 10 years with census information. The Town can request a review of their classifications but would be required to collect the data needed.

Functional Road Classification System (Rural <5000 Population)

Principal Arterials: Serve interstate and interregional trips. These routes generally serve urban areas with more than 5,000 people. The rural principal arterials are further subdivided into:

- Interstate highways.
- Other principal arterials.

Minor Arterials: In conjunction with the principal arterials, these serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators, serving intra-regional and inter-area traffic movements.

Major Collectors: Provide service to moderate sized communities and other intra-area traffic generators, and link those generators to nearby larger population centers or higher capacity routes.

Minor Collectors: Collect traffic from local roads, and provide links to all remaining smaller communities, locally important traffic generators, and higher capacity roads. All developed areas should be within a reasonable distance of a collector road.

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 function roads.

Within the Town of Erin Prairie, U.S.H. 63 is a principal arterial (state jurisdiction); County Trunk Highways T, K, G, and E are major collectors (St. Croix County jurisdiction). The remaining roads are local roads (local jurisdiction). Local roads in Erin Prairie are maintained by St. Croix County. The higher the function of the road, the more traffic it carries (see *Map 4-1*).

Map 4-1 compares Average Daily Traffic (ADT) counts in 2000 and 2006. All but one location showed an increase in 2006, and the overall increase in traffic volume at 7 sampling locations was 9%.

The City of New Richmond has created a Future Land Use and Thoroughfares map as part of their comprehensive plan. The map indicates that 160th Street is planned to function as a minor arterial and C.T.H. GG as a collector. This is in anticipation that the land surrounding these roads may be residential areas in the future.

Road Right-of-Ways

Highway right-of-ways are an important resource, offering much potential for wildlife conservation and for preservation of the historic prairie ecosystems that dominated the Town before European settlement. Best practices for prairie restoration and control of noxious weeds like leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, yellow and white sweet clover, wild parsnip, and buckthorn along highway right-of-ways can be implemented so that the full potential of these areas is achieved.

Commuter Patterns

The road network in and surrounding the Town of Erin Prairie is a major factor in the Town's commuting habits. The Town is surrounded by S.T.H. 64 to the north, U.S.H. 63 to the east, and both U.S.H. 12 and Interstate 94 to the south.

Automobile driving is the most common mode of transportation for residents who commute to work. Table 4-1 shows that 76.5% of residents drive alone while 15.0% carpool. Seven percent of residents worked at home; these may be residents engaged in farming or in home-based businesses.

Table 4-2 indicates that 62.5% of residents who commute work in St. Croix County while almost 34% are commuting to jobs out of state, most likely in Minnesota.

Table 4-1 - Commuting to Work 16 Years and Older – Town of Erin Prairie

	Number	Percent
Total	387	100.0%
Car, truck, or van	354	91.5%
Drove Alone	296	76.5%
Carpooled	58	15.0%
Walked	3	0.8%
Worked at home	27	7.0%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Van and carpool lots are located in the Village of Baldwin, at the northeast side of the Interstate 94/U.S.H. 63 interchange. Other nearby lots are located at the U.S.H. 63/S.T.H. 64 intersection and the Interstate 94/U.S.H. 65.

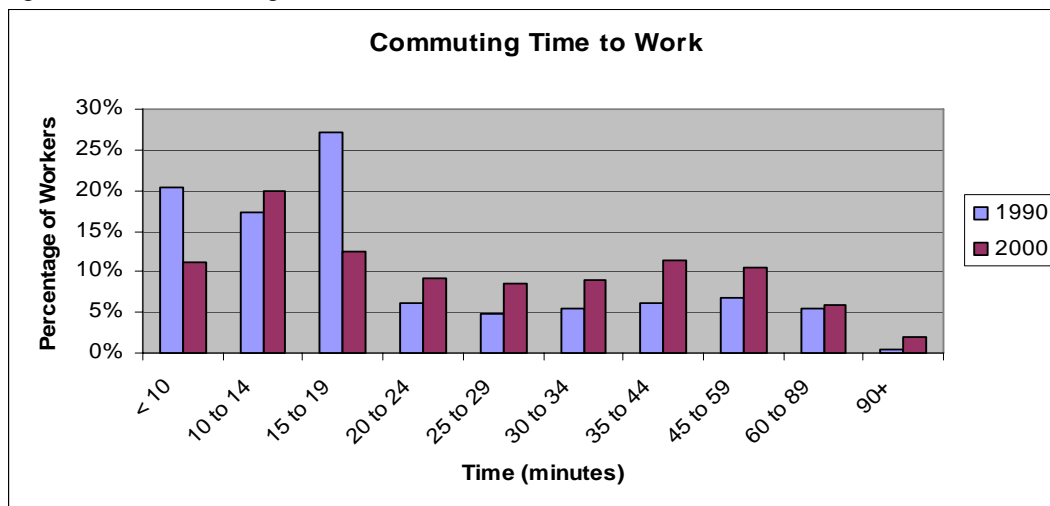
Table 4-2 - Place of Work 16 Years and Over - State and County Level – Town of Erin Prairie

