

PLANNING ISSUES—TRANSPORTATION

Objectives

1. To provide safe, efficient transportation facilities and services linking the various parts of Kane County to the region, the nation, and the world.
2. To improve the quality of life for Kane County residents by expanding available travel options, increasing personal mobility, and reducing congestion through a balanced transportation system.
3. To maintain and improve the environment and air quality of Kane County by providing a range of transportation alternatives.
4. To coordinate transportation planning with county and municipal land use planning, so that the transportation system can accommodate the travel needs generated by land use.
5. To foster greater cooperation and coordination of transportation facilities and services at local and regional levels.
6. To encourage the effective preservation and protection of existing and potential rights-of-way for the transportation system.
7. To reduce congestion while preserving the county's transportation system and its carrying capacity.

Chapter Focus



Kane County has an extensive transportation system, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, local roads and highways, bus and rail networks, and interstate highways. The projected population and employment growth in Kane County will challenge this transportation system given our society's current automobile dependency. The challenge will be to balance new development with transportation improvements while increasing mobility choices and protecting Kane County's environment and community character.

This chapter examines:

- Transportation and Land Use
- Kane County Transportation Planning
- Regional Transportation Planning
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning
- Rustic Roads
- Global Linkages

Transportation And Land Use

The land uses created to accommodate where we live, work and recreate are directly related to how we travel between these locations. The topics of land use and transportation traditionally have been discussed, researched, and implemented as separate topics. It is now recognized that because of their interconnectedness, land use and transportation must be addressed concurrently. It is especially important that Kane County and its 28 municipalities coordinate planning for transportation and land use. Given current development projections for Kane County, the next 20 to 25 years offers an unmatched opportunity to coordinate land use and transportation decisions.



We own more cars and make more road trips than ever before. The Chicago metropolitan region has been ranked, depending on the study methodology, as the third or fourth most congested region in the nation. The most common mode of travel in Kane County and across the Chicago metropolitan region is the "single occupant vehicle" described as one car/one occupant. The number of

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registered vehicles in Kane County has increased from 280,661 in 1990 to 343,953 in 2000. Americans are now driving 88% farther than in 1969 to go shopping and an overwhelming 137% farther to accomplish family and personal errands (Refer to Figure 40).

Due to population and employment increases, evolving development patterns, changes in travel behavior, and an overall increase in the number of cars and trips, Kane County is potentially facing an unprecedented congestion level. In 2003, approximately one-quarter of Kane County's roads experienced congestion. By 2030, congestion will expand to nearly three-quarters of the county system. There are many measures used to calculate the performance of the transportation system and predict its future capabilities. Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT), which indicates the quantity of travel on the roadway system, is expected to more than double between 2003 and 2030 for all county roads. Vehicle Hours of Travel (VHT), a measure that indicated the time that motorists spend on the roadway system, is expected to more than triple between 2003 and 2030. Vehicle Hours of Delay (VHD), the aggregate delay experienced by motorists due to congestion, is predicted to increase greatly. The consequences of congested roads in Kane County include poor air quality, a decrease in quality of life, and wasted time stuck in traffic (Refer to Figure 41).

There are several possible actions to mitigate projected road congestion, including changing our land development patterns and encouraging people to either walk, bike or use public transit for certain trips. Encouraging walking and biking requires more than providing paths, sidewalks and bike racks. Keeping services and shopping within a half-mile of residences and providing desirable and safe routes to reach the destination is essential.

There needs to be a shift from auto-dominated land development to those designed for mixed-use developments with a pedestrian and transit friendly environment. Site planning for pedestrian orientated development should address mixed uses, building orientation and scale, location of parking, logical and safe pedestrian connections to adjacent land uses, and building articulation including porches, arcades, overhangs, canopies, and window placement.

Municipalities and developers must begin evaluating both new construction and redevelopment projects using these standards. Redesign of the county's

transportation network is an on-going process that will take a concerted effort to transform to a more balanced system with greater opportunities to use transit, walking, and bicycles. This can be accomplished cooperatively between the public and private sectors by implementing programs (such as ridesharing), as well as constructing improvements (i.e., intersection widening). Local government units are encouraged to provide fiscal and zoning incentives, partner with other governmental units, use redevelopment authority, and participate in all available federal and state programs to incrementally implement these policies.

