

Chapter Seven



U.S. Route 20 between Norwalk and Monroeville

Transportation

Huron County's transportation system is assisted by the presence of a number of U.S., State, and County highways, six distinct rail lines operated by four rail companies, and two general aviation airports. While these facilities provide significant resources for passenger and freight transportation throughout the county, there are a number of goals that are sought by County and local officials to improve transportation efficiency and safety. The overall transportation goals that have been developed by the comprehensive plan steering committee are as follows:

1. Work toward achieving an adequate, safe countywide transportation system that will take into account future growth.
2. Design for the efficient flow of traffic.
3. Identify, provide, and increase public transportation and transit where warranted by demand and need.
4. Make provisions for safe pedestrian and bicycle movement.
5. Maximize the usefulness of airports in Huron County, including consideration of the siting of a new airport if existing facilities cannot adequately respond to future needs.

The Steering Committee that has overseen the development of this plan identified several transportation-related strengths regarding Huron County – the presence of four railroads, proximity to health care and educational facilities, and nearby Interstate access to the northern portion of the County. Weaknesses included a lack of adequate highways, both north-south and, with the exception of US 20 between Bellevue and Norwalk, east-west as well; and for bypasses for through traffic in several communities. The Committee also cited some “proximity issues” resulting from the County being in neither a metropolitan nor a recognized fringe area. The County's airports also presented some limitations, especially regarding runway length and a subsequent inability to land certain corporate aircraft.

Transportation plays a major role in shaping land use patterns within a county, since accessibility to business inputs and markets, places of employment, points of sale for agricultural products, and shopping, health care, entertainment, and other destinations all guide locational decisions for businesses and residences. Thus transportation improvements should be designed and implemented with land use goals in mind.

Transportation planning requires coordination between a number of entities, including County officials (notably the County Engineer's office), Municipal and Township officials who preside over their jurisdictions' local roadway system, State officials (especially within the Ohio Department of Transportation, or ODOT), and providers of other coordinated transportation, such as airport officials and officials from the County's four railroads.

Existing Conditions



State Route 61, a mid-county north-south corridor

According to ODOT data, Huron County contains 69.8 miles of U.S. routes, 157.89 miles of State routes, 227.9 miles of County routes, 487.1 miles of Township roadways, and 160.3 miles of municipal roadways, for a total of 1,103 miles of roadways within its bounds. The State is responsible for the maintenance of the 227.7 total miles of U.S. and State highways, and the County, Townships, and Municipalities are responsible for their respective roadways.

Roadways are categorized by their *functional classification*. Roads are thus characterized as principal arterials, minor arterials, major collectors, minor collectors, or local roadways. Rural Principal Arterials are the major routes that serve corridor movements with substantial statewide or interstate travel and connect larger population areas (such as Mansfield with Sandusky). Minor Arterials connect cities, larger towns, and other major destinations, and are generally spaced at intervals so that all developed areas are within a reasonable distance of an arterial. Rural Arterials are characterized by high travel speeds and minimum interference.

Rural Collectors are primarily intra-county and serve more moderate travel speeds and distances than arterials. While major collectors provide service to the county seat and larger towns as well as such destinations as consolidated schools and parks, minor collectors generally collect traffic from local roads and bring all developed areas within reasonable distance of a collector, as well as providing service to smaller communities and connecting locally important traffic generators within rural hinterlands. Rural Local Roads provide access to adjacent land and accommodate travel over relatively short distances.

The definitions and uses change somewhat for urban classifications. Urban Principal Arterials serve major activity centers, high volume corridors, and the longest trip demands, as well as interconnecting major rural corridors, and serving demand for intra-area travel, such as that between the central business district and outlying residential areas. Urban Minor Arterials augment the principal arterials and interconnect them, serving moderate-length trips and providing urban connections for rural collectors. Urban Collectors provide land access and traffic circulation in residential, commercial, and industrial areas, penetrating residential neighborhoods, and distributing trips between local streets and arterials. Urban

Locals provide direct access to adjacent land, and are not intended to carry any through traffic movement.

The County's highway and roadway systems are depicted below by type and functional class:

Table 7-1: Huron County Roadways by Jurisdiction and Functional Classification

Functional classification	US	State	County	Township	Municipal	Total
Rural Principal Arterial	49.8	12.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	61.9
Rural Minor Arterial	0.0	15.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.4
Rural Major Collector	0.0	102.4	14.7	1.1	1.2	119.4
Rural Minor Collector	0.0	2.9	65.7	2.5	0.0	71.2
Rural Local	0.0	0.0	132.4	464.3	33.4	630.1
Urban Principal Arterial	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Urban Minor Arterial	20.0	4.9	0.8	0.0	0.9	26.6
Urban Major Collector	0.0	13.2	0.7	0.0	5.5	19.3
Urban Minor Collector	0.0	7.0	2.5	1.4	22.0	32.8
Urban Local	0.0	0.0	11.1	17.9	97.4	126.4
Total	69.8	157.9	228.0	487.1	160.3	1,103.0

Source: ODOT database

It is important to be able to measure and note the relative usage of Huron County's state and federal roadways. The most recent traffic counts conducted by ODOT are for 2006, and they distinguish semi truck traffic from passenger and light commercial traffic. Table 2 presents 2006 ODOT traffic counts at selected intersections along U.S. and State arterials in Huron County, and compares them with 2000 data.

