

CHAPTER 4

TRANSPORTATION

Few factors affect a community's overall posture toward growth and development as much as its transportation network. Besides providing basic access, the transportation system largely dictates the pattern and intensity of land use and figures prominently in the determination of property values. Moreover, extensions or other improvements to a city or region's transportation system (or the lack thereof) can also help modulate the pace, form and direction of growth, and is perhaps local government's most direct way of giving shape to the 'built environment'.



While most discussions on the subject of transportation focus on traffic and road systems, the broader view includes other modes such as rail, air, waterborne and non-motorized transportation. In order to function as a 'system' in the true sense, the various transportation modes must be thoughtfully integrated so that transitions between modes can be made smoothly and conveniently.

As a product of the Industrial Age, Manistee owes its very existence to its natural geography and the access provided by its location on the Great Lakes. Once established as a thriving port area, inland rail and a patchwork system of territorial roads connected the City to the larger urban centers of the Upper Midwest. Today, Manistee's complement of transportation facilities includes a deep water port, freight rail, a nearby County airport, and a US highway that bisects the City. As part of a heavily traveled transportation spine connecting the shoreline cities and recreation areas of western Michigan, the highway has been the subject of much debate throughout the years. And while the tonnage shipped via the Great Lakes has dropped in the post World War II era, the deep draught ability of the Manistee River and Lake, and their immediate proximity to downtown attractions, offer the City major advantages to capitalize on the growing Great Lakes cruise trade. In all of West Michigan, only Saugatuck - and perhaps to a lesser extent - Grand Haven offer these same advantages.



As mentioned in the introduction, various proposals have been put forth over the years that have sought to address the problems associated with highway traffic being brought directly through the center of the City via US-31. At various times, loop roads, right-of-way relocations, and a major extension of the divided highway, that currently terminates in Ludington, have all been proposed. While such proposals will likely help remedy many of the traffic issues facing the City, history has shown that any proposed future highway bypass may meet with vocal resistance from certain quarters.

Generally, the opponents of highway bypass systems typically cite the loss of open space, and the development attraction, or ‘sprawl’ effects that often follow such projects. Downtown businesses meanwhile may contend that the City’s commercial center-of-gravity may shift outward toward the City’s periphery causing a general decline in downtown business activity.

While these fears may be valid, proper attention to land use planning and zoning can work to lessen many of the external effects that may otherwise accompany major roadway projects. In all cases, a series of public hearings should be held to afford all concerned citizens the opportunity to weigh-in on any such project, as well as any modifications or amendments to the Master Plan and/or Zoning Ordinance that may be warranted in response to it.

Recently, the Michigan Department of Transportation has proposed the preparation of an Access Management Study to analyze traffic issues and access management recommendations associated with US -31 as it traverses Filer Township, City of Manistee, and Manistee Township. The purpose of the study is to determine the types of access management recommendations that may be employed through the area as a means of improving traffic movement, safety, and efficiency.

Street System

For master planning purposes, streets are often classified in an ordered level according to their function. Manistee has three basic classifications:

- 1) **Local (Neighborhood) Streets** - local streets represent the first functional level. In Manistee, local streets comprise a majority of the City’s street network. Local streets link directly to the residential parcels associated with the City’s neighborhoods. Examples of local streets include Lincoln, Pine, Magill, and Ramsdell. Local streets link to collector streets.

Local streets are characterized by two lanes, low speed limits (usually around 25 mph), low traffic volumes, and limited or no through traffic. On-street parking is normally permitted. Traffic control measures are typically limited to stop signs and yield signs.

- 2) **Collector Streets** - collector streets “gather” the traffic originating from local streets, normally funneling it to minor or major arterial streets. Collector streets represent the second

functional level. Examples of collector streets include Washington, Maple, 1st, and Cherry. Collector streets feed traffic to arterial streets. Some collectors, such as Washington and Maple, may also serve as minor arterial streets.

Collector streets are characterized by two-lanes, low to moderate speed limits (25 to 35 mph), and moderate traffic volumes. On-street parking may or may not be permitted. In some instances, on-street parking is restricted to one-side only. Traffic control measures may include stop signs, caution lights, and/or full signalization. In some instances, center left-turn lanes and/or right-turn only lanes are provided.

- 3) **Arterial Streets** - arterial streets are used to move larger volumes of traffic from one geographic sector of the City to another sector, or through the City. Arterial streets represent the third functional level. Depending on their use, arterial streets are classified as either minor or major. Generally, minor arterial streets move traffic across town, whereas major arterial streets allow traffic to move through town. Examples of arterial streets include Maple, Washington, and River Streets (minor arterial streets), and Cypress (US-31, Manistee's only major arterial).

Arterial streets are characterized by two to four lanes. Center left-turn lanes are often found at high volume intersections, and in heavily trafficked business locations in which commercial establishments have frontage on the street. Traffic control measures may include caution lights and/or full signalization, turning lanes, and deceleration lanes.

Local (Neighborhood) Streets

The vast majority of the City's streets are laid-out in grid fashion, similar to most of Michigan's mature urban communities. This pattern defines the numerous residential blocks that comprise the City's neighborhoods.

Prior plans have identified a lack of adequate off-street parking in residential areas as a problem pursuant to snow removal during winter months. This situation has resulted in the adoption of alternate-side-parking during winter months to allow for snow removal by municipal crews. It has been recommended that additional parking be provided in residential areas to help alleviate this problem.

The snow removal issue is one that impacts numerous cities in West Michigan. Most have adopted snow removal parking policies similar to that of Manistee. Given the fact that off street parking opportunities in core residential sectors are very limited, and will likely remain as such over the plan period, it is recommended:

- the City retain the present alternate-side-parking policy.