Right-of-way protection and preservation is essential for the proper coordination of land development and transportation improvements. Within Kane County, right-of-way is occupied by rail, highways, public utilities, and pedestrian, bicycle, and recreational trails. Land adjacent to right-of-way is being developed at a rapid rate. Transportation and land use planning should include guidelines for right-of-way preservation and acquisition, maximizing opportunities for right-of-way



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Kane County Transportation Planning

preservation as land is developed or becomes available for reuse. For example, as new development occurs, adequate arterial road rights-of-way should be preserved, and new rights-of-way should be provided for local roads, collector roads, trails, and greenway linkages. There is a KDOT policy in place that protects both existing rights-of-way and future corridors.

In 2004, the Kane County Division of Transportation issued a draft 2030 Transportation Plan. The 2030 Transportation Plan addresses the county's future transportation system, including a balanced approach of all travel modes — roadway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian and air. The plan provides recommendations and policies in transit service expansion, commuter rail expansion, highway safety and intersection improvement, signal system upgrades, bicycle and pedestrian system expansion, and highway capacity improvements.

The 2030 Transportation Plan reflects the land use distribution proposed in the 2030 Land Resource Management Plan. In the Urban Corridor, transportation investment will support more intensive densities and established development patterns. In the center of the county, the transportation policies and strategies support the Smart Growth principles and Priority Place ideas planned for the Critical Growth Area. The plan also develops policies and implementation strategies that support agricultural preservation policies for the Agricultural Area. Kane County transportation policies, studies and projects also embrace other Kane County policies related to stormwater management, groundwater protection, natural resource protection and historic preservation (Refer to Figure 42).

The Kane County Board has long recognized the need for additional transportation funding for capacity improvements on the county highway system. In response to that need, the County Board in 2002 initiated the development of a Comprehensive Road Improvement Plan and Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance. In accordance with Illinois statutes, an Advisory Committee, including three municipal representatives, three County Board representatives, one homebuilder representative, one economic development representative, one realtor's representative, and one labor representative, was established to oversee the development of the plan and ordinance. Under the direction of this advisory committee, and through an extensive public process, Land Use assumptions and a Comprehensive Road Improvement Plan were developed and have been approved by the County Board. On January 13, 2004, the County Board adopted a Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance. This ordinance applies to all new development in Kane County, both inside and outside municipal boundaries. It requires developers to pay a fee in proportion to the transportation impacts of the development within the service areas established by the ordinance, and requires that fee to be paid prior to the issuance of a building permit by the county or a municipality. Transportation Impact Fees for Kane County went into effect on April 1, 2004.

In November 2002, Kane County in cooperation with the RTA published a market analysis study, entitled the *Kane County Transit Opportunity Assessment Study*, documenting the existing and potential travel markets and recommendations for future transit opportunities. This will serve as the basis for a future county-wide transit plan. This report provides different recommendations for addressing transit needs in Kane County's urban, critical growth, and rural areas. The study defines niche markets for transit use typically dominated by the automobile in Kane County's urban, critical



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growth, and rural environments. The urban areas along the Fox River lend themselves to more traditional forms of transit service due to the higher density and street system connectivity. The expanding suburban growth areas near Randall Road require more flexible systems due to lower development densities, separation of land uses, and a hierarchy of street systems facilitating automobile use, often at the expense of bicycles, pedestrians, and transit. Bus Rapid Transit is one viable option to improve traffic movement on Randall Road (Refer to Figure 44). Rural villages further west will have different transit needs than the other areas due to their separation from the county's urban areas. The study results in a package of recommendations identifying support options and appropriate land use planning policies, as well as focusing subsequent planning efforts on "transit areas"—smaller geographic sub-areas within the county that share transit-market characteristics.

Three proposed Fox River bridges represent some of the most significant system expansions in the county's transportation system. These bridges will serve an established east-west travel pattern and will alleviate congested bridge crossings through many Fox River communities. A lengthy and rigorous process to examine environmental impacts of several proposed corridors was completed in May 2002. Three primary corridors have emerged from the environmental screening: (1) Stearns Road Corridor; (2) Longmeadow Parkway Corridor (Bolz); and (3) Illinois Route 56 Corridor (Oak). Kane County has determined that it will lead the efforts to implement both the Stearns and Longmeadow corridors, and recommends that the Illinois Route 56 Corridor be considered by the State of Illinois. Right-of-way acquisition and preliminary engineering began in summer 2002. Kane County also encourages the building of local bridges.

