

## Chapter 7

# TRANSPORTATION

### INTRODUCTION

Personal mobility has become a necessity. The daily pattern of nearly everyone's life demands the ability to get from one location to another, preferably in the shortest time possible. Whether it be for employment, recreation, schooling, or shopping, a comprehensive transportation network for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists has become a fundamental necessity. Specialized needs for bulk transport and air transportation are also important. The need for personal mobility is made especially notable by the fact that nearly half of employed residents commute outside of the county to their place of employment. Of equal significance is the role of the tourism industry on the peninsula and the additional demands for efficiency and safety it places upon the peninsula's transportation network.

---

#### **Nearly half of employed residents commute outside of the County to their place of employment.**

---

This network has, and at least for the next few decades will likely continue to have, a direct impact upon the quality of life experienced by those who use it. The network directly impacts the efficiency of emergency services, available personal leisure time, the appropriateness of proposed future land use patterns, and the safety of motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. It also affects the rate of peninsula growth and development, and much more. The **Leelanau General Plan** recognizes the critical role transportation plays, and recognizes that improvements to the network must be strategically planned in coordination with the achievement of other key components of peninsula life and its future. (See Working Paper #8 for more background information.)

### ISSUES

### Road Network

The Leelanau Peninsula faces a number of crucial challenges in the provision of an efficient and safe transportation network. See Map 7-1. The most fundamental challenge is maintaining the extensive road network that is already in place and where necessary, expanding the network to improve traffic flow, safety and efficiency. This challenge is greatly affected by the peninsula's abundant natural resources, including its hillsides and lakes. Rolling topography and large inland lakes provide unmatched scenery and, at the same time, have resulted in a somewhat circuitous roadway network. As population increases, the result is experienced in an increase in travel times, automobile emissions, automobile and truck operation costs, and congestion in some places.

The existing roadway network is further challenged by the fact that it operates within a relatively limited hierarchy of road types. While the network includes corridors classified as regional arteries such as M-22, M-72, and M-204, the alignment and construction of these arter-



*New road construction in Leland Township*

---

**The most fundamental challenge is maintaining the extensive road network that is already in place and where necessary, expanding the network to improve traffic flow, safety and efficiency.**

---

ies limit their ability to function efficiently as regional arteries. The challenging route location (with many 90 degree turning patterns) and many limited sight distances greatly reduces their potential to move traffic safely and efficiently at normal highway speeds. As such, they provide less support for the system than roads built to comparable standards elsewhere. On the other hand, they force slower speeds and provide opportunities for enjoying the unsurpassed beauty of the peninsula. The winding nature of the majority of the peninsula's county roads, resulting in limited sight distances, presents numerous safety hazards. Additional road use by residents and visitors will likely result in more traffic accidents. See Map 7-2.

The often limited lane widths and, at places, absence of adequate shoulders increase the level of safety hazards still further. These conditions present equally unsafe conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and snowmobilers along the roadways. This is of particular significance as the Leelanau Peninsula attracts some of the most extensive biking opportunities and biking tours in Michigan.

### **Level of Service**

Adding to the complexity of the transportation challenges is the fact that peninsula transportation is automobile dominant. Only limited opportunities currently exist for alternative modes of transportation. Alternative modes might otherwise reduce the demand upon the peninsula's roadway network, such as the Bay Area Transit Authority (BATA) which operates a bus service in the county, which includes regularly scheduled, fixed-route service, a summer route program, specialty service for the Commission on Aging, and a "dial-a-ride" door-to-door service. While bike/pedestrian lanes are being developed in some areas of the County, road segments specifically designed to accom-

modate pedestrian and bicycle traffic are limited. Bike lanes have been added to M-22 between Leland and Northport. Airplane facilities are limited and rail service is no longer available. See Map 7-3.

