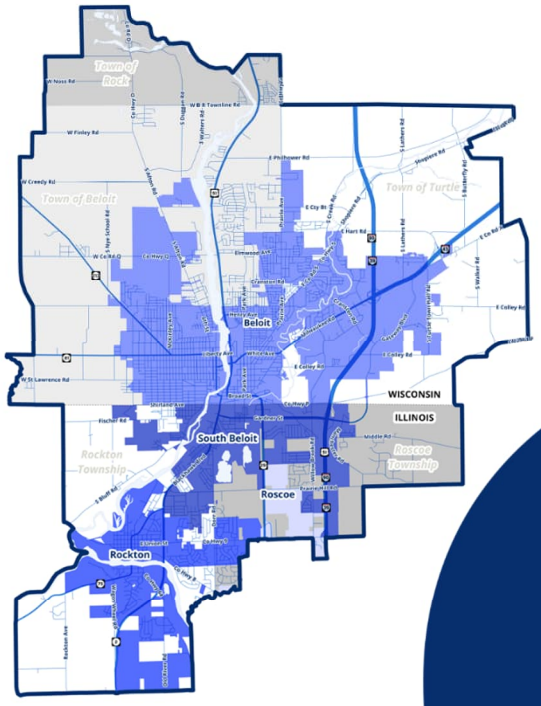






slats
STATELINE AREA
TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Appendix E

Relevant Plans Review

This appendix summarizes planning documents reviewed to help inform the development of the 2055 LRTP, including comprehensive plans from jurisdictions within the SLATS Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) and significant modal and transportation-related studies completed since the adoption of the 2045 LRTP. Together, these documents provide insight into community development trends, transportation needs, and investment priorities that help shape the region's transportation system.

Because transportation outcomes are closely influenced by local land use and development patterns, the review considered a broad range of planning topics addressed in these documents. Transportation and land use decisions are inherently interconnected, with growth patterns, development policies, and transportation investments collectively influencing travel demand, mobility, safety, accessibility, and overall system performance. As part of this effort, SLATS evaluated comprehensive plans not only for transportation-related recommendations but also for policies and strategies related to housing. This approach reflects the growing emphasis by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on understanding the relationship between housing availability, affordability, development patterns, and transportation outcomes as part of the LRTP development process. Reviewing these plans helps identify opportunities to better align transportation investments with future growth, housing needs, and community development objectives.

This review recognizes that plans vary in scope, detail, and update frequency. While some documents provide detailed guidance on future land use, transportation, and housing policies, others address these topics at a broader level. In addition to comprehensive plans, SLATS reviewed recent modal planning efforts related to transit, active transportation, and passenger rail initiatives. Key findings, identified needs, opportunities, and recommendations from these studies help inform the modal analysis and shape the project and policy recommendations included in the 2055 LRTP. Collectively, these plans provide valuable context for understanding local and regional priorities, anticipated growth and land use patterns, housing needs, and transportation considerations that may influence future decision-making within the SLATS MPA.

Comprehensive Plans Review

General transportation and land use themes were identified through a review of the most current comprehensive plans and long-range planning documents available for jurisdictions within the SLATS MPA. The following summarizes recurring themes and planning priorities across these documents, with detailed summaries of each jurisdiction's transportation and land use initiatives that follow.

A consistent finding across all plans is the recognition that land use and transportation decisions are closely linked and should be coordinated to support community goals. Local jurisdictions within the SLATS MPA encourage development patterns that maximize the efficient use of existing public infrastructure, promote a mix of housing and employment opportunities, support economic development, and provide safe and convenient transportation options for all users. Increasingly,

communities are emphasizing the importance of developing complete transportation networks that accommodate walking, bicycling, public transit, freight movement, and motor vehicle travel. Recent plans also consistently emphasis transportation safety, accessibility, system resiliency, environmental stewardship, and quality-of-life.

Across the SLATS MPA, communities continue to value multimodal transportation investments that balance growth, economic development, neighborhood preservation, and the protection of agricultural and natural resources. Rock County's ongoing Comprehensive Plan update emphasizes the importance of balancing future growth and economic opportunity with the preservation of agricultural lands, natural resources, and rural character. Similarly, Winnebago County's 2030 Land Resource Management Plan advocates for a balanced transportation system integrated with land use policies that support economic vitality, environmental stewardship, and sustainable development patterns. At the local level, these priorities are also reflected in the City of Beloit Comprehensive Plan 2045, which promotes connected neighborhoods, expanded transportation choices, strategic reinvestment, and coordinated land use planning. Together, these plans reinforce the important role that transportation investments and development patterns play in shaping future growth and supporting community goals throughout the SLATS MPA.

More recent planning documents place greater emphasis on a range of emerging topics than were typical in prior planning efforts. These include housing affordability and housing diversity, redevelopment and infill development, climate and resiliency considerations, public health, accessibility and connectivity, trail and active transportation networks, and coordinated regional growth management. Communities increasingly recognize that transportation investments should support access to jobs, education, healthcare, recreation, and other essential services while contributing to broader community development objectives.

Overall, the reviewed plans are consistent with the goals and objectives of the 2055 LRTP, particularly those related to safety, system preservation, economic vitality, environmental stewardship, multimodal mobility, accessibility, resiliency, and the integration of transportation and land use planning. The continued coordination of local land use decisions and regional transportation investments will be critical to maintaining an efficient, safe, and connected transportation system that supports the long-term vision of the SLATS region.

City of Beloit Comprehensive Plan 2045



The *City of Beloit Comprehensive Plan 2045* was adopted in 2024 following a year-long planning process. The plan replaced the city's previous comprehensive plan, which was originally adopted in 2008 and later amended, recognizing that significant changes had occurred in Beloit's economy, demographics, housing market, downtown, riverfront, transportation system, and development patterns over the preceding 15 years. The update was intended to establish a long-range vision for growth, redevelopment, infrastructure investment, housing, economic development, transportation, and quality of life through 2045. The planning process included extensive public outreach, multiple visioning events, steering committee meetings, public workshops, and nearly 1,500 public responses that were used to help shape the plan's goals and recommendations.

A major focus of the update was building upon Beloit's recent successes, including downtown revitalization, riverfront improvements, new industrial and commercial investment, and major redevelopment projects, while positioning the city to address future challenges related to housing, economic competitiveness, infrastructure, and community growth. The plan emphasizes coordinated decision-making across land use, transportation, housing, economic development, natural resources, public health, and infrastructure systems.

Existing Conditions, Future Challenges, Opportunities and Themes

The *Comprehensive Plan 2045* recognizes that Beloit is undergoing substantial economic and physical transformation. The city has experienced significant investment in downtown redevelopment, riverfront improvements, industrial expansion, logistics and warehousing development, recreational amenities, and tourism-related projects. Major employment centers continue to expand, particularly within the Gateway Business Park area and other employment corridors near I-39/90. At the same time, the city faces challenges related to housing availability, aging infrastructure, neighborhood reinvestment, economic disparities, and ensuring that growth benefits all areas of the community.

The plan identifies several overarching themes that guide future decision-making. These include supporting economic development, expanding housing choices, improving community health and quality of life, enhancing parks and outdoor recreation, strengthening neighborhood vitality, improving mobility and connectivity, preserving natural resources, and promoting efficient use of existing infrastructure. Public feedback highlighted housing, corridor revitalization, public health, economic development, and natural resource protection as among the community's highest priorities.

The plan also recognizes the importance of balancing continued growth in developing areas with reinvestment in established neighborhoods and commercial corridors. Future opportunities identified through the planning process include redevelopment of underutilized properties, expansion of recreational assets along the Rock River, continued economic diversification, attraction of workforce talent, and leveraging Beloit's strategic location between Madison, Rockford, Milwaukee, and Chicago.

Transportation Issues, Projects and Priorities

Transportation is a central component of the *Comprehensive Plan 2045*. The plan promotes a transportation system that provides safe, efficient, and multimodal mobility options for residents, workers, and visitors. Public input identified opportunities for improving multimodal transportation, expanding transportation choices, strengthening bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, improving safety, and enhancing access between neighborhoods, employment centers, and activity centers.

Several transportation-related themes are particularly relevant to the SLATS LRTP. The plan recognizes Beloit's strategic location along I-39/90 and I-43 as a major economic and freight asset. Continued industrial and commercial growth along these corridors will require ongoing investment in roadway capacity, freight mobility, access management, and multimodal transportation solutions. The plan also supports expanded bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, trail connectivity, complete streets principles, and improved transit access to major destinations.

The plan's transportation recommendations align closely with recent regional planning efforts, including the SLATS Active Transportation Plan, Stateline Area Transit Development Plan, Microtransit Study, and passenger rail studies. The Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the importance of providing transportation options beyond automobile travel and supports continued coordination between transportation investments and land use planning decisions.

Land Use and Housing Considerations

Housing emerged as one of the most significant issues addressed during the comprehensive planning process. Public outreach consistently identified the need for additional housing choices, increased housing supply, neighborhood reinvestment, and improved housing affordability. The plan recognizes that Beloit's future economic success depends in part on its ability to attract and retain workers, families, young professionals, and retirees through a range of housing options that meet varying needs and income levels.

The plan promotes a land use strategy focused on accommodating growth through a combination of redevelopment, infill development, neighborhood reinvestment, and targeted expansion in appropriate growth areas. It encourages a mix of housing types, including single-family homes, townhomes, multifamily developments, and mixed-use projects near employment centers, commercial corridors, and transportation facilities. This approach is intended to create more efficient development patterns, reduce infrastructure costs, and support alternative transportation modes.

The relationship between transportation and housing is a recurring theme throughout the plan. The plan reinforces that future housing development should be coordinated with transportation infrastructure, transit service, pedestrian facilities, bicycle networks, and employment centers to improve accessibility and reduce transportation barriers. Areas experiencing significant employment growth, particularly near Gateway Business Park and major industrial corridors, are identified as locations where improved housing availability and transportation connections could support workforce mobility and economic development objectives.

Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The *City of Beloit Comprehensive Plan 2045* is one of the most important local planning documents informing the development of the SLATS 2055 LRTP. As the largest municipality within the SLATS MPA, Beloit's growth patterns, development priorities, housing strategies, transportation investments, and economic development initiatives will significantly influence future travel demand and transportation system needs throughout the region.

The plan strongly reinforces several themes identified through other regional transportation studies, including multimodal mobility, active transportation, transit accessibility, freight movement, economic competitiveness, corridor redevelopment, housing accessibility, and coordinated land use and transportation planning. The plan's emphasis on directing growth toward areas with existing infrastructure, improving connectivity between neighborhoods and employment centers, and expanding transportation options directly supports the 2055 LRTP goals.

Most importantly, the *Comprehensive Plan 2045* provides a contemporary policy framework for understanding how Beloit envisions future growth and redevelopment over the next two decades. The recommendations regarding housing, transportation, economic development, corridor revitalization, and sustainable growth provide guidance to ensure that the SLATS 2055 LRTP remains consistent with local community goals and development objectives.

City of South Beloit Comprehensive Plan



The City of South Beloit Comprehensive Plan was adopted in April 2014. The planning effort was funded through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's (DCEO) Ike Program, which utilized federal Community Development Block Grant–Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding made available following the severe flooding and storm events that affected Illinois during 2008, including flooding associated with Hurricane Ike. South Beloit received grant funding to prepare a comprehensive plan that would address flood mitigation, economic development, land use planning, transportation, infrastructure improvements, and long-term community resiliency.

