Transportation Policy Analysis

For Todd, Morrison, Cass, Crow Wing, and Wadena Counties

Prepared by
Michael Dorfman
University of Minnesota
Regional Sustainable Development Partnership

Region Five Photos at http://s1184.photobucket.com/home/mnregionfive

Prepared for the
Central Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Project

September 18, 2011
Introduction

The following document analyzes Todd, Morrison, Cass, Crow Wing, and Wadena County policies relating to transportation. This document is one piece of a larger analysis that addresses the five counties’ policies regarding topics of land use, transportation, housing, economic development, parks, trails, open space, and recreation, water and natural resources, intergovernmental coordination, and healthcare. To ensure clarity, each topic is analyzed separately in its own document. Research and analysis was undertaken to provide the Region Five Development Consortium with a clearer understanding of how current policies relate and differ from each other across counties. The following analysis will be helpful for workgroups to develop regional policies and recommendations, which will be adopted by the full consortium to guide the future growth and development of Region Five in a sustainable manner.

Methodology

The following policies were taken from Todd, Morrison, Cass, Crow Wing, and Wadena County’s most recent Comprehensive Plans. This document addresses the similarities, differences, and potential conflicts between county policies regarding transportation. Due to the uniqueness of each plan, not all counties addressed similar issues around the topic at hand. For this reason, policies were only included if at least two of the five counties addressed the issue. To see what county policies were included or dismissed in this analysis please refer to Appendix D (separate document). Additionally, each county’s policies are written at a different level of specificity making it difficult to compare/contrast a detailed policy with a vague policy. For the purpose of this analysis, policies were considered similar to each other even when they differ on the level of detail.

For this analysis, sub-topics were created to guide the reader throughout the document. For example, this document contains sub-topics of safety and efficiency, access management, transportation funding, and so forth. Under each sub-topic, similarities, differences, and conflicts between county policies on an issue were analyzed and grouped into categories. Categories are listed as follows: Very Similar, Similar, Somewhat Similar, Unique/Potentially Conflicting, and Unique. Policies in the Very Similar category are ones that relate to each other at a clear level of specificity; policies under the Similar category are ones that relate in vision but not in detail; policies under the Somewhat Similar category relate to each other more similarly than uniquely; policies under Unique/Potentially Conflicting category are in potential disagreement with other policies pertaining to the same issue; and policies that are considered unique have some relationship to the issue at hand but are not similar to each other. Due to policies relating to more than one sub-topic, it is possible that the same policy will be included across sub-topics and categories. It is also possible that not all categories were used in this document, depending on how county policies relate to each other.
To make it clear to understand, each policy has been assigned a color that corresponds with a county. The county color code can be seen in the footer of each page. Additionally, text that is bolded and highlighted signifies the relationship between policies under a category. Furthermore, a sources list is included below in this methodology section to provide readers with links to each county’s most updated comprehensive plan.

Sources

1) Todd County 2030 Comprehensive Plan:

http://www.co.todd.mn.us/HTML_Files/Departments/Documentation/ToddCounty2030ComprehensivePlan.pdf

2) Morrison County Comprehensive Plan (adopted 2005):

http://morrisonmn.govoffice3.com/vertical/Sites/%7BC8FCCAFF-AECD-45DC-91B1-016A998EB4A8%7D/uploads/%7B77B3A859-82C4-4E06-AC2D-04350EE16357%7D.PDF


http://www.co.cass.mn.us/esd/pdfs/comp_plan.pdf

4) Crow Wing County Comprehensive Plan (2003-2023):

http://www.co.crow-wing.mn.us/planning___zoning/ordinances/docs/2004_COMPREHENSIVE_PLAN.pdf

5) Wadena County Comprehensive Plan (1999):


Findings

I. Safety and Efficiency
All Counties address safety and efficiency in their transportation plans. Although, slightly worded differently, all counties’ policies regarding this issue are very similar. All counties’ policies wish to provide a safe, and efficient transportation system. There are slight differences between policies. Some counties say they wish to provide or develop a safe, efficient transportation system, while others say they would like to maintain a safe, and efficient transportation system (please refer to IA below).