Table 7-2: 2006 Huron County Average 24-Hour Traffic Volume

Route	Intersection	Pass. & A Comm.	B and C Comm.	2006 Total Vehicles	2000 Total Vehicles
SR4	Seneca County line	1750	600	2350	2450
	US 20	2340	880	3220	3530
	SR 113	6450	940	7390	5490
SR 13	Richland County line	2390	650	3040	3020
	US 224	2180	590	2770	2590
SR 18	SR 601	3070	690	3760	4900
	SR 60 S	2550	1270	3820	3190
US 20	Sandusky County line	14801	4510	19320	23540
	E. Corp. Bellevue	8770	2500	11270	12240
	SR 4	5480	2750	8230	11670
	SR 547 Monroeville	8950	4500	13450	12530
	SW Corp. Norwalk	4570	3130	7700	10380
	Cleveland Rd.	4790	940	5730	
	SW Corp. Wakeman	3280	930	4210	6700
SR 60	Ashland Co. line	2980	180	3160	3660
	S. Corp. New London	2980	180	3160	3660

	Intersection	Pass. , A	Commercial	2006 Total	2000 Total
	Main St. New London	3240	210	3450	4080
	S. Corp. Wakeman	1540	80	1620	1950
SR 61	Richland Co. line	7040	540	7580	8050
	US 224	4310	380	4690	5320
	SR 598	1600	170	1770	1620
	SR 162	3150	230	3380	2950
	SW Corp. Norwalk	3650	320	3970	3670
	US 250 Norwalk	8330	440	8770	9350
	NE Corp. Norwalk	3630	170	3800	4080
	SR 601	3130	150	3280	3990
SR 99	US 224 Willard	5190	550	5740	6010
	N. Corp. Willard	3880	300	4180	5400
	SR 162	1660	270	1930	2150
	US 20 Monroeville	3330	550	3880	4130
	N. Corp. Monroeville	3330	550	3880	4130
SR 103	Crawford Co. Line	2280	100	2380	2310
SR 103	SW Corp. Willard	2970	110	3080	3410
	US 224	5100	210	5310	5980
	Myrtle Ave.	4970	210	5180	5960
	SR 598	2400	80	2480	4790
SR 113	US 20 Bellevue	3330	320	3650	3860
	SR 4	1560	290	1850	2020
	SR 99	1700	260	1960	4790
SR 162	SR 99	800	30	830	950
	SR 61	710	30	740	1010
	E. Corp. N. Fairfield	710	30	740	1010
	US 250	2020	70	2090	2220
	w. Corp. New London	3620	70	3690	5500
	Main St. New London	2370	70	2440	5140
	C. 21	760	40	800	690
US 224	Seneca County line	2790	910	3700	4510
	W. Corp. Willard	4480	750	5230	5640
	SR 103	9780	1140	10920	11120
	SR 61	2320	870	3190	4630
	W. Corp. Greenwich	3570	870	4440	6150
	SR 13	2780	970	3750	4580
US 250	Erie Co. line	13740	1150	14890	15260
	N. Corp. Norwalk	13740	1150	14890	15260
	Main St. Norwalk	11920	740	12660	12530
	SE Corp. Norwalk	11920	740	12660	12530
	US 20	6760	2100	8860	10310
	SR 162	1790	1580	3370	8190
	SR 13	4730	1820	6550	10430

	Intersection	Pass. , A	Commercial	2006 Total	2000 Total
SR 269	Seneca Co. Line	900	200	1100	1300
	S. Corp. Bellevue	2680	400	3080	2970
	N. Corp. Bellevue	4860	330	5190	3830
SR 303	US 20	1180	190	1370	1520
	US 60	810	130	940	1250
SR 547	SR 4	930	120	1050	1140
	W. Corp. Monroeville	1900	90	1990	1920
	SR 99 Monroeville	2990	60	3050	3220
SR 598	Richland Co. line	1000	110	1110	1130
	SR 61	2020	530	2550	3820
SR 601	SR 18	1420	540	1960	1740
	US 20	2590	320	2910	2760
	SR 61	2020	530	2550	2530

Source: ODOT database

ODOT has posted 2005 data on adjusted total thousands of daily vehicle miles traveled (kDVMT's). Within Huron County, the estimate is 1,372.84 kDVMT's, or 1,372,840 vehicle miles per day. This figure of 1,372.84 compares with the following estimates for surrounding counties: Erie: 3,063.74, Lorain: 6,568.15, Ashland: 1,870.39, Richland: 3,473.05, Crawford: 1,064.76, Seneca: 1,278.29, and Sandusky: 2,762.48. Of the estimated 1,372.84 kDVMT's, 456.98 (or a third, 33.3 percent) were found to be urban (within municipalities) travel.

It is interesting that the 2000 traffic counts in Table 2 exceeded the 2006 numbers in most cases. While this may indicate an overall decline in the use of the county's roads, it may also be a function of the weather or time of year when the counts were taken. In most cases, however, the numbers are similar over time.

It is no surprise that some of the county's heaviest traffic takes place on the county's only four-lane, limited access highway, U.S. Route 20, where over 19,000 vehicles crossed the Sandusky County line in the center of Bellevue, over 13,000 traveled through the center of Monroeville, and 7,700 vehicles were counted at the southwest corporation limits in Norwalk. The numbers for U.S. 20 decreased substantially east of Norwalk, indicating turning onto US 250 to the north or south, or traffic terminating in Norwalk.



