

St. Croix County Parks and Recreation Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan



**Prepared by
West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
March, 2008**

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Introduction

Background

Many factors contribute to St. Croix County's vibrant growth and quality of life. The scenic beauty of the St. Croix River, the pastoral charm of the rural communities, real estate and development opportunities, and the County's proximity to the Twin Cities, have all contributed to St. Croix County's strong population growth of over 25% from 1990 to 2000 (source: U.S. Bureau of the Census) and another 21% from 2000 to 2005 (source: Wisconsin Department of Administration). As growth continues in St. Croix County, on into the 21st century, quality of life and health issues increase in importance and the demand for recreational accommodations grows amongst County residents. Bicycling and walking are exceedingly efficient forms of transportation, as well as excellent recreational activities. The most competitive economies of the future will fully enable them not only for economic purposes, but for health and quality of life reasons. As the population of St. Croix County continues to grow, more people will be bicycling for commuting, utilitarian, social, recreational, or exercise purposes. In January of 2006, St. Croix County adopted an updated Outdoor Recreation Plan. One of the priority needs identified in the plan was creation of additional bike and pedestrian trail facilities and an integrated trail system for all of St. Croix County. A Bike and Pedestrian Trail Plan is the first step in addressing this need.

In early 2007, St. Croix County and West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) entered into a contract to develop a county-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan. WCWRPC previously worked with St. Croix County to develop the *St. Croix County Bicycle Transportation Plan, 1995-2015*, completed in July of 1996. Many of the plan's recommendations have been implemented. The County's current need is to supplement this plan with the addition of a recreational component which considers opportunities for on-road, as well as off-road facilities for the future. This plan will consider some of the County's recreational resources, particularly those that are linear in nature, that could offer opportunities for bicycle/ pedestrian trails, and perhaps connect to the statewide trail system that currently skirts St. Croix County.

The Process

A Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Planning Advisory Committee was formed and concerted effort made to include representation from all of the towns, cities, and villages, to provide a perspective for all areas of the County. In addition to community representation, participation included the County Highway, Planning, and Parks Departments. (See Appendix A for Committee participation.) The committee provided information on countywide needs and developed goals for a regional bicycling/pedestrian system. Then, the Committee was divided up into smaller work groups to provide more specific information on needs in various parts of the County, such as important destinations, connections between communities that share a school district, and coordination with local plans. Routes were further developed and refined to provide good county-wide connections, and then reviewed by the smaller sub-groups. Community representatives were encouraged to take the route maps back to their community boards or commissions for review and further input, which are incorporated into the final recommendations included in this plan.

Many communities within the County have given this topic much thought in the development of the transportation and/or recreation elements of their respective comprehensive plans. Some communities do not yet have an adopted comprehensive plan, or did not as thoroughly address bicycling or pedestrian travel in their plans. One role of this County plan is to provide connections to and between planned municipal routes, but not necessarily to provide recommendations for local bicycling/walking systems within the communities. In communities without adopted bicycling/walking plans, outreach efforts were made to provide logical connections to a planned County system. Those adopted local plans for pedestrian and bicycle facilities that were made available to us, are included in Appendix B of this report.

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Goals and Objectives

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Planning Advisory Committee (See Appendix A) reviewed and updated goals and objectives from the previous bicycle transportation plan. The recommendations presented in this plan are intended to provide guidance for the enhancement of the bicycling environment in the County, and encourage inter-governmental coordination toward that goal, while recognizing the fiscal constraints under which county and local municipalities operate. The following goals and objectives were developed to keep the planning effort focused on these issues.

Goal 1: To encourage the use of bicycle and pedestrian modes as elements of an integrated multi-modal transportation system in St. Croix County.

Objectives

- A. Identify a bikeway/pedestrian system in St. Croix County that will provide bicyclists and pedestrians with safe and convenient access to major centers of employment, education, shopping, housing, and recreation.
- B. Develop a bicycle/pedestrian plan for St. Croix County that employs an acceptable methodology to determine suitable bicycle facilities and identify improvements needed to attain a suitable situation.
- C. Encourage the coordination and cooperation between cities, villages, and towns in the planning and development of bike/pedestrian facilities.
- D. Increase the safety of bicycle and pedestrian transportation in St. Croix County through bicycle/pedestrian facility improvements, expanded education programs and increased law enforcement pertaining to the interaction between motorists and bicyclists on public roads.
- E. Promote increased use of bicycles and walking as viable alternative modes of transportation.
- F. To strongly consider accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians in the construction and reconstruction of bridges and other barrier crossings.