The resultant overall level of service along roadways has declined over the years as the peninsula has experienced growth and development. Both M-22 and M-72 received a level of service designation "E" by the Department of Transportation in 1998, which indicates a roadway operating "at capacity." The poor road base of sections of these roads makes maintenance costs particularly high. While many of the peninsula's roadways are experiencing very adequate levels of service, those roads segments which have traditionally witnessed the lowest traffic counts are generally showing the greatest rise in traffic counts over the past ten years. The ability of the County Road Commission to maintain or improve the level of service along the network, either through general maintenance, incremental improvements, or major construction projects, is becoming increasingly difficult as available revenues are not keeping up with needs. The most needed projects in the peninsula (rebuilding some existing roads and solving a few congestion problems) are those which require massive amounts of expenditures. One such project, the extension of County Road 641, has been completed.

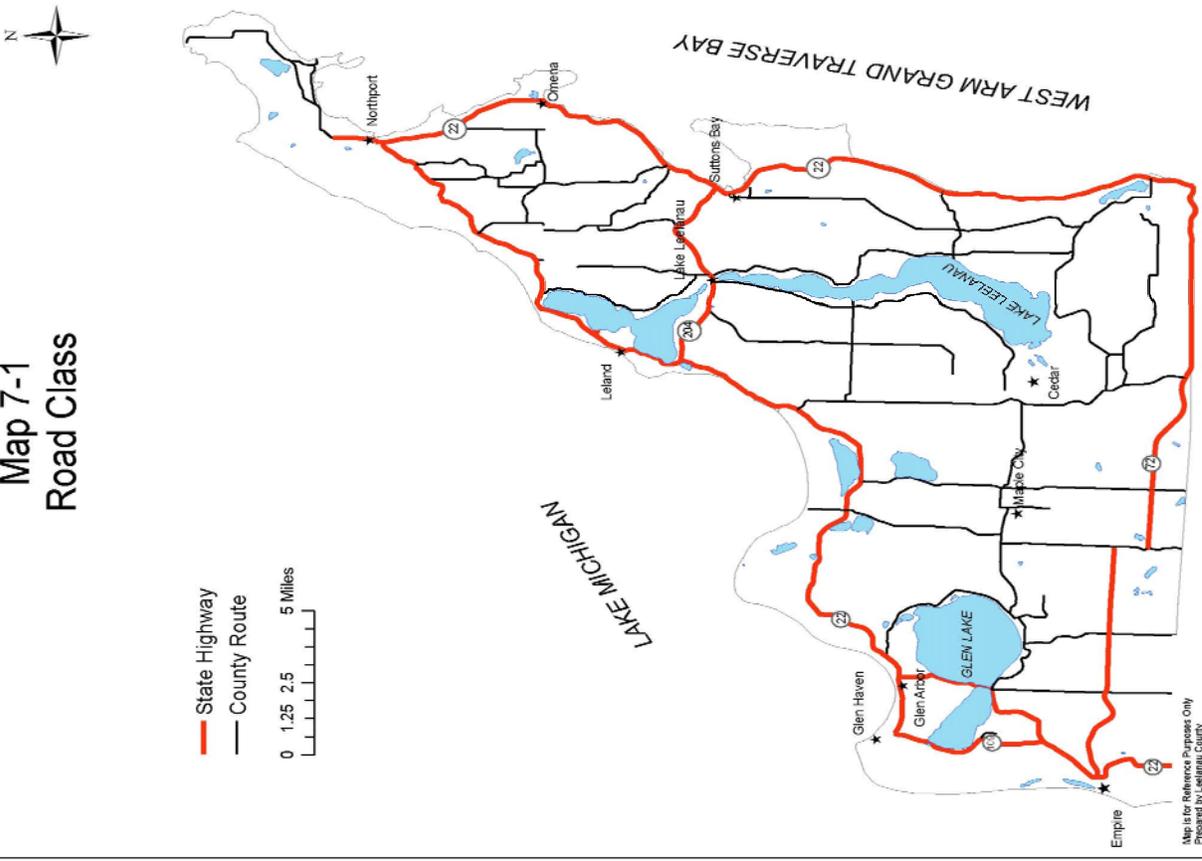
---

**Both M-22 and M-72 received a level of service designation "E" by the Department of Transportation in 1998, which indicates a roadway operating "at capacity."**