U.S. 250 near Fitchville

U.S. 250, the primary north-south arterial through the county, sustained vehicle counts in excess of 10,000 vehicles within Norwalk. The count dropped to 3,370 further south, at S.R. 162 near Fitchville, then rose to 6,550 at the split with Route 13 in Fitchville.

The third U.S. highway, Route 224, is an east-west highway linking the county with



U.S. 224 in downtown Greenwich

I- 71 (where it becomes Interstate 76) and Akron to the east, and Findlay and I-75 to the west. Traffic counts peak within the county in Willard, where nearly 11,000 vehicles crossed S.R. 103 in Willard's commercial area. Outside the Willard area, counts are substantially lower, with 3,700 at the Seneca County line near Attica, 4,440 in Greenwich, and 3,750 at S.R. 13 east of Greenwich.

Other north-south corridors besides U.S. 250 include State Route 4, connecting U.S. 23 to the south, and Sandusky and vacation destinations to the north; S.R. 99, connecting Willard with Monroeville and northern destinations where it meets S.R. 4 in Erie County, and S.R. 60 connecting New London and Wakeman with Vermilion to the north and Ashland to the south. Counts on S.R. 4 are 2,350 at the Seneca County line to the south, and 3,220 at the intersection at U.S. 20. Counts on S.R. 99 reach 5,740 in Willard but are only 1,930 at S.R. 162 in the middle of the county. Finally, counts on S.R. 60 are 3,160 from Ashland County to New London, and only 1,620 at Wakeman's southern border. Thus, the greatest level of north-south traffic by far is supported by U.S. 250.

East-West travel is mostly supported by U.S. Routes 20 and 224, with mid-county travel (directly serving North Fairfield and New London) along S.R. 162 only reaching 830 vehicles at S.R. 99, 2,090 at U.S. 250, and 3,690 only reached at New London's western border. Other State Routes reported here serve largely as collectors, and do not serve as arterial corridors by themselves.

The U.S. Census provides additional information on how people travel in Huron County. As is typical for a rural county, nearly all travelers rely on their own car, truck, or van, with 25,790 of the 27,571 workers aged 16 and over citing those vehicles as their means of transportation to work. Just under ten percent (2,370) using a car, truck, or van, said they carpooled. Another 165 said they used public transportation to work, with 32 using a taxi service, and 637 claimed they walk to work.

Mean travel time to work was 20.2 minutes among Huron County commuters, which was about two minutes less than the Ohio state mean of 22 minutes and also under the national mean of 25.5 minutes. Table 3 helps describe local commuting patterns a little more closely, listing the fifteen most common counties where Huron County residents work, and the fifteen most common counties where employees working in Huron County live.

Table 7-3: Inter-County Commuting Patterns, 2000

Counties Where Huron County Residents Work	Number	Counties Where Huron County Employees Live	Number
Huron	18,310	Huron	18,310
Erie	4,048	Erie	2,358
Lorain	1,501	Sandusky	1,305
Sandusky	1,025	Richland	1,244
Richland	900	Seneca	954
Cuyahoga	399	Lorain	421
Seneca	282	Crawford	400
Ashland	264	Ashland	388
Crawford	141	Ottawa	151
Ottawa	111	Delaware	45
Medina	102	Wood	43
Lucas	76	Cuyahoga	36
Franklin	62	Morrow	34
Wood	52	Medina	32
Summit	46	Wayne	17

Source: 2000 Census of Population

The strongest connections by far are with Erie County, a net importer of workers, and where 6,406 workers cross the Huron/Erie County line in either direction to go to work, followed by Sandusky (2,330 total), Richland (2,144), Lorain (1,922), and Seneca (1,236). Sandusky County's large number can be partially explained by the City of Bellevue's location with roughly half the City in each of the two counties. However, these commuting patterns help explain the large numbers of average daily vehicle counts along such roadways as U.S. 250 north of Norwalk, U.S. 20 to the west, and to a lesser extent, routes 598, 61, and 13 toward Richland County.

Safety

Known data can also help pinpoint areas where safety needs are most evident. The Ohio Department of Public Safety provides annual data on vehicle crashes, and the following table provides information on the number of crashes by township for the past three years.

Not surprisingly, townships near the larger urban centers appear to have the greatest concentration of crashes. The highest numbers are witnessed in Norwalk Township, which nearly surrounds the City of Norwalk, and the second highest incidence of crashes is in New Haven Township, which is adjacent to Willard. In 2005, the five most crash-prone townships, in order, were Norwalk, Bronson (south of Norwalk, and includes a segment of U.S. 250), New Haven, Townsend (east of Norwalk, with segments of U.S. 20 and S.R. 18, and Greenfield (just northeast of Willard, with segments of State Routes 61, 99, and 162).

Table 7-4: Total Crashes by Township, 2003-2005

Township	2003 crashes			2004 crashes			2005 crashes		
	total	fatal	injury	total	fatal	injury	total	fatal	Injury
Bronson	75	2	13	56	0	14	85	2	21
Clarksfield	50	1	21	56	1	19	49	0	14
Fairfield	32	0	9	24	0	6	28	0	11
Fitchville	89	0	18	67	1	23	60	1	17
Greenfield	65	0	15	59	2	12	69	0	20
Greenwich	51	0	14	49	0	15	33	0	9
Hartland	41	3	7	41	0	19	42	1	14
Lyme	54	1	21	50	0	16	58	2	18
N. Haven	107	1	36	86	1	32	80	1	29
N. London	31	1	6	42	0	10	46	1	9
Norwalk	165	0	50	139	0	39	132	2	27
Norwich	28	1	3	23	0	6	23	0	4
Peru	37	0	6	36	0	9	44	0	11
Richmond	46	1	17	42	0	12	29	0	12
Ridgefield	59	0	19	61	1	12	48	1	14
Ripley	28	0	10	32	0	9	27	0	10
Sherman	13	0	4	16	0	3	20	0	7
Townsend	83	0	22	70	1	25	73	1	26
Wakeman	64	1	24	48	1	14	50	0	17
Total	1,118	12	315	997	8	295	996	12	290