The plan was developed through an extensive public engagement process that included community workshops, business stakeholder meetings, online surveys, visioning sessions, key-person interviews, and steering committee meetings. The resulting plan established a long-range vision focused on preserving South Beloit's small-town character while positioning the community for future growth through strategic investments in transportation, industry, housing, environmental resources, and commercial development. Many of the plan's recommendations were influenced by concerns regarding flooding, infrastructure deficiencies, economic competitiveness, neighborhood revitalization, and community identity.

Existing Conditions, Future Challenges, Opportunities and Themes

South Beloit is identified as a growing community with excellent regional accessibility due to its location along I-39/90, proximity to Beloit, Rockford, and Madison, and direct access to major freight and industrial corridors. The plan recognized South Beloit's strengths in manufacturing, logistics, regional accessibility, recreation, and natural resources, particularly the Rock River and Turtle Creek corridors.

The plan also identified significant challenges. Flooding was consistently cited as one of the community's greatest long-term concerns. Large portions of the community are impacted by floodplain constraints associated with the Rock River and Turtle Creek, creating potential barriers to redevelopment and increased infrastructure costs. Additional challenges include aging infrastructure, neighborhood deterioration in some areas, brownfield sites, limited commercial investment, fragmented trail connectivity, and the need to strengthen South Beloit's regional identity and economic competitiveness.

Looking to the future, the plan envisioned South Beloit becoming a regional center for quality housing, commerce, recreation, and industry. Key opportunities included redevelopment of the City Center area, expansion of industrial development along Prairie Hill Road and the I-90 corridor, enhancement of the Rock River and Turtle Creek as recreational and community assets, expansion of trail systems, attraction of new commercial development, and completion of partially built residential subdivisions. The plan repeatedly emphasized leveraging South Beloit's interstate access and strategic location within the broader Stateline region.

Transportation Projects, Issues and Concerns

Transportation is one of the strongest and most detailed components of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan established a goal of creating a complete multimodal transportation system that improves mobility for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, freight, and transit users. Several transportation issues identified in the plan remain relevant today. These include limited bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, gaps in the sidewalk network, lack of pedestrian accommodations at major intersections, barriers created by rivers and rail corridors, and concerns regarding underutilized transit services.

The plan recommended numerous transportation projects that continue to have relevance for the SLATS MPA. Major roadway recommendations include realignment of Yale Bridge Road and Prairie Hill Road, improvements at key intersections, implementation of a Complete Streets policy, expansion of roadway connectivity in growth areas, preservation of truck routes, access management improvements, and a "road diet" concept for Gardner Street that would reallocate excess roadway capacity toward bicycle lanes, pedestrian improvements, and enhanced streetscaping.

Active transportation is a particularly important theme. The plan identifies a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian network that would connect South Beloit with Beloit, Rockton, Roscoe, Rockford, and ultimately the broader regional trail system. Recommendations include trail extensions along the Rock River corridor, connections to Beloit's trail network, enhancements to the Dorr Road Trail, Prairie Hill Road bicycle facilities, improved pedestrian crossings, sidewalk infill projects, and trail connections to neighborhoods, parks, schools, and commercial areas. The plan specifically calls for continued coordination with SLATS and incorporation of recommendations from the SLATS Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (which was updated in 2026 to the SLATS Active Transportation Plan).

Transit recommendations are more limited but still important from a regional mobility perspective. The plan recognizes the importance of the Stateline Mass Transit District (SMTD) service and recommends improving awareness, accessibility, and coordination with Beloit Transit System (themes that are reinforced in the recent Stateline Area Transit Development Plan). It also suggests evaluating future local circulator transit services as demographics evolve and as the community ages.

Land Use and Housing Considerations

The plan establishes a strong connection between land use decisions and transportation investment. Growth is directed toward specific development corridors, particularly along I-39/90, Prairie Hill Road, and other major transportation facilities. The plan emphasizes coordinated development that takes advantage of existing infrastructure while minimizing unnecessary expansion costs

Housing issues receive significant attention throughout the plan. South Beloit's housing stock is characterized by a mix of established neighborhoods, newer subdivisions, rental housing, and older housing affected by flooding, industrial adjacency, or deferred maintenance. The plan advocates for neighborhood stabilization, infill development, rehabilitation of existing housing, code enforcement, completion of unfinished subdivisions, and protection of residential neighborhoods from incompatible industrial and commercial uses.

The plan also recognizes changing demographics and the need for a broader range of housing options. Recommendations include promoting senior housing, allowing residents to age in place, encouraging medium-density housing in appropriate locations, and ensuring that future residential development

includes good connectivity to schools, parks, commercial areas, and employment centers. The plan also emphasizes that future residential development should include sidewalks, bicycle access, open space, and direct connections to the broader transportation network.

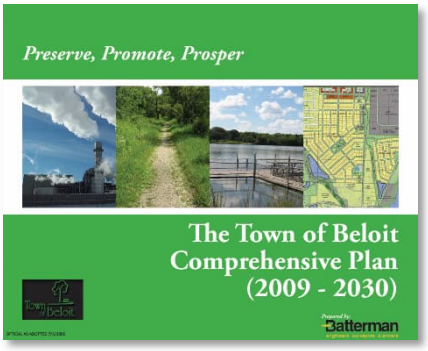
Relevance to 2055 LRTP

Although the plan is more than a decade old, it remains relevant to the development of the SLATS 2055 LRTP as it sets forth South Beloit's long-term vision for growth, mobility, and community development. Many of the plan's recommendations align closely with current transportation planning principles that emphasize multimodal transportation, active transportation, economic competitiveness, resiliency, environmental stewardship, and coordinated land use planning.

The plan provides important guidance regarding future growth locations, industrial development corridors, neighborhood preservation, trail expansion, freight movement, flood resilience, and regional connectivity. It also reinforces the importance of cross-jurisdictional coordination among South Beloit, Beloit, Rockton, Roscoe, Winnebago County, IDOT, SMTD, and SLATS. Many proposed transportation investments – including trail connections, roadway improvements, Complete Streets enhancements, transit coordination efforts, and freight-supportive infrastructure – remain directly applicable to the development of the SLATS 2055 LRTP.

Most importantly, the plan recognizes South Beloit's role as an integral part of the broader SLATS MPA transportation system. The emphasis on interstate access, industrial growth, trail connectivity, regional mobility, and improved connections to Beloit and surrounding communities provide valuable context to help inform and shape future transportation investments that support both local community goals and regional transportation goals.

Town of Beloit Comprehensive Plan (2009–2030)



The Town of Beloit Comprehensive Plan was adopted in July 2009 pursuant to Wisconsin's Smart Growth legislation. The plan replaced the Town's 1997 Master Plan and was developed through a multi-year public engagement process that included community surveys, focus groups, workshops, stakeholder meetings, and coordination with regional agencies. The planning effort was undertaken to establish a long-range policy framework for managing growth, preserving agricultural and natural resources, coordinating land use and infrastructure investments, and responding to increasing development pressure on the Town's rural and urbanizing areas.

A recurring theme throughout the planning process was balancing the Town's dual identity. The plan recognizes that the eastern portion of the Town functions much like an urbanized extension of the Beloit metropolitan area, while the western half remains largely agricultural and rural in character. As a result, the plan seeks to guide development toward areas already served by infrastructure while preserving rural landscapes, productive farmland, environmental corridors, and the Town's small-town identity.

The plan's overarching vision is summarized through four central themes: strengthening cooperation with the City of Beloit, preserving agricultural and environmental resources, promoting a distinct Town identity, and encouraging balanced and controlled growth patterns that maximize existing public investment while minimizing leapfrog development and infrastructure inefficiencies.

Existing Conditions, Future Challenges, Opportunities and Themes

One of the most important findings from the plan is the Town's unique position within the SLATS MPA. The Town contains urban residential neighborhoods, industrial development areas, commercial corridors, significant open space, extensive environmental resources, and over 6,400 acres of productive agricultural land. The plan recognizes that these competing land use interests create both opportunities and challenges for future growth and development.

The plan identifies uncontrolled rural subdivision activity and "leapfrog" development as major long-term concerns. Existing development patterns in portions of the western Town have consumed agricultural lands while creating dispersed residential development that is difficult and costly to serve with utilities, transportation infrastructure, and emergency services. As a result, the plan strongly supports directing future growth toward areas already served by sanitary sewer, water service, road infrastructure, and other public facilities.

Several planning areas were identified as particularly important to the Town's future. These include the Riverwest area west of the Rock River as a logical future growth area; the Riverside Drive corridor as a key redevelopment and community gateway corridor; the Prairie-Park district as an infill and redevelopment opportunity; and the New Northeast area as the preferred location for future residential growth. At the same time, the western portion of the Town is prioritized for agricultural preservation and environmental protection.

The plan also acknowledges broader economic and demographic trends affecting the community. It notes that most Town residents commute outside the Town for employment, creating significant dependence on automobile travel. The plan views local job creation, improved economic development opportunities, and regional transportation connections as important strategies for addressing these challenges.

Transportation Issues, Projects and Concerns

Transportation is one of the most significant elements of the Comprehensive Plan and remains relevant to the SLATS 2055 LRTP. The plan recognizes that the transportation network was designed primarily around automobile travel and identifies a lack of comprehensive bicycle, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure throughout much of the community. Existing sidewalks, bicycle accommodations, and transit services were found to be fragmented and often disconnected from important destinations.

The plan establishes several transportation goals that remain consistent with current multimodal planning principles. These include improving roadway safety, coordinating transportation and land use decisions, expanding opportunities for walking and bicycling, improving transit access, supporting ridesharing opportunities, and strengthening connections between neighborhoods, schools, employment centers, commercial areas, parks, and public facilities. The plan specifically emphasizes continued collaboration with SLATS and WisDOT on regional transportation planning initiatives.

Several transportation projects and concepts discussed in the plan remain noteworthy from a long-range planning perspective. These include improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the Town, extending neighborhood connectivity, improving access along the Riverside Drive and Prairie Avenue corridors, and monitoring long-term Highway 81 bypass discussions, improving access to I-39/90, and expanding alternative transportation opportunities. The plan also references the Beloit-Janesville Express and local Beloit Transit services as important existing transportation assets.

Land Use and Housing Considerations

Land use and transportation are integrated throughout the Comprehensive Plan. The Town explicitly promotes Smart Growth principles and seeks to focus development in areas where existing infrastructure can efficiently serve future residents and businesses. One of the plan's most consistent land use policies is discouraging additional leapfrog development and large-lot rural subdivisions that consume productive farmland and increase transportation and infrastructure costs.

The plan encourages future development to occur primarily within areas served by sanitary sewer and public utilities. It supports infill development, redevelopment along major corridors, compact neighborhood design, mixed housing choices, and stronger connections between land use decisions and transportation investments. The plan also encourages traditional neighborhood development principles that support walkability and reduce automobile dependence.

With respect to housing, the plan recognizes that the Town's housing stock is diverse and generally in good condition but identifies opportunities to better accommodate young families, seniors, and households seeking more affordable housing options. The plan supports a variety of housing types, including single-family, duplex, multifamily, and mixed-density neighborhoods. It also recommends locating higher-density housing near major roadways, employment areas, services, and transportation infrastructure. One noteworthy recommendation specifically calls for ensuring that senior housing and

specialized residential facilities are served by transportation options beyond the private automobile, recognizing a growing trend of older adults desiring to age in place.

