

CHAPTER 3: TRANSPORTATION

Wisconsin State Statute § 66.1001(2)(c)

Transportation

A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development of the various modes of transportation, including highways, transit, transportation systems for persons with disabilities, bicycles, electric personal assistive mobility devices, walking, railroads, air transportation, trucking and water transportation. The element shall compare the local governmental unit’s objectives, policies, goals and programs to state and regional transportation plans. The element shall also identify highways within the local governmental unit by function and incorporate state, regional and other applicable transportation plans, including transportation corridor plans, County highway functional and jurisdictional studies, urban area and rural area transportation plans, airport master plans and rail plans that apply in the local governmental unit.

INTRODUCTION

Sawyer County’s primary transportation mode consists of local, county, state, and federal roads which provide residents and visitors the ability to traverse the countryside for employment, shopping, or leisure. The land use pattern has in large part been driven by the development of roadways serving residential and commercial structures. While personal vehicles and commercial trucking are the prominent modes of travel, public transit is available in many areas and is gaining ridership. In addition, air, pedestrian, and bicycle are also important modes of travel.

EXISTING ROADWAY NETWORK

The existing roadway network is represented in Map 2. The natural environment of forests, rivers and lakes characterizes the County and local roadway development pattern. A total of 1,485 miles of roads traverse the Sawyer County landscape.

Table 3-1: Functional Road Classification

Classification	Miles of Roadway	Percent of Total
Principal arterials	16.94	1.14%
Minor arterials	144.38	9.76%
Collectors (major/minor)	298.95	20.21%
Local Roads	1,019.11	68.89%
Total	1,479.38	100.00%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation 4/24/2017

Roads within the County are classified by their functional use and by the amount of traffic they carry. Table 3-1 indicates the functional classification of the overall County roadway network. Functional road classification (Map 2) for rural areas include principal arterials, minor arterials, collectors (major & minor) and local roads.

- 1) **Principal Arterials** - Principal arterial roads provide connections between cities and regions. They move large volumes of traffic on reasonably direct routes. Private property access, parking and traffic signals are often limited to help facilitate smooth traffic flow through rural areas. STH 63 serves as the only principal arterial in Sawyer County.

- 2) **Minor Arterials** - In conjunction with the principal arterials, minor arterials serve cities, large communities and other major traffic generators providing intra-regional and inter-area traffic movements. STHs 27, 40, 48, 70 and 77 serve as minor arterials.
- 3) **Collectors (major and minor)** - Collector roads generally provide major and/or minor connections within a community or neighborhood and link local roads to arterial roads. Parking and private property access is generally available on these roads. The CTH system and several local roads serve as collectors. Major collectors include CTHs A, B, D, E, F, G, N, K, W, portion of M south of W, S, CC, EE, GG, NN, and OO and Hospital Road, Airport Road, Cedar Avenue and Telemark Road. Minor collectors include CTHs C, H, T, BB, KK, and a portion of M between STH 70 and CTH W, Ranch Road, Sissabagama Road, Froemel Road, Round Lake School Road, Indian Trail Road, Peninsula Road, West Lane, Forest Road 206, Upper A Road, Nelson Lake Road, Nyman Avenue and County Hill Road.
- 4) **Local Roads** - Local and federal forest roads are all other roads that are not classified as arterials or collectors. Local roads handle the least amount of traffic volume but provide direct access to private property. They are generally narrower than the other types of roads and generally allow parking.

The County Forestry Department maintains a list of forest roads within the Sawyer County Forest. These roads are not included in the total of the overall transportation network. Across the County Forest, approximately 381 miles of Forest Roads are in place. Restrictions for the use of County Forest Roads are outlined within the Sawyer County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

TRAFFIC VOLUME

Traffic counts are reported as the number of vehicles expected to pass a given location on an average day of the year. This value is called the Annual average daily traffic (AADT) and is based on a short duration traffic count, usually 48 hours, taken at the location. This count is then adjusted for the variation in traffic volume throughout the year and the average number of axles per vehicle. Short duration counts are collected over three, six, or ten-year cycles at more than 26,000 rural and urban locations throughout the state.