	Number	Percent
Total	387	100.0%
Worked in state of residence:	256	66.1%
Worked in county of residence	242	62.5%
Worked outside county of residence	14	3.6%
Worked outside state of residence	131	33.9%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Figure 4-1 indicates that in 2000, residents were driving farther to work than had been the case in 1990. The number of residents traveling 19 or fewer minutes dropped between 1990 and 2000. Many residents are commuting to jobs in St. Croix County and the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.

Figure 4-1 - Commuting Time to Work

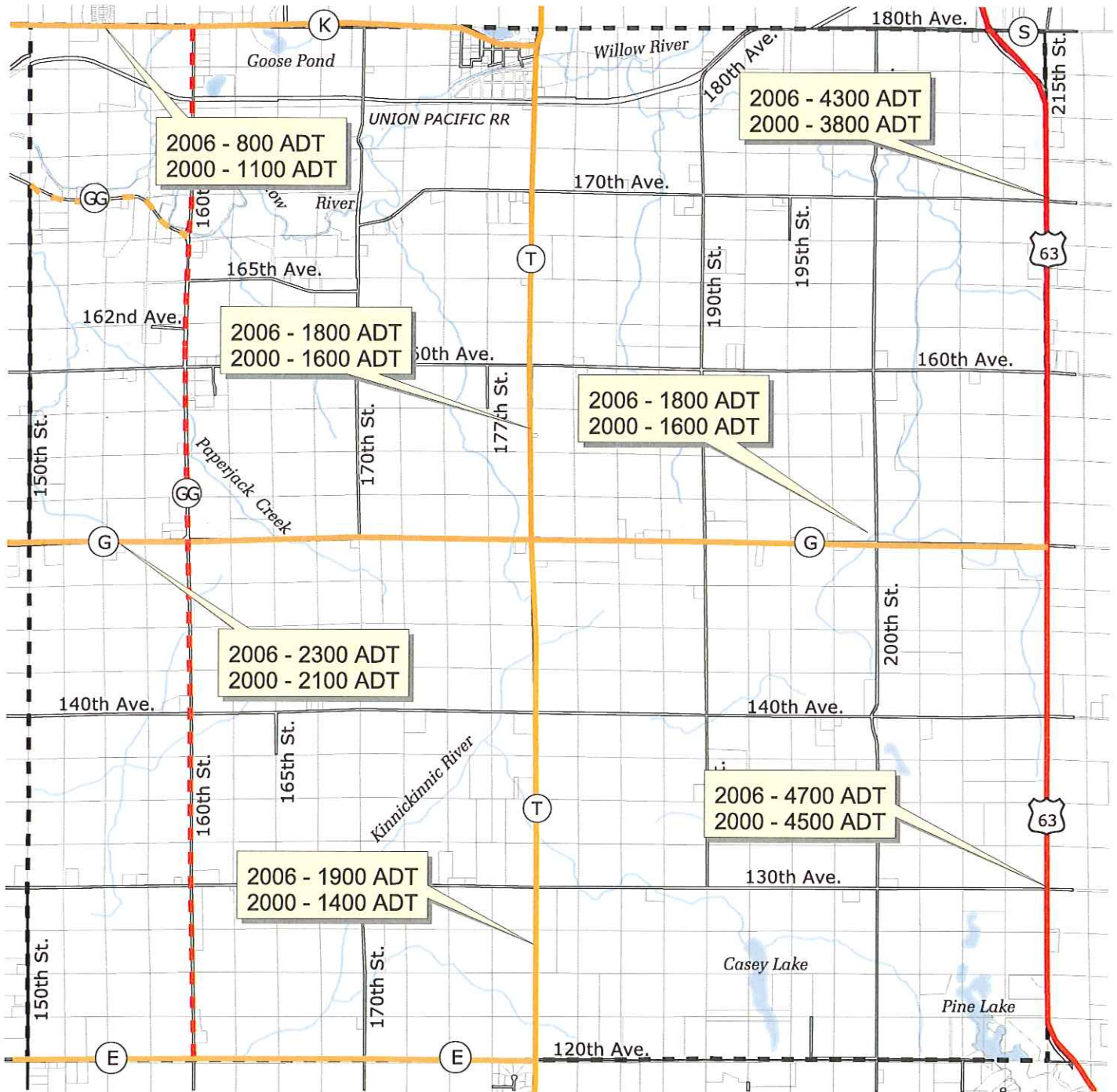


Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS & AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC

Map 4-1

Town of Erin Prairie
St. Croix County, Wisconsin



- Principal Arterial
- Major Collector
- Future Minor Arterial
- Future Collector

- Town Boundary
- Road Right-of-Way
- Parcels
- Rivers, Streams, and Creeks
- Lakes and Flowages

0.5 0 0.5 1 Miles



Source: Town of Erin Prairie PASER ratings. City of New Richmond Future Land Use and Throughfares map.

Air Transportation

The Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport provides major commercial air service for Western Wisconsin and Town of Erin Prairie residents. The airport consists of the Humphrey and Lindberg Terminals. This airport will continue to be the main provider of passenger and commercial service in the area.

The New Richmond Regional Airport (NRRA) is the only public use airport in St. Croix County. NRRA is located in the City of New Richmond and is approximately 30 miles northeast of Minneapolis-St. Paul. Over 180 aircraft are based in privately owned hangars.

The airport has two runways. Runway 14-32 is 5,507'x75' and is has an asphalt surface. Runway 4-22 is 2,110'x75' and has a turf surface.

NRRA is home to ten aviation related businesses and several business aircraft. The airport contributes over nine million dollars per year to the New Richmond area economy. NRRA will continue to provide private aircraft service for area residents.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails

Erin Prairie does not have any developed trails for hiking or bicycling. West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC), in conjunction with the St. Croix County Bicycle Facilities Planning Advisory Committee and the St. Croix County Transportation Committee, created the St. Croix County Bicycle Transportation Plan 1995-2015. The plan was approved in July, 1996.