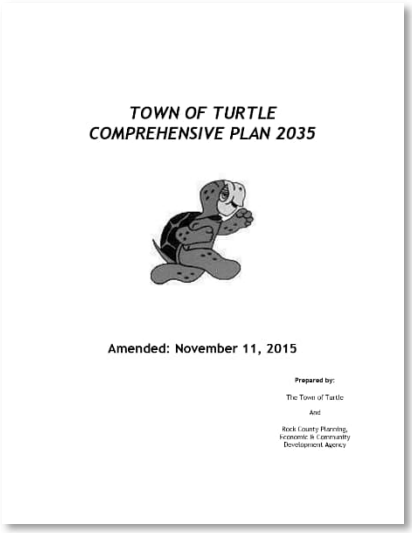
Relevance to 2055 LRTP

Although the Town of Beloit Comprehensive Plan is now more than fifteen years old, it remains an important local land use planning document to inform the SLATS 2055 LRTP. Many of its core principles – coordinated transportation and land use planning, preservation of agricultural lands, focus on infill and redevelopment, multimodal transportation improvements, corridor revitalization, and regional cooperation – remain aligned with current federal and regional transportation planning priorities.

The plan provides guidance regarding future growth locations, preferred development patterns, transportation corridor priorities, and areas where agricultural or environmental preservation should influence transportation decisions. Its emphasis on directing growth toward existing infrastructure and supporting bicycle, pedestrian, transit, and roadway investments in developed portions of the Town align with the SLATS 2055 LRTP goals and objectives.

Most importantly, the plan demonstrates the Town's longstanding commitment to integrating land use and transportation planning. As the LRTP evaluates future transportation investments through 2055, the Town's vision for concentrating development, expanding multimodal transportation options, protecting agricultural resources, improving corridor connectivity, and strengthening regional coordination provides an important foundation to support transportation decision-making throughout the SLATS MPA.

Town of Turtle Comprehensive Plan 2035



The Town of Turtle Comprehensive Plan serves as the Town's primary long-range policy document for guiding land use, transportation, housing, economic development, natural resource protection, agricultural preservation, and intergovernmental coordination. Building upon the Town's original comprehensive planning effort completed under Wisconsin's Smart Growth legislation, the 2015 update reaffirmed the community's long-standing vision of accommodating growth while preserving the rural character, agricultural resources, and natural environment that define the Town. The plan provides a framework for managing future development through 2035 and continues to guide local planning and development decisions.

A central theme throughout the plan is balancing growth and development pressures with the preservation of the Town's rural identity. The plan emphasizes directing growth toward appropriate locations where infrastructure and services can be efficiently provided while protecting productive farmland, environmental resources, and open spaces. The Shopiere area and other established development areas are identified as focal points for future growth, while much of the Town is planned to remain agricultural or rural in character.

The plan recognizes the Town's strategic location within the region. Situated between Beloit, Rockford, and the Chicago metropolitan area and served by I-39/90, I-43, and key regional highways, the Town is positioned to experience continued development pressure and economic growth. As a result, the plan seeks to coordinate future development with transportation infrastructure, public services, and neighboring jurisdictions while maintaining the community's desired character and quality of life.

Existing Conditions, Future Challenges, Opportunities and Themes

The plan identifies the preservation of agriculture and rural character as a defining priority. More than three-quarters of the Town's land area was devoted to agricultural use when the plan was prepared, and the community expressed a strong desire to maintain productive farmland while directing future development to appropriate locations. The plan repeatedly emphasizes avoiding scattered development patterns and encouraging growth adjacent to existing development areas and infrastructure.

The plan also recognizes both growth opportunities and development pressures associated with its strategic location. I-39/90, I-43, State Highway 67, proximity to Beloit, and its location within the SLATS MPA position the Town to experience future residential, commercial, and transportation-related growth. The plan notes development pressure from Rockford, South Beloit, Rockton, Roscoe, and the broader Chicago region could increasingly influence future land use decisions in the Town.

Another major theme involves demographic and housing changes. While official projections anticipated a slight population decline through 2035, Town residents and officials expressed a desire for modest growth. The plan identifies an aging population, declining household sizes, increasing housing costs,

and limited housing diversity as emerging issues. It also recognizes the importance of providing housing options that allow residents to remain in the community throughout different life stages.

Finally, the plan also identifies opportunities for expanding local employment opportunities, supporting small-scale commercial activity, improving recreational amenities, preserving natural resources, and strengthening the Town's identity while maintaining strong relationships with neighboring communities and regional agencies.

Transportation Issues, Projects and Concerns

The transportation element of the plan establishes a goal of providing a safe, efficient, and equitable transportation system while minimizing impacts on farmland and the environment. The plan explicitly calls for integrating transportation and land use planning to reduce sprawl, congestion, and infrastructure costs.

The Town's location along I-39/90 and I-43 is identified as one of its most significant transportation assets. The plan acknowledges that these facilities provide critical regional access to Madison, Milwaukee, Janesville, Rockford, and Chicago while simultaneously creating development pressures that must be carefully managed. The plan anticipates future commercial growth near major interchanges, particularly the I-90/Shopiere Road interchange and the I-43/Hart Road interchange.

The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes active transportation and multimodal mobility. While acknowledging limited bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the Town, the plan supports maintaining and expanding bicycle routes, pedestrian facilities, recreational trails, and non-motorized transportation opportunities. It references the SLATS and Rock County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and specifically encourages incorporating bicycle and pedestrian facilities into future development. Policies support preserving right-of-way for future facilities, improving shoulders along bicycle routes, and expanding trail connectivity.

The plan also discusses transit and passenger rail. It refers to *South Central Wisconsin Commuter Study*, which was underway when the plan was first adopted. The study evaluated improved transit and commuter rail connections between Rock County, Madison, Rockford, and the Chicago metropolitan area. Notably, public participants expressed concerns that a future rail station in Clinton could increase development pressure and housing costs within the Town. The plan also supports improving awareness and utilization of existing transit services, particularly for older adults and persons with disabilities.

Several transportation concerns identified in the plan remain relevant today, including roadway safety, traffic growth along regional corridors, access management, congestion near developing areas, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, and coordination between transportation investments and future land use decisions. The plan strongly discourages land development patterns that would limit future transportation connectivity or require excessive public infrastructure investments.

Land Use and Housing Considerations

The Comprehensive Plan establishes a direct relationship between land use decisions and transportation system performance. One of the central planning objectives is directing future development to areas where infrastructure and transportation facilities already exist or can be

efficiently extended. The plan explicitly states that future growth should occur adjacent to existing developed areas rather than in scattered rural locations.

The future land use strategy directs most new development toward existing developed areas, particularly the Shopiere area and other locations where public infrastructure and transportation facilities can be efficiently provided. The plan supports limited commercial and employment-related development in appropriate locations, including areas with access to major transportation corridors, while emphasizing the preservation of agricultural lands and rural character throughout much of the Town. Consistent with the Town's vision, future growth is intended to occur in a coordinated manner that minimizes scattered development patterns and protects natural and agricultural resources.

Housing is another important issue discussed in the plan. The Town's housing stock is overwhelmingly single-family homes, creating limited options for young adults, seniors, smaller households, and renters. The plan notes that the lack of housing diversity contributes to automobile-dependent development patterns where nearly all daily trips must be made by car. It recommends integrating a broader mix of housing types and land uses into future development so that walking and bicycling become more viable transportation options.

The plan also identifies a shortage of available rental housing and recognizes the need to accommodate an aging population. Policies encourage creating housing choices in locations that are accessible to parks, open space, transportation facilities, and future community destinations. New development is encouraged to include pedestrian and bicycle connections and avoid isolated subdivision patterns that limit mobility.

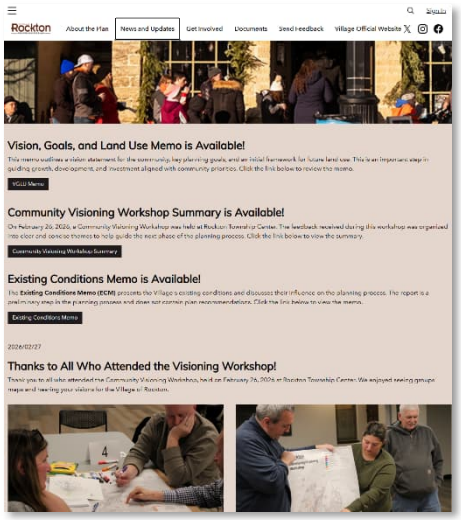
Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The Town of Turtle Comprehensive Plan 2015 Update is an important local planning document for the development of the SLATS 2055 LRTP. The update reaffirmed many of the Town's long-standing planning priorities, including coordination between land use and transportation, preservation of agricultural lands and rural character, concentration of development in appropriate growth areas, protection of natural resources, and continued intergovernmental cooperation. These priorities remain consistent with the 2055 LRTP goals.

The plan is valuable because it provides guidance on how the Town seeks to manage future growth while maintaining its rural identity. The Town supports directing development to areas where infrastructure and transportation facilities can be efficiently provided, discouraging scattered rural development patterns, protecting productive farmland, and preserving open space and environmental resources. The plan also recognizes the importance of the Town's location along major regional transportation corridors and the need to coordinate future land use decisions with transportation investments and regional growth trends.

The plan reinforces the importance of maintaining a safe and efficient transportation system that supports regional accessibility while minimizing impacts on agricultural land, natural resources, and community character. The plan supports continued coordination with SLATS, Rock County, neighboring municipalities, and state transportation agencies on issues related to roadway improvements, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, transit services, and regional mobility.

Village of Rockton Comprehensive Plan



The Village of Rockton is currently conducting a comprehensive plan update to establish a new long-range vision for growth, development, housing, transportation, economic development, parks and open space, and community character. The update was undertaken in recognition that the Village has experienced substantial growth and change since the original plan was prepared, particularly in population growth, residential development, regional commuting patterns, economic activity, and transportation demands. The planning process includes an existing conditions assessment, stakeholder meetings, public workshops, online engagement, community visioning exercises, and preparation of updated land use and transportation policy recommendations. As of 2026, the Comprehensive Plan Update remains underway and has not yet been formally adopted.

The ongoing planning process identifies several strengths that continue to define Rockton, including its historic downtown, strong school system, extensive park and open space resources, proximity to the Rock River and Pecatonica River corridors, access to regional transportation networks, and small-town character. Public engagement conducted during the update process indicates a strong desire to preserve these community assets while thoughtfully accommodating future growth. Community feedback has also highlighted the need to maintain Rockton's identity as a distinct community despite increasing development pressures from the broader Rockford-Beloit metropolitan area.

Transportation Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

The existing conditions analyses and public outreach have identified concerns regarding increasing traffic volumes, congestion along key corridors, safety at major intersections, and the need to balance mobility with preservation of community character. Several transportation corridors – including IL 75 (Blackhawk Boulevard), IL 2, Rockton Road, Hononegah Road, Prairie Hill Road, and Old River Road – continue to serve as critical regional connections linking Rockton with Beloit, South Beloit, Roscoe, Rockford, and I-90. As development continues throughout the Stateline region, maintaining efficient transportation connections while minimizing impacts on residential neighborhoods remains a local priority.

The Village has also demonstrated continued support for active transportation improvements. Recent planning efforts include development of the Old River Road multi-use path project and ongoing discussion regarding trail connectivity, sidewalk expansion, bicycle accommodations, and connections to regional trail systems. Community input gathered during the update process indicates strong support for improving walkability, expanding recreational trail opportunities, and enhancing connections between neighborhoods, schools, downtown, parks, and community destinations. These priorities align with the recently completed SLATS Active Transportation Plan.