Paratransit planning has been undertaken in Kane County to identify transportation alternatives for seniors and people with disabilities. In February 2003, the Kane County Board passed a resolution adopting the Kane County Paratransit Coordination Study. This study, undertaken by the Kane County Division of Transportation, was the result of a year's worth of data collection of existing paratransit services, surveying of providers and stakeholders, and interviews with key providers and stakeholders. There were six recommended coordination strategies developed from this study. These include the following: (1) establishing a Kane County Paratransit Coordinating Council; (2) developing a coordinated marketing program; (3) implementing a user-side taxi subsidy program; (4) adoption of uniform Dial-A-Ride operating and service policies; (5) providing Dial-A-Ride service for ADA customers; and (6) integrating separate Dial-A-Ride programs and Pace ADA paratransit service into one regional paratransit system. Implementation of these strategies will be incremental and based upon the initiatives taken on by the Kane County Paratransit Coordinating Council.

Regional Transportation Planning

All the jurisdictions within a region—the state, regional agencies, counties, townships, and municipalities—share in the use and the cost of transportation services. Traffic impacts go beyond jurisdictional boundaries. Long-range planning for regional transportation helps provide the coordination needed to achieve traffic mobility, cost efficiency, and environmental protection. The Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) is responsible for regional transportation planning in northeastern Illinois (the six county Chicago region). In October 2003, CATS released the 2030 Shared Path Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) a long range regional transportation plan for northeastern Illinois. The RTP plan identifies major projects and system improvements for Kane County, including:

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- Metra Commuter Rail Extension along the Milwaukee District West line from the Big Timber station in Elgin to Gilberts, Huntley and then continuing into McHenry County to Rockford
- Commuter rail extension along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe from Aurora to Oswego in Kendall County. A longer extension terminating in Plano is also proposed.
- Metra extension along the Union Pacific West line from Geneva to La Fox and Elburn
- Additional lanes along I-88 and I-90
- Prairie Parkway from I-88 to I-80



Public transportation service is provided by Metra and Pace, operating divisions of the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). Metra operates commuter rail service throughout the region; three of its lines—the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe (BNSF) Line, the Union Pacific (UP) West Line, and the Milwaukee District West (MDW) West Line—serve Kane County. Metra ridership increased by approximately 34% from 1991 to 2002 at the five stations within Kane County. Parking availability at the stations is nearing capacity. In order to increase ridership, parking at existing stations needs to be significantly expanded. Meanwhile, the expansion of commuter rail service west to La Fox and Elburn is expected to be operational by 2006. Pace, the suburban bus division of the RTA,

operates fixed route bus service, express bus service, American Disabilities Act paratransit service, and vanpool/subscription bus service. From 1990 to 2000, PACE ridership has decreased by approximately 10.82% in Kane County.

Metra, in cooperation with other planning agencies in the Chicago region, is planning an innovative commuter rail service for the western suburbs. The Metra STAR (Suburban Transit Access Route) Line will become the first commuter rail line in northeastern Illinois designed to service commuters from suburb-to-suburb. The STAR Line, will utilize the existing EJ&E railroad line, which runs north to south. This line connects existing residential and employment centers along western Cook, DuPage just east of Kane County, and northwest Will County. The STAR Line will also link with other existing Metra commuter lines, running east to west into Kane County.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning

Kane County has approximately 120 miles of bicycle/pedestrian trails, providing one of the most extensive trail systems in northeastern Illinois. Bicycling and walking for transportation, recreation, and fitness is an area of study that is gaining the interest of transportation and land use planners. Pedestrian and bicycle circulation systems must be designed for the active and disabled users of all ages.

Barrier-free accessibility linking buildings, parking, paths, sidewalks, employment and recreation is a goal for all of Kane County.

A safe and well-designed pedestrian and bicycle circulation system will help to divert a portion of short trips. It is also possible to fully integrate biking and walking with public transit. This requires changes in the design and engineering of the road and land use environment. Road design can be altered to make biking and walking safe, inviting, and convenient for children and adults. Ultimately, there should be a hierarchy of pedestrian and bicycle routes in Kane County linking neighborhoods to natural resources, small towns to the Urban Corridor, and city centers to the countryside.