The plan showed C.T.H. T as a proposed paved shoulder bikeway and C.T.H. GG, C.T.H. E, and a few local roads as shared roadways. WCWRPC is currently creating an updated pedestrian and bicycle plan for St. Croix County. A representative from Erin Prairie has been attending the meetings. A draft of the plan is available. Currently designated bicycle routes through the Town are located on C.T.H. T, C.T.H. E, 160th Avenue, and C.T.H. GG.

There are Federal and DNR lands in the Town of Erin Prairie. The Town would support the development of bicycling or walking trails in these areas.

Transportation Facilities for the Disabled

The St. Croix County Department of Aging provides services for the elderly in the Town of Erin Prairie. Residents can call to arrange rides to area clinics. Residents can also be transported to shopping or recreational opportunities in the area. This service is offered Monday through Thursday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. They also offer a service to people 60 years of age and older who need to go out of town for medical appointments. This service is performed by volunteers.

St. Croix County Disabled Transportation is a non-profit volunteer organization that offers transportation opportunities to the disabled and elderly. Most services are offered during daytime hours, but nighttime and Saturday service is sometimes available. There is no charge for their services but donations are accepted. Rides can be given almost

anywhere as long as there is a volunteer willing to provide transportation. St. Croix County Disabled Transportation is funded through donations from the Anderson Foundation, United Way St. Croix County, Baldwin Area Community Foundation, and the Office of the Aging, which receives funds through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Rail Service

The Union Pacific Railroad runs east-west through the northern portion of the Town of Erin Prairie in the area known as Jewett. The Union Pacific Railroad carries freight and commodities but does not make any scheduled stops in the Town. Historically, a rail spur existed at this location, but the tracks were removed many years ago. The possibility of redeveloping this location as a loading and unloading area for farm commodities is an issue that deserves serious consideration. The redevelopment of the rail spur would effect economic development and the transportation system in the area.