A particularly important long-term transportation opportunity for the Village is its location along the Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) rail corridor connecting the Stateline region with Beloit, Janesville, Rockford, and Chicago. The Village's 2001 Comprehensive Plan identified the corridor as a potential

location for future commuter or passenger rail service, including a possible station area near Downtown Rockton. While the current Comprehensive Plan Update does not appear to specifically address passenger rail service, the corridor remains a significant regional transportation asset. Recent passenger rail studies completed by SLATS, along with WisDOT's inclusion of the Rockford–Beloit–Janesville–Madison corridor in statewide passenger rail planning efforts, suggest that future rail service could have important implications for transportation, economic development, and land use planning within the Village and the broader SLATS MPA.

Land Use and Housing Considerations

The ongoing Comprehensive Plan Update indicates a strong desire to balance future growth and development with preservation of the community character that residents value. Public engagement activities and draft planning documents consistently emphasize maintaining Rockton's small-town identity, protecting natural resources and open space, preserving community gateways, and guiding development in a manner that supports long-term economic vitality. At the same time, the Village continues to experience residential and commercial growth pressures associated with its location within the developing Stateline region.

Housing has emerged as an important component of the planning process. Existing conditions analyses and community input have highlighted the need to evaluate future housing opportunities alongside community growth objectives and quality-of-life considerations. Consistent with broader regional and statewide trends, the planning process is examining how the Village can accommodate future housing needs while maintaining neighborhood character, supporting economic development, and providing housing options for residents at different stages of life. The draft vision and planning goals recognize the importance of planning for future growth while ensuring that development remains consistent with community priorities.

The planning process also places significant emphasis on downtown vitality, economic development, land use compatibility, and conservation of environmental resources. Particular attention is being given to future land use patterns, growth management, protection of natural features, and efficient use of infrastructure and public services. The emerging land use framework is intended to help guide development and investment decisions while preserving the qualities that distinguish Rockton from surrounding communities.

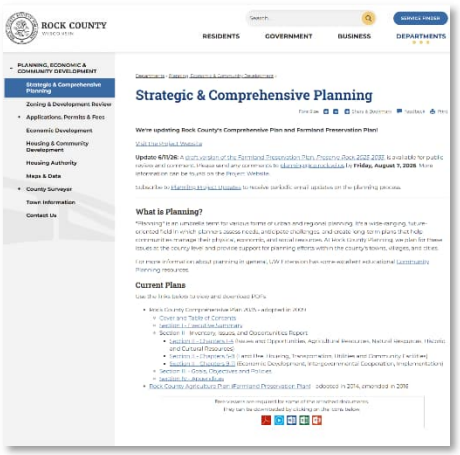
Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The Rockton Comprehensive Plan Update provides important insight into the Village's evolving vision for growth, land use, housing, economic development, and community character. While the 2001 Comprehensive Plan remains the Village's adopted policy document, the ongoing update process reflects current community priorities and identifies issues that will likely influence transportation needs and investment decisions over the coming decades. The emerging vision, goals, and land use framework reinforce several regional planning objectives, including coordinated land use and transportation planning, economic competitiveness, environmental stewardship, quality-of-life improvements, and multimodal connectivity.

For the 2055 LRTP, the Rockton planning process highlights the importance of maintaining regional connectivity while supporting walkability, bicycle connectivity, and access to community destinations.

The Village's emphasis on managing growth, preserving community character, protecting natural resources, and coordinating future land use decisions with infrastructure investments aligns with the SLATS 2055 LRTP goals. Once completed and adopted, the updated Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed for incorporation into future LRTP updates and amendments to ensure continued consistency between local development objectives and regional transportation investments.

Rock County – Renew Rock 2025–2045 Comprehensive Plan



The Renew Rock 2025–2045 Comprehensive Plan is an ongoing countywide planning effort intended to establish a long-range vision for Rock County through 2045. The planning process is being conducted in conjunction with the Preserve Rock 2025–2035 Farmland Preservation Plan and includes extensive public outreach, stakeholder engagement, coordination with local governments, and collaboration with residents, businesses, and community organizations throughout the county. The plan will serve as Rock County's primary policy framework for guiding future land use, housing, transportation, economic development, agricultural preservation, natural resource management, and public infrastructure investment.

A central focus of the planning effort is understanding how Rock County can accommodate future growth while preserving the agricultural, environmental, and community assets that contribute to its quality of life and economic competitiveness. The process emphasizes the interconnected nature of transportation, land use, housing, economic development, natural resources, and public services, recognizing that coordinated planning across these areas is essential to supporting sustainable long-term growth. The planning effort seeks to strengthen regional collaboration and provide a consistent framework for decision-making among local governments and partner agencies throughout the county.

The ongoing planning process is evaluating existing conditions, future opportunities, and emerging challenges facing Rock County. Topics currently being addressed include housing needs, transportation connectivity, economic development, agricultural viability, natural resource protection, infrastructure investment, and quality of life. As draft plan elements continue to be developed, the plan is expected to provide updated goals, policies, and implementation strategies that will help guide countywide planning and investment decisions through 2045.

Existing Conditions, Future Challenges, Opportunities and Themes

The Renew Rock 2025–2045 Comprehensive Plan evaluates existing conditions, future trends, and long-term opportunities to help guide policy and investment decisions across Rock County through 2045. Preliminary planning materials highlight the importance of understanding how future growth, changing demographics, housing needs, and economic development trends may influence the County's communities over the coming decades. The planning effort is also examining how transportation infrastructure, agricultural resources, natural systems, utilities, and community facilities can continue to support long-term prosperity and resilience. As part of the process, the County is evaluating opportunities to strengthen regional collaboration and coordinate planning efforts across municipal boundaries.

Rock County's strategic location within southern Wisconsin, including access to I-39/90, I-43, regional freight networks, major employment centers, and connections to the Madison, Milwaukee, Rockford, and Chicago metropolitan areas, is recognized as a significant asset. The planning process is evaluating how these transportation and economic advantages can support future growth while maintaining the

agricultural, environmental, and community resources that contribute to the County's character and quality of life.

Transportation Issues, Projects and Concerns

The County is evaluating transportation infrastructure and connectivity as part of a broader effort to understand existing conditions and future needs related to mobility, economic development, access to employment, public services, and community destinations. The planning effort recognizes the importance of major transportation assets including I-39/90, I-43, U.S. and state highway corridors, freight rail infrastructure, and the Southern Wisconsin Regional Airport.

The planning process also emphasizes the relationship between transportation and other planning topics, including land use, housing, economic development, agricultural preservation, and community facilities. As draft plan recommendations continue to be developed, transportation considerations are expected to play an important role in shaping future growth and investment strategies throughout Rock County.

Land Use and Housing Issues

Housing is one of the key topics being evaluated as part of the Renew Rock planning process. Wisconsin's comprehensive planning framework identifies housing as a required planning element, and the County is assessing current and future housing conditions alongside broader issues related to growth, economic development, and community development. The planning effort is also examining how housing, transportation, employment, and public infrastructure interact to influence quality of life and long-term community sustainability.

Land use planning is similarly focused on understanding existing development patterns, future growth opportunities, agricultural resources, natural systems, and community priorities. Through both the Comprehensive Plan and the concurrent Farmland Preservation Plan update, the County is evaluating how future development can be accommodated while supporting agricultural viability, protecting natural resources, and using infrastructure efficiently.

Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The Renew Rock 2025–2045 Comprehensive Plan is an important ongoing planning effort that will help shape future land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and infrastructure decisions throughout Rock County. Although the plan remains under development, the issues being evaluated through the planning process align with key topics being addressed in the SLATS 2055 LRTP, including regional mobility, economic competitiveness, housing, transportation connectivity, and coordinated planning across jurisdictions.

As draft recommendations and policies are completed, the Renew Rock plan will provide valuable guidance regarding future growth patterns, infrastructure needs, transportation connections, and regional development priorities. Upon adoption, the plan should serve as an important resource for future LRTP updates, project prioritization efforts, and coordination between county and regional planning initiatives.

Rock County – Preserve Rock 2025–2035 Farmland Preservation Plan



The Preserve Rock 2025–2035 Farmland Preservation Plan is being prepared concurrently with the Renew Rock Comprehensive Plan and serves as the County's primary agricultural preservation policy document. The plan updates previous farmland preservation efforts and establishes a framework for protecting productive agricultural lands while accommodating long-term economic development and community growth.

Agriculture remains one of Rock County's defining industries and land uses. The planning process recognizes that preserving agricultural viability requires attention not only to farmland protection but also to transportation infrastructure, freight mobility, economic development, agricultural processing, and market access. A draft version of the Preserve Rock 2025–2035 Farmland Preservation Plan was available for public review during development of the SLATS 2055 LRTP, providing insight into emerging countywide agricultural preservation priorities and implementation strategies.

Existing Conditions, Future Challenges, Opportunities and Themes

The plan identifies agriculture as a foundational component of Rock County's economy, identity, and landscape. Despite relatively modest long-term population growth projections, the County anticipates continued development pressure resulting from its strategic location within southern Wisconsin's transportation and economic network.

A major challenge identified in the plan is balancing growth with farmland preservation. The County estimates that approximately 4,600 acres of agricultural land could be annexed or converted to non-agricultural uses between 2025 and 2045. Development pressure is expected to remain strongest near municipal boundaries, transportation corridors, industrial development areas, and interstate interchanges.

Additional emerging issues include:

- Agricultural consolidation
- Energy development, including utility-scale solar facilities
- Industrial and logistics expansion
- Workforce and succession challenges in agriculture
- Preservation of rural character
- Infrastructure maintenance in rural areas

At the same time, the plan identifies opportunities to strengthen agricultural competitiveness through improved freight mobility, infrastructure preservation, agricultural processing investment, and coordination between transportation and land use planning.

Transportation Issues, Projects, and Concerns

Transportation plays a prominent role throughout the Farmland Preservation Plan. The plan identifies I-39/90, I-43, US 14, US 51, WIS 26, and other major state highways as critical agricultural freight corridors connecting producers to regional, national, and international markets.

The County's freight rail network is also identified as a significant economic asset. Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR), Union Pacific (UP), and Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) provide important freight service for grain movement, agricultural products, food processing, manufacturing, and distribution industries.

One of the most important transportation-related findings involves preserving rural transportation infrastructure. The plan notes that agricultural producers rely heavily on county highways, town roads, and local bridges to move equipment, livestock, feed, fertilizer, and harvested commodities. These local facilities are critical first-mile and last-mile connections between farms and regional freight corridors.

The plan emphasizes that transportation investments can influence development patterns and farmland conversion. As transportation accessibility improves, development pressure may increase near highway corridors and municipal growth areas. Consequently, transportation planning and farmland preservation planning must remain closely coordinated.

Land Use and Housing Issues

The plan focuses primarily on land use rather than housing (which is addressed in the comprehensive plan update). The primary objective is protecting agricultural land from fragmentation and premature conversion. Growth is encouraged in locations already planned for development, while agricultural preservation remains the dominant objective throughout much of the County's rural area.

The plan strongly supports coordinated growth management, annexation planning, and municipal cooperation to minimize unnecessary farmland conversion. It also highlights the importance of directing infrastructure investments toward planned growth areas rather than extending infrastructure into productive agricultural landscapes.