---

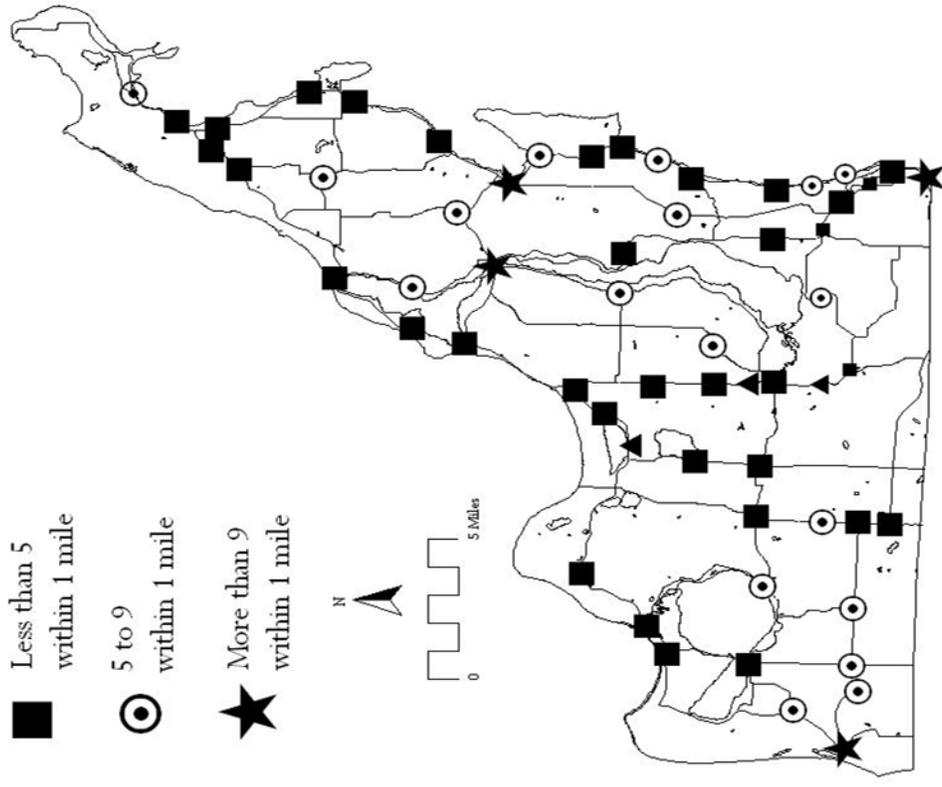
It can be expected that transportation conditions will worsen on the peninsula if current trends and conditions continue. Growth and development will further increase the number of vehicles on the County's roads. Between 1990 and 2000, there was an increase of over 6,100 vehicle registrations in the county. This is far in excess of the population growth. Vehicle miles traveled increased by 11% between 1994 and 2002. These increasing demands on the roadway network associated

