

5. Transportation

A well-designed and maintained transportation system provides efficient, reliable, and safe ways for residents to get to their businesses, places of work, homes and schools and plays an important role in facilitating a township's land use, economy and all-around development. This section describes the transportation network in the Town of Marshall in terms of existing facilities and local transportation planning including county, state, and regional planning perspectives.



Town of Marshall transportation system

The Town of Marshall's transportation system with 39.88 miles of roads, consists of four county roads (County Road G, D, VV, and V)

that provide the primary corridors for residents and visitors access to and through the Township (see map on page 44 for all the roads in the Township). Local roads provide routes to homes and farms both within and beyond the Town. While vehicular travel is the most common means of transportation in Marshall, the recent influx of about 25 Amish residents/landowners and families, has brought horse and buggy transportation as a common occurrence throughout the entire Township. Mass transit options are substantially limited due to the rural nature of the Town. However, the results of a recent strategic planning process by Indianhead Community Action Agency will make public transit services more readily available to residents in Marshall with planned scheduled stops.

Functional road classification

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) classifies roads as principle arterials, minor arterials, collectors, and local roads. The classification system recognizes that roads perform specific functions and serve two primary purposes:

- to move vehicles; and
- to serve adjacent land (land access).

Arterials accommodate the through-movement of vehicles, while collectors (major and minor) serve both local and through traffic by providing a connection between arterials and local roads. Local roads not classified as arterials or collectors are functioning roads.

In the Township there are no principle or minor arterials. Major collectors, that provide service to moderate sized communities and link to larger population centers or high functional routes include: County Roads G, D, and VV and Cemetery Road. Minor collectors collect

All County and Town Roads in the Town of Marshall

traffic from local roads and provide links to small communities, e.g., Sheldon and Conrath. Local roads carry the least amount of traffic volume and provide for travel over relatively short distances and are mostly all Town roads.



Traffic Counts

The WisDOT uses Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) counts to determine traffic volume on roadways throughout the state. The most recent traffic count, taken in the Town of Marshall in 2004 at seven locations, is shown in Table 5.1.

Pavement surface evaluation rating (PASER)

WisDOT requires all communities to submit pavement ratings every two years on the physical condition of roadways under their jurisdiction. The data from evaluations provides the foundation for the

Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR), which is a computer resource that enables communities to assess, plan and budget for future road improvements. The Town of Marshall Board Chairman conducts the PASER review, which will be completed in December 2009.

Location	2004 AADT
Site 1: County Road G @ Oak Road	600
Site 2: County Road G @ County Road VV	510
Site 3: County Road G @ County Road D	200
Site 4: County Road D @ Oak Road	400
Site 5: County Road G @ County Line Road	420
Site 6: County Road D @ County Road V	460
Site 7: County Road D @ Pioneer Road	360

Other transportation modes

Pedestrian. Pedestrian travel is limited in the Town of Marshall to the shoulders on county and local Town roads.

Public transit. There are currently no scheduled pick-up or drop-off locations for transit in the Town of Marshall, but Indianhead Community Action Agency serving Rusk County provides Indianhead Transit Service (ITS) and a variety of options for all residents, including elderly and disabled, in the Township. The projected roundtrip fee for riders in 2010 will be \$6.00 to travel to any

destination in the county. Based on the Fall, 2009 transit strategic planning process, ITS will be researching the feasibility of, and the need for more fixed route services to the Sheldon area.

ITS also currently offers a Driver's Escort (DE) service that involves a volunteer driver program to provide round-trip transportation for individuals residing in Rusk County to destinations outside the area. Volunteer drivers utilize their own vehicles for this service or lift-equipped vehicles for transporting individuals requiring specialized transportation (wheel chair lifts). The DE program fares are based on the distance traveled at a rate of .55 per mile. Some medically related trips are eligible for third party payments including Medicare, veterans and Badger Care. The ITS telephone number is 532-5031 and the website with more information is www.indianheadcaa.org.