AADT counts for selected years and locations across Sawyer County are represented in Table 3-2. Overall, the transportation system is carrying more daily trips on the roadway networks that have been in place for decades. The state highway system has the highest levels of traffic, in part due to the highways serving as a connection between cities and regions. Most County highways have average daily traffic below 1,000 vehicles per day. However, CTH B east of the City of Hayward has traffic volumes in excess of 4,000 vehicles per day.

The large geographic area of Sawyer County places a reliance on the county highway system to provide intra-county connections to communities. Future financial constraints to the County Highway Department will result in deferred maintenance and rehabilitation of the nearly 230 miles of county trunk highway.

Table 3-2: Select Highway Traffic Count Data

Municipality	1995	1998	2001	2005	2011	2014	2017	Number Change	Percent Change
STH 27 – south of Ojibwa	1,400	1,400	1,300	1,500	1,400	ND	1,500	110	7.91%
STH 27 – north of CTH K	3,500	3,100	3,400	3,200	3,300	3,300	3,400	910	44.10%
STH 70 – west of Loretta	1,100	1,000	930	1,300	1,100	ND	1,700	850	100.00%
STH 70 – east of unincorp Stone Lake	2,000	2,200	2,600	2,500	2,700	2,400	ND	730	43.71%
STH 77 – east of Washburn Co. Line	1,100	1,100	1,600	1,800	1,500	1,800	1,800	1,050	140.00%
STH 77 – just east of CTH A	1,100	1,100	930	800	760	760	ND	160	26.67%
STH 40 – south of Radisson	650	840	800	630	470	380	510	-190	-27.14%
STH 63 – east of Washburn Co. Line	5,000	5,400	5,500	5,000	5,500	5,300	6,800	3,420	101.18%
STH 63 – north of City of Hayward	3,100	3,200	4,000	4,300	4,100	4,600	3,600	500	16.13%
STH 48 – west of CTH C	810	650	740	710	640	600	ND	-210	-25.93%
CTH C – south of STH 70/27	340	400	420	300	210	ND	ND	-130	-38.24%
CTH G – west of CTH W	200	210	250	250	210	ND	ND	10	5.00%
CTH A – south of STH 77	350	450	610	320	280	ND	ND	-70	-20.00%
CTH B – west of CTH K	3,900	4,100	5,300	5,200	5,600	ND	4,500	600	15.38%
CTH W – west of West Lane	ND	350	280	290	280	ND	ND	-70	-20.00%
CTH CC – south of CTH B	790	990	1,200	1,000	970	ND	ND	180	22.78%
CTH CC – south of intersec w/ CTH N	500	600	710	550	570	ND	ND	70	14.00%
CTH NN – south of CTH B	1,100	1,200	1,500	1,500	1,300	ND	ND	200	18.18%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

JOURNEY TO WORK

Commuting is defined as transportation between your home and your main or regular place of work. Your “home” is the place where you reside. According to the 2018 American Community Survey, the average travel time to work for residents of Sawyer County is 21.4 minutes. Most Sawyer County residents commuted to work alone while driving a car, truck or van (75.2%) followed by 13.3 percent who carpooled. The remaining modes of transportation to work included public transportation (1.9%), walking (3.7%), bicycle (0.4%), taxicab, motorcycle, or other means (0.9%), or working at home (4.6%).

MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

While the primary mode of transportation is the personal vehicle (car or truck) several other modes provide critical transportation services.