- the conversion of single-family dwellings to multiple-family use should, as part of the conversion standards (e.g. zoning standards), be predicated on the provision of off-street parking equal to not less than one (1) space per new dwelling unit created.

An issue of potential significance voiced during preparation of the current plan was that of the increasing levels of vehicular traffic on neighborhood streets. It was indicated that neighborhood streets are commonly used for the movement of cross-town and through traffic. This was identified as especially pronounced over the summer months during which the City's resident base is significantly augmented by seasonal residents, tourists, and other guests.

The extensive street grid currently in place makes it difficult to control through movement. Closure (e.g. blockage of one end) of select grid segments is possible. However, this method is often met with opposition from nearby residents who dislike the disruption to their historic travel patterns. Blockage of the "looped" street system also creates potential snow removal problems.

The Plan recommends that the excessive use of neighborhood streets be controlled through the maintenance of low speed limits, signage/signalization as needed, and traffic enforcement. As necessary, speed limit signs should include the notation that limits are "*Strictly Enforced*".

Maple Street and Washington Street

Maple Street, located south of the Manistee River Channel, and Washington Street, located north of the channel, function as primary north/south collectors, as well as minor arterial streets. These systems link local neighborhoods with the downtown and to the industrial area on the City's northern end. Maple Street is also used by traffic originating from Filer Township, and other locations to the south, as a means of entry to the City.

Traffic Counts

Traffic count data for the years 1988, 1997 and 2000 show only moderate increases in Average Daily Traffic Volumes along the Manistee segment of US-31 since the late 1980s. On balance, the average daily traffic volume has hovered around 14,000 to 16,000 vehicles per day throughout this period. Of course, these average totals do not adequately account for the heavier volumes that occur during the summer months. Anecdotal accounts suggest that these volumes have increased rather sharply during the past several years as development and tourist activities in and around Manistee, and points north, has increased. Traffic estimates for 2002 indicate an average daily count of approximately 16,900 vehicles per day [Table 4-1].

The most significant increase in recorded traffic volumes during this period was noted in the heart of the City, near River Street. Available information suggests that average daily traffic volumes have increased by almost 2100 vehicles per day in this vicinity between 1997 and 2002. This coincides with a fairly dramatic spike in building activity that occurred during the latter part of the 1990s. At

present, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has no major transportation projects planned for the Manistee area. According to current MDOT standards the City segment of US-31 is rated “good” in terms of overall surface condition and ride quality. MDOT is, however, presently considering preparation of a US-31 Access Management Study in order to evaluate access management needs. If completed, the study would examine and provide recommendations on traffic control measures, driveway spacing, driveway closures, and related issues associated with the safe and efficient movement of vehicular traffic. Filer and Manistee Townships are also being proposed for inclusion in the study. A study which includes the three neighboring communities is supported by this plan.

River Street Conversion

A recommendation of the 1993 Downtown Economic Enhancement Strategy suggested that the City should consider re-converting River Street back to a two-way street. This is something that many cities have done in the past several years in response to declining downtown business activity and the somewhat pedestrian-hostile environment often caused by one-way streets. Not only are they considered safer than one-way streets, two-way streets are also generally viewed as more reflective of a traditional ‘main-street’ environment, allowing visitors a better way to navigate the city, and help businesses that are sensitive to pass-by, or commuter traffic to avoid major lulls in business activity during certain times of the day. Of course, any decision to convert the River Street/Clay Street one-way circuit (or perhaps to introduce diagonal parking on one side of the street as a means to increase on-street parking capacity) should be supported by a favorable traffic circulation and parking study. Should the one-way circuit be converted, it is recommended the conversion be instituted based on a “trial period” during which the resultant impacts (e.g. market impacts as well as traffic impacts) may be carefully monitored and evaluated.

Other State Trunklines

Other state trunklines in the Manistee City area include M-55, M-110, and M-22. M-55, connecting with US-31 north of the City of Manistee, offers direct linkage to M-37 and M-115, near the City of Cadillac. M-110 and M-22, also lying north of the City, offer scenic Lake Michigan shoreline routes leading to Frankfort, Traverse City, and other Northern Michigan communities. Based on information provided by the Michigan Department of Transportation, average daily traffic counts for the above systems are listed in Table 4-1.

Non-Motorized Pathways

In addition to the City’s system of motorized transportation, recent attention has been focused on the implementation of non-motorized pathways (e.g. bike paths) constructed in concert with street system improvements. One such location is along Cherry Road.

Non-motorized pathways have become extremely popular and, in addition to health benefits, represent an excellent means of connecting residential neighborhoods with recreation, school,

business, employment, and other public activity nodes. Accordingly, the plan recommends the ultimate installation of a non-motorized, looped, pathway system following, more-or-less, Cherry Road, 12th Street, Maple Street, and 1st Street. It is envisioned the loop system would connect with various lateral pathways oriented to residential areas lying north of the Manistee River Channel and east of Cypress. The southerly portion of the loop might also connect to pathways originating from the residential sectors of Filer Township.

Table 4-1
Traffic Counts
Manistee Master Plan - 2002

| Count Location | Average Daily (24 Hour) Traffic Count [1] |
|---|---|
| US-31, Filer Township, near the City Limit | 8,600 vehicles |
| US-31, within Manistee City | 16,900 vehicles |
| US-31, north of M-55 | 15,100 vehicles |
| US-31, at M-22 | 11,100 vehicles |
| M-55, east of US-31 | 5,700 vehicles |
| M-110, west of US-31 | 3,000 vehicles |
| Notes: [1] Based on 2000 MDOT count plus 2.5% per year increase. | |
| Source: Michigan Department of Transportation, 2000 LSL Planning - Current Estimates | |