



McHenry County Division of Transportation

Celebrating 100 Years, 1913-2013

Each month this year, a new article celebrating the 100 year anniversary of the McHenry County Division of Transportation will be featured in the Northwest Herald. The seventh article, printed on July 26th, gave an overview of the McHenry County 2040 Transportation Plan. Watch for the eighth article on public transportation in McHenry County to be published at the end of August.



History teaches us that how we moved is a strong indicator of who we were. In 1840, McHenry County was a land dependent on railroads, horses, and good boots.

By 1940, the nation had begun to embrace the motor vehicle as the future. The 1933 World's Fair in Chicago included dramatic displays showing how our rural roads would be converted into amazing highways for motor vehicles. Since that time, this vision has dominated development patterns and transportation infrastructure investments in McHenry County.

Perhaps as a result of all the changes that occurred between the 19th and 20th Centuries, strategic planning for transportation by the County Board has become a priority. The first long range transportation plan for the County was developed in 1995 and forecasted out to the year 2010. This was a period of dramatic change for McHenry County, with its population increasing 35%, from 228,762 to 308,760. The second transportation plan was adopted in 2005 for the year 2020.

As we look to the future (the year 2040), it only makes sense to tap into the public's imagination and knowledge to determine how much of the past we should keep and how much we need to invent or reinvent. The transportation system plan should reflect the desires and values of the citizens and businesses of the County. Based on past experience, the County had come to understand that simply holding large, public meetings would not be enough to understand the desires and values of the community. A different approach was needed to attract more participation than previous efforts.



Figure 1: Woodstock Exchange Hotel in 1847
(Source: The Woodstock Public Library)

A creative, comprehensive approach was developed with the intent of reaching as many people and groups in the County as possible. As the County is over 600 square miles in area, this was no small undertaking. The campaign ultimately heard from thousands of people from all reaches of the County, and included five main forms of gathering input: pop-up meetings, library boards, high school engagement, focus groups, and online outreach.



Figure 2: General Motors Futurliner (Source: Futurliner Scrapbook"; National Automotive and Truck Museum of the United States; GM Futurliner Restoration Project at <http://www.futurliner.org/amer.htm>)

Using the public input that was received as a guide, six goals for the 2040 Transportation Plan were developed. Goal number one, **highway congestion mitigation**, focuses on providing reliable travel on the major arterials in the County. A **safety** goal represents the desire to achieve zero traffic fatalities in McHenry County, and to prioritize projects that will improve safety conditions for all users of the transportation system. **Mobility for all** aims to ensure that those without access to an automobile, including the young, the old, and anyone with a disability, are able to access basic service to maintain a high quality of life. Goal number four is **transportation choices**. Similar to mobility for all, transportation choices aims to improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, as well as bus and commuter rail service. **Environmental quality** balances

the need to improve the transportation system while promoting ecological and human health. Finally, the last goal is **transportation and land use**. This goal seeks to prioritize projects that will support development and industry consistent with existing community as well as county plans.

Using these goals and drawing from the previous transportation plans, a list of 58 projects has been developed. These projects are currently on-line for the public to rank and comment. At the end of the process, a plan will be brought forward for the County Board to consider. Ultimately, this plan will be used to build a transportation system that is a reflection of who we are today and where we want to be in the year 2040. Please go to 2040mchenrycountyplan.org and help determine our County's future. Happy and safe travels!