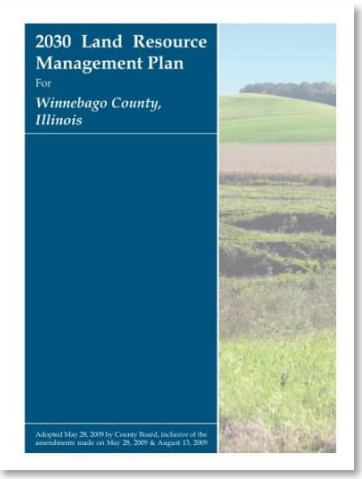
A recurring theme is maintaining agricultural viability by preserving large, contiguous agricultural areas and avoiding development patterns that create land use conflicts between farming operations and residential development.

Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The Plan provides guidance regarding the relationship between transportation investments, land use decisions, economic development, and farmland preservation. The plan reinforces the need to evaluate projects not only from a mobility perspective but also from a land use and agricultural preservation perspective. For the SLATS 2055 LRTP, the plan highlights the importance of:

- Preserving freight mobility
- Maintaining rural transportation infrastructure
- Supporting agricultural economic activity
- Coordinating transportation and land use decisions
- Directing growth toward existing communities
- Minimizing unintended farmland conversion

Winnebago County – 2030 Land Resource Management Plan



The Winnebago Land Resource Management Plan (LRMP) was developed to create a long-range framework for managing growth while protecting agricultural land, natural resources, open space systems, and community character. The plan was prepared during a period of significant suburban growth pressure throughout the Rockford metropolitan area and sought to ensure that future development occurred in a coordinated, fiscally responsible, and environmentally sustainable manner.

A primary objective was integrating transportation, land use, and infrastructure planning to support economic development while minimizing unnecessary environmental impacts and infrastructure costs.

Existing Conditions, Future Challenges, Opportunities, and Themes

The plan identifies Winnebago County as a diverse landscape consisting of urban, suburban, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and environmentally sensitive areas. Growth pressures associated with the Rockford metropolitan area, interstate corridors, and expanding communities create ongoing challenges related to farmland preservation, infrastructure management, and community character. The plan promotes directing growth toward municipalities and areas with existing infrastructure capacity while preserving agricultural and environmental resources in rural areas. Key themes include:

- Efficient growth management
- Agricultural land preservation
- Economic development competitiveness
- Environmental protection
- Open space and greenway preservation
- Infrastructure efficiency
- Multimodal transportation
- Regional collaboration

Transportation Issues, Projects and Concerns

Transportation plays a central role throughout the LRMP. The plan advocates for a balanced multimodal transportation system that supports safety, mobility, economic development, and environmental stewardship. Transportation priorities include:

- Coordination among federal, state, county, township, and local agencies
- Infrastructure preservation and modernization
- Freight mobility improvements
- Enhanced transit services
- Expansion of bicycle and pedestrian networks
- Improved aviation and rail connectivity
- Transportation safety improvements

The plan also emphasizes integrating transportation planning and land use decision-making to ensure that future transportation investments support desired development patterns and economic objectives.

Land Use and Housing Issues

A core principle of the LRMP is directing new residential, commercial, and industrial development toward areas already served by infrastructure and public services. This strategy seeks to limit infrastructure costs, reduce development pressure on farms and natural areas, and support efficient public service delivery.

The plan identifies the importance of maintaining a strong supply of housing opportunities while protecting community character and environmental resources. Growth is encouraged in locations where transportation facilities, utilities, schools, parks, and community services can support development efficiently.

The LRMP also promotes interconnected open space systems, protection of wetlands and waterways, and expanded trail connectivity, recognizing the strong relationship between community development patterns and transportation infrastructure.

Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The Winnebago County LRMP provides an important land use foundation for transportation planning on the Illinois side of the SLATS MPA. The emphasis on multimodal transportation, growth management, infrastructure preservation, freight mobility, and environmental stewardship aligns with the goals of the SLATS 2055 LRTP.

Most importantly, the plan reinforces the need to coordinate transportation investments with long-term land use objectives, direct growth toward infrastructure-served areas, preserve agricultural and environmental resources, and strengthen connectivity among transportation modes. These principles remain relevant as SLATS evaluates future transportation needs and investment priorities through 2055.

Modal Plans Review

The development of the SLATS 2055 LRTP was informed by recent transportation studies, modal plans, transit planning efforts, and rail studies. These plans provide valuable insight into existing transportation conditions, emerging trends, future mobility needs, and investment priorities throughout the SLATS MPA. Collectively, these plans examine active transportation, public transit, passenger rail, freight rail, economic development, sustainability, and transportation technology initiatives that influence future transportation decision-making which is central to the development of the SLATS 2055 LRTP. Key modal plans and studies completed since the SLATS 2045 LRTP plan adoption (2021) include:

- SLATS Passenger Rail Study (2021)
  - Rock County Transit Jobs Analysis memo – addendum to this study
- Beloit Transit System (BTS) Zero-Emission Transition Plan (2023)
- Stateline Mass Transit District (SMTD) Zero-Emission Transition Plan (2023)
- Microtransit Planning Study (2024)
- SLATS Passenger Rail Impact Study (2025)
- Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 (March 2026)
- SLATS Active Transportation Plan (April 2026)
- Stateline Area Transit Development Plan (August 2026)
- Beloit Janesville Express Intercity Transit Study (August 2026)

Together, these efforts provide a comprehensive multimodal foundation for the 2055 LRTP by identifying transportation needs, opportunities, and challenges related to safety, accessibility, economic competitiveness, freight movement, system resiliency, sustainability, regional connectivity, and coordination between transportation and land use planning. The findings and recommendations from these plans have been incorporated into the LRTP development process to help ensure that future transportation investments support a safe, connected, efficient, and sustainable multimodal transportation system that reflects regional goals and stakeholder priorities. Collectively, these modal plans also establish the region's multimodal priorities and provide a framework for identifying, evaluating, and advancing transportation projects, policies, and strategies over the life of the 2055 LRTP.

The following sections summarize the modal plans and studies reviewed as part of the LRTP development process. For organizational purposes, these plans are grouped into three categories: Active Transportation, Transit Related, and Rail/Passenger Rail Studies. Each plan contributes unique insights and recommendations that help inform the multimodal transportation vision, policies, and investment priorities identified in the 2055 LRTP.

SLATS Active Transportation Plan



The SLATS Active Transportation Plan was completed in 2026 and was an update to the 2017 Pedestrian and Bicycle System Plan, and the active transportation elements in the 2045 LRTP. The plan was developed in response to growing regional interest in improving walking and bicycling conditions, addressing network gaps, enhancing safety, and providing greater transportation choice throughout the SLATS MPA. SLATS initiated the effort to create a comprehensive, regionally coordinated framework for active transportation that reflects current community priorities, incorporates modern design practices, and establishes a long-term vision for pedestrian and bicycle connectivity across municipal and state boundaries.

The planning process included a robust public involvement effort, including a citizen steering committee, community pop-up events, online surveys, interactive mapping exercises, and public open houses. More than 450 residents participated in in-person engagement activities, while additional input was gathered through online surveys and mapping tools. Public feedback consistently identified concerns related to traffic speeds, lack of separated bicycle facilities, inadequate pedestrian connections, and gaps in the regional trail network. These findings directly informed the plan's vision, network recommendations, and implementation priorities.

Existing Conditions, Challenges and Opportunities

The plan's existing conditions assessment concluded that the SLATS MPA possesses many valuable active transportation assets but lacks a fully connected regional network. Sidewalk infrastructure is generally concentrated within urbanized areas and is relatively continuous within communities, while bicycle facilities are fragmented and often disconnected from one another. The study identified significant challenges associated with crossing major roadways, connecting neighborhoods to destinations, and providing comfortable bicycle facilities on arterial and collector streets. A Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (BLTS) analysis found that although many local residential streets offer low-stress riding conditions, these areas are frequently separated by high-stress corridors that create barriers to regional bicycle travel. The result is a series of disconnected “islands” of low-stress bicycle facilities that limit the practicality of bicycling for transportation purposes.

Public engagement results reinforced the technical findings. Residents reported feeling significantly less safe walking and bicycling than driving, with only 25 percent of survey respondents indicating they feel safe bicycling and 44 percent indicating they feel safe walking. The most frequently cited barriers to active transportation included excessive vehicle speeds, inadequate separation from traffic, poor sidewalk and bicycle facility maintenance, and stressful street crossings. Residents expressed strong support for facilities that provide physical separation from motor vehicles, including shared-use paths, trails, and protected bicycle lanes. These findings highlight the importance of safety, accessibility, connectivity, and maintenance as key issues that will continue to influence transportation planning decisions throughout the planning horizon.

At the same time, the plan identifies significant opportunities to expand regional connectivity. One of the most transformative opportunities involves creating a continuous low-stress connection between Wisconsin's Peace Trail and Illinois' Stone Bridge Trail, effectively linking major portions of the regional trail systems and creating new recreational and transportation opportunities. Additional opportunities include expanding connections between communities, improving access to schools, parks, employment centers, and downtown districts, implementing Complete Streets practices, and strengthening connections between active transportation facilities and transit services. The plan ultimately envisions a region-wide network that accommodates users of all ages and abilities while supporting mobility, recreation, economic development, tourism, public health, and quality of life.

Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The Active Transportation Plan provides an important policy and implementation framework for the SLATS 2055 LRTP. The plan translates regional goals related to mobility, safety, accessibility, public health, economic development, and environmental sustainability into a coordinated strategy for improving walking and bicycling throughout the SLATS MPA. The plan establishes a vision for a more connected, safe, and accessible active transportation network that supports the 2055 LRTP goals.

The plan identifies the infrastructure investments, policies, and programs needed to expand and improve active transportation opportunities across the region. Key recommendations include development of a comprehensive low-stress bicycle network, enhancement of regional trail connections, implementation of pedestrian safety improvements, adoption of Complete Streets principles, and incorporation of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations into transportation projects whenever feasible. These recommendations help inform the LRTP's project identification, evaluation, and prioritization processes.

The Active Transportation Plan also reinforces the importance of integrating active transportation with transit service, land use planning, economic development initiatives, and community investment decisions. By establishing a long-term framework for improving bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, safety, and accessibility, the plan serves as a key supporting document for the 2055 LRTP and helps guide future transportation investments toward a safer, more connected, and more multimodal regional transportation system.

Beloit Transit System (BTS) Zero-Emission Transition Plan (2023)



The Beloit Transit System Zero-Emission Transition Plan was completed in November 2023 to establish a roadmap for transitioning the agency's fleet from conventional diesel vehicles to zero-emission technologies, primarily battery-electric buses (BEBs). The plan was prepared in response to Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements associated with Low-No Emission Vehicle grant funding and to support the City of Beloit's broader sustainability initiatives, including its goal of carbon neutrality by 2040 and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The plan also responded to increasing federal investment opportunities available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which provided substantial funding for transit electrification projects.

The study evaluated current transit operations, fleet replacement schedules, facility readiness, utility coordination needs, workforce training requirements, and long-term funding strategies. The plan served as a compliance document for federal funding programs and a long-range strategic framework for integrating zero-emission vehicles into the regional transit system.

Existing Conditions, Challenges and Opportunities

The plan found that BTS is well-positioned to begin transitioning to battery-electric buses. BTS operates fixed-route transit service throughout Beloit using a fleet of diesel buses and the Beloit-Janesville Express (BJE) regional route. The analysis indicated that most local BTS routes could eventually be transitioned to battery-electric buses on a one-to-one replacement basis using current or near-future battery technology and overnight charging strategies. However, the longer-distance BJE route presented challenges due to vehicle range limitations.