Source: Ohio Dept. of Public Safety

While Township data are not available for the 1990's, total crash data are available at a County level to review overall trends over time. The statistics indicate a decrease in total crashes, from 1,713 in 1995 and 1,759 in 2000 to 1,597 in 2005. Fatal crashes have unfortunately held fairly steady, totaling 12 in 1995, 8 in 2000, and 12 in 2005. Injury crashes, on the other hand, have decreased over time, totaling 582 in 1995, 442 in 2000, and 400 in 2005.

Larger Trends Impacting Transportation in Ohio

The Ohio Department of Transportation issued a planning document entitled "Access Ohio 2004-2030". One chapter of that document discussed trends in demographics, economics, and travel patterns. Some of the trends cited in that report are worth consideration at the County level.

Within the planning document, Ohio's population projected to grow by 8.5 percent between 2000 and 2030, with the greatest growth (over twenty percent) in metropolitan fringe counties, such as Delaware and Medina. Within this projection, Huron County's population was projected to grow by 7.6 percent, consistent with the projection cited in Chapter 2 of this document.

The report points out that Ohio's population is shifting more than it is growing, with an overall outcome of some decentralization of the population, spreading out and creating a new pattern of urban boundaries. The resulting lower development density results in an increased dependence on the private automobile and growing demand on the State's highway system. A longer driving distance may extend peak commuting periods. ODOT also envisions a trend toward increased single-occupancy driving and vehicle miles traveled.

Ohio's population is aging, and the "baby boom" population includes approximately one-third of the state's total population. Between 2000 and 2030, it was projected that those over 65 would increase by 750,000 (or 49.8 percent) and those aged 35-54 will decrease by about 250,000 (or 7.4 percent), suggesting that there may be fewer people in the traditional workforce making trips during peak travel times. Also, an increase in the number of older drivers may result in a greater mid-day peak.

Although people over age 65 make 22 percent fewer overall trips than younger people, they actually make a comparable number of non-work trips as those under 65. It is found that older men make substantially more non-work trips and travel slightly more miles than younger men, but because of their flexibility, they tend to avoid peak times and make most of their trips between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of households in Ohio grew 8.7 percent, approaching twice the rate of increase in general population growth of 4.7 percent. In 2000, Ohio's average household size was 2.49 persons, less than the national average of 2.59 persons, and this trend toward smaller household size is expected to contribute to an increase in the number of vehicle trips per person.

Between 1960 and 2000, the number of registered vehicles in Ohio grew by 162 percent, from 3.9 million to 10.3 million. Recently, the number of registered vehicles has exceeded the number of people in Ohio, with 11.9 million vehicles registered in Ohio in 2002, including 8,347,600 passenger cars, 1,664,000 noncommercial trucks, and 900,000 commercial vehicles. Rates of automobile ownership in Ohio are not expected to increase as rapidly as they have in the past because the U.S. market for automobiles is expected to reach a saturation point between 2015 and 2025.

Public Transportation in Huron County

Public transportation service is provided throughout Huron County by Senior Enrichment Services of Huron County. This agency operates a fleet of vans and other vehicles, supported in part with funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation. Curb to curb transportation to and from any point in Huron County is available on demand, but the rider must call to request the ride 24 hours in advance. The cost of a cross-town ride in Norwalk was \$2.00 in 2006. Transportation is also available in Norwalk from two local taxicab businesses.



Huron County Airports

Huron County is home to two general aviation airports, the Norwalk-Huron County Airport located in Norwalk Township, south of U.S. Route 20, and just east of the City of Norwalk, and the Willard Airport, located in Willard just south of U.S. Route 224. While both airports help serve a base of business interests, private pilots and owners, and transient general air traffic, both also have limitations to the length of their runways, as well as the inability to easily expand those runways due to adjacent roadway alignments and neighboring land uses.

Norwalk-Huron County Airport



The Norwalk-Huron County airport is a public use, general aviation facility that was constructed in 1968. The airport is owned by Huron County, and is guided by a five-member Authority whose members are appointed by the County Commissioners. The airport is managed by NOFA, Inc., a contract management company.

The airport features a 4,209 by 75 foot, east-west runway, of which 3,969 feet are usable for landing and the full distance is available for takeoff. The airport is accessed by three designated taxiways, connecting the main ramp, runway, and business complex, and it has an FBO (fixed base operator) building with various amenities for pilots and passengers.

Hangars provide storage for three aircraft in Building A, eight aircraft apiece in Buildings B and C (T-hangars), and private storage in Building D. A business complex building stores an additional three aircraft. Water is supplied to the airport by Northern Ohio Rural Water, and sanitary sewerage is covered by an on-site septic tank. Power is provided with three-phase electricity from Ohio First Energy, and propane is supplied by a 150-gallon tank with service to the FBO Building and business complex.

The current fleet at the airport includes 28 based aircraft, of which 25 are single engine, one is multi-engine, and two are rotorcraft. Projections in the current airport master plan call for that number to increase to as many as 38 based aircraft by the end of the planning period, 2026. Further, airport staff state that there is a waiting list for hangar space of ten aircraft.

