

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Wisconsin's quality of life and economic growth depend on a safe, efficient, effective and coordinated multimodal transportation system that provides choices for people and goods, enabling quick and convenient transfers among modes. *Connections 2030*, Wisconsin's long-range, statewide multimodal plan, will help the state maintain and enhance its transportation system to meet the needs of the 21st century and fulfill the state's transportation vision.

Wisconsin already has a quality transportation network. Efforts during the next 20 years will focus on maintaining and enhancing that system to support future mobility and economic growth. *Connections 2030* sets the foundation for Wisconsin's transportation system with an emphasis on:

- » Safety and security
- » Preserving the existing and future system
- » Optimizing investment in the system for continued safety, enhanced mobility and efficiency

Wisconsin's vision for transportation

WisDOT envisions an integrated multimodal transportation system that maximizes the safe and efficient movement of people and products throughout the state, enhancing economic productivity and the quality of Wisconsin's communities while minimizing impacts to the natural environment.

- » Responding to local, regional, national and international economic trends to maintain state economic competitiveness
- » Considering environmental issues to maintain Wisconsin's quality of life
- » Providing users with transportation choices



▲ Figure 1-1: Wisconsin's quality of life and economic growth depend on a safe, efficient, effective and coordinated multimodal transportation system.



CONNECTIONS 2030 meets the challenge of providing a quality transportation system by setting policy directions for the state trunk highway system, public transit, intercity travel, freight movement, bicycle and pedestrian travel, and funding, project scheduling and prioritization decisions.

Connections 2030 links statewide transportation policy to implementation, planning, programming and other Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) activities. The plan also calls for improved system integration for passengers and freight, as well as modernization to correct outdated infrastructure design and combine technological advancements with more traditional transportation infrastructure designs.

Wisconsin relies on a mix of modes to move people and freight safely and efficiently. Interstate and international travel relies on efficient rail, air, water and highway systems. *Connections 2030* meets the challenge of providing a quality transportation system by setting policy directions not just for the state trunk highway system, but also for public transit, intercity travel, freight movement, bicycle and pedestrian travel, and funding, project scheduling and prioritization decisions.

Even with modest revenue increases, Wisconsin has continued to achieve its goals of building and operating a high-quality transportation system; moving people and freight safely; identifying and eliminating congested traffic bottlenecks; planning and investing in major projects and transit services; supporting economic development; and preserving the network.

To meet future demands, additional funding will be required. Because priorities and financial resources for transportation infrastructure needs can vary from

budget cycle to budget cycle, WisDOT has developed *Connections 2030* to be a road map of policy statements with recommended implementation actions and priorities (defined by short-, mid- and long-term activities). The plan is intended to help decision-makers establish transportation funding priorities.

Understanding and using the plan

The plan is organized into four main parts:

- » Part One – Chapters 1-4: introduces the *Connections 2030* plan; provides an overview of Wisconsin's transportation system; describes some of the key trends and challenges facing the state's transportation system; and reviews the public involvement activities that helped shape the plan
- » Part Two – Chapters 5 – 11: focuses on the seven themes and related policy statements developed to achieve the *Connections 2030* vision
- » Part Three – Chapters 12-13: provides a basic overview of the state's transportation funding structure and plan implementation strategies through 2030
- » Part Four – Chapters 14-15: documents the system-plan environmental evaluation¹ and the environmental justice analysis of the potential impacts of the plan on the state's natural, cultural and protected populations

The plan's theme chapters

In a departure from previous mode-based plans, the *Connections 2030* policies are organized according to seven themes:

- » Preserve and maintain Wisconsin's transportation system

¹SEE – Statutorily defined as the conceptual environmental evaluation, a SEE analysis is required during the preparation of statewide, system-level transportation plans when initial department analyses determine that the plan contains "major and significant new proposals" likely to affect the quality of the human and natural environment.