Goal 2: To increase recreational bicycling and walking opportunities for residents and to enhance tourism and the economy of St. Croix County.

Objectives

- A. Continue to pursue improvements to identified bicycle and pedestrian facilities where needed.
- B. Acquire and develop abandoned railroad corridors for bicycle/pedestrian trails that provide a connection to other bicycle/pedestrian facilities, where feasible.
- C. Seek to acquire lands for proposed off-road trail systems.
- D. Develop funding sources that would support the development, operation, and maintenance of a bicycle/pedestrian trail system.
- E. Promote recreational bicycling and walking for its associated physical and mental health benefits.

- F. To pursue improvements that will provide safe recreational bike/pedestrian opportunities for families and children.

Goal 3: To promote a safe bicycling/walking environment in St. Croix County through facility improvements and education and enforcement programs.

Objective

- A. Increase the safety of bicycle and pedestrian transportation in the County through bicycle/pedestrian facility improvements and educational enforcement programs for bicyclists, motorists, and law enforcement personnel.

The Biking/Walking Environment

Rapid development has continued through much of St. Croix County, with the western portions – City of River Falls, City of Hudson, Village of North Hudson, and City of New Richmond – and the surrounding towns in the western tier of the County under considerable growth pressure from the Twin Cities. Urbanization pressures have also been felt in the central and eastern portions of the County, with growth mainly occurring around a number of smaller communities scattered over the primarily agricultural areas of central St. Croix County.

Traffic volumes have increased, making some highways less desirable and less suitable for bicycling. The 1995 plan analyzed which roads were suitable for bicycling at that time. While volumes have increased, some infrastructure improvements, such as paved shoulders, have been implemented since 1995, to help maintain bicycling suitability for those who are able to ride, and are comfortable riding, in higher traffic volumes. This plan updates that suitability analysis based on current conditions, and considers alternative routes, as needed, to replace those that are no longer suitable.

The physical characteristics of St. Croix County offer a wide variety of biking and walking experiences, making it attractive to bikers from outside the area. Improvement of bicycling facilities within the County and connection to other regional trails will improve the County's tourism potential, in addition to serving the local population. From a bicyclist's perspective, St. Croix County offers a wide variety of terrain. The landscape varies from the rugged hilly areas in the western portions of the county, particularly in the Towns of St. Joseph and Somerset, to the rolling plain of the central portions of the county, and again to a more rugged hilly terrain in the eastern portions.

The Bicyclist and Pedestrian

Childhood obesity and all its related health concerns have become major issues in society and are beginning to be addressed at all levels of government. Partly to blame are the development patterns that have occurred across the country, over the past several decades, including St. Croix County. Scattered development has resulted in the use of motor vehicles for most trips that could have been done by bicycle or walking, as well as reducing familiarity between neighbors, resulting in a lessened sense of security. This is especially true for trips to school and other children's activities. While local planning for walkable and bikeable communities can certainly help to regain much of this important daily activity, some has been irreparably lost to dangerous traffic levels, fear of strangers, and trip distances too long for biking. Much of the recommended one hour or more of physical activity per day now relies on more structured activity than normal daily routine. The same is true for adults. With more time spent on computers or sitting in cars on longer work commutes, there is an increasing need and interest in bicycling and walking for recreation and fitness.

Bicyclists and pedestrians vary in their ability to control the bicycle and their ability to judge the speed of moving vehicles. For instance, younger children may have difficulty judging speeds of motorized vehicles, anticipating all the possible movements cars will make. Also, children often do not have the knowledge and a command of the rules of the road. Adult recreational riders are more comfortable and knowledgeable on roadways, but would rather not risk conflict with higher traffic volumes and truck traffic on busier highways. More experienced, adult bicyclists may be able to maneuver in traffic and would likely be comfortable taking the most direct route to work, or other destinations, even if it is on a fairly busy highway. The abilities and needs of all bicycles need to be considered. Most facilities can accommodate walkers and bikers, so throughout this document they will be referred to as bicycling facilities.

