

Chapter Four

Transportation

Transportation is necessary for the effective movement of people and goods within and with connections outside of the Village. Transportation is also critical to development and land use. This chapter provides an inventory of the existing transportation facilities and services within the Village.

Transportation is a crucial component of livability and provides a basis for the formulation of policy to coordinate transportation facilities with a sustainable pattern of development. The existing network needs to be coordinated to maximize efficiency for the overall system. The connection between home and work is an important part of any transportation system. A range of transportation alternatives should be supported, including walkability wherever possible.

The Village of Marathon City is served by several State and County trunk highways, which serve as the main thoroughfares of the transportation system in Marathon County. The Village is located adjacent to two of Central Wisconsin's state highways. STH 29 located along the northern edge of the Village, serves as the major east/west transportation corridor through the region. STH 107 runs through the center of the Village, serves as a north/south corridor through the area. Both provide direct access into the Village and STH 29 serves as an entry gateway.

A network of local and county roads provides good access to and through the Village. Village roads are generally in good condition. The originally platted section of the Village has a distinct grid pattern, while newer areas of development often have curved roads and cul-de-sacs.

While the Village has good access from regional roadways, travel is somewhat constrained by river crossing limitations and floodplain and environmental constraints which restrict north-south movement through the Village. Only one bridge connects the Village over the Big Rib River.

Previous Plans and Studies

Regional Comprehensive Plan, 2025

The 2025 Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), written by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, addresses issues of livability in the areas of housing, transportation, economic development, and land use. The RCP identifies the following issues facing transportation within the Region:

- A need for bicycle and pedestrian improvements
- Dispersed population in rural areas
- Weight limits on roads
- Rail and roadway conflicts
- Funding transportation maintenance and improvements
- An aging population's ability to continue depending on driving
- Transporting students as school enrollment declines and school facilities consolidate

Marathon Safe Routes to School, 2025

The Marathon Safe Routes To School (SRTS) Plan coordinates the opportunity to make walking and bicycling to school safer for children in grades K-8, and to increase the number of children who choose to walk and bike. On a broader level, SRTS programs can enhance children's health and wellbeing, ease traffic congestion near schools, and improve community members' overall quality of life.

Locally Developed, Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan, 2024

Marathon County developed this five-year plan that was facilitated by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. The plan analyzes service gaps and needs in public transit and human services transportation and proposes strategies to address the gaps and needs.

Connections 2050

Connections 2050 is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) long-range transportation plan for the state. Adopted recently, the plan addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit. WisDOT is currently updating several of the modal plans.

Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

This 2018 plan is a region-wide effort to improve bicycling and walking across the communities. The plan assesses existing conditions related to bicycling and walking, identifying other potential trail and route user groups, identifying routes and describing policies and programs to assist local governments in improving bicycling and walking to promote connectivity between communities and destinations throughout north central Wisconsin.

State Trails Network Plan

This 2001 document [revised in 2003] clarifies the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) role and strategy in the provision of all types of trails. The plan identifies a series of potential trail corridors

that would link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. This statewide network of interconnected trails would be owned and maintained by municipalities, private entities, and partnerships of the two. Preserving transportation corridors, such as old rail lines, is specifically discussed as a very important strategy in the creation of recreational and alternative transportation corridors.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act)

This current federal transportation program authorizes up to \$108 billion to support federal public transportation programs, including \$91 billion in guaranteed funding. It also reauthorizes surface transportation programs for FY 2022-2026 and provides advance appropriations for certain programs. Major goals include improving safety, modernizing aging transit infrastructure and fleets, investing in cleaner transportation, and improving equity in communities with limited transportation access. These funds will be distributed via formulas and grants to the states. Local units will be able to access the funds through various grant programs.

Road Network

Major roadways within the Village of Marathon City include State Highways 29 and 107, and County Highways B and NN. The road network within the Village of Marathon City is a network of local roads, state highways, and county highways. The jurisdictional and functional breakdown of the Village of Marathon City road network is shown in **Table 16**.

Functional Classification

A functionally classified road system is one in which streets and highways are grouped into classes according to the character of the services they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility to land access functions. At the upper limit of the system (principal arterials, for example), are those facilities that emphasize traffic mobility (long, uninterrupted travel), whereas at the lower limits are those local roads and streets that emphasize access.

The functional classifications are generally defined as:

- **Principal Arterials** serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics of an interstate or interregional nature. These routes generally serve all urban areas with populations greater than 5,000 or connect major centers of activity. They carry the highest traffic volumes and are designed to accommodate longer trips.
- **Minor Arterials**, like principal arterials, minor arterials also serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators, providing intra-community continuity and service for trips of moderate length, with more emphasis on land access than principal arterials.
- **Collectors** provide both land access service and traffic circulation, within residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and industrial areas. The collector system distributes trips from the arterials through the area to the local streets. The collectors also collect traffic from the local streets and channel it into the arterial system.