**Map 7-1  
Road Class**



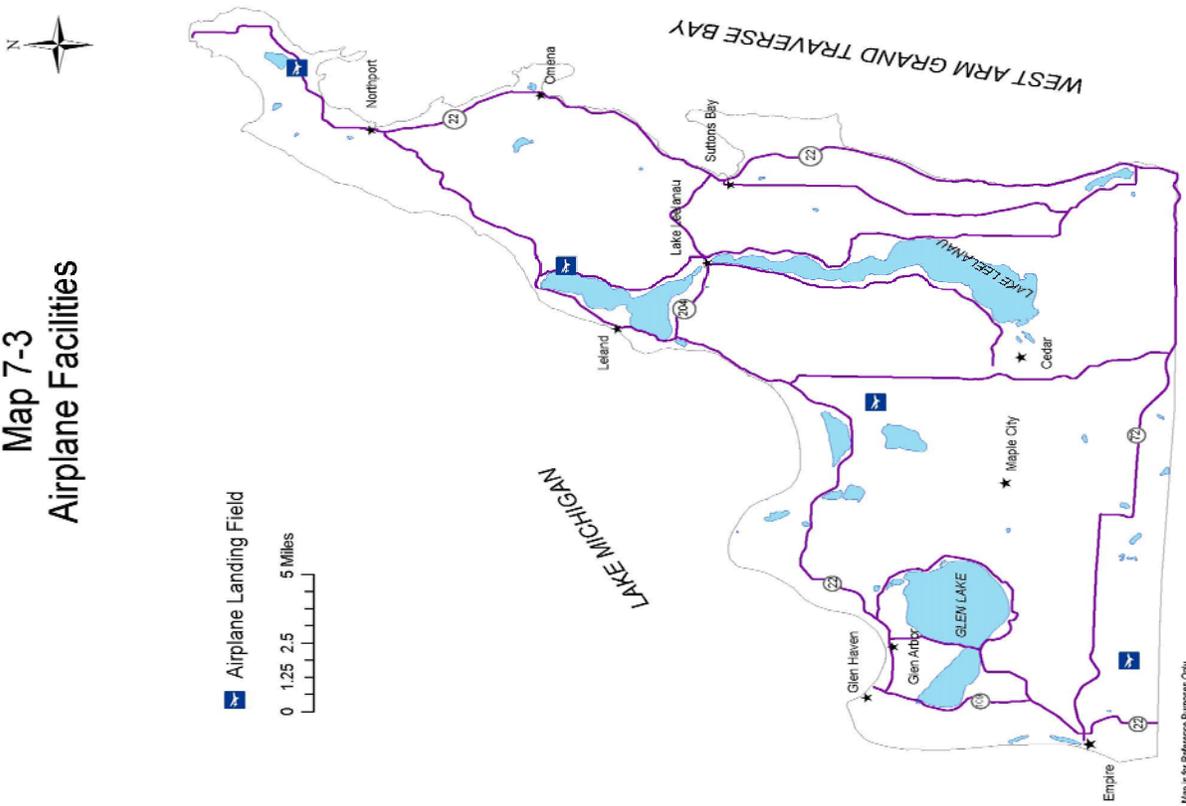
Map is for Reference Purposes Only  
 Prepared by the Leelanau County  
 Planning & Community Development March 2012

**Map 7-2  
Traffic Accidents**



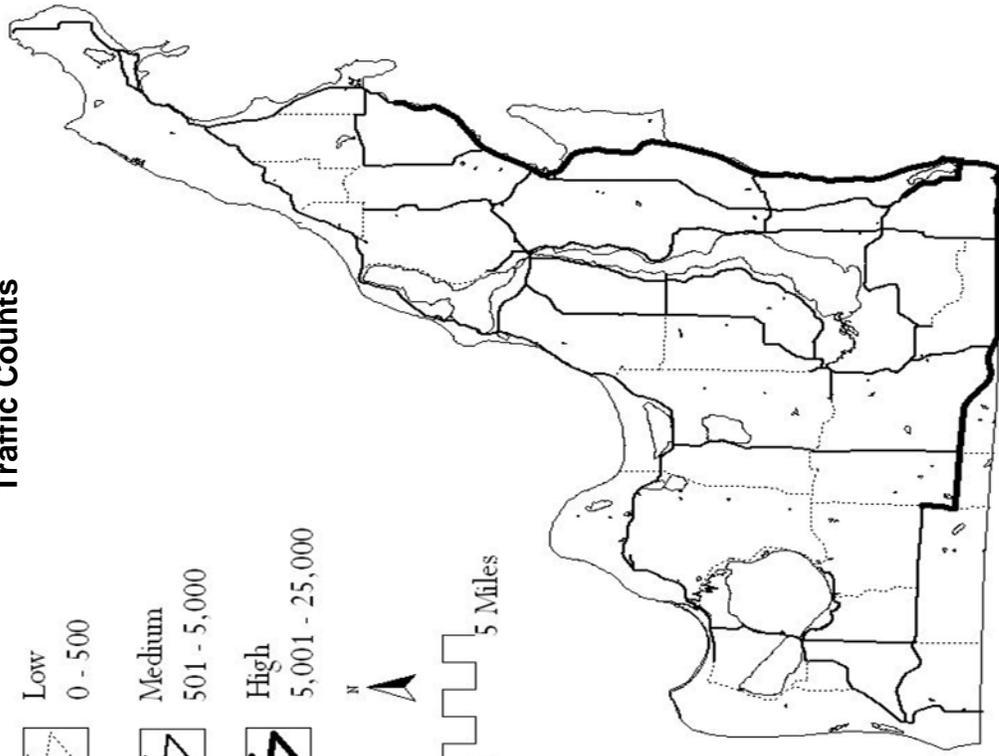
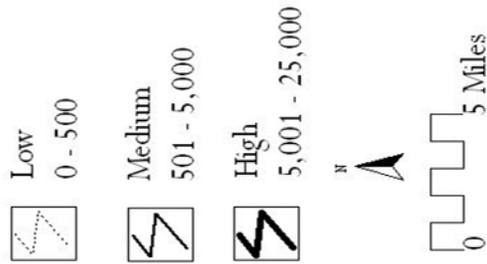
MAP FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY  
 Data Provided by the Road Commission in 1990  
 Prepared by the Leelanau County Planning Department, Fall 1999