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In December 2002, the county adopted the first *Kane County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan* in a collaborative planning process including the Kane County Council of Mayors, the Kane County Forest Preserve District, local park districts, bicycle advocacy groups, and other interested parties. One of the key products of the plan is the Kane County Bicycle Map that shows existing, planned, and longer-range conceptual bicycle/pedestrian facilities. The Kane County Bicycle Map is to be used by bicyclists in planning their route and navigating during their trip. The map includes the existing and proposed bicycle and pedestrian facilities with bikeways categorized as either regional or local facilities. The map also includes a Bicycle Level of Service (BLOS) rating for selected roadways. BLOS, together with FHWA's Bicycle Compatibility Index (BCI) are emerging national standards for quantifying the relative bike-friendliness of a roadway. These measures indicate bicyclist comfort level for specific roadway geometries and traffic conditions. In addition to the maps, the plan contains a best practices guide, a chapter on arterial roadway corridors and crossings, and a conceptual system for consistent countywide way-finding and signage. The plan, intended for use by all local agencies, also lists and describes potential funding sources for bicycle and pedestrian projects.

Rustic Roads

Many of the roads in Kane County reveal the rural character of the area. The view of the countryside along these roads gives a sense of stability in a fast-changing world. Points of visual interest along a rustic road, both natural and man made, add to the enjoyment of roadside scenery and to a sense of place. In Kane County, rustic roads provide views of Midwestern vernacular—gently rolling woods and expansive farm fields, the Fox River and its tributaries, autumn color, farmhouses, barns, hedgerows, and churches.



In July 2000, Kane County established a Rustic Roads Program to preserve road corridors and the surrounding features that define their character. Designated road corridors minimally include the road right-of-way and can include properties and features adjacent to the right-of-way. The program applies to roads located in unincorporated Kane County and can include municipal roads through intergovernmental agreement. Rustic Road designation does not “freeze” roads in time. During the designation process, a Corridor Management Plan is developed which defines the significant features of the road corridor that should be protected and enhanced. Traffic and life safety issues continue to be addressed while those significant features are preserved. This technique of corridor planning offers an opportunity to balance character and aesthetic design with engineering and maintenance. It may take more time and resources initially, yet yields a result that is appropriate for Kane County's uniqueness.

The Rustic Roads Program promotes:

- a sense of place in Kane County—improves community identity and quality of life;
- economic development—generates tourist revenue by promotion of the county's scenic beauty;
- recreation—provides enjoyment for the large percentage of the population who enjoys driving for pleasure and sightseeing; and
- resource protection—contributes to protection of the significant scenic, environmental, and historic resources that are often located within rustic road corridors (Refer to Figures 45 and 46).

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The Lincoln Highway Association promotes and preserves America's first coast-to-coast highway, a section of which runs east-west through central Kane County. The association has state directors in the 12 states through which it runs, and is attempting to preserve parts of the original route, erect replicas of the original Lincoln Highway markers, and encourage governments and property owners to save roadside architecture and culture.

Global Linkages

A tremendous volume of goods and merchandise are moved through Kane County by rail, air, and surface roads connecting to larger national and international markets and transportation systems. Interstates I-90 and I-88, and the BNSF and Union Pacific Railroads directly connect Kane County with the rest of the U.S. and the world. Safe and efficient transportation systems are critical to the local economy.

Kane County's commercial airline needs are served by O'Hare International Airport and Midway Airport. Both airports are approximately 45 minutes travel time from the Fox Valley. Kane County is served by two major general aviation airports: Aurora Municipal Airport in Sugar Grove and the DuPage Airport just east of Geneva and St. Charles. The Aurora Municipal Airport, located on the western edge of Sugar Grove, is a publicly owned general aviation reliever facility for O'Hare and Midway Airports. It is a busy airport with a 2003 daily average of more than 425 take-offs and landings made by aircraft owned by private firms, public agencies, and individuals for business, training, and recreation. The airport employed 285 persons in 2003. The DuPage Airport, situated on Kane County's eastern border near St. Charles, is a general aviation airport that is an excellent resource for nearby industrial parks. In 2003, the DuPage Airport was the 3rd busiest airport in the state of Illinois. The DuPage Airport, as of 2003, averaged 511 daily take-offs and landings. The airport employed over 600 people in 2003. In addition to the Aurora Municipal and DuPage Airports, several small private airstrips dot the rural areas of central and western Kane County.