The airport's operations in 2005 included 3,648 local operations and 2,752 itinerant operations, for a total of 6,400 operations. The general aviation operations forecast conducted by the master plan's author projected this to increase to 5,415 local and 4,085 itinerant operations (9,500 total) in 2026. The plan noted that the proximity of Norwalk Raceway Park accounted for an increase in operations in season during racing events. This may become particularly true with the recent announcement of an expansion of the Raceway Park to fit its new role within the prestigious National Hot Rod Association.

Another trend that will have a positive effect on this airport is the emergence of light jet and charter/fractional ownership aircraft, and air taxi services that account for ten to sixteen

operations monthly. A new air taxi service called "Sky Taxi NE" has begun local service in northeast Ohio, and Norwalk-Huron County Airport is one of three airports in the area from which the air taxi will have service.

The Airport Master Plan notes that current trends having a bearing on the development of the airport include the use of global positioning systems for navigation, the increasing use of charter/air taxi services, and the growing Very Light Jet aircraft market. Providing facilities for business jet aircraft increases the accessibility to small markets and cities by jet aircraft. The plan recommends that consideration should be given to lengthening the usable runway to 4,300 feet to accommodate future demand of B-II aircraft. This would require an overall length of the runway to be 4,968 feet with the existing displaced thresholds. Also recommended is a partial parallel taxiway to provide access to the most active runway end or a full taxiway linking both runway ends to the apron and terminal areas. A subsequent phase of the report will examine the need for a second, crosswind runway.

Willard Airport



The Willard Airport is open to the public and is located just south of and parallel to the commercial corridor located along U.S. Route 224. The runway measures 4,028 by 65 feet, and the surface is asphalt in good condition. There are medium intensity edge lights. Fuel is available on site, provided by Willard Aviation.

There are four aircraft based on the field: two single engine airplanes and two single engine ultralights. The airport averages 52 airport operations per week, with 92 percent being transient general aviation and seven percent being local general aviation (one percent is military).

Wakeman Airport (Erie County)

A third airport, the Wakeman Airport, is located just northeast of Huron County along S.R. 60. The airport has available fuel, hangars, and tie downs. Its runway is 3,800 feet by 55 feet, with asphalt paving in good condition. There are some 27 aircraft based at the airport, including 25 single engine planes and two multi-engine aircraft. The airport averages 47 operations daily, with 81 percent being local general aviation, ten percent air taxi, and nine percent transient general aviation. There are no published instrument procedures for this airport.

Railroads



A train passes west of New London

Huron County is served by six rail lines. The following is a description of those lines:

1. The northern tier of the county is served by a line owned and operated by the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad. This line serves agricultural and business needs along its route, including grain elevators (West Clarksfield, Hartland Station, and Monroeville). The route travels from the east in close proximity to S.R. 18, and runs through the center of Norwalk, Monroeville, and Bellevue.

1. A main line of the Norfolk Southern Railroad cuts diagonally through the very northwestern corner of the county in Bellevue. This line accesses a major rail yard facility in Bellevue, which extends northeast from the City into Erie County.



2. The southern tier of the County is served by a CSX line that extends south of New London, then through Greenwich and west to Willard, where a large rail yard operation and major switching point
View of Willard CSX Rail Yard from Town

Line Rd. bridge

in the entire CSX system is located.

3. Another CSX line traversing the south end of the County travels from the northeast through New London and Greenwich, in a southwesterly alignment into Richland County.

4. Wheeling and Lake Erie also operates a line that switches, by agreement, into the CSX line in New London, which it utilizes between New London and Greenwich before traveling southwesterly to Plymouth on its own alignment.

5. A short line is operated by the Ashland Railway, extending north from Plymouth at the County line to Willard, connecting with the CSX yard in Willard.

The above lines can collectively provide rail access to Bellevue, Monroeville, Norwalk, Willard, Plymouth, Greenwich, and New London. Wakeman and North Fairfield have no rail access.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio lists 94 rail crossings in Huron County. Forty of these crossings involve the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway Co., thirty involve CSX Transportation, Inc., eight involve the Ashland Railway, and sixteen involve Norfolk

Southern. Most of the ninety-four listed are at-grade. The County and its Emergency Management Agency have proactively pursued funding and approval for grade separations at key locations. Grade separations have been constructed on Townsend Avenue in Greenwich, on Old State Road in Greenwich Township, on Section Line 30 at the western end of the Willard CSX yard, on Biglow Parkway in New London, and on S.R. 269 on the south side of Bellevue. Another key crossing on U.S. 250, north of U.S.224, is designed and will soon be bid for construction in the near future, and final plans for a crossing on S.R. 13 north of U.S. 224 are ready to be submitted.

In addition to the effort aimed at grade separations, the County and its Emergency Management Agency have obtained funding to install new lights and gates at some sixteen priority crossings, with additional upgrades in the planning and construction stage. It is recommended that this effort be continued, as rail crossing safety is a major concern throughout the County.

Existing Transportation Plans in Huron County

Huron County Comprehensive Plan

The most recent Comprehensive Plan for Huron County was developed in the 1970's. That plan listed the following goals for the transportation element: reduce the probability of accidents, reduce travel time and effort, reduce vehicle operating costs, maximize the rate of return on capital investments in the transportation system, minimize dislocation of people and disruption of the economy, and promote a better regional environment. These goals are still relevant today, although the priority projects as listed in that document have changed over time.