**Map 7-3  
Airplane Facilities**



Map is for Reference Purpose Only  
 Prepared by the Leelanau County  
 Planning & Community Development, March 2012

**Map 7-4  
Traffic Counts**



**MAP FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY**  
 Data Provided by the Leelanau County Road Commission  
 Prepared by the Leelanau County Planning Department, Fall 1999

with growth and development will further challenge the network's level of service. Significant decreases in service may be unavoidable in some places. The resulting lower levels of service will be reflected in increased congestion, extended travel times, higher maintenance costs, higher rates of vehicular and non-vehicular accidents, and longer emergency response times. Safety hazards along the roadways will not be a result of increased traffic levels alone, but will also be a result of the rise in the number of driveways, street intersections, and other new access points along major corridors resulting in hazardous turning patterns, stop and go traffic, and congestion. Land acquisition costs for widening road right-of-ways to accommodate road improvements will be more costly due to the high cost of land on the peninsula as market trends boost property values. Major developments planned for the Suttons Bay and Northport areas will have an impact on local roads and M-22.

---

**Between 1990 and 2000, there was an increase of over 6,100 vehicle registrations in the county.**

---

While problems associated with population growth and development are the impetus behind many of the County's road improvements, some improvement projects may sometimes fuel the development that causes these problems. Roads designed for a high volume of traffic may be viewed at times as an incentive to developers. Better roads are more attractive for development than those that are gravel or unimproved. This improvement of rural roads, and the development that typically follows, can have an impact on the Peninsula's rural character.

The road network on the peninsula serves to get people from one place to another without the frequent delays common in urban areas. However, without improvement, some problems will worsen in the next decade.

### **A FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE POLICY**

The transportation issues facing the peninsula

today and projected for the future if current trends continue, dictate a far more proactive stance to assure transportation needs are met. It is the intent of the **Leelanau General Plan** to provide the guidance for a proactive approach to comprehensive transportation planning throughout the peninsula. This proactive approach is founded upon a number of key initiatives.

The 1995 **General Plan** made the following recommendation:

At the heart of the peninsula's transportation planning and improvement efforts should be creation of a long term road development and multi-modal transportation plan. It should address the review, evaluation, and development of alternative funding mechanisms upon which capital and service improvements can be implemented. Without a long-term plan with clear improvement priorities, existing financial resources cannot be wisely utilized. Likewise, the identification of transportation needs and necessary capital improvements is of little value if feasible and practical funding mechanisms are not in place, or able to be implemented.

The Road Commission has identified a list of needed improvement projects for primary roads and ranked these projects in order of priority. This list is updated every year or two and compared to available federal highway funding.

Since 50 percent of the funding for many road improvements comes from local municipalities, the Road Commission is often reluctant to initiate road projects. Instead, the Road Commission responds to requests from the townships. The requests are usually for immediate improvements. Each year individual townships prioritize projects depending on the funds that they have available. The result is that local, short term priority needs are met, but not the longer term, broader transportation needs.

An important element of taking a broader, longer term view must be the provision of public information and education on the critical transportation issues facing the peninsula including: 1) costs of maintenance of the network; 2) relative costs of major improvements; 3) existing revenue generators and the revenues generated from each source; and 4) the disparity between transportation revenues and costs. Consideration should be given to development of new funding mechanisms such as tapping tourism dollars, a county sales tax, supporting changes in Act 51 funds, and federal assistance with transportation improvements where federal facilities are served.