The plan identified several infrastructure and implementation challenges. Cold-weather operating conditions in Wisconsin reduce battery performance and require agencies to plan around winter operating conditions. The study also found that BTS will require electrical system upgrades, charging infrastructure deployment, utility coordination with Alliant Energy, and continued workforce training to support future electric fleet operations. At the same time, the existing BTS garage was found to have adequate space and physical characteristics to accommodate future charging infrastructure with relatively limited facility modifications.

A major opportunity identified in the plan is the ability to gradually implement fleet electrification as vehicles reach the end of their useful lives. At the time of the study, BTS projected that its fleet could transition to fully electric vehicles by approximately 2035, subject to funding availability, vehicle technology advancements, and infrastructure investments. The plan recommends coordinated investments in charging infrastructure, facility upgrades, and utility partnerships to support this long-term transition.

Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The BTS Zero-Emission Transition Plan establishes a framework for evaluating future transit fleet investments, facility improvements, charging infrastructure needs, and operational considerations associated with transitioning portions of the Beloit Transit System fleet to zero-emission technologies. As the region plans for future transportation investments, the plan helps identify opportunities to improve system sustainability, reduce emissions, enhance energy efficiency, and support long-term transit resiliency.

From an LRTP perspective, the plan identifies potential capital, operational, and infrastructure needs associated with fleet electrification, including vehicle replacement schedules, charging facilities, utility coordination, workforce training, and facility upgrades. The plan also highlights the importance of coordinating transit planning with broader transportation, energy, and infrastructure investment decisions to ensure that future transit investments remain cost-effective and operationally feasible.

At the same time, the plan acknowledges the uncertainty surrounding future vehicle technologies, funding availability, energy costs, and federal and state transportation policies. In particular, recent changes in federal priorities related to electric vehicles and transit electrification may influence the pace and scale of future zero-emission bus deployments. As a result, the LRTP should view the Zero-Emission Transition Plan as a strategic roadmap that identifies potential pathways toward fleet modernization while recognizing that technology choices, implementation schedules, and funding strategies may evolve over time.

Stateline Mass Transit District (SMTD) Zero-Emission Transition Plan (2023)



The SMTD Zero-Emission Transition Plan was completed in November 2023 to guide the transition of SMTD's demand-response transit fleet toward zero-emission vehicle technologies. Similar to the BTS effort, the plan was developed to satisfy FTA requirements associated with federal funding programs and to position SMTD to compete for future Low-No Emission and transit infrastructure grants. The plan also supports broader state and federal greenhouse gas reduction goals while preparing the agency for future advances in electric vehicle technology applicable to demand-response transit operations.

Unlike BTS, SMTD operates a demand-response transit service serving South Beloit, Rockton, Roscoe, and surrounding portions of northern Illinois. SMTD contracts with the Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) to provide transit operations, vehicle maintenance, storage, and administrative services. As a result, the transition strategy is closely tied to RMTD's zero-emission fleet planning efforts and facility expansion occurring in Rockford.

Existing Conditions, Challenges, and Opportunities

The plan found that transitioning SMTD's fleet presents unique challenges compared with traditional fixed-route transit. SMTD currently operates demand-response service using smaller cutaway buses that serve a large geographic area and operate longer service hours. Analysis indicated that current battery-electric cutaway transit vehicles generally do not provide sufficient range to support one-for-one replacement of existing SMTD vehicles under many operating scenarios, particularly during winter conditions when battery performance is reduced.

The study concluded that current technology limitations represent the largest barrier to implementation. While battery-electric technology for smaller transit vehicles continues to improve, the plan determined that additional vehicle range improvements will likely be required before a full fleet conversion can occur efficiently. Under existing conditions, a fully electric fleet would likely require additional vehicles and operational adjustments to accommodate charging needs throughout the day.

Despite these challenges, the plan identifies opportunities over the long term. SMTD is scheduled to expand its fleet, which could improve operational flexibility and help facilitate future vehicle rotations during charging periods. Continued improvements in battery technology, declining vehicle costs, and planned facility upgrades at RMTD create a pathway toward gradual fleet electrification. The plan anticipated a phased transition to a fully electric fleet by approximately 2032, assuming technology advancements and funding resources continue to improve.

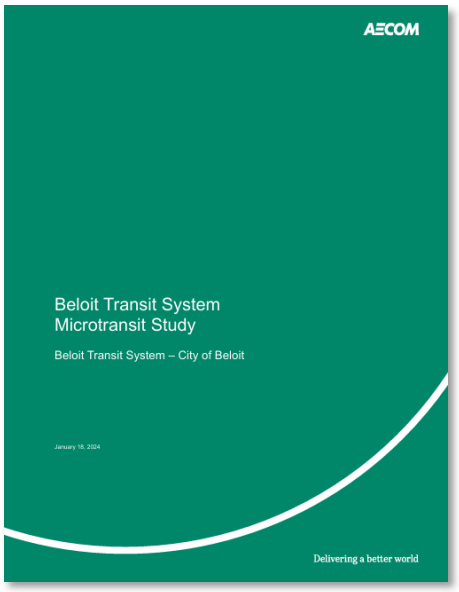
Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The SMTD Zero-Emission Transition Plan is important to the 2055 LRTP because it highlights mobility needs and implementation challenges in lower-density portions of the SLATS region. While many regional transportation planning initiatives focus on urban fixed-route service, SMTD demonstrates the

critical role that flexible demand-response transit plays in providing access to employment, healthcare, shopping, and essential services within smaller communities and rural areas.

The plan also reinforces the importance of regional cooperation and shared infrastructure. Because SMTD relies on RMTD facilities and operational resources, successful fleet electrification would require continued coordination among local governments, transit providers, utility companies, and funding agencies. These themes align closely with the regional coordination, system resiliency, and multimodal transportation goals set forth in the SLATS 2055 LRTP.

Beloit Transit System Microtransit Study (2024)



The Beloit Transit System (BTS) Microtransit Study was completed in January 2024 to evaluate whether on-demand microtransit service could help address changing mobility needs within Beloit and complement the existing fixed-route transit network. The study was initiated by BTS and SLATS as a response to declining fixed-route ridership trends, evolving travel patterns, changing employment locations, and growing interest in flexible mobility solutions that could improve access to jobs, shopping, healthcare, and other community destinations. The study specifically sought to determine where microtransit could most effectively supplement traditional fixed-route bus service and improve transportation access for residents, particularly in low-density areas that are difficult to serve efficiently with conventional transit.

The study included a detailed assessment of existing transit services, demographic and socioeconomic conditions, travel patterns, employment centers, activity centers, public engagement findings, and potential operating models. Public outreach was conducted throughout 2023 and included meetings, transit center outreach events, community surveys, and stakeholder engagement activities that helped identify mobility needs and evaluate public interest in a future microtransit service.

Existing Conditions, Challenges and Opportunities

The study found that BTS faces several challenges experienced by small and medium-sized transit systems nationwide. Fixed-route ridership had been declining at the time of the study, falling from approximately 252,000 annual passenger trips in 2013 to approximately 93,000 trips in 2022. While ridership has partially recovered since the COVID-19 pandemic, system productivity measures, farebox recovery, and cost-effectiveness indicators continue to face long-term challenges. At the same time, transit service levels have remained relatively consistent, resulting in declining passengers-per-hour and passengers-per-mile performance metrics.

The study identified significant transportation needs among transit-dependent populations, particularly in and around Downtown Beloit, west-side neighborhoods, and areas along the Rock River corridor where concentrations of low-income households, minority populations, individuals with disabilities, households without access to a vehicle, and other transportation-disadvantaged populations are located. The analysis also identified a disconnect between residential concentrations and major employment centers. While many residents are located in west and central Beloit, major job centers are increasingly located along the Prairie Avenue corridor, the Gateway Business Park area, healthcare facilities, and industrial and distribution centers near I-39/90.

Public outreach reinforced these findings. The most frequently cited transportation needs included expanded service hours, better connections to employment centers, improved cross-town (east-west) travel, and more flexible service for workers traveling to second- and third-shift jobs. Stakeholders noted that fixed-route service can be difficult to operate efficiently in lower-density employment areas

such as the Gateway Business Park, where destinations are dispersed and travel patterns vary throughout the day.

As a result, the study identified microtransit as a potentially effective service concept for addressing first-mile/last-mile connections, improving access to major employers, and serving lower-density areas where fixed-route transit is less productive. Three potential microtransit zones were evaluated, including the Gateway Zone, North Beloit Zone, and West Beloit Zone. The study recommended implementation of a Gateway Zone pilot program focused on serving major employment and commercial destinations in eastern Beloit, including Amazon, Hormel, Kerry, Walmart, the Ho-Chunk Casino development, hotels, and industrial employers. The study concluded that microtransit could provide more direct, demand-responsive service while improving connections to the broader fixed-route transit network.

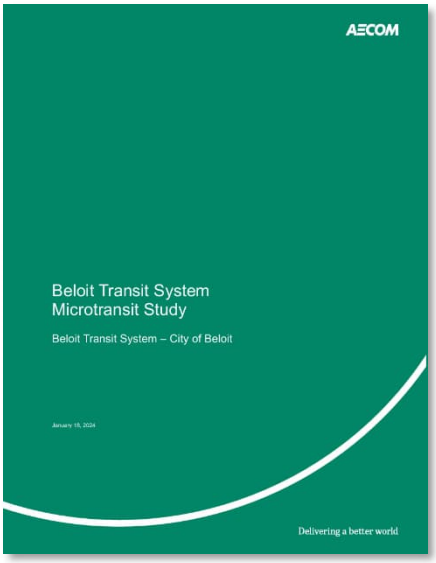
Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The Microtransit Study evaluated the feasibility of implementing an on-demand transit service to improve mobility within the SLATS MPA, particularly for employment centers, underserved areas, and trips that may not be effectively served by traditional fixed-route transit. The findings and recommendations from the study were subsequently incorporated into the BTS Transit Development Plan (TDP), where microtransit was evaluated alongside other local and regional transit service improvements and long-term mobility strategies.

From a comprehensive planning perspective, the study highlights how dispersed employment growth, particularly in industrial and commercial developments near interstate corridors, can create mobility challenges that are not always addressed effectively through traditional fixed-route transit alone. The study's findings also support broader community goals related to economic development, transportation access for all users, workforce mobility, and efficient use of public resources.

For the 2055 LRTP, the study highlights the potential role of flexible, demand-responsive transportation services as part of a broader multimodal transportation network. By informing the BTS TDP, the study helps guide future transit planning, investment decisions, and service strategies while supporting regional goals related to accessibility, workforce mobility, transportation equity, and connectivity. Together, the Microtransit Study and BTS TDP provide valuable direction for evaluating how emerging mobility solutions can complement traditional transit services and contribute to a more connected and responsive transportation system over the LRTP planning horizon.

Stateline Area Transit Development Plan (TDP)



The Stateline Area TDP was completed in July 2026 through a partnership between SLATS, BTS and SMTD. The plan was developed to provide a comprehensive assessment of existing public transportation services within the SLATS MPA and establish a coordinated strategy for improving transit mobility, accessibility, and regional connectivity. The effort builds upon previous transit planning studies and responds to changing travel patterns, evolving mobility needs, growing interest in regional coordination, and ongoing challenges related to transit funding, service efficiency, and cross-border travel between Wisconsin and Illinois.