While many of the roads within the county are quite suitable for bicycling, recreation for families with children often demands off-road facilities to provide an enjoyable and safe recreational

experience. Increased traffic volumes and speeds can force a need for off-road facilities to serve the commuting needs for children, to school or other activities. Land acquisition and construction for off-road facilities can be fairly expensive. While several grant programs are available to help in funding such facilities, they can be quite competitive and require commitment by the sponsoring communities to build and maintain such facilities. Perhaps most important is the community's commitment to encourage the use and provide for the connectivity to other routes or off-road trails. Recommendations to this end are also included in this document.

Related Plans

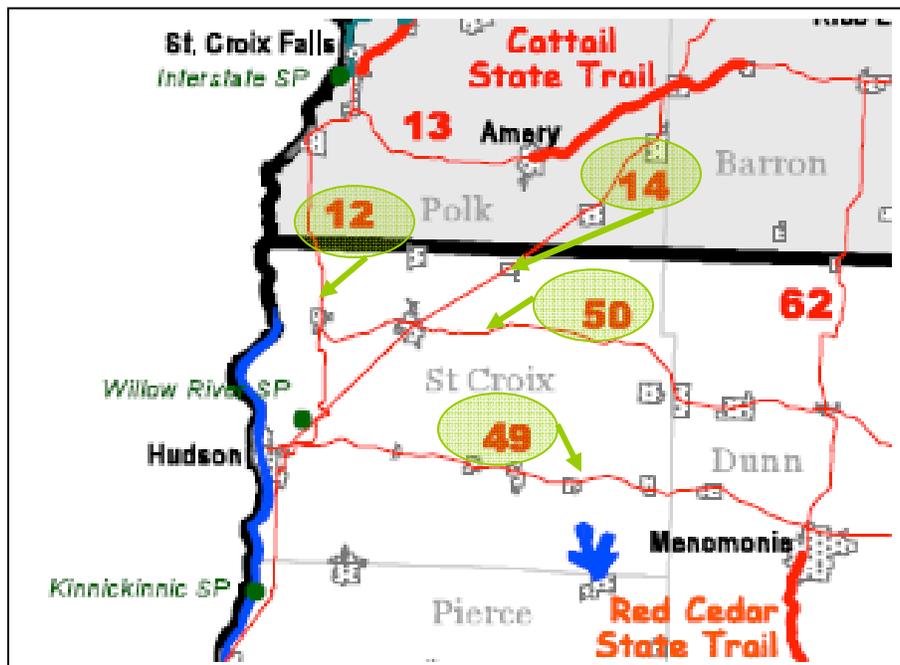
There are a number of state, county, and local plans that have been reviewed and taken into account in the development of this plan. The recommendations of this plan do not intentionally conflict with other adopted plans, and attempts were made to coordinate with the recommendations of all of the plans discussed in this section.

State Plans: At the State level, both the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) have plans directly pertinent to the subject matter of bicycle/pedestrian travel and recreation. The *Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020* was adopted in December of 1998. The state bicycle planning process yielded a good review of state highways and, to some extent, county highways, in terms of their suitability for bicycling. Maps for each county, showing good, moderate, and poor highway suitability for bicycling were developed and are available on the WisDOT website, <http://www.dot.state.wi.us/travel/bike-foot/countymaps.htm>. Routes noted in WisDOT's plan are intended to serve more of a transportation role, a means of getting from point A to point B, and not necessarily intended for recreational purposes.

To better address the needs of rural bicycling, WisDOT has completed the *Wisconsin Rural Bicycle Planning Guide*, which was used extensively in the development of St. Croix County's plan. The suitability standards for this plan were modeled after those in the state's planning guide, with some added input from valuable local knowledge.

WDNR's *Wisconsin State Trails Network Plan*, approved by the Natural Resources Board in 2001, provides a long-term, big-picture vision for establishing a comprehensive recreational trail network for the state. The plan recognizes the important role that trails developed by local units of governments serve as critical links. Under the plan, WDNR staff will continue to work with local governments and encourage them to connect trails onto the statewide network as local plans are developed and updated. Four potential trails are noted in the WDNR plan within St. Croix County, as shown and described in Figure 1 and 1a.

Figure 1: DNR Trail Network Plan map - 2001 (portion)



**Figure 1-a: WDNR Trail Network Plan (portion) – 2001
Potential Trail Descriptions – St. Croix County**

Segment 12—St. Croix - Mississippi River corridor (West Central Region)

The potential St. Croix - Mississippi River trail corridor would link the Northern, West Central and South Central regions.