Passenger rail service is available from Amtrak in St. Paul, Minnesota. There is potential for the development of passenger rail service adjacent to the existing Canadian National Railroad line that follows U.S.H. 12. An abandoned second set of tracks could be developed for such service. The West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition is coordinating the development of passenger rail service through West Central Wisconsin as part of a regional strategy to ensure a balanced transportation system for long-term sustainable economic growth. The development of passenger rail service in the area could influence land use demand and development in the area.

Truck Transportation

Currently, there are no truck terminals in the Town of Erin Prairie. Tractor-trailers are used to transfer commodities to and from farms. This may increase as farms grow larger or if the rail spur in Jewett becomes a reality.

An important component of the Town of Erin Prairie's Comprehensive Plan is the importance of farming to the Town's economy; there must be coexistence of farm vehicles and local traffic.

Trucks, off-road vehicles, and cars add noise pollution. Erin Prairie can adopt an ordinance related to manifold braking and the use of vehicles without mufflers.

Other Modes of Transportation

The Town of Erin Prairie does not have any water or transit service or facilities. It is unlikely that these services will be developed in the next 20 years.

State, Regional, and Local Plans

State and regional transportation plans were reviewed to ensure consistency with the Town of Erin Prairie's long range goals. Improvements to Interstate 94, S.T.H. 64, U.S.H. 63, and any development of a passenger rail service could increase the demand

for residential, industrial, and commercial development. These possible scenarios will be taken into consideration throughout the plan.

Potential Funding Sources and Organizations

Local multi-modal transportation projects can be funded through different sources. Some of the most common funding sources for transportation infrastructure are:

- State Shared Revenue
- Local General Funds
- Community Development Block Grants
- DNR Stewardship Grants
- Township Road Improvement P and TRIP- Discretionary
- DOT Transportation Economic Assistance
- Enhancement Grants
- Private Foundations
- Corporate Foundations
- Local Volunteer Groups
- Local Organizations (Boy/Girl Scouts)

Transportation Goals, Objectives, Policies, Programs, and Actions

Goal 1: Maintain a quality road system.

Objectives

1. Provide quality roads that meet the needs of residents and farmers.
2. Maintain a system of roads that is both safe and aesthetic.

Policies, Programs, and Actions:

1. Utilize grants to offset the costs of road reconstructions.
2. Continue to use the PASER pavement evaluation system to plan future infrastructure expenditures efficiently.
3. Work with St. Croix County to plan and budget for future road maintenance.
4. Coordinate planning with the City of New Richmond so that transportation infrastructure growth and improvements meets the needs of both the City and Town of Erin Prairie.
5. Maintain good communication between residents, the Town Board, and St. Croix County to ensure timely and quality road maintenance.

Goal 2: Maintain road right-of-ways for conservation of wildlife and prairie plants.

Objectives

1. Reduce mowing.
2. Promote best management practices and prairie restoration techniques for residents to use in the rights of way that border their property.

Policies, Programs, and Actions:

1. Encourage prairie restoration in highway rights of way
2. Promote best-management practices for noxious weed control

3. Eliminate roadside mowing before the avian breeding season ends, and reduce it throughout the year.
4. Establish a prairie restoration demonstration project on the Town Hall grounds and identify other properties where such restorations can be seen.

Goal 3: Support the maintenance or creation of alternative forms of transportation to meet the needs of Town and area residents.

Objectives

1. Reduce the use of fossil fuels.
2. Promote the health benefits of walking and biking.
3. Provide transportation for people of all physical needs.

Policies, Programs, and Actions:

1. Continue to work with St. Croix County and West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in long range pedestrian and bicycle route planning.
2. Utilize signs and striping to ensure safe bicycle routes for residents.
3. Support the development of passenger rail service through the area.
4. Encourage carpooling to reduce fuel consumption and the number of vehicles on area roads. Identify potential carpool parking areas in the northwest and southeast portions of the Township.
5. Support the transportation services that the St. Croix Department of Aging provides to County residents.