Airports. There are no registered airports or airfields in the Town of Marshall. The Rusk County Airport, located in the Town of Dewey, north of Tony is the only public airport in Rusk County. The closest airport providing scheduled passenger service is the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport located in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Bicycle and walking/hiking trails. While there are no designated bicycling or walking/hiking trails in Marshall, the managed forests in the Town are open for recreational hiking. Bicycle transportation/recreation is possible on a number of County and Town Roads. WisDOT worked in partnership with the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin (BFW) to produce a Wisconsin Bicycle Map that provides a bicycling condition assessment. The Bicycle Road Map reveals several roadways that the BFW has identified as suitable and in good condition for bicycling with the "green" roads providing good conditions. While Cemetery Road and Arrowhead, re-paved as of fall,

2009 are also suitable for bicycling, these roadways have minimal shoulder areas and speed limits greater than 45 miles per hour, creating potentially hazardous conditions for bicycling.



Other recreational-related transportation. All terrain vehicle operation comes under the auspices of the Department of Natural Resources in Wisconsin with a special "Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Council" that meets on a regular basis to oversee a grant-making process and rules and regulation recommendations. Snowmobiling and All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) are popular forms of recreation in the Township with several area clubs. There are limited places in Marshall, however, where these recreational vehicles can be used.



ATVs are not currently allowed on any roads in Wisconsin unless it is designated as a route and only after they have gone through a local government approval process. An exception to this is farmers' private use to go from one parcel to another on land they either own or rent. For more information on the locations of ATV trails in Rusk County see www.ruskcountywi.com/atv/

The Town of Marshall does not currently have an ATV club. The process for accessing routes in the Township is to approach the local town board to seek permission. Currently the Town Board has an ordinance that they passed on August 20, 2007 which gives approval for ATV use of the following roads in the Township:

- Range Line road from Broken Arrow Road north to County Highway I.
- Broken Arrow Road from Range Line Road east to Pioneer Road.

- Pioneer Road south to County Highway D.
- Chippewa/Rusk County Line Road east to Hill Creek Road.
- From Chippewa/Rusk County Line on Hill Creek Road north to Spur Road.
- Spur Road west to the Railroad Bridge and Sheldon Village limits.

The Town of Marshall, as authorized by Sec. 23.33(11) (a), Wisconsin State Statutes, regulates the operation of all-terrain vehicles on the designated routes including a 30 mile per hour speed limit, the use of headlights and tail lights, age restrictions, and other regulations.

Snowmobilers are able to ride on designated trails within land that is in managed forests, of which there are 172 acres in the township. Once it freezes over, the Jump River is also a popular snowmobiling destination. For more information about snowmobile trails throughout the entire county see www.snowtracks.com

State, regional, and local transportation plans

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Legislation requires that the Town of Marshall incorporate any applicable state, regional and other transportation plans and communicate with appropriate agencies on proposed activities. Other plans to be considered in this process include:

- Wisconsin State Highway Plan
- Corridors 2020
- Connection 2030 (under development by WisDOT)
- Rusk County Highway Improvement Program plans
- 6-Year State Highway Improvement Program
- Translinks 21
- Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020

- Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2020
- Transportation Planning – Resource Guide
- Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020

Findings from the surveys

Town of Marshall survey. Results of the survey section that focused on transportation and transportation-related issues is summarized in the following tables.

Item	Ex/Good	Average	Poor	N/A
Gravel road maintenance	49%	39%	12%	1%
Paved road maintenance	56%	31%	9%	3%
Snow removal	69%	23%	3%	5%
Condition of local roads	49%	38%	13%	1%
Bridge maintenance	53%	34%	5%	7%
Bicycle/pedestrian trails	13%	14%	9%	63%
Snowmobile trails	39%	15%	1%	47%
ATV trails	21%	17%	8%	53%

Residents were asked their opinions about whether or not most Town roads should be open to ATVs and snowmobiles. The majority (47%) responded yes, 35% no and 18% had no opinion. When asked their opinions about the proportion of paved roads in the Township, 57% thought it was sufficient, 35% responded insufficient and 18% had no opinion.

When queried about which kinds of pedestrian and recreational trails they would like to see developed in the Township, the responses included the following.

Type of Trail	Number of Responses
Waling and hiking trails	51 responses
Bike routes and trails	47 responses
ATV trails	43 responses
Snowmobile trails	38 responses
Horseback riding trails	37 responses
Cross country ski trails	33 responses

The Canadian National Railway crosses through the Town of Marshall at six intersections, all with varying safety devices, e.g., Poplar Road Marshall Road and County Line Road (between the Town of Ruby and Marshall) all have stop signs only; Market Road, Broken Arrow Road, and Cemetery Road all have lights and gates. There is one additional overpass on Spur Road. The survey included questions that asked residents their opinions about railway crossing safety and wait-time at crossings. Concerning the safety of railway crossings, 55% said sufficient, 33 insufficient and 12% had no opinion. With the wait-time at railway crossings, 53% indicated sufficient, 25% responded insufficient, and 21% had no opinion.

