

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

Introduction

Transportation is an important topic greatly affecting Henderson County residents and businesses. The transportation system directly affects the county's quality of life in terms of travel time, air pollution, road connectivity, emergency response time, recreation, and other issues. The transportation network also has a profound influence upon commerce and the economic environment. Henderson County must take an active role in ensuring that the transportation network adequately serves to enhance the economic vitality and quality of life of Henderson County. The primary features of the county's transportation network are summarized on Map # 12, *Transportation* (Appendix I).

Public Input

The Citizen Survey did not address transportation in general terms. Specific questions regarding the expenditure of public dollars on the development of a by-pass around Hendersonville, public transit, or greenways all scored very low relative to virtually all other issues.

Community Meeting participants rated transportation as the second most important Primary Comment. Transportation issues placed within the top twenty detailed Summary Comments in a number of ways. Community Meeting participants expressed much more interest in greenways and public transit than did respondents to the Citizen Survey. Also, there was a strong perception among participants that although the county transportation network is currently adequate, the system is rapidly worsening due to growth and congestion.

Designing Our Future questionnaire responses are summarized as follows:

- Develop a long-range transportation plan that includes public input for roads and alternate modes of travel...46.9% of votes.
- Improve or repair existing roads for better traffic flow...34.9% of votes.
- Improve access and development of walking trails, sidewalks, bike paths, and greenways ...18.2% of votes.

Recommendations & Action Strategies

Recommendation T-01: Develop and maintain a high-quality transportation network, and continue to provide leadership at every level in transportation planning.

A. Adopt and implement a multi-modal transportation plan

A multi-modal transportation plan (hereafter, “transportation plan”) should be the primary mechanism through which Henderson County understands its future needs, plans, and budgets for meeting such needs.

As of the drafting of this Comprehensive Plan, the North Carolina Department of Transportation is in the process of developing the *Comprehensive Transportation Plan* (CTP) for the French Broad MPO. This document will identify existing and future deficiencies through the year 2030 and will recommend specific transportation improvements in response thereto.

To maintain an efficient and functional transportation network, a multi-modal transportation plan will be adopted and actively implemented, while being periodically revised to best suit Henderson County’s specific needs. Such an adopted plan may be the aforementioned CTP or another transportation plan that best serves the interests of Henderson County.

Section 4 of this Comprehensive Plan will establish a Community Planning Framework. Each Community Plan should contain a transportation element that both informs and is informed by a transportation plan.

B. Identify and incorporate access management standards and requirements into County land development ordinances.

One of the most important factors influencing the ability of Henderson County’s road network to handle traffic volume is the design, placement, and number of access points (driveways, intersections, and other curb cuts). “Access management is a process that provides access to land development while simultaneously preserving the flow of traffic on the surrounding road system in terms of safety, capacity, and speed.” (N.C. DOT Congestion Management Section, Access Management Group) According to the N.C. DOT, a good access management program does the following:

- *Limits the Number of Conflict Points at Driveway Locations*
- *Separates Conflict Areas*
- *Reduces the Interference of Through Traffic*
- *Provides Sufficient Spacing for At-Grade, Signalized Intersections*
- *Provides Adequate On-Site Circulation and Storage*

The benefits of access management are extensive:

Access management is an obvious strategy in the fight to preserve the travel speeds and minimize accidents on our roadway system. The real beauty...is that it can provide many substantial benefits at a relatively low cost. A well designed and implemented access management program:

- *Provides substantial reductions in accident costs*
- *Maintains the efficient movement of people and goods*
- *Preserves the public investment in the transportation infrastructure*
- *Reduces the need to build more new roadways*
- *Protect[s] the value of private investments*
- *Enhance[s] the environment and economic vitality of surrounding communities*

Access management programs typically control the number and spacing of curb cuts, as well as the design of the cuts themselves. Effective use of medians and turn lanes promotes limited types of movement and access while allowing vehicles to safely decelerate without creating additional congestion or conflict from subsequent traffic. Reducing points of conflict through proper placement, spacing, and design of access points can greatly increase a driver's ability to respond to vehicular movements, whether entering or exiting a roadway (NCDOT).

At a minimum, access management standards and requirements will apply extensively within the Urban Services Area and Community Service Centers as defined within the *Growth Management Strategy Element* of this Comprehensive Plan. Access management standards and requirements should also apply within the Rural / Urban Transition Area.

C. Continue to support public transportation in Henderson County.

Western Carolina Community Action, Inc. (WCCA) was appointed by Henderson County to administer numerous human services including transportation, and has played an important role in making mass transit a reality in Henderson County. Henderson County's Public Transit has been operated under the NCDOT Rural

Transportation Program, but in 2004, Henderson County was informed by NCDOT that the County was now within the Asheville Urbanized Area and that its transit system needed to transition from a rural program to an urban program. The Henderson County Commissions directed Staff to make the necessary arrangements to convert the system to an urban system that complied with the FTA Section 5307 Grant Program. One regulation requires that management of the system be procured competitively on a regular basis. Apple Country Transportation, a division of the WCCA, was awarded the contract in 2006. Although Henderson County's Transit system receives funding through federal and state sources, Henderson County, the City of Hendersonville, and the Town of Fletcher all provide significant financial support. As the County continues to grow and the transit system is expanded or improved, Henderson County should consider creating a public transportation authority.

The provision of public transit is important for a number of reasons. Public transit facilitates the mobility of elderly and low-income individuals, reduces traffic congestion, lowers levels of air and noise pollution, and increases connectivity between communities. For all of these reasons, Henderson County will continue to work with other municipal and regional governments in the area toward the development of a sustainable bus system. The County will explore a variety of ways to contribute to the funding of the system, including utilizing portions of fees and taxes upon automobiles.

D. Integrate recreation and transportation planning.

The *Recreation Element* of this Plan calls for the development of a countywide recreation master plan (hereafter, "recreation plan"), a key ingredient of which will be long-term greenways development plans. Greenways are multi-functional in that they meet both recreational and transportation needs. Furthermore, much of the funding for greenways development is derived from federal and state transportation funding sources. It is therefore necessary for greenways plans to be reflected in the adopted countywide multi-modal transportation plan discussed in Action Strategy T-01.A of this element. The transportation plan should be updated and re-adopted at such time as the recreation plan is completed. Conversely, the recreation plan should reflect any guidance derived from the transportation plan. Furthermore, both documents should both inform and be informed by the Community Plans envisioned in Section 4 of this Comprehensive Plan.

E. Continue active leadership of, and participation in, the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO).

Henderson County was incorporated into the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO) following the release of the 2000 U.S. Census data. The FBRMPO is part of a federal process that requires urbanized areas to engage in comprehensive, ongoing, cooperative regional planning. The FBRMPO works with NC DOT to develop and implement multi-modal transportation plans and with local governments to coordinate transportation and land use planning.