Air Transportation

No scheduled passenger flights are available within Sawyer County. The nearest airports providing regular scheduled passenger flights to domestic and international destinations are the Duluth International Airport (96 miles), Eau Claire Regional Airport (110 miles), and the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport (148 miles). The Rice Lake Regional Airport - Carl’s Field (51 miles), provides regional airport services including charter air services through Rice Lake Air Center. The charter service operates a King Air C-90 providing passenger service for up to 6 passengers.

The Sawyer County Airport, located in Hayward, is classified as a general aviation airport. It has an asphalt runway length of 5,002 feet by 100 feet and a runway capacity of 60,000 lbs. At present, there is one public and five private airport/airfields registered with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation’s Bureau of Aeronautics within Sawyer County. The County location and present status of area airports is outlined in Table 3-3. Several privately owned floatplanes use the many lakes to access cabins and personal property.

Table 3-3: Sawyer County Airports/Airfields		
AIRPORT/AIRFIELD	Location	Status
Sawyer County Airport	T41N, R9W Section 24	Public
Rainbow Airport (Ojibwa)	T38N, R6W Section 3	Private
Lake Chippewa Field	T40 N, R6W Section 8	Private
Round Lake Seaplane Base	T41N, R7W Section 30	Private
Florida North Airport	T37N, R9W Section 29	Private
Kitty-Wompus Airport	T37N, R8W Section 12	Private

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Pedestrian Facilities

Designated pedestrian walkways are limited in rural area of Sawyer County. Most state and County roadways have minimal shoulder areas and speed limits greater than 45 miles per hour unless posted. These conditions hamper safe pedestrian travel opportunities. Moreover, given the low-density development pattern of rural Sawyer County, walking to places of work, shopping or entertainment is not realistic for most residents.

The *Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020* provides a statewide framework to increase walking as a mode of transportation and to promote pedestrian safety. The plan establishes goals, objectives and actions regarding pedestrian accommodations that could be implemented locally. It also serves to help communities identify actions to take to establish pedestrian travel as a viable, convenient and safe transportation choice. No specific recommendations within the plan relate directly to Sawyer County.

Throughout the County, pedestrians use the state, County and local roads to walk for exercise or to destinations such as shopping or visiting friends and neighbors. Many communities have had residents request wider shoulders for walking. In the future, as roadway improvements are made, it is strongly recommended County and state transportation officials meet with local officials to discuss the inclusion of pedestrian facilities along roads and highways.

The City of Hayward, Town of Hayward and Hayward Area School District developed a Safe Routes to School Plan in 2010. The purpose of this plan is to assist the community in identifying routes for improved walking and bicycling to school, with recommendations for future pedestrian paths.

Bicycling Facilities

Bicycling is limited to undesignated bicycle routes on state, County, and town roads. The Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020 is intended to help both communities and individuals in developing bicycle-friendly facilities throughout Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has compiled county bike maps that highlight bicycling conditions on select roadways in Wisconsin. The conditions for cycling represented on the map are intended for an average adult cyclist with at least some experience operating on higher speed roadways. Maps of all 72 of the Wisconsin counties, including the Sawyer County (North) Bicycle Conditions Map and the Sawyer County (South) Bicycle Conditions Map are available at: <https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/travel/bike/bike-maps/county.aspx#alpha>.

Trucking and Water Transportation

County and state highways provide adequate trucking access for delivery of goods and products while the local roadway system enables commercial and forestry related products to be transported to local businesses. Continued maintenance of local, County and state roadways is critical to ensure safe and efficient travel. Deteriorated roadways can result in increased maintenance costs and the potential of discouraging businesses from locating throughout the County due to inadequate infrastructure. On many local and County highways, seasonal weight limits must be posted to prevent damage. Regional Wisconsin Long Truck Operator Maps identify designated long truck routes and restricted truck routes in Wisconsin. Sawyer County is included on the Northwest Region Map available at: <https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/dmv/com-drv-vehs/mtr-car-trkr/truck-routes.aspx>.