- » Promote transportation safety
- » Foster Wisconsin's economic growth
- » Provide mobility and transportation choice
- » Promote transportation efficiencies
- » Preserve Wisconsin's quality of life
- » Promote transportation security

Each of the seven theme chapters includes:

- » An overall vision statement
- » Background information including trends, statistics and objectives
- » A summary of the major challenges
- » A summary of opportunities, which are also the policy statements, to address the trends and challenges, as well as a description of the department's role into the future
- » Individual policies outlining WisDOT's goals, objectives, and implementation measures

The seven themes provide the base upon which the plan's policies were written. Each policy outlines specific issues and identifies actions WisDOT either is currently taking or will undertake to achieve the policy goal or goals. By design, the seven themes are interrelated, but they have been written to stand alone if necessary. For example, safety is an important consideration for all of WisDOT's activities, including those detailed in other themes, but the department's long-range vision for safety and safety-specific goals, commitments and implementation measures is located in Chapter 6, *Promote Transportation Safety*.

The plan's 37 policies

Connections 2030 defines 37 policies that have been organized under their primary theme chapter. The policies address specific issues and areas of activity

either under way or proposed to be undertaken during the life of the plan.

The focus of each policy includes providing a concise policy statement accompanied by the department's commitment and proposed actions to implement the policy through 2030. The policies have been developed with awareness of critical issues and best practices that are explored through research. The policies will guide planning, investment decisions and project delivery from now until 2030.

Each of the 37 policies includes:

- » Policy title (which is also the goal statement)
- » Background information
- » Discussion of important issues, trends or challenges
- » WisDOT's commitments to address the issues and implement the policy
- » List of specific recommended action steps through 2030

Just as the seven themes define the plan's vision and scope, the policies and implementation strategies support the department's mission and commitment to achieving the *Connections 2030* vision. In addition, the policies, like the themes, are interrelated and in some cases codependent, but are written in such a way as to be able to stand alone.

Goals

Each policy's title is the proposed policy statement. These policy statements are WisDOT's goals under the theme topic areas.

Commitments

The specific commitments proposed to help achieve the goal are outlined in the beginning of each policy with a bulleted statement beginning with: "WisDOT will ..." Each "WisDOT will" statement (or policy commitment) is further detailed in the paragraphs that follow.



Actions

Action statements are located at the end of each policy and are grouped according to timeframe. They are not listed in any particular order within the given timeframe. Priorities within timeframes will be determined by the biennial budget process. All actions represent specific measures proposed to reach the policy commitments by 2030.

Plan development process

The plan development process was influenced by several factors, including:

- » The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)
- » Wisconsin's comprehensive planning legislation (Section 66.1001 Wis. Stats.)
- » Trends and challenges
- » Public involvement

SAFETEA-LU

Passed in 2005, SAFETEA-LU establishes the nation's transportation priorities and funding through 2009. Compared to previous transportation bills, SAFETEA-LU places greater emphasis on transportation system security considerations, consultation activities, and linking statewide planning activities to project-level activities. *Connections 2030* addresses these changes by:

- » Including transportation security as a separate plan theme and defining the department's security-related policies
- » Establishing a consultation process for environmental resource agencies and tribal governments for the plan development process
- » Developing policies to better link state-level planning to regional and local transportation activities

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users

SAFETEA-LU represents the largest surface transportation investment in U.S. history, guaranteeing funding for highways, highway safety and public transportation totaling \$244.1 billion. SAFETEA-LU addresses the many challenges facing the nation's transportation system – challenges such as improving safety, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency in freight movement, increasing intermodal connectivity, and protecting the environment – as well as laying the groundwork for addressing future challenges.

~ www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/summary.htm

Wisconsin's comprehensive planning legislation

The actions of local governments, developers and property owners significantly influence the state's transportation system.

WisDOT's regional transportation offices continue to coordinate with local governments to consider local comprehensive plans while working to make the state's transportation system safe and reliable.

The comprehensive planning law (Section 66.1001, Wis. Stats.) was passed as part of the 1999-2001 Wisconsin biennial budget. Although sometimes referred to as the "smart growth" law, the comprehensive planning law does not dictate how or where development will occur; instead, the law focuses on improving communication within and among jurisdictions to make more informed decisions that result in smart growth.