Segment 12—St. Croix - Mississippi River Corridor (Northern Region) The link with the South Central Region would occur at De Soto on the Vernon/ Crawford county line. The proposed trail continues north on corridor using rail line, highway right-of-way, and the existing 22-mile-long Great River Trail between Onalaska and Trempealeau. State Highway 35 from Grant County to Prescott is identified in the *Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020* as a priority bicycle corridor. Wider paved shoulders are being added as highway reconstruction occurs. Currently DOT and DNR are cooperating on a 3.9-mile-long separated extension from Marshland (current terminus of the Great River Trail) along State Highway 35 to Winona, MN. Perrot, Merrick, Kinnickinnic, and Willow River state parks are in or near the corridor.

From Prescott to the St. Croix/Polk county line, the recommended route is on County Trunk Highways F, A, and I and State Highway 35.

Segment 14—Bayfield to Hudson, (Northern Region)

The abandoned rail grade from Hudson to Spooner could link the Wild Rivers and Cattail trails and connect to trails in Minnesota near the state line. The corridor from Spooner to Hayward is an active rail line. The proposed trail continues on old, abandoned rail grade from Hayward to Bayfield. The Hayward to Bayfield portion of the corridor would connect to the Tri-County Recreational Corridor and link to Hayward area trails already in place. Parts of it, particularly in the Chequamegon National Forest and county forests, are used now as snowmobile trails. Much of this corridor runs through typical northern lakes and forest landscapes.

Segment 49—Hudson to Merrillan

Between Hudson and Eau Claire, Segments 49 and 50 are two alternate east-west rail corridors with trail potential. Segment 49 connects with the Red Cedar Trail in Menomonie and the Chippewa Valley trail system in Eau Claire.

Segment 50—Somerset to Marathon City

The Chippewa Falls to Somerset alternate closely parallels Segment 49 to the south and links with the Chippewa Valley Trail system in Chippewa Falls. Linkage to the Red Cedar Trail could be accomplished via roadway connectors between Wheeler and Menomonie. The trail corridor would extend eastward along roadway from Chippewa Falls to Marathon City west of Wausau.

St. Croix River Crossing Loop Trail: As a part of the St. Croix River Crossing, a loop trail is planned to be constructed using the old Stillwater Lift Bridge as a pedestrian/bicycle crossing. From the lift bridge, the trail is planned to proceed up the Houlton Hill on the former Wis 64 highway right-of-way, pass under the new STH 35 via an underpass, travel along the old STH 35 and former CTH E on paved shoulders, parallel the west side of the proposed Wis 64 from old CTH E to the new river bridge. On the new bridge, the bicycle/pedestrian facility is planned to run along the north edge with several overlooks providing vistas of the river. The loop trail is planned to connect to an existing section of trail running parallel to Minnesota State Highway

95, mainly on abandoned rail bed, to Stillwater. The Wisconsin portion of this 4.7 mile loop trail is shown on Figure 4.

County Plans: St. Croix County Highway Committee approved a Bicycle Transportation plan in 1995. There were some off-road facilities recommended in the 1995 plan, but as a transportation plan, most recommendations were for county highway and town road improvements to accommodate bicycles. Routes noted in County plan are intended to serve more of a bicycle transportation role, a means of getting from point A to point B, and not necessarily intended for recreational purposes. This plan will review bicycling suitability on those routes and propose changes as appropriate. A map highlighting county highway segments which this plan either adds or deletes from the routes proposed in the 1995 plan is included in Appendix C. This map will serve as a starting point in an effort to resolve any discrepancies between the two plans.

St. Croix County also has an Outdoor Recreation Plan, adopted by the St. Croix County Board of Supervisors in January of 2006. A section on trails discusses the increasing demand for off-road bicycling facilities to serve more of a recreational need in the County, and recommends the development of a plan to consider these needs. This plan will implement that recommendation of the Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Local Plans: A number of local communities have adopted, or are in the process of completing their comprehensive plans, many of which include bicycle and pedestrian recommendations. These plans were viewed in the process of developing this county bicycle/pedestrian plan and adopted routes were included as appropriate. In most cases, the plans were used to ensure that proposed off-road trails or on-road facilities in this county plan would connect with, and compliment the locally adopted routes. Local routes will not always be shown on maps within this plan, due to detail and scale, but will be shown as appropriate to illustrate connectivity of the system, and are included in Appendix B. Local communities that have not yet adopted bicycle/pedestrian plans were solicited for input and comment in the planning process.