The plan found US 250 north of Norwalk to be the only highway segment where volume exceeded capacity. However, several areas where the volume to capacity ratio indicated a need for upgrading included segments of US 20 east of Norwalk, US 250 from Norwalk to Fitchville, US 224 west of SR 13, SR 103 on both sides of Willard, SR 61 between Plymouth and New Haven, and SR 60 south of New London. Recognized major traffic generators within the county included the center of Norwalk, industries in southeast Willard, and the rail yards in Willard and Bellevue. It was also noted that recreational facilities such as Cedar Point generate traffic that must be handled by Huron County roads. Through traffic routes in the county include US 20, 224, and 250 and State Routes 4, 13, and 18; US 250 and SR 4 are especially important because of job opportunities and recreation facilities in Erie County (these linkages are still true today).

One guiding principle described in the plan is the benefit of separating heavy through traffic and significant areas of local traffic. Recommendations for the major arterials in Huron County included a limited access U.S. bypass around and to the south of Bellevue connecting SR 4 south of the railroads; purchase of additional right of way east of Norwalk for future expansion of US 20 to four traffic lanes, with a bypass recommended around the south side of Wakeman; Relocating US 224 as a limited access highway; extending the Norwalk US 20 bypass to the north and east side of Milan; and widening SR 13 to allow for two additional traffic lanes in the future. In addition, 24-foot pavement was recommended

for all minor arterials, including SR 4, 18, 60, 61, and 99, as well as potentially Fitchville River Road, Peru-Olena Road, and SR 162.

Another recommendation was to consider a trucking terminal or transfer point within key industrial areas. Sites with both highway and rail access could provide an opportunity for “piggyback” or other methods of freight movement integration. While a Triple Crown facility has been developed north of Bellevue, some accommodation of intermodal transportation may still have value in other portions of the county, including Norwalk, should industry realize a return on such an investment.

Community-Level Planning

Some Huron County communities have completed their own comprehensive plans, while others have transportation planning priorities or capital improvements plans. The following is a summary of those plans and priorities, focusing on recommendations that have more countywide than local community significance.

Norwalk Comprehensive Plan

Norwalk's comprehensive plan was completed in 2006, and includes a chapter on transportation. The issue of “smooth and efficient flow of traffic” was covered by recommending better access management, especially on major thoroughfares, limiting driveway permits in specific areas, and developing a plan for the US 250 North corridor that includes an access road joining Cline Street to relieve US 250 of local traffic.

Another recommendation concerns the development of improved truck routes. If it is assumed that a new US 250 bypass is unlikely, an alternative recommendation is to enhance existing routes, including Greenwich-Milan Townline Road, as well as Old State Road to Main Street, with additional improvements to a route that would include Main Street, Akron Road, Schauss Avenue, and Ontario and Republic Streets.

Among the other recommendations developed by a steering committee and resource panel are the construction of a series of uniform and distinctive “gateway” signs at major thoroughfares' entrances to the city (US 250, SR61, Akron and Cleveland Roads), the extension of several streets to open up undeveloped land within and adjacent to the city, extending Industrial Parkway within the Firelands Industrial Park to Old State Road and SR 601 (which will open a new traffic route in the northeast portion of the city, especially for truck traffic), expanding a system of walking and bicycle trails within the city and linking them to the “Rails to Trails” system, support to the Norwalk-Huron County Airport planning efforts, building a stronger alliance with the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad in order to maximize local industrial use of that asset, developing industrial sites that can be accessed by rail, and increased partnering with providers to maximize the benefit of public transportation to residents and employees.

Bellevue Comprehensive Plan



New road/rail grade separation at SR 269 in Bellevue

The City of Bellevue also completed a 2005 comprehensive plan. A major recommendation concerned the development of a US 20 bypass, which has been a subject of planning studies in Bellevue for decades. Recommended strategies in the 2005 plan included striving to have the bypass, including two grade separations (west of 269 and on SR 4) listed in ODOT's planning priority list, and investing local funds in preliminary planning activities. Until such a bypass would become reality, it was recommended that the City and Bellevue Development Corporation work to create a roadway system in the SR 269 south area that may include an eastern extension of County Line Road to Prairie Road through the future industrial area. This would require developers and businesses locating in the area to construct driveways and roadways that provide a common access to SR 269 such that constructed, existing roads will fit into the "big picture". Further, selected county and township roads in the area would be upgraded to meet truck standards.

Among the other Bellevue transportation recommendations were working toward rail grade separations in priority areas (a separation at SR 269 just south of the central business district was completed in mid-2006); coordination with the Bellevue School District to identify traffic problems; development of an alternative access route from the northeast industrial area to SR 4, working with Groton and Lyme Townships; preparation of a corridor and access management plan for US 20 East and West, and SR 269 North and South, and development of gateway designs and signage.

Other Huron County Community Transportation Plans and Priorities

The City of Willard has planned and carried out a widening of US Route 224 throughout the city to three lanes, allowing for turning movements that will not obstruct traffic flow. This helps alleviate a bottleneck along the US 224 corridor, which sees some 12,000 vehicles daily, of which 30 percent is truck traffic.

Another issue in Willard is the fate of the Willard Airport, which provides service for a minimal number of business flights, and which only offers tie-downs for aircraft. The existing location will always have limitations because it is surrounded by other land uses, including commercial businesses along the US 224 corridor to the north. An assessment of its usefulness (to hobbyists and private owners, and uses including life flights, as well as business use) and development alternatives (including relocating the airport entirely) needs to be conducted.