II. Coordination with Land Use Policies

Todd, Cass, and Crow Wing County all have similar transportation planning policies relating to land use planning; they all support the integration of transportation and land use planning. For example, Todd County’s policy states “provide a transportation system that compliments land-use policies and land development throughout the County”. Similarly, Crow Wing County’s policy states that their transportation network should support and coordinate with the land-use goals of the region. Uniquely, Todd County says that new roadway pavement projects should be constructed only when the development is consistent with the land-use policies. Morrison and Wadena County do not address this issue.

III. Airports

Todd and Morrison County have very similar policies regarding airports in their county; both counties support the use of airports in the county. Todd County’s policy is slightly more detailed, stating they would like to promote the use of airports for both personal and business needs. Morrison County simply states they support the use of the Little Falls/Morrison County Airport facility. Cass, Crow Wing, and Wadena County do not address this issue.

IV. Access Management

Both Todd and Morrison County have similar policies regarding access management. They both state that their access management programs should be coordinated and developed with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Additionally, Todd County states that these access management programs should be coordinated with cities and townships of the County. However, their policies differ on the level of specificity. Todd County says that access management standards should be developed and adopted to guide the location of driveway and public roadway locations on the County highway system. Morrison County agrees, but adds that access management guidelines should be adopted for all trunk highways as well as all County-State Aid Highways.

Similar to these policies, Crow Wing and Wadena County both state that they should research and consider road access management plans (please refer to IVA2 below).
Regarding more detailed policies regarding accessibility please refer to IVA3 below. Cass County does not address the issue of access management plans or accessibility.

V. Transportation System Needs

Regarding Transportation System Needs, Todd and Cass County both have very similar policies. They both state that their transportation system should satisfy local and regional needs. Cass County’s policy goes more into detail, stating that their transportation system should be maintained and enhanced to meet the local and regional access needs of Cass County residents, businesses, and visitors.

Regarding long-term transportation plans, Morrison, Crow Wing, and Wadena County all state that they should address long-term roadway issues and needs. Morrison, Crow Wing, and Wadena County also have similar policies regarding road capacity and growth. They all state that they would like to analyze current road capacities and other transportation measures that will aid in planning for new development and transportation improvements. Todd and Cass County do not address these issues.

VI. Multi-Modal Transportation

Cass and Crow Wing County have very similar policies regarding multi-modal transportation; both stating they should provide a multi-modal transportation system. Similarly, Todd, Morrison, Crow Wing County all have policies that promote non-automobile forms of transportation. Somewhat similarly, Wadena County encourages a variety of transportation uses.

Although all counties state that they wish to provide a multi-modal transportation system or promote non-automobile forms of transportation, it is not clear what alternative forms of transportation are for some counties. For example, Cass County does not go into detail of what a multi-modal transportation system is; Morrison County does not define alternative modes of transportation; and Wadena County does not define what is meant by a variety of transportation uses. Uniquely, Todd County would like to monitor the development of light rail concepts being developed by the state. All counties address this issue in some form.

VII. Automobile Use

Both Todd and Morrison County have somewhat similar policies related to automobile use. Todd County’s policy states “focus on the movement of people and goods, rather than on the movement of automobiles, in transportation planning”. Morrison County
encourages community design that centralizes community centers to minimize the reliance of residents on automobiles. Apart from county policies that promote alternative (non-automobile) forms of transportation, Cass, Crow Wing, and Wadena County do not address this issue. To see county policies on multi-modal and alternative forms of transportation please refer to the header VI. Multi-Modal Transportation in this document.

VIII. Environmental Protection

Both Todd and Crow Wing County have similar policies relating to environmental protection when planning for transportation. They both state that the environment should not be adversely affected when building/locating transportation facilities. Todd County also specifies that prime agricultural areas should not be affected. Additionally, Crow Wing County says that the environment should be protected when building new roads. Similarly, Morrison County has a policy that says they should protect the value of land, buildings and landscapes on all roadways in the County. Cass and Wadena County do not address this issue.

IX. Cultural Hazard Mitigation

Todd and Wadena County have somewhat similar policies regarding transportation problems. They both agree that land use patterns and design should be used to minimize the adverse effects of transportation systems (refer to IXA1 below). However, Todd County says that adverse effects of transportation systems should be minimized on adjacent developments while Wadena County promotes land use patterns that minimize negative traffic problems. Similarly to Todd County’s policy, Cass County requires buffers where possible between developments and public roads. Morrison and Crow Wing County do not address this issue.