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Planning Criteria and Standards

Planning Criteria

This plan utilizes six planning criteria developed by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for bicycle transportation system plans. The criteria are used in conjunction with suitability standards to evaluate and select bicycle routes and facility types for the bikeway system recommendations within the County. (Appendix D defines the bicycle facility terms used throughout this plan.) The planning criteria include:

1. *Usage*: Bikeways (bike paths/trails, lanes, routes) should be located in areas where use can be maximized. They should provide desirable routes that connect communities, schools, and recreational facilities in the county. Routes that are commonly used by bicycles are good indicators of needs, interests and routes that may already meet the suitability standards.
2. *Accessibility*: Frequent and convenient bicycle access is important to the effectiveness of a bicycle route.
3. *Directness*: For utilitarian bicycle trips, facilities should connect traffic generators, such as employment, shopping and residential areas, and should be located along a direct line convenient for users. Bicyclists, like motorists prefer a direct route.
4. *Continuity*: A bicycle route system should be free of missing links or gaps.
5. *Barriers*: Bicycle facilities should be integrated into the design of road and bridge improvements to eliminate barriers such as freeways, rail lines, rivers and steep grades.
6. *Aesthetics*: The scenic value of a bicycle route should be considered in the evaluation of alternatives when other criteria are considered of equal weight.

In addition to the WisDOT criteria, this plan considers the cost of necessary improvements and the potential for implementation. All of these factors were considered in the identification of general corridor locations and in the evaluation and siting of preferred bicycle routes within the corridors.

Suitability Standards

Suitability of roadways for bicycling, either in the driving lanes or on paved shoulders, was determined using WisDOT's evaluation method. (For a more detailed description of the methodology and standards, see Appendix E.) The method is based on the needs of the casual cyclist, typically age 16 or older with a driver's license. This methodology is based on the concept that all rural roads are capable of accommodating one bicycle and one motor vehicle in the same lateral road section at the same time. Conflict arises when a bicycle, an oncoming motor vehicle, and an overtaking motor vehicle arrive at the same lateral section at the same time. It is possible that paved shoulders will add sufficient width to allow a safe pass for all three vehicles without much variation of speed or deviation from their lane of travel. Therefore, the suitability ratings are based on the likelihood of the incident of this triple pass occurrence, considering the primary variables of average daily traffic (ADT) and total width of the pavement surface.

The method also uses two secondary variables - percent of truck traffic, which increases stress during a triple pass, and percent of solid yellow line in the road segment. The solid yellow line is an indicator of hilly or curvy conditions resulting in restricted sight lines for drivers and bicyclist.

As this data is not readily available, percent truck traffic and/or percent yellow line were only used in cases where the suitability ratings were borderline between suitability categories.

A generalized version of the WisDOT criteria, without consideration of the truck traffic and yellow lines, follows:

Figure 2
Simplified Suitability Criteria

Pavement Width	Rating	ADT Threshold	Rating	ADT Threshold	Rating
22 feet or less	GOOD	< 1050 <	MODERATE	< 1440 <	POOR
23-24 feet		< 1350 <		< 1860 <	
25-26 feet		< 2105 <		< 2890 <	
27-28 feet		< 2640 <		< 3630 <	
29-30 feet		< 3450 <		< 4740 <	
31-32 feet*		< 3450 <		< 6035 <	
33 feet or more*		< 4035 <		< 6715 <	

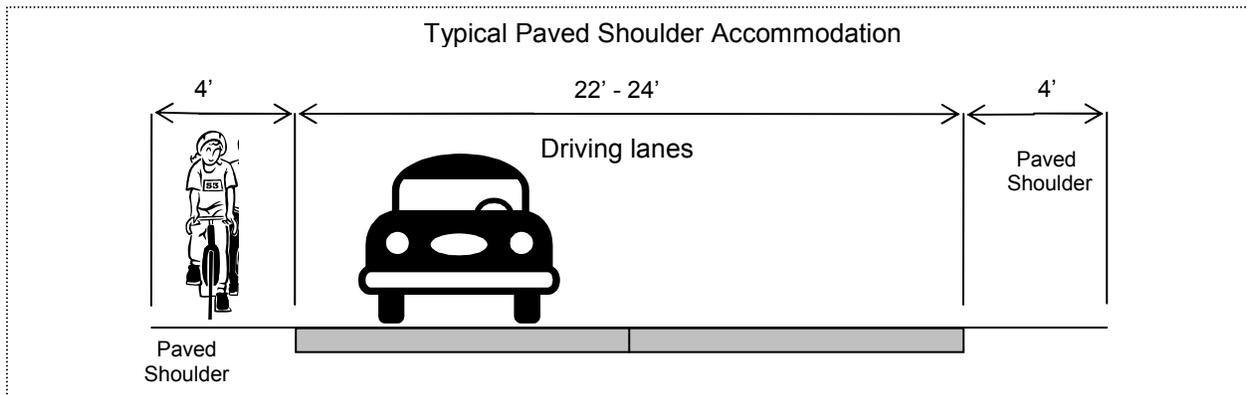
* - These pavement width categories have an additional rating threshold based on high volumes, but wide shoulders, that provide additional safety. (See Appendix E for more detail.)