The Village of Monroeville's comprehensive plan identified no major transportation improvements involving new or extended thoroughfares or arterials. However, transportation issues cited included heavy truck traffic on US 20, a lack of safe areas for

pedestrian movement across US 20, a lack of a sufficient truck turning radius on SR 99 and SR 547, lack of a rail spur to serve the Monroeville Industrial park on US 20 on the west side of town, and a lack of cooperation by the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad.



The Village of New London has completed a significant transportation project with the opening of a newly aligned Biglow Parkway (pictured at left) and rail grade separation. This roadway offers direct access from SR 60 and 162 to some significant acreage of potential industrial property, including the area known as the "tile yard".

Other communities did not list specific transportation projects with countywide implications.

Transportation plans and Priorities of the Huron County Engineer's Office

The Huron County Engineer's office is responsible for the maintenance of some 228 miles of the County Road system, and works with Townships to provide funding for the improvement of their roadways. Duties of the Engineer's office include maintenance and repair of those county roads, traffic control, safety improvements, mowing, and snow removal. The office also serves as the engineering advisor to the County's nineteen townships. While some roadway construction is completed every year, the amount of roadway improved diminishes with the limited revenue sources and rising cost of construction.

In addition to performing its duties in inspecting and evaluating the load carrying capacity of bridges, the Engineer's office has become instrumental in improving the County's bridges, which were typically constructed prior to the development of larger agricultural equipment with greater load requirements. The County has 389 bridges, and the Engineer has taken an active role in constructing new bridges in-house, forming bridge components in the Highway Garage year-round. An inventory sheet shows 25 small bridge and 25 large bridge projects in varying degrees of completion, as well as seven culvert projects. Bridges are largely constructed using Issue I and Gas Tax revenues; \$11 million in bridge construction has been completed over the past fifteen years.

The Engineer has identified drainage as a major issue that needs to be addressed in Huron County. A long-range storm water management plan is needed, and sources of revenue for drainage along the 400-mile roadway system need to be identified.

With regard to priority roadways, the Engineer notes that the maintenance of certain roadways, specifically Section Line 30, Old State Road, New State Road, Greenwich-Milan Town Line Road, and Town Line 12 provide secondary routes for truck and other traffic, in addition to State Route 162, which is maintained by ODOT.

Priority projects that should be undertaken in Huron County, in the view of the Engineer, include the rail-roadway grade separations on SR 13 and US 250 at the CSX line, which are in various stages of final planning and implementation, and improvements to Greenwich-Milan Town Line Road northeast of US 250, including two wide lanes and a significant berm, as well as raising the profile of the road, to serve its growing function as a Norwalk bypass alternative and direct route to such destinations as Norwalk Raceway Park, the Norwalk-Huron County Airport, and the Village of Milan.

Access Management

With an increase in use of a number of corridors, and with the continual addition of new driveways and roadways to access new housing and business, it is recommended that the county consider the adoption of an access management plan. Access management programs seek to limit and consolidate access along major roadways, adding to the safety and efficiency of roadways. The following are some important principles of access management that should be observed in transportation planning:

1. It is important to design and manage roadways according to the primary functions they are expected to serve.
2. Limit direct access to major roadways. Roadways that serve higher volumes of regional through traffic need more access control to preserve their function. Frequent and direct property access is more compatible with local and collector roadways.
3. Long, uniform spacing of intersections and signals on major roadways enhances the ability to coordinate signals and ensure continuous movement of traffic at the desired speed. Signals should be located to favor through movements.
4. Access connections too close to intersections can cause serious traffic conflicts. The functional area of intersections and interchanges (the area where motorists are responding to the intersection) should be preserved.
5. Limit the number of conflict points. Simplifying the driving task and minimizing the conflict points contributes to improved traffic operations and fewer collisions.
6. Conflict areas should be separated. Drivers need sufficient time to address one set of potential conflicts before facing another. The necessary spacing between conflict areas increase as travel speed increases, to provide adequate perception and reaction time.
7. Remove turning vehicles from through traffic lanes. Turning lanes allow drivers to decelerate gradually out of the through lane and wait in a protected area for an opportunity to complete a turn. This reduces the conflict between turning vehicles and through traffic.

8. Use non-traversable medians to manage left turn movements. Medians channel turning movements on major roadways to controlled locations, and can be especially effective in improving roadway safety.
9. Provide a supporting street or circulation system. A supporting network of local and collector streets can accommodate development as well as unified property access and circulation systems. Commercial strip development with separate driveways for each business forces even short trips onto arterial roadways, reducing safety and impeding mobility.

Huron County can encourage officials to carry out access management principles without adopting regulations. However, such formal implementation is an option. Townships of under 15,000 population may not adopt access management regulations if the county has adopted county regulations. Also, access management regulations do not apply to subdivisions that are subject to plat approval under Ohio Revised Code section 711.05 or 711.10, and they do apply to subdivisions subject to approval without a plat under section 711.131, where minor subdivisions or lot splits are subject to access management regulations. However, prior to approval of new subdivision regulations which will incorporate a procedure for a full review, Huron County does currently require a review of all such subdivisions by the Engineer and Soil and Water Conservation District.

Steps in the adoption of county access management regulations include a Resolution to Proceed, advisory committee appointment, preparation of the regulations by the County Engineer's office, adoption of the regulations by the Commissioners, and provisions for appeals and variances, permits and fees, and amendments. Currently, the adoption process for Huron County's new subdivision regulations is underway, and approval, adoption, and adherence to those regulations is recommended.