X. Sidewalks and Trails

Todd, Morrison, and Crow Wing County all have similar policies regarding the development of sidewalks and trails. They all encourage the development of sidewalks and trails. Todd County’s policy is most detailed and says that the construction of sidewalks should be coordinated along county roads, through the cities and in more developed areas in the County. They also say a network of trails should be developed throughout the County using existing rights-of-way and roadway shoulders to connect residential areas with employment, shopping, parks and other destination points (refer to XA3 below). Morrison County states that the incorporation of sidewalks and trails should be encouraged in local community plans to promote walking or bicycling. Crow Wing County only says that trails and sidewalks should be enhanced and developed. Cass County does not address the issue of sidewalks.

County Color Code: Todd  Morrison  Cass  Crow Wing  Wadena
Also regarding trail systems, Wadena County promotes a cooperative effort between the county, county municipalities, and townships in designing and implementing a county trails system. Uniquely, Cass County states that a network of destination ATV trails should be established.

**XI. Economic Transportation**

Todd and Cass County have unique policies regarding the economic use of the transportation system. Both policies are quite vague and do not give much detail. Todd County promotes an efficient transportation system for commodities. Cass County’s policy says they need to be sensitive to the transportation needs of industry and those of economic development, while protecting and improving the high quality of life in the County. Morrison, Crow Wing, and Wadena County do not address this issue.

**XII. Transportation System Maintenance**

Regarding the improvement of deficiencies in the transportation system, Todd and Cass County have similar policies. They both state they should identify and improve deficiencies. Todd County specifically states that substandard roadways should be identified and improved while Cass County simply states that any existing and projected deficiencies should be identified and improved. Additionally they state that they should establish methods to improve these deficiencies.

Relating to the maintenance of the existing transportation system, Todd and Cass Counties have similar policies. These policies only state that they ensure maintenance of the existing transportation system. Similarly and more detailed, Morrison County states that consistent maintenance of farm to market roads should be provided. Similarly but regarding the maintenance of transportation facilities, Wadena County says they should continue their program of upgrading, improving, and maintaining existing deficient and inadequate transportation facilities. Uniquely, Wadena County has other policies relating to maintenance of the transportation system (please refer to XIB3 below). Crow Wing County does not address any of these issues.

**XIII. Transportation Aesthetics**

Regarding aesthetics of the county, Morrison and Crow Wing County have somewhat similar policies. Crow Wing County states that the development of a multi-modal transportation network should preserve the rural character of the region. Morrison County simply says that they would like to preserve and promote the aesthetics of the location and community. Similarly, Wadena County has a policy that says they should consider the Scenic Byways Program. Uniquely, Crow Wing County would like to improve the appearance of the transportation networks within the County. Although these counties say
they would like to maintain or improve the aesthetics of their county regarding the transportation system, they do not list how. Todd and Cass County do not address this issue.

XIV. Road Design Standards

Todd and Cass County have similar policies regarding road design standards. They both state they roadway design standards should be established. Todd County’s policy is more detailed saying that these common roadway design standards should be established for County and Township roads using the types of roads listed in the functional classification system. Cass County does not specify what types of roads they should establish design standards for. Morrison, Crow Wing, and Wadena County do not address this issue.

XV. Transportation System Functionality

Regarding the functionality of the transportation system, Cass and Crow Wing have similar policies. Cass County ensures the functional integrity of the existing transportation system while Crow Wing County says that functional qualities of the transportation networks should be improved. Similarly, Morrison County says that “all streets should be developed according to their function. Pavement width, load capacity, and continuity of the road must recognize the function for which the road is intended.” Uniquely, Todd, Cass, and Wadena County have policies relating to the function of roadways (please refer to XVA3 below). All counties address this issue in some form.

XVI. Transportation Funding

Relating to the issue of transportation funding, Cass and Crow Wing have somewhat similar policies. They both would like to utilize potential sources of funding for transportation projects. Cass County simply states they would like to “identify and efficiently utilize all potential sources of funds for transportation projects.” Crow Wing County goes more in detail saying they would like to “continue to support and provide funding from federal, state, and local money (including lobbying) for all forms of transportation improvements.” Crow Wing County goes more in detail as to how this will be accomplished by forming a committee of stakeholders to lobby (please refer to XVIA1bi below). Todd, Morrison, and Wadena County do not address this issue.