No commercial waterborne transportation occurs in the County. The nearest access to waterborne commerce is the Port of Duluth/Superior. Waterborne commerce was once a critical transportation mode used by Native American Indians and settlers for transporting logs harvested from forests of Sawyer and surrounding counties. The Wisconsin Railroads and Harbors Map identifies all harbors in Wisconsin. The map is available at: <https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/doing-bus/freight/rail.aspx>.

Transit

Private specialized transportation providers are available to persons with disability. Sawyer County and several specialized transportation providers met in 2008 to discuss strategies to provide continued and expanded specialized transportation and non-ambulatory services. A Locally Developed County Transportation Coordination Plan was developed that provides future strategies and actions to enhance existing and future mobility of area residents.

Namekagon Transit (formerly LCO/Sawyer County Transit) provides public transportation for Sawyer County, Southern Bayfield County, Washburn County, and Barron County. It provides 3 deviated fixed routes and 10 door stop routes operated weekdays, 2 regular weekend routes, a weekday route to several small towns in southern Sawyer County, a bi-weekly route to a larger city for enhanced shopping opportunities, a weekly route to several small towns in southern Bayfield County, and 2 door stop routes operated weekdays in Washburn/Barron Counties.

The Senior Resource Center (SRC) has bus transportation that is available Monday through Friday for people 55+ or with disabilities within 5 miles of the City of Hayward. It also has a volunteer driver program for persons who have no other means of travel. Non-handicapped accessible transit services include Cindy's Taxi Service located near the City of Hayward, Sawyer County Veteran's Service, and Namekagon Transit.

NWT Express Shuttle (NWT) provides charter or group ground transportation between Hayward and the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport (MSP) and other prearranged destinations. NWT service operates twice a day, seven days a week with scheduled stops at 10 different communities along the way to MSP.

Rail

During the late 1970's and 1980's a flurry of rail abandonments resulted in one main rail line traversing the County. Freight rail service is provided by Canadian National (CN) Railroad connecting to points into Canada, Chicago and beyond (Map 2). Limited manufacturing development presently utilizes the rail line except for manufacturers along the Hayward Subdivision line. Rail sidings for logging operations along the line have also disappeared over the past several decades. The Wisconsin Railroads and Harbors Map identifies all railroads in Wisconsin. The map is available at <https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/doing-business/freight/rail.aspx>.

MULTI-USE-RECREATIONAL TRAILS

Throughout Sawyer County, there are several hundred miles of multi-use trails and many forest roads. This network is used most intensely during the winter months for snowmobiling and in the summer months for ATV/UTV use. The network also provides an alternate means of commuting (other than vehicle travel) for some Sawyer County residents. This network includes:

- 650 miles of snowmobile trails
- Over 100 miles of ATV trails
- 200 miles of cross country ski trails
- 200 miles of bike trails
- Hiking trails
- Horseback trails

Most motorized trails include Class A groomed snowmobile-only trails, ATV-only routes and trails for both ATV and snowmobiles. Most of the trails are located along easements granted to local recreation associations or others by private landowners. Coordination between motorized recreation associations and land managers with the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest and the Sawyer County Forest has allowed for designated motorized snowmobile and ATV trail routes. Map 3 includes trail routes throughout the County. These trail routes continually change due to local conditions and easement changes. As a result, trail users should seek up-to-date maps from local clubs and organizations for accurate routes.

An important rule regarding motorized trails in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest was handed down on November 9, 2005, with an effective date of December 9, 2005. Commonly referred to as the Travel Management Plan, this rule revised regulations governing motor vehicle use on all National Forest System lands, including the use of off-highway vehicles. This final rule prohibited the use of motor vehicles off the designated network, as well as the use of motor vehicles on roads, trails, and in areas that are not consistent with the designations. The decision rendered in the Travel Management Plan encompasses the following changes:

- 559 miles of roads will be available to ATVs (roads that are available to ATVs only or to both highway-legal vehicles (HLV) and ATVs). 71 miles of these roads are located on the Nicolet side of the forest.
- 52 miles of roads for HLV and ATV use will be controlled seasonally in the fall (open from September 1 to December 31).
- 8 miles of roads for ATV use will be controlled seasonally in the fall (open from September 1 to December 31).
- 25 miles of road for HLV use will be controlled seasonally for sensitive species consideration, including 13 miles of roads for ATV use.
- 334 miles of trails will be designated to be available for public ATV use.