The Chicago region is a major transportation hub for freight movement and is one of the largest interstate trucking corridors in the country. The Chicago region carries over one-fourth of all U.S. rail traffic. This region is the third largest container port in the world after Singapore and Hong Kong, with 50% of all U.S. containers traveling through Chicago. According to Chicago Metropolis 2020, rail traffic is expected to increase 75% and truck traffic is expected to increase by 87% by the year 2030. These regional transportation facts highlight the need to constantly plan for improving the transportation system that serves as the engine for the county and regional economy.

Policies

1. Implement land use based transportation planning in cooperation with local and regional agencies.
2. Coordinate the 2030 Land Resource Management Plan with the 2030 Kane County Transportation Plan to develop a transportation system based on land use.
3. Provide leadership and information to employers in methods to achieve higher vehicle occupancy averages as mandated by federal regulations.
4. Work with regional transit providers to improve county public transit services, including bus services to railroad stations, regional bus service, as well as development of bus rapid transit and/or light rail service in the Urban Corridor, and commuter rail service.
5. Require that all development proposals comply with right-of-way dedications per adopted county policy.

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6. Plan and develop safe bike and pedestrian paths to serve daily transportation and recreation needs in conjunction with new or existing development, roads, and transit facilities.
7. Improve the county's limited access freeways by developing and adopting intergovernmental agreements with municipalities for protecting and improving safe access.
8. Promote safe, compatible development near airports and encourage noise easements, land use, and other compatibility controls.
9. Support the efforts of the Lincoln Highway Association to promote the section of the Lincoln Highway that runs through Kane County.

Figure 40

Commuter Patterns in Kane County

The 2000 Census shows the average commute times for Kane County residents is 27.3 minutes, which is the lowest commute time in the six county region. The vast majority of workers commute by car (93.6%). Half of all Kane County workers leave the county each day to work, of those commuters, 79.9% drive alone to work. Of those commuters, approximately 6,300 or 12% of out-commuters travel over an hour one-way to/from work each day. The percentage of residents leaving the county is prevalent and on the rise. Residents employed outside the county translates into increased road congestion, lost retail spending and associated tax revenue losses, and reduced worker productivity. There are opportunities to mitigate these patterns by offering commuter based programs as incentives for business attraction and retention. These include:

- business incentives for companies that offer telecommuting;
- alternative work schedules;
- employee incentives for van and car pooling;
- Park and Ride facilities;
- parking management; and
- employee incentives for biking and walking

Source: A Commuter Patterns Study, prepared for the County of Kane, April 2002.

Figure 42

Kane County Transportation Planning Area Studies

The Kane County Division of Transportation is developing a series of detailed transportation improvement plans for each Transportation Planning Area (TPA) within the county. The goal of these plans is to enhance connectivity, reduce delay, be proactive towards development related infrastructure improvements, and distribute trips to appropriate facility types. Several priority sub-areas are identified based on transportation system performance for existing and future land use scenarios. A toolbox of solutions included improvements to the arterials, collectors, transit, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, regional connections, and access management. In conjunction with other planning efforts, the county and municipalities will use the plans to ensure that appropriate transportation infrastructure is provided as development occurs.

Source: Kane County Division of Transportation, 2004.

