

## Appendix B

# TRANSPORTATION and CIRCULATION

### Regional Access

Regional access to the Cass County area is provided by Interstate 94, approximately eight miles to the north, I-80, approximately two miles to the south in Indiana; U.S. 131, approximately eight miles to the east; and US-31, approximately five miles to the west. Regional access is also available from several regional airports including the Dowagiac Municipal Airport, the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport, the Elkhart City Airport and the South Bend Regional Airport. Passenger rail service is available from the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District, which runs the South Shore Line Passenger Service from Chicago to South Bend, Indiana.

### Road Network

**Overview and Jurisdiction:** Regional access to and within the county is further facilitated by a number of other federal and state highways. US-12 travels across the southern limits of the county and M-40 travels north and south through the county's eastern limits, linking US-12 with I-94 to the north. M-60 travels east and west through the county's southwest and central parts and intersects with M-40. M-51 travels through the northwest quarter of the county, joining I-94 with US-31 to the west. M-62 also travels across the northwest quarter of the county and travels south connecting Dowagiac, Cassopolis, and Edwardsburg. The local road network generally reflects a grid-like pattern according to township section lines – the same overall pattern that dominates much of the Lower Michigan rural landscape (See General Circulation Map, Appendix H). However, there are substantial voids in the network due to various factors including the presence of wetlands, lakes and other water courses. The road network of Dowagiac and the county's four villages also reflects a traditional grid-like pattern customary in urban communities.

The public roads of Cass County fall under the responsibility of three principal parties. The state highways fall under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Those public roads within the municipal borders of Dowagiac and the county's four villages fall under the jurisdiction of each of the respective municipalities. The balance of the county's public road network, and vast majority of road miles (in excess of 1,000 miles) is under the jurisdiction of the Cass County Road Commission (CCRC).

**Primary, Secondary and Class A Roads:** In compliance with the requirements of Michigan Public Act 51 of 1951 (Act 51), the CCRC classifies all roads under its jurisdiction as either "*primary*" or "*local*" roads. Primary roads are considered the most critical in providing regional circulation throughout the county and between counties (See General Circulation Map, Appendix H).

The CCRC further divides its primary roads into two classes – Class A and Class B. Class A roads are constructed in such a manner that no vehicle weight restrictions apply throughout the year. The design and construction of Class B roads requires the CCRC to instate weight restrictions during late winter and early spring. These seasonal weight restrictions impact the transportation of goods. Class A roads in Cass County are limited to the following:

## CASS COUNTY MASTER PLAN

July 1, 2014

**Barron Lake Road** between M-60 and Pokagon Highway  
**Brownsville Road** between M-62 and Calvin Center Road  
**Calvin Center Road** between US-12 and M-60  
**Cassopolis Road** between Old M-205 and Calvin Hill Street  
**Conrad Road** between May Street and US-12  
**Dailey Road** between Pine Lake St and M-60  
**Dailey Road** between Pokagon Highway and Mathews Street  
**Decatur Road** between M-60 and Crane Street  
**Dutch Settlement Street** between Lawrence Road and Moorlag Road  
**Marcellus Highway** between Dowagiac City Limits to M-40  
**May Street** between Conrad Rd and M-62  
**Old M-205** between Indiana State Line and US-12  
**Pine Lake Street** between M-60 and Conrad Road  
**Pokagon Highway** between M-51 and Cassopolis Village Limits  
**Pokagon Street** between M-51 and Dowagiac City limits  
**Reum Street** between Berrien County Line and M-60

All state highways in the county are also considered all-season roads except M-216 and M-62 between Dowagiac and Cassopolis

**National Functional Classification and Funding:** Also of importance is the functional classification of roads as established by the Federal Highway Administration (FHA). The FHA classifies road segments according to the extent to which the road is intended to facilitate traffic movement over long and short distances versus access to abutting property. This classification is referred to as the National Functional Classification (NFC). The relative hierarchy of the classification can be summarized as follows:

Interstates and Other Freeways are at the top of the NFC hierarchical system and frequently include freeways and state highways between major cities. Interstates and freeways function to primarily facilitate long distance travel including access to important traffic generators such as major airports and regional shopping centers.

Arterials function similarly to interstates and freeways except that they facilitate shorter travel distances and access to lesser traffic generators. Arterials are further divided into major and minor arterials.

Collectors function with a much greater focus on providing access to property rather than long distance travel, and frequently funnel traffic from residential or rural areas to arterials. Like arterials, collectors are further divided into major and minor collectors.

Local Roads serve primarily to provide access to adjacent properties and minor collectors and typically include roads serving subdivisions and similar neighborhood settlement areas.

While there is a strong correlation between those roads classified by the CCRC as “primary” and the NFC’s classification of arterials and collectors, this correlation does not apply in all cases. There are some road segments classified as primary roads according to the CCRC but classified as local roads according to the NFC. See National Functional Classification Circulation Map, Appendix H.

**Road Improvements:** The CCRC maintains a tentative schedule of annual road improvements. The improvement schedule looks approximately five years into the future. However, due to funding and other considerations, road improvements to be implemented in any specific year are not fully known until the construction season approaches. There are no major road improvements planned in the county at this time. Scheduled improvements are principally limited to repairs and resurfacing. In

## CASS COUNTY MASTER PLAN

July 1, 2014

some cases, the CCRC is examining the removal of the asphalt surface material along some road segments in an effort to minimize long-term maintenance costs along some of the less-traveled paved segments. All of the repair efforts by the CCRC are in addition to its regular road maintenance activities including grading, dust control, and snow removal. The last major road improvement in Cass County was the construction of M-217, connecting I-80 in Indiana to U.S. 12 just west of Union along the Mason and Porter Township borders.