- **Local streets** comprise all facilities not on one of the higher systems. They serve primarily to provide direct access to abutting land and access to higher order systems. Local streets offer the lowest level of mobility and high volume through-traffic movement on these streets is usually discouraged.

Table 16: Road Mileage by Jurisdictional and Functional Class				
Jurisdiction	Functional Classification			Totals
	Arterial	Collector	Local	
State*	1.72	2.44	0.00	4.16
County	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.67
Local	0.00	1.29	17.72	19.01
Totals	1.72	4.40	17.72	23.84

Source: WisDOT & NCMRPC

*: WisDOT has jurisdiction over interstate and federal highways

Jurisdiction

Roads are commonly classified in one of two ways: by ownership or by purpose. Jurisdictional responsibility refers to ownership of a particular road, while functional classification, as described above, identifies the road by the level of service it provides.

Jurisdiction refers to governmental ownership, not necessarily responsibility. For example, some State-owned roads are maintained by local jurisdictions. Additionally, the designation of a public road as a “Federal-aid highway” does not alter its ownership or jurisdiction as a State or local road, only that its service value and importance have made that road eligible for Federal-aid construction and rehabilitation funds.

As previously noted, these functional classifications are generally equated with the jurisdictional divisions. In the more developed larger urban communities, this relationship may not be as rigid, whereas the local community constructs and maintains all classes of the roadway system. However, in the typical rural transportation system the jurisdictional and the functional classifications maintain a closer relationship. The greatest emphasis of traffic in rural areas is generally on non-local efficient movement, whereas local access is secondary due to relatively low population densities.

Major Road Facilities

Roadway facilities, including jurisdictions (i.e. U.S., State, and County highways) are shown on the Transportation Map. The following is a brief description of the major road facilities located in the Village.

State Highway 29

This road runs east-west toward the northern village limits. STH 29 is a four-lane divided principal arterial and has a grade separated interchange with STH 107, providing convenient access to both the east and west.

State Highway 107/Main Street

This is a north-south major collector and the main thoroughfare through Marathon City. STH 107 provides the only river crossing between Marathon City and USH 51.

County Highway NN/4th Street

This is a major collector providing a connection to USH 51 to the east. The County road designation ends at Main Street in the Village.

County Highway B

This road is a major collector that runs southeast diagonally between Marathon City and Mosinee.

Local Roads

The Village of Marathon City local road network consists of approximately 24 miles of local roads, most of which are under Village jurisdiction. As part of the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR), WisDOT requires all local units of government to submit road condition rating data every 2 years. The Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) program and WISLR are tools that local governments can use to manage pavements for improved decision making in budgeting and maintenance. Municipalities can use this information to develop better road budgets and monitor roads in need of repair.

Road Maintenance

The Village of Marathon City uses the Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) system, which was designed by the Transportation Information Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The PASER system is the rating system used by most Wisconsin communities. The PASER system rates road surfaces on a scale of 1 to 10. This scale is broken down as follows:

- “1” and “2” = very poor condition
- “3” = poor condition
- “4” and “5” = fair condition
- “6” and “7” = good condition
- “8” = very good condition
- “9” and “10” = excellent condition

Table 17 shows a summary of pavement conditions in the Village of Marathon City. Roads exhibiting a surface condition rating at or below “fair” must be examined to determine what type of reconstruction or strengthening is necessary. The roads that display a surface rating of “good” or better will only require minimal preventative maintenance to promote safe travel conditions. Based on the latest PASER ratings, about 29 percent of the local roads in the Village of Marathon City need improvement. Over 92 percent of roadways within the Village have asphalt or sealcoat surfaces, while the remaining 8 percent of roadways in the Village are gravel or unimproved roads.

Table 17: Summary of Pavement Conditions, 2025		
	Miles	Percent of Total Mileage
Very Poor	1.30	6.8%
Poor	1.64	8.6%
Fair	2.54	13.4%
Good	3.73	19.6%
Very Good	2.91	15.4%
Excellent	6.87	36.2%
Total	18.99	100.0%

Source: WisDOT 2025

Trucking

Within the Village of Marathon City, State Highway 29 is designated as a Long Truck Route, while State Highway 107 is designated as a 65' Restricted Truck Route by WisDOT. Local truck routes often branch out from these major corridors to link local industry with the main truck routes as well as for the distribution of commodities within the local area. Local issues such as safety, weight restrictions, and noise impacts play significant roles in the designation of local truck routes.