Implementing a hierarchically based roadway network is critical to success. Each road segment must have a specific function within the entire network, whether it be to provide higher speed access between villages and other long distance destinations, access to neighborhood and shopping areas, or access to individual residences and lots. These roads must be coordinated according to their function and tie-in to one another to provide safe and efficient

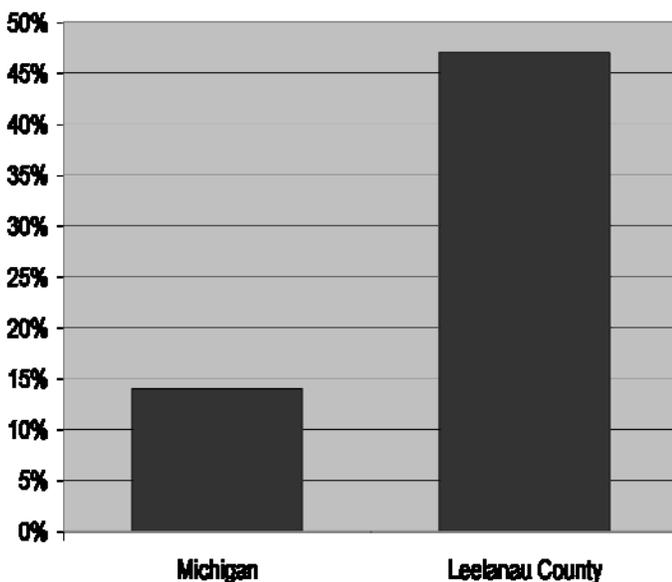
movement of traffic. Identification of a functional classification system must then be followed by engineering studies and capital improvement projects, thereby assuring that the design and construction of each road segment is capable of functioning as intended. Associated with the development of a coordinated peninsula-wide road network should be the development of peninsula-wide standards for all new road construction. These standards should address provisions for adequate shoulders, safety zones for bussing school children, and related safety elements.

Special consideration in the development of a peninsula-wide network and alternative funding programs should be the identification of the most appropriate locations for all-season roads, based upon the future land use map and policies of this **General Plan**. All-season roads should be designated as major arteries and not for use as local thoroughfares. This effort should be extended to consider necessary interfaces with a safe and efficient belt-line(s) around the Traverse City area.

Directly tied to the identification of a functional classification network and the improvements which must be made to implement the network is the need to establish a land acquisition program. This program would provide for the identification, designation, and appropriate funding for land acquisition. Identification of necessary land acquisitions through official evaluations, plans, and maps will enable the county to assure proposed acquisitions are undeveloped prior to acquisition. This is especially important where funds are not immediately available for right-of-way acquisition, and helps assure lower future acquisition costs. Modification of local regulations would help accomplish this goal where feasible.

It is very desirable that all road improvement projects should recognize the scenic character of the peninsula's roadway corridors and attempt to preserve the natural character elements. Classification of some roads as "scenic" or as "natural beauty roads" should be pursued based upon inventory data and long range plans.

**Figure 7-1**  
**Percent Increase in Vehicle Registration for Michigan and Leelanau County, 1990—2000**  
*Includes passenger and commercial vehicles*



This **General Plan** proposes far more substantive efforts directed at establishing a stronger multi-modal transportation network on the peninsula than has previously been invested. This effort will minimize demands upon the peninsula's roadway network and improve safety. Transportation planning should recognize multi-modal trends and include provisions for the respective safety of motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Programs to be established could include comprehensive peninsula-wide bicycle systems and improved pedestrian systems in villages and other small settlements. These systems should be planned and designed to provide safe and functional linkages between existing villages and future settlement areas, shopping areas, recreational facilities and employment centers. New residential, commercial, and industrial land uses should be designed to provide continuity to existing and future pedestrian/bicycle systems. The systems would accommodate travel by the physically handicapped and, to the extent road right-of ways are used, should be afforded adequate shoulder and pavement construction.

