

## **CHAPTER 5. TRANSPORTATION**

A safe and well-balanced transportation network is essential to the health of any community, as it links activities and land uses within a community to those in the broader region. In addition, features of transportation resources typically play a critical role in determining the nature and intensities of land uses in a community. Low-density land use patterns are a common attribute of most rural communities that preclude the feasibility of walking to meaningful destinations, since most land uses – and even neighbors – are reasonable far apart. For this plan, roads are considered as public ways intended for use by all legal users.

### **General Commuting Patterns**

Census estimates reveal that 95.7% of Well's employed 683-person workforce over 16 years of age used a private automobile to travel to work. Of these, 577 people (87.4%) drove alone, and carpooling accounted for 81 people, or 10.5% of the workforce over 16 years of age. Mean travel to work time for a Wells resident in 2014 was 35.6 minutes.

Wells Township residents have access to I-75, which runs north-south, via either M-46 West at its southern border, or through Caro to M-81 West. Many large cities are within one-half day driving distance from the Township, including: Chicago (330), Cleveland (240), Detroit (90), Grand Rapids (135), and Lansing (90). Closer to home, Saginaw and Bay City are popular work and shopping destinations, and are within an hour's drive for Township residents.

### **Road Characteristics and Improvements**

Highways and roads are the most important modes of transportation throughout Wells Township. According to the Tuscola County Road Commission, the total certified Act 51 mileage in Wells Township is 71.957 miles. Jurisdictional location of M-46 is Dayton Township. There are 16.648 miles of County Primary roads, including Hurds Corner Road from Bevens to Gilford Road, although this change is still not reflected in the Michigan Geographic Framework. There are 16.788 miles of County Local Hard Surfaced roads, and 38.521 miles of County Local Gravel roads.

Along the southernmost boundary of the township is M-46, a state trunk line running the entire six-mile, east-west length of the township, and traversing the state from Port Sanilac to Muskegon. Bevens Road is a major east-west county primary road that runs all the way through the Township. Hurds Corner and East Dayton roads are the major north-south county primary roads, with Hurds Corner connecting M-46 and M-81 for easy access to either Caro or Cass City. East Dayton is a popular route directly into Caro. A lack of natural or man-made obstacles results in sufficient connections with neighboring communities. The quality of these connections varies.

The Tuscola County Road Commission holds jurisdiction over the roadways in Wells Township. Typically, the Township Board selects annual projects that the Tuscola County Road Commission provides a cost estimate. The Township makes the final determination for

yearly projects, pays for them, and the road commission then completes the work. For several years, and in 2010, the Tuscola County Road Commission provided a matching subsidy of \$25,000 under the stipulation that the Township include as their first project the upgrading of the oldest black-topped road, 15 years or older. An example of funding in cooperation with other sources occurred with the paving of Hurds Corner Road, for which the Tuscola County Road Commission applied for federal and state funds. The project included paving Hurds Corner from Frankford to Deckerville Roads, and in the end was paid for by federal, state, county, Ellington Township, and Wells Township monies.

Annual maintenance of the Township's unpaved roads includes budgeting for gravel and applications of a calcium chloride spray, which reduces the dust created by vehicle traffic during dry summer months. Most Township resident concerns are with road conditions in poorly drained areas, and in the spring during the thawing process.

The Township can be expected to continue to maintain the local roads, and state and county agencies will likely maintain and improve their facilities. No new systems or classifications are expected in roads, and scheduled public transit is not expected in the Township.

### **Traffic Volume**

Generally, traffic on the Township's roads flows smoothly and there are few congestion concerns. As a point of reference, the capacity of a typical two-lane roadway is approximately 10,000 vehicle trips per day (*Highway Capacity Manual*, Transportation Research Board, 1996). Beyond this capacity, the road's level of service begins to decline and congestion worsens. No roadway in Wells Township is experiencing this amount of traffic.

### **Air and Public Transportation**

There are no commercial airports in the Township, but the Tuscola Area Airport is located just west of Caro on M-81. There are plans to expand the airport in the near future. The nearest passenger airport is MBS International Airport in the Saginaw/Midland area, approximately forty-five miles northwest of the Township, and Bishop International Airport in Flint also serves the area.

Currently, there are no existing railroad companies operating within the Township, but rail freight lines bisect the county. The nearest passenger rail connection is located about 45 minutes away in Lapeer.

There are no regularly scheduled public inter-city or intra-community transit systems serving Wells Township at this time, but public mass transit (Thumb Body Express) is available in Caro to serve the immediate and surrounding communities.

## **IMPLICATIONS – TRANSPORTATION**

1. It is expected that Township residents will maintain access to available public transit based in Caro.

2. Regional connectivity must be maintained, and improvements can best be made by working with the Tuscola County Road Commission and adjacent townships to improve roads.
3. As changes in population are experienced, existing transportation systems need to be re-evaluated, although existing transportation systems will be within normal standards and capacity in most cases. Traffic volume studies completed by the Tuscola County Road Commission may be an additional information source.
4. Adherence to the rules attached to subsidies may offer the Township a cost effective means of providing the community with a safe, well-balanced transportation system.