Policy Statements and Recommendations

The following policy statements were developed and adopted by the Steering Committee that has overseen the development of this plan. They form the basis of the transportation recommendations made within this plan.

1. Although Townline Rd. 12 is in good condition, there is need for another improved east-west roadway in the county. This can be alleviated with the improvement of US 224 to a four-lane highway and its realignment to bypass Willard. Although less costly alternatives may need to be considered in the short run, long-range planning should target the upgrade of US 224 to a four-lane, limited access highway throughout Huron County, with the four lane configuration reaching east to its intersection with I-71.
2. In order to provide proper long-range planning for roadway widening and expansion, current zoning and land use practices should incorporate mandated "super setbacks" along the US 250 and US 224 corridors, as well as along US 20 east of Norwalk. This will allow for easier land acquisition, clearance, and site preparation for future widening projects. Rights of way should be under site control, with easements. Ideally, US 250 should be of a four-lane configuration from US 224 to Erie County, where it is now four

lanes. A critical improvement is needed to reconfigure the turn and bridge at Fitchville. Additionally, in the short term, efforts should be expended to create sufficient shoulders along the two-lane Route 250. This may include converting ditches to culverts, but the safety factor associated with emergency needs to exit the travel lanes should be addressed as soon as possible.

3. Long-range planning should also continue to include consideration of a north-south bypass in Norwalk and an east-west bypass in Bellevue. The Norwalk bypass may include the aforementioned Greenwich-Milan Townline Road, with consideration to a northern extension to rejoin US 250. Several southerly alternatives for the Bellevue bypass have been described. Additionally, the aforementioned Willard US 224 bypass may be best aligned along Bullhead Road. In proposing bypass alignments, the upgrading of existing roadways should be considered where feasible.
4. In the shorter, term, Greenwich-Milan Townline Road has emerged as a de facto Norwalk bypass, and plans are underway to obtain ODOT funding to improve the road to safety standards and roadway width, 12 foot lanes and six foot graded shoulders. The portion of this roadway from US 250 north should become an extension of SR 601 and be marked as a bypass for Norwalk and direct route to Norwalk Raceway Park and other destinations to the east of Norwalk.
5. The intersection at US 224 and SR 13 should be improved to better accommodate truck traffic and turning movements. Other intersections and roadway segments requiring attention include: SR 103 south of Willard, the 99/547 intersection in Monroeville (to accommodate truck turns), US 250 and South Norwalk Road (where a right turn lane can be easily demarked along southbound US 250), and the roadway fronting the Western Reserve school complex (where a turn lane should be constructed for reasons of public safety).
6. Local officials must work within a regional context to carry the sufficient level of "weight" to be noticed and given attention in Columbus. This regional support may come from an emerging Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) being formed in Erie County. The potential for Huron County's (or a portion of Huron County, such as the more northerly municipal areas of Norwalk, Monroeville, and Bellevue) inclusion within the MPO should be explored. Other regional affiliations may include working with the Toledo Port Authority. Further, Huron County should build a consortium with Ashland and Richland Counties for cases when a combined effort will assist in advocating for a mutually desired project.
7. Local officials should involve ODOT and its Ashland District Office in their planning efforts, in order to advocate for projects that have been deemed of high priority. Advocacy of projects with ODOT should be aggressive and consistent. Local officials should explore how to provide significant local matching funds to gain ODOT's attention.
8. Increased rail traffic, particularly east-west traffic in southern Huron County through New London, Greenwich, and Willard, has presented increased challenges for north-

south highway traffic. A grade separation has been completed along the newly constructed Biglow Parkway in New London, as well as Section Line 30 in Willard, and grade separations on SR 13 and US 250 north of US 224 are in the final planning and construction bidding stages,



At-grade crossing along SR 13 near Greenwich, slated for a grade separation improvement.

respectively. Additional safety improvements within the County include lights and gates on county roads. The County and its affected subdivisions, with the Emergency Management Agency serving as lead agency on such projects, should continue to advocate for and support these improvements, with a prioritization of need for crossing improvements, and the ultimate goal of lights and gates, if not grade separations, for every crossing.

9. Early stage planning is underway for high-speed passenger rail between Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati. It is possible that the rail route will pass through southern Huron County. County officials should monitor the progress of this project and advocate for a regional stop within the county. Such a stop could serve both the Mansfield area to the south and Cedar Point/Erie County vacation and recreation destinations to the north, although it is recognized that a Huron County stop may be counter to planning goals of expeditious through rail traffic to population centers. It may be more realistic to locate a maintenance facility for the upgraded line in Huron County.
10. Huron County's airports should be promoted and more fully publicized as community and economic development tools and resources. Funding should be sought for needed upgrades to ensure that these facilities can optimally serve their customer base of businesses and individuals. The possible relocation of the Huron County Airport should be carefully studied, contingent upon the availability of Federal and State funding to make the project locally cost-effective.
11. Drainage is a significant issue throughout the county and should be addressed by a comprehensive, prioritized plan, in order to keep roadway surfaces safe during periods of high rainfall. Plans should call for a prioritized listing of areas that flood frequently, and clearing of drainage ways and streams in a manner that is environmentally acceptable. A portion of this planning includes analysis of the current effectiveness of older County ditches and tiles and prioritization of projects to best utilize scarce funding for drainage improvements.