Accessible roads and trails are displayed on the Chequamegon-Nicolet Forest Service Motor Vehicle Use Map available at each Forest Service office and on the National Forest Service website:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/cnnf/maps-pubs>.

Several non-motorized recreational activities exist on all public-owned properties. These properties allow for walking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, and sightseeing. A number of designated non-motorized trail systems are located within the Chequamegon–Nicolet National Forest and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Management Areas. The American Birkebeiner Ski Trail offers world-class cross-country skiing from Hayward to Cable. Portions of the Chequamegon Area Mountain Bike Association (CAMBA) trails are well mapped and marked for mountain biking and hiking (Map 3).

All National and County Forest lands are open to walking and other quiet-sport recreational activities. Several “hunter walking trails” are located within the Chequamegon–Nicolet National Forest and can be found on the Chequamegon–Nicolet National Forests website. Several hunter-walking trails are located within Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource owned Wildlife Areas.

RUSTIC ROADS

The Wisconsin Legislature established the Rustic Roads program in 1973 to help citizens and local governments preserve what remains of Wisconsin's scenic, lightly traveled country roads. Unique brown and yellow signs mark the routes of all officially designated Rustic Roads. These routes provide bikers, hikers, and motorists an opportunity to leisurely travel through some of Wisconsin's scenic countryside.

Rustic Road 108 (R-108) is located within Sawyer County and travels along Northern Lights, Boedecker, Seely, and Janet Roads from State Highway 63 to County Highway OO in the Towns of Lenroot and Spider Lake. The route is 3.4 miles in length along a gravel roadway. R-108 meanders through the Sawyer County Forest and is bordered by many species of trees including maples, oaks, birch, red and white pine which are home to many birds and mammals. Originally constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps as a logging road in the 1930's, travelers will catch a glimpse of the old “Dynamite Shack” which stored the explosives used to construct the road through the hills. R-108 is crossed by the Birkebeiner cross country ski trail, and numerous ATV, mountain bike and snowmobile trails. This road offers all nature lovers a north woods experience.

Rustic Road 95 (R-95) is located within Bayfield and Sawyer Counties. The route begins at the intersection of STH 77 and Federal Forest Road (FFR) 203 in the Town of Spider Lake and continues on a six-mile loop off FFR 203 comprised of FFR 622 and Tews Road/FFR 206. The route continues into the Town of Namekagon on Lost Land Lake Road and terminates at County Highway M. The route is 16.4 miles in length on a gravel road. The Lost Land Lake Route (R-95) passes through the Chequamegon

National Forest. Along with scenic forest views, visitors are apt to see a variety of wildlife including deer, bear and possibly even wolves and elk. There are numerous bicycle, ATV, and snowmobile trails that cross the route, including the Lynch Creek Trail that leads to a wildlife-viewing platform.

Rustic Road 111 (R-111) is located within Ashland and Sawyer Counties. The route traverses through the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. Near Moose Lake Road and County Road S there is a scenic river view. This route has rolling hills covered with many types of trees making it a popular destination to view fall foliage. Wildlife abounds with wolf packs, elk, deer, and wild turkeys.

COLOR TOUR ROUTES

Six self-guided color tour routes cross the landscape of Sawyer County, highlighting the scenic vistas and views of the great outdoors. Color Tour 1, 2 and 3 total 203 miles of roads in the northern half of the County, and Color Tour 4, 5 and 6 total 138 miles in the southern half of the county. Each route has written narrative detailing the area sights and events. Information on each of the color tour routes can be found at: <https://haywardlakes.com/color-tours/>.