Rusk County survey. Questions asked respondents their perceptions of the importance of transportation resources, listed in Table 5.4.

Item	Important	Unimportant	No opinion
County highways	96%		4%
Town/village/city roads	96%		4%
Bicycling trails	53%	19%	19%
Public rural transit (ITS)	58%	15%	19%
ATV and snowmobile trails	54%	19%	23%
Pedestrian/walking trails	54%	19%	23%

Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions concerning the use of ATV's. Responses are in Table 5.5.

Item	Yes	No
ATV's should be allowed to use county roads	35%	65%
ATV's should be allowed to use town roads	54%	46%
ATV's should only use designated trails (no roadways)	15%	85%
ATV's should only use private property (no roadways)	19%	81%
ATV's should only use designated trails/route (including approved roadways)	42%	58%

Discussion of the findings

Condition of town and county roads. The majority of residents/landowners responding to the survey believed that gravel road maintenance and the condition of local roads was either excellent or good, but only by a small majority in both cases. Concerning gravel road maintenance, 39% only rated this as average and 12% as poor, with nearly the same response to the question about conditions of local roads (38% rated this as average, and 13% poor). Some commented that either *“some gravel roads should be black topped”* and another said that *“all town roads should be paved.”*

Paved road maintenance was rated higher with a larger spread between excellent/good and average/poor (56% to 31% [average] and 9% poor). There were however, many more comments made in relation to the condition of paved roads, which included:

- *“County Road D for a new road – it sure is a poor example of new construction. The portions that are complete are a sad example of road building.”*
- *“Need to fix the potholes sooner.”*
- *“Don't send someone out to patch holes with a shovel and the next day they are already back. Pioneer Road is actually dangerous!!”*

Note: Since the survey was administered last spring, the Rusk County Highway Department has completed the road work on County Road D and the road is now in much better shape. Also, at a summer, 2009 Town Board meeting, a motion was made and passed to borrow money at a low interest rate to make improvements to three town roads:

- Spur Road – repaved in fall, 2009

- Broken Arrow Road – repaved in fall, 2009
- Pioneer Road – work began in the fall with removing the old blacktop, graveling the road, and resurfacing will be completed spring, 2010.

Another issue that was mentioned within several different element categories in the survey, but especially in relation to transportation and roadways revealed minor tensions between Town of Marshall residents/landowners. Comments were made that *“some drivers don’t have much respect for horses and buggies,”* and that *“real loud motor bikes are scaring the horses.”* And then on the other hand there were complaints/comments shared such as, *“scolding farmers for dripping manure from their spreaders, but the Amish horses do their business on the main street,”* or *“make Amish and others clean up after horses – farmers have to clean up any spills they may cause, so do milk truck drivers if they tip over.”*

Some expressed they felt there was a double standard and evidently no repercussions made against the owners of horses that leave excrement on the roads, while others are being held accountable. But given the number of responses received on the surveys, there were minimal complaints and comments made regarding these issues from both perspectives.

Concerning recreational vehicle routes through the township there were mixed responses again. Some believed that *“most Town roads should be open to ATV’s and snowmobiles with the same licensing as other on-road motor vehicles,”* and supported more access for ATV’s. One connected ATV/snowmobile use to local economics stating, *“ATV’s have become extra money for the small businesses and a vital economic influx to the counties...we should develop more trails to bring in more dollars.”* Some believed that more Town roads should be open

to ATV’s and snowmobiles, but with limits, *“believe me, you have to have speed signs and reinforce them.”* Opposing views were also expressed, such as:

- *“All (these trails) cost money. Where would you get it and no farmer wants people on his land in the summer.”*
- *“The county insurance agent states we are opening ourselves up to liability,”* (if most Town roads would be open to ATVs and snowmobiles)

The number of responses for either position was rather insignificant to consider major recommendations. While there is currently no ordinance concerning snowmobile use in the Township, there is an ordinance in place that gives access to ATV’s on certain roadways and regulates the operation of these (see page 47).