Figure 41—2030 Congested Road Map

2030 CONGESTED ROAD MAP

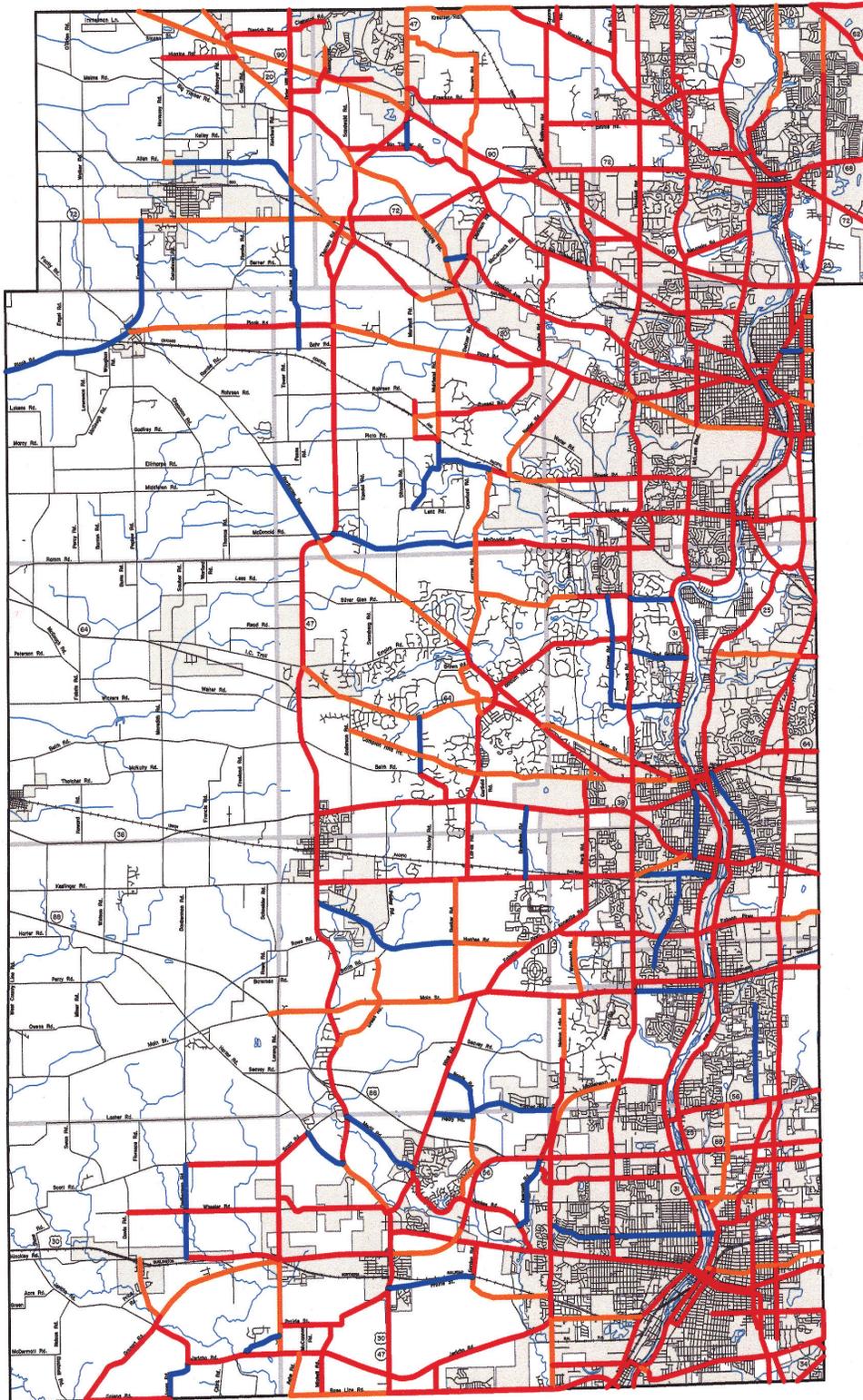


Figure 41

- Moderate Congestion
- Severe Congestion
- Extreme Congestion

TOWNSHIPS

HAMPSHIRE	RUTLAND	DUNDEE
BURLINGTON	PLATO	ELGIN
VIRBIL	CAMPTON	ST. CHARLES
KANCVILLE	BLACKBERRY	GENEVA
BIG ROCK	SUGAR GROVE	BATAVIA
		AURORA



Source: Kane County Division of Transportation

Figure 43

Making the Transportation and Land Use Connection

- Offer a range of travel modes to access housing, jobs, shopping, recreation, and civic uses essential to the daily life of residents.
- Size and arrange communities to limit travel distance to access basic necessities of living.
- Create a well-connected transportation system providing direct and interesting paths for pedestrians and bicyclists and organizing land uses so that they can be properly served by transit.
- Organize the regional network of urban communities around a regional system of transit rather than freeways by taking advantage of the strengths of the existing public transit infrastructure.
- Locate regional institutions and activity centers within major urban centers accessible to the regional transit network.
- Design transportation facilities complementing and supporting community character and identity.

