

Executive Summary

This Transportation Plan (Plan) offers guidance on transportation system improvements for decision-makers of the greater Polson community. The Plan contains analysis of a multi-modal transportation system within the Plan's study area boundary. Included are an examination of traffic operations, the roadway network, the non-motorized transportation system, trip reduction strategies, and growth management techniques available to a growing community. This document also identifies the challenges with the transportation system in the greater Polson community and makes specific recommendations for improvement projects and programs that will mitigate existing concerns and/or meet future needs. This Plan has been developed both through meaningful dialogue with the community and stakeholders, and through the analysis and oversight of the Technical Oversight Committee (TOC), which was established for this planning effort.

This Plan provides a balanced approach in addressing existing challenges and in planning for the future. Growth within the Polson area was forecast by using control totals available from the Polson Growth Policy (2006) and US Census Bureau information. From the available data, dwelling unit and employment (retail and non-retail jobs) growth was assigned to those areas within the community most likely to grow during the twenty year planning horizon (year 2030). By using the *TransCAD* travel demand model, the percent increase in roadway traffic volumes between the current year (year 2010) and the planning year (year 2030) to identify those areas most likely to realize increased traffic volumes were developed. This model used current socio-economic data, along with the developed growth trends, to calculate future traffic volumes. As presented in Chapter 3 of the Plan, these projected traffic volumes informed future traffic concerns within the area.

Analysis of the existing transportation system and future traffic conditions indicates a need for numerous infrastructure improvements in the area. These improvements are explained in Chapter 5 of this Plan and are broken down into three categories:

- Major Street Network (MSN) Recommendations;
- Transportation System Management (TSM) Recommendations; and
- Non-Motorized Network Recommendations & Considerations.

The MSN projects focus on upgrading entire corridors and/or constructing new roadways and making intersection improvements. Six (6) MSN projects are recommended at a total cost of approximately \$5,205,000. TSM projects focus mainly on intersection improvements, such as the addition of turning lanes and signalization. Sixteen (16) TSM projects are recommended at an estimated cost of about \$1,341,300. The Plan also strengthens and/or reinforces policy and programs for both non-motorized and for motorized travel. Chapter 7 of the Plan presents concepts and guidelines for corridor preservation and access management principles, transportation level of service guidance, and for a variety of bicycle design guidelines.

Analysis of the numerous infrastructure projects have been recommended in the Plan shows five (5) projects stand out as being of most value to the community--both in terms of addressing existing concerns and in terms of planning for future growth. Although prioritization of these five projects is best left to elected officials and the community as funding becomes available. The five projects are listed below:

Top Five Projects for Implementation

(in no order of priority)

- MSN-1 7th Avenue (5th Street West to Hillcrest Lane);
- MSN-3 2nd Street East (Kootenai Avenue to 7th Avenue);
- MSN-6 4th Avenue East (1st Street East to US 93);
- TSM-1 US 93 Access Management Plan; and
- TSM-5 Polson Downtown Master Plan.

It is important for the community to plan for the inevitable growth by preserving roadway corridors, when able to do so, and recognize any signs of declining levels of service on area intersections. Although this Plan is a tool that can be used to guide development of the transportation system in the future, both local and state planners must continually re-evaluate the findings and recommendations in this document as growth is realized and development occurs. If higher than anticipated growth is realized in the community, or if growth occurs in areas not originally planned for, then transportation needs may be different from those analyzed in this Plan. Thus an update and re-evaluation of this document is recommended every five years, if at all possible.

Implementation of the many recommendations contained in the Plan does not occur solely through expenditure of funds by the local government. Examples of Plan implementation that occur at little to no cost to the local government can include the process of right-of-way (or easement) acquisition through development, as well as through some Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies. Both the elected officials and the community should constantly seek out ways to partner with each other to create a truly multi-modal transportation system for the travelling public.