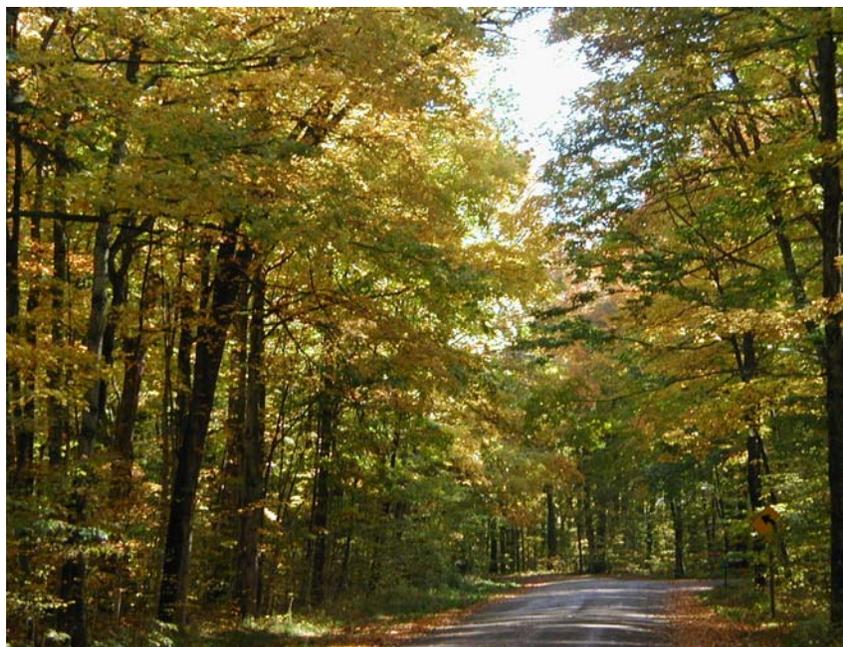
These efforts should result from a non-motorized element of the transportation plan which provides the necessary planning, coordination, and direction in establishing and

maintaining this peninsula-wide system. The plan should include, at a minimum, a needs assessment, a review of alternative system alignments and associated advantages and disadvantages, identification of the preferred system layout, and the necessary capital improvements, by year, cost, and anticipated funding source, to implement and maintain the system.

Minimizing demand upon the peninsula's vehicular network should also maximize the utility of the Bay Area Transit Authority (BATA). BATA's current services and operations should be reviewed and evaluated to identify priority service areas and needs, the extent to which service needs are being met, and opportunities for improved and expanded service areas and daily schedules. Increased operations efficiency and new and alternative funding mechanisms should also be explored.

Preparation of the non-motorized transportation plan, and the future operations of BATA and other potential transit systems should consider linkages between neighborhoods providing affordable housing opportunities and centers providing employment to neighborhood residents.

Multi-modal transportation planning should be



Early fall along a county road.

expanded to include new opportunities for the transporting of goods. These expanded opportunities should be implemented only after careful evaluation of applicable peninsula travel patterns including trip generation, origin-destination, and destination-location studies. Investigations should be encouraged by the private sector into ferry services for commuters and tourists. Employee transit programs should also be examined. Efforts should be directed to assure the long term continuation of commercial air services in close proximity to the peninsula and protection of glide paths to and from existing airports.

The development of consistent peninsula-wide private road regulations should not go unattended. Assuring adequate construction, operation, and maintenance of these roads is critical in protecting the safety and welfare of peninsula residents and visitors and minimizing the road maintenance burden of existing residents. Access for emergency vehicles should

be encouraged for all private roads.

The **Leelanau General Plan** recognizes that all of the transportation planning efforts within the peninsula must occur under an umbrella of strong interjurisdictional coordination. This coordinated peninsula-wide planning effort among local municipalities, the County Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners, the MDOT, the Road Commission, and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chipewya Indians must address the need for a peninsula-wide functional circulation network that meets the needs of all users. The effort must include regular communication and joint planning with the Grand Traverse Band and MDOT to assure adequate transportation and safety in association with casino activities and other conditions along M-22. Coordination of all capital improvements, and the scheduling thereof, should be pursued to better assure the acquisition of needed rights-of-way and minimize network disruptions.