Source: "Making Better Communities by Linking Land Use and Transportation, A New Urban Vision," Association of Bay Area Governments, CA, 1999.

Figure 44

Bus Rapid Transit

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a roadway based rapid transit system offering the fast operating speeds and service reliability of a rail system while providing the flexibility of automobiles. BRT leverages the current investments dedicated to our road infrastructure allowing the system to be implemented at a fraction of the cost of rail. BRT may include the following features:

- **Dedicated Right of Way**—offers a congestion free corridor for BRT, high occupancy vehicles, and emergency vehicles. This maximizes speed and capacity.
- **Attractive stations** providing platform docking, weather protection, and fare collection.
- **High-Frequency Service**—BRT provides high frequency service throughout the day, eliminating the need to consult a trip schedule.
- **Convenient Routes**—Connections to high density nodes while integrating land use and transportation planning.
- **BRT vehicle options**—Low emission compressed natural gas buses, hybrid buses, or fuel cell buses.
- **Opportunities for economic development**—Because BRT is high capacity, it can support transit-oriented development around stations, providing routes from Metra to neighborhoods and office parks.
- **Intelligent Transportation Systems**—BRT can use ITS to track vehicle locations, control traffic signals, update passengers on travel times, and decrease travel times.

Source: Bus Rapid Transit Demonstration Program, Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation; "High Quality Rapid Transit for the 21st Century—A Policy Primer on Bus Rapid Transit," Breakthrough Technologies Institute—Washington D.C.

Figure 45

Features of Rustic Roads

Natural Features:

- Expansive views, such as overlooking stream valleys
- Unusual land forms, ridgelines, ravines, narrow valleys, rock outcrops
- Water
- Woods
- Wildflower glades, flowering native trees, or shrub masses
- Autumn color
- Evergreen groves
- Other areas of native vegetation

Man-made Features:

- Churches, old cemeteries
- Farmsteads
- Architecturally and/or historically significant buildings
- Monuments, memorials, or statues
- Historical markers
- Concrete automobile club guideposts
- Railroad and accessory features
- Landscape
- Roadway pavement, drainage, bridges, tunnels, or other features
- Local activity centers, such as farm supply stores, village stores, inns, mills, factories, or institutions

Source: Kane County Development Department, 2004.

Figure 46

Kane County's First Rustic Road

Thurnau Road, nominated by residents and property owners living along Thurnau Road, is the county's first designated Rustic Road approved by the County Board on February 10, 2004. Thurnau Road meets three criteria for the Rustic Road designation. It has character which is part of the heritage of the area, it is identified with a person who significantly contributed to the development of the county, and it has a unique location and natural



features that warrant scenic significance. Thurnau Road is a tree-lined gravel road with fencerows along many sections. Since 1871, little of the road's features have been changed. Thurnau Road still has the same bends, some of the same stands of trees and the Starks family cemetery. Until the 1930's Thurnau Rd. was part of Route 47 and was the main corridor where the Starks community developed. The Old Starks Tavern is the original grocery store which was moved from its previous



location next to the railroad crossing, where the local farmers used to buy goods and ship their milk from to points east. The Thurnau family, for which the road is named, lived and farmed on the road for many years and were well known to the community. Driving along Thurnau Road one can see views of productive farmland, farm structures, a horse farm with old stands of trees, a railroad crossing, the Old Starks Tavern, and the Starks family cemetery.

Source: Kane County Development Department, 2004.

Figure 47

Illinois Transportation System

Illinois has a competitive edge over many other states due to its central location and superior transportation system. More than 2,000 miles of interstate highway and 34,500 miles of other state highway make trucking of goods fast and efficient. Chicago is home to the largest rail gateway in the nation, connecting eastern and western United States. The state boasts some 1,100 airports, landing areas and heliports, including Chicago's O'Hare International, through which more than 65 million travelers pass annually. Illinois' 1,118 miles of navigable waterways, including the Illinois and Mississippi rivers, make barge traffic an excellent option for shipment of grain to the Gulf of Mexico.

Source: Facts About Illinois Agriculture, Illinois Department of Agriculture, August 2004.