XVII. Intergovernmental Coordination

Morrison, Cass, and Wadena County all have very similar policies regarding the coordination of transportation planning. They all agree that transportation planning within the County should be coordinated with federal, state, cities, and townships.
Similarly, Todd County says that they should work with townships and cities to repair priority roads. Uniquely, Cass County says they should coordinate their transportation plan with the transportation plan of the Region. Crow Wing County does not address this issue.

Additionally, Todd and Morrison County have similar policies regarding the Minnesota Department of Transportation. They both agree that transportation access management should be coordinated or consistent with MNDOT. Cass, Crow Wing, and Wadena County do not address MNDOT.

Furthermore, many counties have unique policies regarding the coordination of transportation planning. For more information please refer to XVIIB2 below.

Policy Analysis

I. Safety and Efficiency

A. Safety and Efficiency

1. Very Similar

   a) Provide a safe, efficient and economical transportation system.

   b) To maintain a safe, efficient, and cost effective roadway system that focuses on the movement of people and goods.

   c) To provide a balanced, multi-model transportation system for the safe and efficient movement of people, goods and services.

   d) Develop an integrated multi-modal transportation network that promotes safe and efficient transportation movements.

2. Similar to Above (IA1)

   a) Maintain a safe, well constructed road system, and convenient circulation patterns for internal and external traffic movement through Wadena County.

II. Coordination with Land Use Policies
A. Coordination with Land Use Policies

1. Similar

   a) Provide a safe, efficient and economical transportation system that satisfies both local and regional needs and complements land-use policies and land development throughout the County.

   b) Encourage transportation facilities and programs that improve general accessibility while reinforcing the County’s land-use and development policies.

   c) To recognize the interrelationship of transportation and existing and future land use concerns and to integrate transportation and land use planning.

   d) Develop an integrated multi-modal transportation network that promotes safe and efficient transportation movements; and supports and coordinates with the land-use goals of the region.

2. Unique

   a) Give priority to maintaining the existing road network. New roadway pavement projects should be constructed only when the development is consistent with the land-use policies.

III. Airports

A. Airports

1. Very Similar

   a) Promote the use of airports in the County for both personal and business needs.

   b) Support the use of the Little Falls/Morrison County Airport facility.

IV. Access Management

A. Access Management
1. Similar

a) Coordinate the development of an access management program with the cities and townships in the County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

b) Develop and adopt access management standards to guide the location of driveway and public roadway locations on the County highway system that are consistent with MNDOT accepted standards.

c) Support and participate in the incorporation of Minnesota Department of Transportation Access Management Guidelines on all trunk highways within Morrison County.

d) Develop and implement Access Management Guidelines on all County-State Aid Highways within Morrison County.

2. Similar to Above (IVA1)

a) Research the feasibility of buffers and road access management plans along major transportation corridors.

b) Wadena County should consider the development of a Highway Access Plan to manage access to roads.

3. Similar to Above (IVA1)

a) Encourage transportation facilities and programs that improve general accessibility while reinforcing the County’s land-use and development policies.

b) Encourage the development of a transportation system that properly integrates the various types and levels of highways (state, county and local) to maximize safety and appropriate levels of accessibility.

c) Promote a transportation system that maximizes accessibility of all income groups to places of employment, recreation, shopping, housing, entertainment, and health care.

d) Support the development of senior transportation and transportation opportunities for disabled persons within the County.

e) Require right-of-way dedications, public easements or direct connections as part of new subdivisions to ensure road access to all properties and to provide multiple routes for future travelers and developments.
Limit cul-de-sac developments based on health safety and general welfare of the community.

V. Transportation System Needs

A. Transportation System Needs

1. Very Similar

a) Provide a transportation system that satisfies both local and regional needs.

b) Maintain and enhance a transportation system that meets the local and regional access needs of Cass County residents, businesses, and visitors.

B. Long-Term Transportation Plan

1. Similar

a) Address long-term roadway issues and needs when reviewing new proposed development within the County.

b) Develop a transportation plan that will analyze current road capacity, plan for road improvements or expansions, and address the anticipated population growth and projected travel needs of the County’s residents and businesses over the next 20 years and beyond.

c) Wadena County will continue support of the development of a long-range transportation road improvement and management plan.