STATE, REGIONAL AND OTHER TRANSPORTATION PLANS

State, regional and county agencies have developed guidance and improvement schedules for roadways or infrastructure under their responsibility. It is important that Sawyer County and other agencies communicate on proposed schedules and coordinate local and regional activities. A regional transportation plan has not been developed.

Sawyer County Road Improvement Plan

The Sawyer County Highway Department annually develops a road construction schedule for County Road improvements covering a seven-year period.

Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2030

Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2030 and its accompanying *System-Plan Environmental Evaluation (SEE)* is the statewide long-range airport transportation plan. The 20-year plan builds off the policies and issues identified in *Connections 2030*; Wisconsin's statewide long-range transportation plan adopted in October 2009. The *Wisconsin State Airport System Plan* identifies a system of 98 public-use airports adequate to meet different aviation needs in all parts of the state.

Connections 2030

Wisconsin's Long-Range Transportation plan, *Connections 2030* addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian and transit. The overall goal of the planning process is to identify a series of policies to aid transportation decision-makers when evaluating programs and projects.

Connect 2050

Connect 2050 will replace *Connections 2030* as the statewide long-range transportation plan, with the planning process currently underway. The plan focuses on addressing the state's multimodal transportation needs through the year 2050. *Connect 2050* is described as a new plan for a new time; a streamlined, user-friendly document that utilizes innovative planning and data visualization techniques to guide Wisconsin's transportation future. The plan is envisioned to provide all Wisconsinites, service providers, and stakeholders user-friendly access to useful information.

State Freight Plan

Enhancing freight mobility is a top priority for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). The *State Freight Plan* provides a vision for multimodal freight transportation and positions the state to remain competitive in the global marketplace. The SFP was approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation on March 19, 2018.

Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020

The *Wisconsin State Highway Plan* focuses on the 11,800 miles of State Trunk Highway routes in Wisconsin.

Corridors 2030

Corridors 2030 sets criteria for selected routes that go beyond traditional highway planning with the intent to enhance and improve all two and four-lane highways connecting cities of 5,000 inhabitants or more. The total length of the *Corridors 2030* system is approximately 3,750 miles; of this, approximately 2,300 miles are Connector routes. No conflicts with the comprehensive plan have been identified in association with *Corridors 2030*.

Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2030 and Five-Year Airport Improvement Program

The *Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2030* and its accompanying *System-Plan Environmental Evaluation (SEE)* is the statewide long-range airport transportation plan. The 20-year plan builds off the policies and issues identified in *Connections 2030*. The identification of potential projects in the plan is not a commitment for federal or state project funding, nor does it provide project justification.

Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020

The *Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020* presents a blueprint for improving and expanding bicycle transportation routes throughout the state. No identified bicycle route expansion or development is detailed in the plan. However, when town, County, and state transportation roadways are reconstructed, consideration of bicycle lanes should be discussed.

Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020

The *Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan* provides a statewide long-range vision addressing Wisconsin pedestrian needs. The Pedestrian Plan provides a basic description of existing and emerging pedestrian needs through 2020, with a set of recommendations to meet those needs.

Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030

Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030 is the statewide long-range rail transportation plan. It provides a vision for freight rail, intercity passenger rail and commuter rail, and identifies priorities and strategies that will serve as a basis for Wisconsin rail investments. WisDOT officially adopted Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030 on March 19, 2014.

Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050

Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 will replace *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030* as the statewide long-range rail transportation plan. The entire planning process is scheduled to be completed by January 2022. The plan will include policies for railroad crossings, freight rail, Wisconsin's state-owned rail system, long distance passenger rail, intercity rail, and commuter rail. The plan will specifically discuss rail data trends, existing and possible future service levels, rail system conditions, commodity freight movements, and future rail-related improvements or plans.