

Transportation

Recommendation #1: Develop a Regional Transportation Plan for the micropolitan area of the Brainerd Lakes to guide local units of government in future development of their local comprehensive plans, transportation plans, and land use decisions. (a multi-modal plan that roads, transit, bike/pedestrian, air, rail, etc.)

1) Benefits to the region if implemented:

- a. To local units of government: Unified/consistent approach to deal with regionally-significant transportation issues; promotes orderly growth and development and improves cooperation; provides communities with a voice to communicate/advocate transportation issues and concerns; educates communities on transportation issues; strengthens local planning efforts by linking land use decisions to transportation; leverages resources and support of transportation matters; cost savings.
- b. To community at-large: Establishes a multi-jurisdictional regional framework; establish regional vision and subsequent goals, objectives, and policies to create a transportation destiny. (e.g., Regional Blueprint); consistent approach on regionally-significant transportation issues; establishes a transportation hierarchy, i.e., not all roads are equal; establishes transportation priorities; better utilization of resources and improved coordination; reduces duplication and redundancy; demonstrates regional unity to strengthen area's voice on transportation matters.
- c. To business: Everyone is being treated fairly.
 - i. Provides business community with a voice to communicate/advocate transportation issues and concerns.
 - ii. Establishes common policies in dealing with access to businesses.
 - iii. Don't need to shop around for the right community to locate or expand their business.
 - iv. Identifies on a regional level the transportation issues that matter as they affect business success/failure.

2) Consequences to the region if not implemented:

- a. To local units of government
 - i. Accept status quo. Status quo means future financial resources will continue to be focused on preserving the system versus expansion. Currently congested corridors will get even more congested and new congestion will occur. Safety of our roadways will also be challenged by the increased use on the system.
 - ii. Lack of support and resources on transportation planning.
- b. To community at-large
 - i. Accept status quo (as described above)
 - ii. Piecemeal decision-making – no one is looking at the regional connections
 - iii. Non-visionary planning (e.g., reactive vs. proactive).
 - iv. Parochial decision-making and planning (who can scream the loudest).
- c. To business
 - i. Accept status quo (as described above)

- 3) Ideas for incentives to encourage implementation:
 - a. Local planning grants
 - b. Local technical assistance
 - c. Participation in regional process

- 4) Steps to implementation:
 - a. Organize a regional advisory committee and establish early and continuous public involvement plan
 - b. Inventory existing conditions on all transportation modes
 - i. Collect data, inventory plans, obtain input
 - c. Identify socio-economic characteristics and trends.
 - d. Determine regional vision, goals, and objectives
 - e. Analyze transportation system condition and performance
 - f. Develop plan recommendations, strategies, and policies
 - g. Create implementation and/or action plan

- 5) Timeline: 1 Year

Recommendation #2: Promote the development and implementation of a consistent transportation access management strategy throughout the Brainerd Lakes Area that coordinates land use and transportation decisions to ensure safety and mobility of the traveling public while accommodating the access needs of local communities.

- 1) Benefits to the region if implemented:
 - a) Reduce congestion and crashes
 - b) Preserve road capacity and postpone the need for roadway widening
 - c) Improve travel times for the delivery of goods and services
 - d) Ease movement between destinations
 - e) Supports local economic development

- 2) Consequences to the region if not implemented:
 - a) Increased number of crashes as vehicles cross and turn along the road in an uncoordinated manner
 - b) Stop and go conditions continue to frustrate commuters and local residents
 - c) Adjacent businesses suffer when customers have trouble turning into their sites
 - d) Freight and delivery trucks lose time and money stuck in traffic
 - e) Pedestrians can't find a safe spot to cross the road
 - f) Overall community livability suffers

- 3) Ideas for incentives to encourage implementation:

The benefits and consequences listed above should be incentive enough. With that in mind, poorly designed entrances and exits not only present a traffic hazard, but also cause congestion that can create a negative image, especially those on the intersection of busy roads. Maintaining the safety and mobility is critical to the long term health, safety, and economic vitality of the region. To accomplish these goals, this plan would provide for the development of an inter-connected network of state, county, and local streets and highways. By adopting this common framework as part of local comprehensive plans and incorporating it into local zoning and subdivision decisions, the communities can achieve the consistency and coordination necessary to protect the valuable transportation asset.

- 1) Steps to implementation:
 - a) Accept recommendation in order to proceed
 - b) Meet with local transportation officials and planning and zoning staff/commissioners to educate them on the importance of access management.
 - c) Develop local access and signal spacing guidelines for local units of government to use as they
 - i) Review and take action on changes in land use, building/conditional use permits, site/concept plans, and preliminary/final plats
 - ii) Develop local comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, corridor plans, access management plans, and transportation plans
 - d) Apply approved guidelines in land use and transportation decisions.
 - e) Educate public and area business community on the access guidelines and the benefits that can be realized from implementation.

- 2) Timeline: 1 Year