C. Analyze Road Capacity and Growth

1. Similar

a) Continue to address the need for increased capacity, safety measures, and proper ingress and egress when considering new development.

b) Develop a transportation plan that will analyze current road capacity, plan for road improvements or expansions, and address the anticipated population growth and projected travel needs of the County’s residents and businesses over the next 20 years and beyond.
Transportation Policy Analysis, 09/18/2011

c) **Analyze existing and future traffic volumes versus road capacities** and provide appropriate improvements.

VI. Multi-Modal Transportation

A. Multi-Modal Transportation

1. Very Similar

   a) **To provide a balanced, multi-modal transportation system** for the safe and efficient movement of people, goods and services.

   b) **Develop an integrated multi-modal transportation network** that supports multi-modal transportation.

2. Similar to Above (VIA1)

   a) **Promote alternative modes of transportation** including public transit, bicycling, walking, car pooling, etc.

   b) **Develop unique, yet realistic alternative modes of transportation** and use of existing alternative modes of transportation.

   c) **Promote the enhancement and development of other forms of transportation**, including foot, biking, snowmobile, and ATV trails and sidewalks.

3. Somewhat Similar to Above (VIA1, VIA2)

   a) Wadena County shall **encourage a variety of transportation uses**.

4. Unique

   a) Monitor the development of light rail concepts being developed by the state.

VII. Automobile Use

*Note: Apart from the policies listed below please refer to VI. Multi-Modal Transportation to see policies regarding alternative forms of transportation (non-automobile).*

**County Color Code:** Todd Morrison Cass Crow Wing Wadena
A. Automobile Use

1. Somewhat Similar

a) **Focus on the movement of people and goods, rather than on the movement of automobiles**, in transportation planning

b) Encourage community design that centralizes community centers to **minimize the reliance of residents on automobiles** and encourage a “healthy lifestyle.”

VIII. Environmental Protection

A. Environmental Protection

1. Similar

a) **Avoid locating transportation facilities so as to adversely affect the natural resources or prime agricultural areas of the County.**

b) Encourage new developments to retain or replace trees and **protect the environment when building new roads or other transportation facilities.**

2. Similar to Above (VIIIA1)

a) Encourage the development of a transportation system that properly balances consideration of safety, accessibility, environmental protection and cost.

b) **Protect the value of land, buildings and landscapes on all roadways in Morrison County**

c) Develop an integrated multi-modal transportation network that guides development along designated transportation corridors, **preserves the rural character of the region, is sensitive to environmental concerns.**

IX. Cultural Hazard Mitigation

A. Cultural Hazard Mitigation
1. Somewhat Similar

a) **Integrate land-use and transportation designs to minimize the adverse effects of transportation systems (noise, air pollution) on adjacent developments.**

b) **In areas designed for growth, Wadena County should promote efficient and innovative land use patterns that minimize negative traffic problems.**

2. Similar to Above (IXA1a)

a) **Require buffers where possible between developments & public roads.**

X. Sidewalks and Trails

A. Sidewalk and Trail Development

1. Similar

a) **Coordinate the construction of sidewalks** along county roads, through the cities and in more developed areas in the County. **Develop a network of trails** throughout the County that use existing rights-of-way and roadway shoulders to connect residential areas with employment, shopping, parks and other destination points.

b) **Encourage the incorporation of sidewalks and local trails** in local community plans to promote walking or bicycling to promote a “healthy lifestyle.”

c) **Promote the enhancement and development of** other forms of transportation, including foot, biking, snowmobile, and ATV **trails and sidewalks.**

2. Similar to Above (IXA1)

a) **Promote a cooperative effort between the county, county municipalities, and townships in designing and implementing a county trails system.**

3. Unique
a) Coordinate the construction of sidewalks along county roads, through the cities and in more developed areas in the County.

b) Develop a network of trails throughout the County that use existing rights-of-way and roadway shoulders to connect residential areas with employment, shopping, parks and other destination points.

c) To establish a network of destination ATV trails.

XI. Economic Transportation

A. Economic Transportation

1. Unique

a) Promote an efficient transportation system for commodities.

b) To be sensitive to the transportation needs of industry and those of economic development, while protecting and improving the high quality of life in the County.