**State Funding:** Undertaking road improvements, and even day-to-day road maintenance, has been challenging across the state and this condition has been exacerbated with the recent economic downturn and shrinking municipal revenues. The funding of road improvements in Michigan, by the state, has a history of comparatively low priority and the state's road network today reflects this history. The state funding of roads in Michigan occurs through two primary sources – vehicle registration fees and state-collected gas tax. These two sources account for approximately 90% of state funding. State-collected revenues for roads are distributed according to the Act 51 formula. Certain funds are dedicated to state highway bridge work, railroad crossings, economic development initiatives, and public transportation, and the balance is divided as follows:

- 39.1% to MDOT (principally for state highways)
- 39.1% to the state's 83 county road commissions, or similar bodies, which in turn utilize the funds to address the transportation needs of the state's 1,224 townships
- 21.8% to the state's 533 cities and villages

The classification of roads by the CCRC has important financial implications with regard to maintenance and improvements. Under Michigan law, townships have no responsibility for funding road improvements and maintenance. The CCRC is responsible for local road maintenance and must maintain and improve primary roads at its own expense. However, state law limits the participation of Road Commissions to no more than 50% of the cost for improvements to local roads. Requests by local townships for local road maintenance levels beyond those considered adequate or feasible by the CCRC, and requests for improvements to local roads, frequently require local funding. In reality, there are very few counties in Michigan where local townships are not actively involved in funding road maintenance and improvements.

**Federal Funding:** The federal government applies an 18.4% gas tax. The revenue is available for major road improvements, with MDOT receiving 75% of the state's funds and the balance being divided among the county road commissions, cities and villages. The classification of roads according to the NFC has financial implications as well. Federal aid for road projects is limited to roads classified as major collectors or higher. Roads classified as minor collectors have only limited eligibility and roads classified as local roads are not eligible for federal funding.

Federal funding for a portion of Cass County is administered through the Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS). NATS is a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) – an entity comprised of representatives from local government and transportation organizations and tasked with undertaking transportation planning in a comprehensive and cooperative manner for regional urbanized areas with populations in excess of 50,000 (according to the U.S. Census). Federal funds must be channeled through an MPO for these urbanized areas. NATS is part of the South Bend/Elkart Urbanized Area and serves the Cass County communities of Howard Township, Milton Township, Ontwa Township, and the Village of Edwardsburg.

Federal funding for Cass County is also channeled through the Cass County Rural Task Force and administered through MDOT. The Rural Task Force program provides funding for road and transit improvements. The Task Force includes representatives from the CCRC, transit providers, and cities and villages with a population less than 5,000.

## Public Transportation

Public transportation generally refers to modes of transportation whereby members of the public share occupancy of the vehicle providing the transportation. The mode of transportation is typically by bus or train and may include high speed transit lines.

Today, public transportation in Cass County is somewhat limited as might be expected with the county's dispersed population and comparatively small settlement areas. Dowagiac Dial-a-Ride and Cass County Transit Authority are the only transit service providers. Both provide a curb-to-curb bus service available by reservation, with Cass County Transit being county-wide. Cass County Transit is managed by the Cass County Transportation Authority. The Authority contracts with Transportation Management Inc. to operate the system. Consolidation of Dowagiac Dial-a-Ride and Cass County Transit Authority is currently under consideration.

Efforts have been underway to bring high-speed rail to Cass County. The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative is a nine-state initiative to improve commuter rail service including both access to the service and enhanced train speeds (some sections to have speeds in excess of 100 mph). The service is to rely on the construction of new tracks and upgrading existing rail corridors and crossings. High-speed rail service is currently available from Chicago to Port Huron and Detroit. However, upon completion of the expanded high-speed rail system, there may be no opportunities to access the service within Cass County and residents may need to travel to St. Joseph, Benton Harbor, Niles or Kalamazoo for the high speed rail service.

*For more information regarding county-wide transportation, please see the Tribal Transit Feasibility Plan prepared by the Southwest Michigan Regional Planning Commission.*

## Non-Motorized Travel

Residents of and visitors to Cass County have an extensive road network available to them for biking. Most of the road miles pass through rural landscapes including farmland and wooded areas. However, very few of the road miles include a paved shoulder to facilitate safer non-motorized travel. MDOT maintains a record of its primary roads for biking purposes, and classifies the road segments according to their level of traffic and the type of road surface (paved/unpaved), and the presence of paved shoulders. Roads that currently have paved shoulders are principally limited to portions of the county's state highways and U.S.-12, as follows:

M-60 from Cassopolis east to Three Rivers (St. Joseph Co.).

M-62 from Edwardsburg south to Indiana, and from Dowagiac west to Eau Claire (Berrien Co.).

M-62 from Edwardsburg south to Indiana state line.

M-217 from Union south to Indiana state line.

U.S.-12 from Edwardsburg west to Niles (Berrien Co.) and beyond.

U.S.-12 from Union west to Redfield Road in Mason Township.

Lake Street in Howard Township, from Bailey Road west to Niles (Berrien Co.).

Yankee Street in Howard Township, from M-60 west to Niles (Berrien Co.).

There are several communities in the county that have established designated bike paths and are pursuing improvements to accommodate safe and comfortable bike travel. Examples include a designated bike path in Silver Creek Township from Russom Park to the township hall, and a bike path around Diamond Lake in the townships of LaGrange, Jefferson, Calvin and Penn.