Rail

There is no rail access to the Village. Shipments needing rail service would have to be trucked to nearby cities with rail access such as Marshfield or Wausau.

Airport

Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) is a joint venture of Marathon and Portage Counties and is governed by the Central Wisconsin Joint Airport Board. It is the only airport within Marathon County or neighboring counties that provides scheduled air passenger services. The Central Wisconsin Airport is located east of Mosinee and is easily accessible via I-39. In 2011, the airport underwent a terminal renovation and expansion project which increased operational space, expanded the security checkpoint, increased parking, and relocated rental cars to a separate facility. The airport is currently served by three airlines, Delta, American and United Airlines.

Bus/Transit

There is no public transit service available in the Village. The nearest intercity bus access is available at the MetroRide transit center in downtown Wausau. Service is provided by Jefferson Line and Lamers Bus Lines to Minneapolis, Green Bay, Madison, and Milwaukee.

North Central Health Care provides paratransit services for persons over 60 or persons with disabilities who live within Marathon County. The service includes semi-fixed routes that are scheduled, and demand service available with 48-hour notice. Information and services are available by calling 715-841-5101.

Bicycling and Walking

Sidewalks within the Village are mainly located in the Village's downtown area. Sidewalks within the Village are shown in the **Transportation Map**. The 2018 North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan identifies County Highways B and NN as recommended bike routes within the Village.

Specialty

The Aging and Disability Resource Center serves Marathon County residents with a variety of resources including those related to transportation. More details about transportation services for ambulatory and non-ambulatory residents can be found on their website. Some examples include Abby Vans, which provides weekend transportation services county-wide and Wheels to Work which assists Marathon County families/individuals to overcome transportation obstacles between home and work.

Transportation Issues

- **Intersection Safety** – The Highway 29 interchange and the intersections along Main St, north of the river, are in need of better lighting, improved traffic control, and additional pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- **Sidewalk Policy** – There is some interest in developing a formal sidewalk policy, especially for new residential development.
- **Elderly Transportation** – Currently, elderly transportation is lacking in the Village. There is interest in exploring local alternatives to provide transportation to serve the elderly population.
- **Highway 29 and Traffic Volume** – As WisDOT continues to close access points to Highway 29, local transportation patterns will shift and drive more vehicles to the interchange. Closure of at grade access points to Highway 29 have also resulted in higher traffic volumes through the Village.
- **Frontage Road** – WisDOT had previously planned for a frontage road east of Highway 107 and north of Highway 29. The construction of such a road would increase access to the Village and promote new development.
- **Pavement Quality** – Roads in some areas of the Village suffer from low-quality pavement, as indicated by the 2025 PASER ratings.
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails** – Increased demand for safe paths for bicyclists and pedestrians requires the development of new off-road trails to promote the movement of people through the Village and physical fitness.

Transportation Programs

Below is a listing of programs that may be of assistance to the Village with regard to the development of the local transportation system. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is the primary provider of programs to assist local transportation systems. A wide variety of programs are available to serve the gamut of jurisdictions from county down to the smallest town. The programs most likely to be utilized by communities such as Marathon City include:

- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
- Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP)
- General Transportation Aids
- Surface Transportation Program – Local (STP-L)
- Surface Transportation Program – Rural (STP-R)
- Surface Transportation Program – Urban (STP-U)
- Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
- Connecting Highway Aids
- Disaster Damage Aids
- Transportation Economic Assistance Program (TEA)
- Local Bridge Improvement Assistance
- Local Small Structure Improvement Program (LSSIP)
- Signals and ITS Standalone Program (SISP)

More information on these programs can be obtained by contacting the WisDOT region office in Rhinelander or at <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/default.aspx>.

Goals, Objectives & Policies

Transportation Goal: *The Village of Marathon City maintains local transportation infrastructure to the highest standards to allow safe and efficient movement of people, goods and services.*

1. Provide a multi-modal transportation system to meet the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.
 - a. Maintain existing sidewalks.
 - b. Develop a formal sidewalk policy.
 - c. Promote the development of multi-use trails and trail linkages.

2. Maintain a safe and efficient Village road network.
 - a. Utilize the Capital Improvement Program to plan and budget for maintenance and new construction.
 - b. Utilize WISLR to inventory and rate local roads.
 - c. Increase local enforcement of speed limits, especially along 4th/Main St.
 - d. Explore alternative traffic calming measures for feasibility within the Village.
 - e. Implement road and infrastructure safety improvements recommended in the 2025 Marathon Safe Routes to School Plan.
 - f. Pursue grant funding for the maintenance, improvement, and expansion of the Village's transportation network.