A key objective of the TDP was to evaluate existing transit operations and identify opportunities to improve service for residents, workers, students, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and transit-dependent populations. The planning process included a detailed review of service performance, demographic trends, travel demand, stakeholder interviews, public surveys, interactive mapping exercises, and community open houses. The study also incorporated a Regional Transit Study component that examined opportunities for improved coordination between BTS and SMTD and explored long-term options for strengthening transit connectivity throughout the Stateline Area.

Existing Conditions, Challenges and Opportunities

The TDP found that transit services in the Stateline region provide important mobility options but operate largely as separate systems. BTS provides fixed-route service primarily within Beloit, while SMTD operates a demand-response system serving South Beloit, Rockton, Roscoe, and surrounding areas in northern Illinois. Although limited connections exist between the two systems, the study identified challenges associated with cross-border travel, inconsistent service hours, separate fare structures, and limited direct connections between major employment centers, medical facilities, educational institutions, and commercial destinations. Public engagement results consistently highlighted the need for improved regional connectivity, expanded service coverage, better east-west mobility within Beloit, and stronger north-south connections across the Wisconsin–Illinois Stateline.

The plan's market analysis identified several areas with strong potential for future transit investment. Population density, employment concentrations, and transit-dependent populations are heavily concentrated within Beloit, particularly in and around Downtown Beloit, the Rock River corridor, and major commercial districts. Origin-destination travel analysis found substantial travel occurring across jurisdictional boundaries for work, shopping, education, and healthcare purposes, reinforcing the need for enhanced regional transit coordination. The analysis also found that many residents face transportation barriers due to limited-service hours, lack of weekend service options, insufficient regional transit connections, and challenges accessing transit stops. These findings were reinforced through public outreach where respondents emphasized longer service hours, increased service frequency, improved bus stop amenities, better sidewalk connections, and expanded regional travel opportunities as top priorities.

The TDP also identified several future opportunities to strengthen transit throughout the region. These include restructuring BTS routes to improve efficiency, implementing fare modernization technologies, advancing microtransit service in lower-density areas, expanding service hours and frequencies, improving passenger amenities, and enhancing coordination between transit providers. The long-term vision of the plan emphasizes the development of a more integrated regional transit network capable of supporting economic development, workforce access, educational opportunities, healthcare access, and cross-border mobility while maintaining financial sustainability. Of particular importance is the plan's recognition that future transit success will depend on stronger coordination among local governments, transit operators, land use planning efforts, and regional transportation investments.

Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The TDP provides the current assessment of transit needs, service performance, mobility gaps, and future transit investment priorities within the SLATS region. As such, it serves as a key document for the development of the 2055 LRTP by identifying existing and future transit needs, evaluating service alternatives, and establishing a framework for improving mobility throughout the planning area.

The TDP identifies a phased strategy for enhancing transit service, including near-term operational improvements, longer-term service expansions, regional coordination opportunities, and implementation of flexible mobility solutions. Major themes include improving regional connectivity, expanding access to employment centers and community destinations, strengthening coordination between BTS and SMTD, evaluating microtransit and other innovative service models, and improving transit-supportive infrastructure.

The plan also highlights the increasingly regional nature of travel within the Stateline Area, where work, education, healthcare, shopping, and recreational trips regularly cross municipal and state boundaries. As a result, the TDP reinforces the importance of multimodal transportation investments, regional mobility solutions, and interagency coordination. The recommendations help inform the transit goals, policies, project priorities, and investment strategies incorporated into the 2055 LRTP, ensuring that transit remains an integral component of a connected, accessible, and resilient regional transportation system. The findings are also consistent with comprehensive planning efforts throughout the region, which have identified the need for expanded transit options, improved regional connectivity, and enhanced access to employment, services, and community destinations.

Beloit–Janesville Express (BJE) Intercity Transit Study



The BJE Intercity Transit Study was conducted to evaluate the performance, long-term viability, and future opportunities associated with the region's only fixed-route transit service directly connecting the cities of Beloit and Janesville. Operated jointly by BTS and Janesville Transit System (JT), the BJE serves as an important regional mobility link connecting residents to employment, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, retail centers, and other key destinations located between Wisconsin's two largest communities in Rock County. The study was undertaken to understand current travel demand, identify operational challenges, evaluate opportunities for service improvements, and determine how transit can support future regional growth and mobility objectives.

Existing Conditions, Challenges and Opportunities

The study found that the Beloit–Janesville corridor functions as a major economic and commuting corridor within Rock County, supporting significant travel between employment centers, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and commercial destinations. Although the BJE provides a critical regional transit connection, the study identified several challenges related to service frequency, travel times, transit competitiveness, and the ability to serve emerging travel markets. Like many regional transit services, the BJE must balance operational costs and available funding with the desire to provide convenient and attractive service for riders.

The study also identified substantial opportunities for future enhancement. Continued economic development within both Beloit and Janesville, combined with growth in employment, healthcare, educational, and entertainment destinations along the corridor, creates opportunities to expand transit ridership and improve regional mobility. As part of planned service improvements, the BJE route will be realigned within Beloit to operate along the Prairie Avenue corridor. This change will provide opportunities for improved access to major healthcare facilities and a possible direct transit connection to the new Beloit Casino, which is expected to open in fall 2026. In addition, the route realignment will shift the southern terminus to the Piggly Wiggly, improving connections with the local transit network and creating opportunities for additional consortium members to join the regional service.

Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The BJE Study serves as a supporting document for the 2055 LRTP by identifying current and future transit needs within one of the region's primary travel corridors. The study highlights the importance of maintaining and strengthening transit connections between Beloit and Janesville to improve access to employment, education, healthcare, commercial destinations, and other essential services. The study demonstrates how regional transit can support broader LRTP goals related to mobility, accessibility, economic competitiveness, transportation choice, and connectivity. The recommendations for service enhancements, improved transit connections, expanded regional partnerships, and integration with other transportation modes help inform the LRTP's transit strategies and investment priorities.

Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 (Amended March 2026)



The Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 was adopted by WisDOT in 2023 and amended in March 2026 to maintain compliance with federal rail planning requirements and reflect evolving passenger rail, freight rail, and rail investment priorities through 2050. The plan establishes Wisconsin's long-range vision, goals, policies, and investment strategies for freight rail, intercity passenger rail, commuter rail, rail safety, and rail corridor preservation. The plan guides future state, federal, local, and private-sector rail investments while supporting Wisconsin's broader multimodal transportation objectives.

Although the plan is statewide in scope, it contains sections that are relevant to the SLATS MPA. In particular, the plan acknowledges the strategic location of Rock County within Wisconsin's freight rail network and specifically identifies the Madison–Janesville–Rockford passenger rail corridor as a long-term passenger rail opportunity. The plan also references the SLATS Passenger Rail Study completed in 2021 and incorporates findings from previous regional rail planning efforts.

SLATS Area Passenger Rail Opportunities

One of the most significant findings for the 2055 LRTP is the continued recognition of a future passenger rail connection between Madison, Janesville, Beloit, and Rockford. The Wisconsin Rail Plan notes that the 2021 SLATS Passenger Rail Study evaluated multiple alignments and identified two corridors that warranted additional consideration: the Rockford–Beloit–Janesville–Milton–Madison corridor and the Harvard–Janesville–Milton–Madison corridor. These corridors build upon earlier recommendations from the South Central Wisconsin Commuter Transportation Study.

The amended Wisconsin Rail Plan elevates the Madison–Janesville–Rockford Rail Service corridor into its list of potential long-range intercity passenger rail projects. While no funding has been programmed for environmental review or implementation, inclusion in the state rail plan establishes the corridor as a recognized long-term transportation initiative and preserves the opportunity for future study, federal funding pursuit, and regional coordination. The plan specifically identifies Madison–Janesville–Rockford service as a potential future component of Wisconsin's expanded passenger rail network extending beyond the existing Hiawatha and Empire Builder corridors.

The plan also highlights the growing regional significance of Rockford within Midwest passenger rail planning. Illinois is actively advancing restoration of passenger rail service between Chicago and Rockford, with service currently anticipated to begin by the end of 2027. The planned service will reestablish a direct rail connection between Rockford and the Chicago region for the first time since 1981 and could serve as a critical first step toward future passenger rail expansion northward to Beloit, Janesville, and Madison. Together, Wisconsin's long-range corridor planning efforts and Illinois' ongoing implementation of the Chicago–Rockford service creates a foundation for future regional passenger rail connections linking communities within the SLATS area to major employment, educational, and transportation centers throughout southern Wisconsin, northern Illinois, and the Chicago region.

Freight Rail Issues and Opportunities Affecting Rock County

The Wisconsin Rail Plan recognizes Rock County as one of Wisconsin's most important freight rail hubs. Janesville is identified as one of the state's major rail yards and serves as a key interchange location among Union Pacific (UP), Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR), and Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC). The county's rail infrastructure supports agricultural producers, manufacturers, distribution facilities, and regional freight movement throughout southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. This is consistent with the on-going update to the Rock County Comprehensive Plan.

The plan identifies several freight rail operational issues with direct relevance to Rock County. Most notably, WSOR's operations through Janesville are constrained because portions of its network require the use of Union Pacific-owned track segments and dispatching authority to move trains between the Madison, Monroe, Fox Lake, Chicago, and Waukesha subdivisions. This shared-use arrangement creates operational bottlenecks that can affect freight efficiency and system reliability, which can also impact the SLATS MPA. The continued coordination between freight rail operators and infrastructure owners therefore remains an important consideration for future freight mobility and economic development efforts in the region.

The plan forecasts substantial statewide growth in freight rail activity through 2050, with rail tonnage projected to increase by approximately 119 percent and the value of rail freight expected to increase by approximately 172 percent. Agricultural products, manufacturing commodities, and transportation and warehousing-related freight are projected to experience significant growth. Given Rock County's strategic location along interstate, major freight rail corridors, and industrial development areas, these trends suggest continuing demand for rail-served industrial sites, freight mobility improvements, rail corridor preservation, and freight-related economic development opportunities.

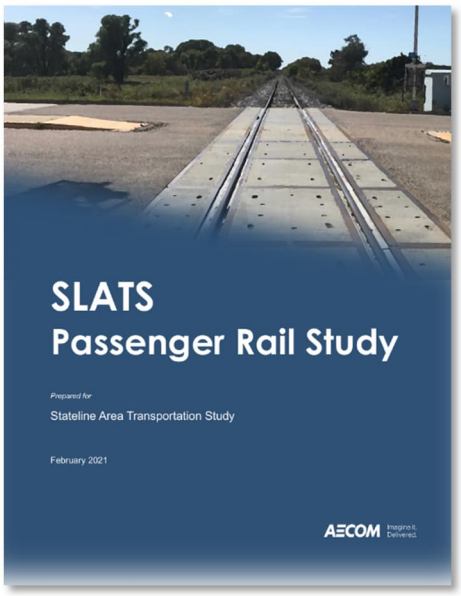
Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 establishes a statewide policy framework that directly supports several long-range transportation goals already identified within the region. The plan emphasizes multimodal connectivity, passenger rail expansion, freight mobility, rail corridor preservation, safety improvements, and economic competitiveness. These priorities closely align with regional transportation objectives focused on strengthening mobility options, enhancing freight efficiency, improving access to employment centers, and supporting economic development.

The plan reinforces the importance of preserving rail corridors that may support future passenger rail service, particularly along the Madison–Janesville–Beloit–Rockford corridor. The plan also highlights how transportation investments can influence future development patterns, economic activity, and land use decisions. As local jurisdictions update comprehensive plans and economic development strategies, consideration should be given to protecting rail corridors, coordinating land use around potential future stations, preserving freight rail access to industrial areas, and maintaining opportunities for future passenger rail implementation.