XII. Transportation System Maintenance

A. Identify and Improve Deficiencies in Transportation System

1. Similar

a) Identify and improve substandard roadways in the County.

b) To identify existing and projected deficiencies in the transportation system, including right-of-way, and to establish methods to improve these deficiencies.

B. Maintain Existing Transportation System

1. Similar

a) Give priority to maintaining the existing road network.

b) To ensure adequate maintenance and the functional integrity of the existing transportation system.
2. Similar to Above (XIIB1)

   a) Regular and **consistent maintenance of farm to market roads** should be provided.

   c) Wadena County should continue its program of **upgrading, improving, and maintaining existing deficient and inadequate transportation facilities**.

3. Unique

   a) Develop and maintain an ongoing project list of roads in need of improvements.

   b) Maintain all county roads regardless of traffic counts to the same standard.

   c) Transfer road jurisdiction to appropriate municipalities that do not meet county road traffic counts.

XIII. Transportation Aesthetics

A. Transportation Aesthetics

1. Somewhat Similar

   a) **Preserve and promote the aesthetics of the location and community.**

   b) Develop an integrated multi-modal transportation network that preserves the rural character of the region.

2. Similar to Above (XIIIA1)

   a) **Wadena County should consider the Scenic Byways program.** This program recognizes outstanding scenic roads and landscapes.

3. Unique
a) Improve the appearance and functional qualities of the transportation networks within the County.

XIV. Road Design Standards

A. Road Design Standards

1. Similar

a) Establish common roadway design standards for County and township roads using the types of roads listed in the functional classification system.

b) Establish road use and design standards.

XV. Transportation System Functionality

A. Transportation System Functionality

1. Similar

a) To ensure adequate maintenance and the functional integrity of the existing transportation system.

b) Improve the appearance and functional qualities of the transportation networks within the County.

2. Similar to Above (XVA1)

a) All streets should be developed according to their function. Pavement width, load capacity and continuity of the road must recognize the function for which the road is intended.

3. Unique

a) Control land development at the major transportation intersections and along major roadways to avoid compromising safety, accessibility and functions of the highways.

b) Establish road use and design standards

c) Provide strict guidelines for private roads connecting to public roads.
d) Wadena County should provide a grid type network of 9-ton capacity roads at reasonable intervals throughout the county.

XVI. Transportation Funding

A. Transportation Funding

1. Somewhat Similar

   a) To identify and efficiently utilize all potential sources of funds for transportation projects.

   b) Continue to support and provide funding from federal, state, and local money (including lobbying) for all forms of transportation improvements.

   i. Form a committee of necessary stakeholders to lobby for money at all government levels to ensure continued maintenance and improvement of the entire transportation infrastructure in Crow Wing County.

XVII. Intergovernmental Coordination

A. State, Federal, City and Township Coordination

1. Very Similar

   a) County road planning should be coordinated with Federal, State, City and Township road plans.

   b) Coordinate efforts with county, state, tribal, and federal transportation planning.

   c) To encourage Cities and Townships to coordinate their transportation planning with the County.

   d) County road planning should be coordinated with Federal, State, City, and Township road plans.

2. Similar to Above (XVIIA1)
a) **Work with the townships and cities to repair priority roads.**

3. **Unique**

a) **To coordinate this plan with the transportation plan of the State and Region.**

**B. Coordination with Minnesota Department of Transportation**

1. **Similar**

a) **Develop and adopt access management standards** to guide the location of driveway and public roadway locations on the County highway system **that are consistent with MNDOT accepted standards.**

b) **Support and participate in the incorporation of Minnesota Department of Transportation Access Management Guidelines** on all trunk highways within Morrison County.

2. **Unique**

a) A cooperative relationship with officials from adjoining counties should be encouraged.

b) **To coordinate this plan with the** transportation plan of the State and Region.

c) **Coordinate efforts with** county, state, tribal, and federal transportation planning.

d) To foster cooperation and reduce institutional barriers between all entities involved in providing transportation to the County.

e) To maximize public involvement in the transportation planning process.

f) **Work with County economic development officials, transportation planners, the planning department, cities, and townships to identify and designate growth corridors and high-growth areas within those corridors.**

g) **Transfer road jurisdiction to appropriate municipalities that do not meet county road traffic counts.**