## TRANSPORTATION OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STATEMENTS

The following objectives and action statements are intended to set up a blueprint for the **General Plan's** recommendations for the peninsula's transportation system. All statements are intended as proposals. How ever strongly desired, they are not meant as directives.

**VISION:** As regards the transportation needs of the county, this General Plan envisions multi-modal transportation networks that include networks of roads and trails that accommodate both motorized and non-motorized transportation modes. As envisioned these transportation networks will facilitate the efficient and effective movement of people and goods along key corridors, protect the scenic quality of the roads, provide a safe environment for non-motorized vehicle users and pedestrians and support the key tourist and agricultural sectors of the county's economy.

**Goal:** Development of a long term road and multimodal transportation plan.

**Objective:**



*Parking problems in Leland have led to an assortment of parking regulations*

Work on long-term planning for primary road improvements by the County Road Commission utilizing the TEA-21 planning process.

**Action Statement:**

Obtain significant input from each township to develop long-range, prioritized improvements to the local road system. Identify any new sources of funding for implementation.

**Action Statement:**

Work on meeting non-motorized needs, especially for an integrated network of bicycle lanes and of a pedestrian friendly sidewalk system in villages and other pedestrian areas. Identify appropriate sources of funding to expand the existing network of independent non-motorized trails.

**Goal:** Safe and adequate road network to accommodate motorized and non-motorized traffic.

**Objective:**

Promote construction of shoulders on all new, reconstructed or resurfaced roads on the Leelanau Peninsula by Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Leelanau County Road Commission (LCRC).

**Action Statement:**

MDOT and LCRC should commit to construction specifications including road shoulders of adequate width to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

**Objective:**

Increase safety of both motorized and non-motorized transportation modes by expanding road shoulders.

**Action Statement:**

MDOT and LCRC should utilize road shoulders to enhance safety for both motorized and non-motorized traffic.

**Goal:** Identification and funding of the "Class A" (all-season) road network.

**Objective:**

The Leelanau County Road Commission, (LCRC) with the assistance of the County

Board of Commissioners and all other municipal governments, should seek alternative funding sources to create a network of "Class A" (all-season) roads on the Leelanau Peninsula.

**Action Statement:**

The LCRC, MDOT, and local governments should study traffic patterns to determine the most appropriate location for the all-season road network. Consider the "Class A" as a peninsula-wide road network, not a local road network.

**Objective:**

Work with the Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA) to be sure that public transportation needs are evaluated and accommodated efficiently and economically.

**Action Statement:**

The Leelanau County Government and Road Commission should join with citizens and local governments in supporting the continued fiscally sound operations of the Bay Area Transportation Authority as the primary mechanism for meeting the needs of mass-transit dependent individuals on the peninsula.

**Goal:** Improve equity of county road network funding, considering such factors as tourism and gas and weight taxes.

**Objective:**

Leelanau County governments should work together to supplement County Road Commission funding.

**Action Statement:**

Coordinate road improvement projects with neighboring counties.

**Action Statement:**

Support grant applications submitted by the Road Commission for road improvement projects.

**Goal:** Protect scenic quality of roads.

**Objective:**

Special effort should be made to protect the scenic character of roads, when necessary

road improvements are made.

**Action Statement:**

Support the efforts on the part of local governments and citizen groups to inventory the scenic character of state and county roads, initiate scenic highway and/or natural beauty roads designation on key non-arterial roads or road segments and once designated as a scenic highway and/or natural beauty road, future road improvements should respect and/or enhance the scenic character of the road and immediate environs to the extent possible without compromising safety.

**Action Statement:**

Support the efforts on the part of local governments and citizen groups to enhance the scenic character of the road by the planting and maintain of trees to the extent possible without compromising safety.

**Goal:** Maintain information on private

roads and the local ordinances and/or county requirements that affect them.

**Objective:**

Consistent private roads regulations between local units of government.

**Action Statement:**

Develop model zoning ordinances to encourage similar regulations where private roads cross township lines.



Downtown Suttons Bay