For the 2055 LRTP, the Madison–Janesville–Rockford corridor represents one of the most significant long-range multimodal opportunities identified in any statewide transportation planning document. Continued monitoring of federal, state, and FRA passenger rail initiatives will be important monitor through the SLATS 2055 LRTP planning horizon.

SLATS Passenger Rail Study (2021)



The SLATS Passenger Rail Study was completed in February 2021 following the development of the 2045 LRTP. This study represented the first comprehensive evaluation of passenger rail service opportunities in the region since the South Central Wisconsin Commuter Transportation Study (SCWCTS) in 2008. The study was undertaken to reassess the feasibility of introducing passenger rail service to the SLATS MPA and evaluate various passenger rail alignments connecting Beloit, Janesville, Rockford, Madison, Harvard, and the Chicago metropolitan area. Key objectives included improving workforce mobility, supporting economic development, expanding transportation options, reducing roadway congestion, and encouraging more compact land use patterns.

Existing Conditions, Challenges, and Opportunities

The study found that existing transit options were limited to local bus service, demand-response transit, and intercity bus connections such as Van Galder service. At the time the study was completed, the closest passenger rail service was available through the Metra station in Harvard, Illinois, while Illinois was evaluating the restoration of passenger rail service between Chicago and Rockford. Since then, IDOT has advanced the project, with passenger rail service between Chicago and Rockford currently anticipated to begin by the end of 2027.

A detailed market analysis examined multiple passenger rail corridors and concluded that the strongest ridership potential was associated with corridors connecting Rockford, Beloit, Janesville, and Madison. Projected ridership ranged from approximately 850 to 2,150 weekday passenger trips, depending on the corridor evaluated. A key finding was that the concentration of employment in Madison, combined with projected employment growth throughout Rock County, improved the potential market for passenger rail service. The study also highlighted increasing travel demand between regional employment centers as a key factor supporting future passenger rail viability.

The study emphasized that implementation would require extensive coordination among local governments, MPOs, WisDOT, IDOT, freight railroads, and federal agencies. Additional challenges identified included securing rail corridor capacity, maintaining freight operations, funding infrastructure improvements, and identifying sustainable operating revenues. One of the study's recommended next steps was to seek inclusion of the preferred corridor in the Wisconsin State Rail Plan. As noted earlier in this appendix, SLATS worked with WisDOT in Winter 2025 to have the corridor added to the statewide rail plan. WisDOT amended the Wisconsin Rail Plan in March 2026 to include the Madison–Janesville–Rockford corridor as a potential long-range intercity passenger rail project.

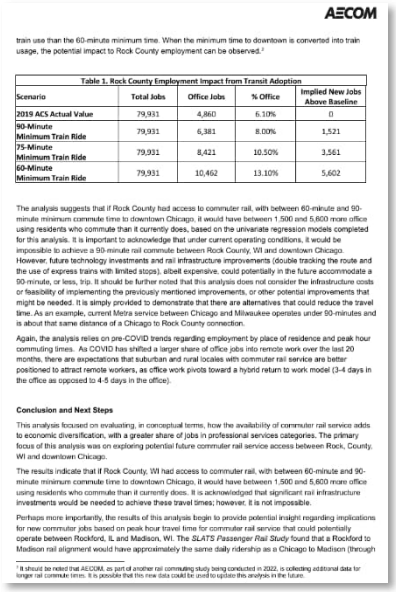
Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The Passenger Rail Study established the technical foundation for future passenger rail planning within the Stateline Area. Most importantly, it identified the Rockford–Beloit–Janesville–Madison corridor as a promising passenger rail opportunity serving southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. The study also

emphasized the importance of preserving rail corridors, continuing interstate and interagency coordination, and monitoring future population and employment growth that could strengthen the case for passenger rail investment.

For the 2055 LRTP, the study remains the region's primary evaluation of passenger rail market potential and provides a framework for considering future multimodal mobility investments beyond traditional highway improvements. Combined with the anticipated restoration of passenger rail service between Chicago and Rockford by the end of 2027 and WisDOT's inclusion of the Madison–Janesville–Rockford corridor in the 2026 Wisconsin Rail Plan, the study continues to provide important guidance for advancing long-term passenger rail opportunities within the SLATS region.

Rock County Transit Jobs Analysis (2021)



AECOM

train use than the 60-minute minimum time. When the minimum time to downtown is converted into train usage, the potential impact to Rock County employment can be observed.[1]

Table 1. Rock County Employment Impact from Transit Adoption

Scenario	Total Jobs	Office Jobs	% Office	Implied New Jobs Above Baseline
2019 ACS Actual Value	79,931	4,860	6.10%	0
90-Minute Minimum Train Ride	79,931	6,381	8.00%	1,521
75-Minute Minimum Train Ride	79,931	8,421	10.50%	3,561
60-Minute Minimum Train Ride	79,931	10,462	13.10%	5,602

The analysis suggests that if Rock County had access to commuter rail, with between 60-minute and 90-minute minimum commute time to downtown Chicago, it would have between 1,500 and 5,600 more office using residents who commute than it currently does, based on the univariate regression models completed for this analysis. It is important to acknowledge that under current operating conditions, it would be impossible to achieve a 90-minute rail commute between Rock County, WI and downtown Chicago. However, future technology investments and rail infrastructure improvements (double tracking the route and the use of express trains with limited stops), albeit expensive, could potentially in the future accommodate a 90-minute, or less, trip. It should be further noted that this analysis does not consider the infrastructure costs or feasibility of implementing the previously mentioned improvements, or other potential improvements that might be needed. It is simply provided to demonstrate that there are alternatives that could reduce the travel time. As an example, current Metra service between Chicago and Milwaukee operates under 90-minutes and is about that same distance of a Chicago to Rock County connection.

Again, the analysis relies on pre-COVID trends regarding employment by place of residence and peak hour commuting times. As COVID has shifted a larger share of office jobs into remote work over the last 20 months, there are expectations that suburban and rural locales with commuter rail service are better positioned to attract remote workers, as office work pivots toward a hybrid return to work model (3-4 days in the office as opposed to 4-5 days in the office).

Conclusion and Next Steps

This analysis focused on evaluating, in conceptual terms, how the availability of commuter rail service adds to economic diversification, with a greater share of jobs in professional services categories. The primary focus of this analysis was on exploring potential future commuter rail service access between Rock, County, WI and downtown Chicago.

The results indicate that if Rock County, WI had access to commuter rail, with between 60-minute and 90-minute minimum commute time to downtown Chicago, it would have between 1,500 and 5,600 more office using residents who commute than it currently does. It is acknowledged that significant rail infrastructure investments would be needed to achieve these travel times; however, it is not impossible.

Perhaps more importantly, the results of this analysis begin to provide potential insight regarding implications for new commuter jobs based on peak hour travel time for commuter rail service that could potentially operate between Rockford, IL and Madison, WI. The *SLATS Passenger Rail Study* found that a Rockford to Madison rail alignment would have approximately the same daily ridership as a Chicago to Madison (through

[1] It should be noted that AECOM, as part of another rail commuting study being conducted in 2022, is collecting additional data for longer rail commute times. It is possible that this new data could be used to update this analysis in the future.

In 2021 as a follow-up to the 2021 SLATS Passenger Rail Study. The analysis explored the relationship between passenger rail accessibility, workforce mobility, and economic development opportunities within Rock County. Specifically, the study explored how access to commuter rail service connecting Rock County to the Chicago metropolitan area could influence the county's share of professional and office-using employment. The study also focused on emerging trends related to remote and hybrid work patterns following the COVID-19 pandemic and assessed how rail access could enhance the region's economic competitiveness.

Existing Conditions, Challenges and Opportunities

The analysis found a statistically significant relationship between communities with commuter rail access and higher concentrations of office-based and professional employment. Using Illinois communities served by Metra as a benchmark, the study concluded that places with commuter rail service generally exhibit higher proportions of professional, financial, management, and office-oriented employment. The findings suggest that travel time to major employment centers influences rail usage and that shorter travel times are associated with higher transit ridership rates.

Applying these relationships to Rock County, the study estimated that future commuter rail access could potentially support between approximately 1,500 and 5,600 additional office-using jobs, depending on the level of service and travel times achieved between Rock County and downtown Chicago. The study also noted that evolving hybrid work arrangements may strengthen the attractiveness of communities such as Beloit and Janesville by allowing workers to reside farther from major employment centers while maintaining periodic access through rail service. In addition, the analysis concluded that similar economic development implications could result from future passenger rail service operating between Rockford, Beloit, Janesville, and Madison.

Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The Transit Jobs Analysis demonstrates that passenger rail should be considered not only as a transportation investment but also as a long-term economic development strategy. The study provides evidence that expanded regional mobility can support workforce diversification, increase access to professional employment opportunities, and enhance regional competitiveness. Its findings reinforce the importance of preserving future passenger rail opportunities, particularly within the Madison–Janesville–Beloit–Rockford corridor, and provide an economic rationale for continuing to monitor and plan for future regional rail investments during the 2055 LRTP planning horizon.

SLATS Passenger Rail Impact Study (2025)



The Passenger Rail Impact Study was completed in 2025 to build upon the findings of the 2021 Passenger Rail Study. While the earlier study focused primarily on ridership potential and corridor feasibility, the Impact Study examined the broader economic development, land use, demographic, and redevelopment implications associated with passenger rail service along the entire length of the Rockford–Beloit–Janesville–Madison corridor. The study evaluated 16 potential station areas and assessed opportunities for transit-oriented development (TOD), economic growth, redevelopment, housing, and job creation.

Existing Conditions, Challenges and Opportunities

The study found that growth along the corridor has been uneven over the past decade. Madison has captured much of the region's population and employment growth, while portions of Rockford and northern Winnebago County experienced population decline. Downtown Beloit emerged as one of the corridor's strongest performers, exhibiting population and employment growth despite broader regional challenges. It found that some station areas contained aging commercial and industrial properties, underutilized land, and redevelopment opportunities that could support future TOD.

One of the study's key findings was that communities located between major metropolitan centers, particularly Beloit and Janesville, would potentially receive the largest accessibility benefits from passenger rail investments. The analysis showed that passenger rail could significantly improve access to employment centers in Madison and Rockford while expanding connections to future Chicago passenger rail services through Rockford. Transit accessibility modeling found that under an express rail scenario, jobs accessible within 60 minutes from Downtown Beloit could increase from approximately 35,000 to 79,000 jobs, while accessibility for Janesville residents would also improve.

The study also identified substantial redevelopment potential within downtown Beloit, Janesville, and Rockford. Historic downtowns were found to possess the greatest opportunities for higher-density, mixed-use, transit-supportive development, while suburban and greenfield station locations also demonstrated long-term development potential. The analysis projected that passenger rail investment could generate between 22,000 and 29,000 cumulative new jobs and between $3 billion and $5 billion in cumulative fiscal impact across the corridor over a 30-year period.

Relevance to 2055 LRTP

The Passenger Rail Impact Study expands transportation planning beyond ridership analysis by demonstrating how transportation investments can influence future development patterns, economic growth, housing opportunities, and redevelopment activity. The study directly links transportation and land use planning by identifying station areas where future rail investments could support compact, mixed-use, walkable development patterns consistent with local comprehensive plan goals. It also highlights the importance of preserving station area opportunities, coordinating future land use decisions, and integrating transportation investments with economic development strategies. All of which are consistent with the SLATS 2055 LRTP goals and objectives.