By January 1, 2010, all actions and decisions made by a community must be consistent with an adopted local comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plans must contain the following nine elements:

- » Issues and opportunities
- » Housing
- » Economic development
- » Transportation
- » Intergovernmental cooperation
- » Utilities and community facilities
- » Implementation
- » Land use
- » Agricultural, natural and cultural resources

While *Connections 2030* does not include specific elements of individual community plans, the plan development process recognized these efforts and incorporated community-level concerns into the individual policies. *Connections 2030* also includes recommendations developed by metropolitan planning organizations and regional planning commissions, WisDOT's corridor and project plans, and tribal transportation plans.

Trends and challenges

Chapter 3, *Trends*, and the plan's policies identify many of the trends and challenges Wisconsin's transportation system either is facing or will face in the future. WisDOT developed the *Connections 2030* policies to address these trends and challenges.

One significant trend affecting the state is the aging of the population. By 2030, Wisconsin's 65 and older population is expected to increase more than 90 percent. The plan's policies regarding transportation safety, public transit and intercity travel address this trend by recommending more transportation choices.

Public involvement

Chapter 4, *Public Involvement*, describes the public involvement activities that shaped *Connections 2030*. Early public outreach efforts helped guide development of the plan's vision and seven themes. Additional outreach activities during the draft plan public review effort will help refine the plan's policies.

Linking plan to project-level activities

A key goal of WisDOT reflected in *Connections 2030* is an emphasis on improving the link between statewide policies and implementation activities occurring at the WisDOT regional or corridor level.

To help achieve this goal, WisDOT has adopted a corridor management approach. Corridor management is a coordinated transportation planning, project development and facility operations approach that enables consideration of the transportation system from a state and "corridor" – regional or local – perspective.

Key characteristics of the corridor management approach include:

- » Developing plans for the corridor within the context of what is happening within and adjacent to the right of way (for example, all aspects that influence or impact the function and operation of the facility, such as surrounding land uses, access management and adjacent facilities)
- » A long-term perspective: developing and, over time, implementing a vision for the corridor (for example, preservation of the existing facility)
- » Integration of all appropriate modes to maximize the capacity of the existing corridor
- » Intergovernmental and community coordination and collaboration
- » Continued review and update of this approach to meet emerging statewide and regional needs, and incorporate best practices where practical



As part of the *Connections 2030* planning process, WisDOT identified 37 System-level Priority Corridors. Maps of the corridors can be viewed or downloaded online at www.wiconnections2030.gov.

The information depicted on these maps provides visual representations of how the plan might be implemented during the next 20 years. It is important to note that while the corridor maps identify specific projects, it is not guaranteed that all potential projects will be implemented.

The short-term projects are identified in the Six-Year Highway Improvement Program, metropolitan transportation improvement programs and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. These projects are most likely to be completed; however, funding and prioritization changes can cause a project to be delayed or advanced.

The remaining project information is based on planned or anticipated projects with implementation decisions based on available funding and evaluation of priorities when compared with other priorities. With the exception of the highways enumerated under the Major Highway Development Program, mid- and long-term projects do not have funding specifically designated for their implementation.

For more information about the 37 System-level Priority Corridors, as well as the corridor management approach, refer to Chapter 13, *Implementing Connections 2030*.

WisDOT highway programs

Six-Year Highway Improvement Program: 2008-2013

This program covers the 11,773 miles of state trunk highways that are administered and maintained by WisDOT. While these 11,773 miles represent only 10 percent of all public road mileage in Wisconsin, they carry more than 35 billion vehicle miles of travel a year, or about 59 percent of the total annual statewide highway travel. Each wisely invested dollar returns benefits in terms of time savings, fewer accidents and decreased vehicle operating costs.

~ www.dot.state.wi.us/projects/state/sixyear/index.htm

2006-2017 Major Highway Development Program

The Major Highway Development Program, a subprogram of the Six-Year Highway Improvement Program, addresses the most complex, costly and potentially controversial highway development projects initiated by the department. By statute, a “Major highway project” denotes a project that has a total cost of more than \$5 million and involves any of the following:

- › Constructing a new highway 2.5 miles or more long
- › Reconstructing or reconditioning an existing highway by any of the following:
 - Relocating 2.5 miles or more of the existing highway
 - Adding one or more lanes five miles or more in length to the existing highway
 - Improving to freeway standards 10 miles or more of existing divided highway having two or more lanes in either direction

~ www.dot.state.wi.us/projects/state/sixyear/major.htm