The issue that received the most comments, by far, in this section of the survey concerned the safety of railroad crossings and the wait-time at railroad crossings. While 55% has said that safety was sufficient, 33% indicated insufficient and 12% had no opinion. Regarding wait-time, 53% indicated it was sufficient, 26% insufficient, and 21% had no opinion. One can surmise that the responses were dependent on where one lives in the township and their experience in having to cross the railway on a daily basis, as there are numerous railway intersections in the entire township and also a side track that begins in Sheldon and extends to Broken Arrow Road.

Comments about issues with the railway were made by 17 individuals. Those that focused on wait-time included such things as:

- *There are times when trains park blocking Cemetery Road for hours at a time – I thought this was illegal? If so, why does it happen and why does the township allow this? I think somebody with the authority (i.e., Town Board) need to address the train issues. Why are the trains being allowed to block roadways for hours at a time? I thought there was a 15 minute law on the books? Doesn't the law apply to Marshall Township?"*
- *"The railroad company should be held to be in compliance with laws and ordinances that are already in place."*
- *The wait-time at railroad crossings is way too long – sometimes 45 minutes."*
- *"There should be a fine issued to Canadian National every time they block roads longer than the legal time limit."*
- *"Several times I have had to turn around and take a different road because the railroad crossing on Cemetery Road is blocked by a train that is sitting still."*
- *"The wait-time at railroad crossings is usually good, but can get long in connection with the side rail."*
- *"Crossing are blocked too much and the time of blockage is too long."*

The Wisconsin State Statutes 192.292 say that *"it shall be unlawful to stop any railroad train, locomotive or car upon or across any highway or street crossing, outside of cities, or leave the same standing upon such crossing longer than 10 minutes, except in cases of accidents; and any railroad company that shall violate this section shall be liable to a fine of not more than \$500 or any officer of such company responsible for the violation shall be liable to imprisonment of not more than 15 days."*

As the issue of wait-time causes inconveniences and potentially serious situations, when ambulances and other emergency vehicles can not get to their destinations, the town has established a set of procedures to deal with this issue:

If wait-time is more than ten minutes, the county sheriff's department should be notified as well as the Town Board Chairperson. The purpose for reporting this to the dispatcher and to the Town Chairperson is to have formal documentation of these occurrences, which will in turn be compiled into a report and sent to the Wisconsin Railway Commissioner.

Numerous comments were made about safety of railway crossings, including:

- *"More lights (are needed) at railroad crossings."*
- *"More railroad crossings need lights and gates."*
- *"Speed some people drive on gravel roads with railroad crossings. And not stopping for the railroads."*
- *"Railroad crossing bars and arms and lights at all crossings – too inconsistent (some arms/bars – some no arms/bars)."*
- *"Mainly the safety of the railroad crossing north of Elm Road. It could be tough for many to see trains coming at that angle."*

Concerning the issue of safety at railway crossings, since the survey was distributed last spring there have been improvements made on two additional railway crossings in the Town of Marshall – on Broken Arrow Road and Market Road (see page 52).



The railway intersection on Poplar, Marshall and County Line Roads still only have stop signs.

Recommendations

Table 5.6 lists recommendations for goals, objectives and policies concerning transportation issues.

Table 5.6 Transportation Goals & Objectives
<p>Goal 1: Support and maintain a safe and efficient road system.</p>
<p>Objective 1.1 Priority is given to maintaining and enhancing existing infrastructure before adding new. Policy 1.1 (a) The Town will consider paving of road segments based on necessity. Objective 1.2 Update local transportation plans. Policy 1.2 (a) Consider future road locations, extensions or connections when reviewing local development plans. Policy 1.2 (b) New roads must have a separate entrance and exit, and meet Town, State and County requirements. Objective 1.3 Work with Indianhead Transit System to provide transit service to the elderly and others in need of such services. Policy 1.3 (a) Support the continuation of the Rusk County Aging and Disabilities Resource Center transportation program. Objective 1.4 Coordinate with other governmental units on matters concerning transportation.</p>
<p>Goal 2: Support interconnect recreational trails.</p>
<p>Objective 2.1 Sponsor a trials meeting inviting clubs, landowners, government entities and organizations with an in interest in Town trails.</p>
<p>Goal 3: Ensure safety of all Township railroad crossings.</p>
<p>Objective: 3.1 Monitor wait-time of trains at railway crossings. Objective 3.2 Inform Town residents of procedures to follow concerning wait-time.</p>