Types of Bike/Pedestrian Facilities

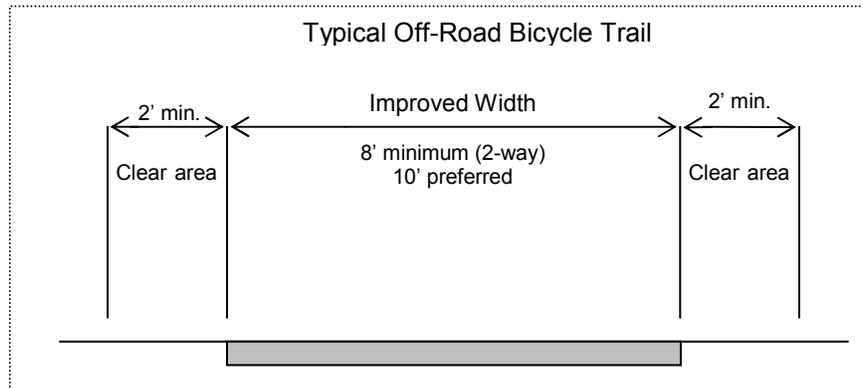
There are three general types of bicycle accommodations considered in the development and recommendations of this plan: shared roadway, paved shoulders, and bike path/trail. Some basic standards are mentioned here, but the most current and specific standards are included in Appendix G.

Shared Roadway: Shared roadway facilities, are generally intended for riders who are at least 16 years of age and have some driving experience. Types of roads that would be suitable for shared roadway bicycling are those with relatively low traffic volumes, meeting the previously discussed suitability standards, and that can be safely shared by bicyclists and motorists with no additional improvements necessary. Some additional pavement maintenance may be necessary to provide a fairly smooth, bikeable surface.

Paved Shoulders: Rural collector highways that are not suitable as shared roadways, need to have paved shoulders, a minimum width of four feet, to accommodate bicycle travel. Due to higher traffic volumes, these routes may still be unsuitable for young children traveling without adults, but are rated based on the comfort level of the more experienced rider.



Bike Path/Trail: A bike path/trail should be physically separated from motor vehicle traffic by an open space or barrier, and may be within the road right-of-way or within an open space. Bike paths/trails should be constructed with a ten-foot wide paved or unpaved, usually limestone screenings, surface, and a two-foot clear zone on each side to accommodate two-way bicycle travel. Structures such as bridges, overpasses and underpasses should be constructed 10-12 feet wide where feasible. The appropriate surface type and design for off-road bike facilities varies greatly depending on terrain, soils, and intended use. For more specific design guidance, please consult the Wisconsin Bicycle Facilities Design Handbook, published in January of 2004 by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. This document is also available on the WisDOT website at: www.dot.state.wi.us/projects/bike/htm.



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Existing Conditions and Opportunities

This section is divided into two parts. The first examines the current suitability of existing on-road facilities, as well as segments that were recommended in the 1995 plan. This will take into account increased traffic, using the most current traffic counts available (2004), and any changes that have occurred in pavement width through road improvements. The second section will show existing off-road facilities in the county, and review some additional opportunities that may exist for off-road trails.

On-road facilities and suitability

With the rapidly urbanizing nature of much of St. Croix County traffic has increased significantly, making some roads less suitable for biking, and increasing concerns for less experienced riders attempting to share the roadway with vehicles. There are still many roads in the County that are suitable for bicycling or walking. As discussed earlier in this report, on-road bicycling facilities are primarily intended and rated for use by persons 16 years of age, and older, with some driving experience. Some very low volume roads may be suitable for younger people or family outings, but it is the responsibility of the rider, or a responsible adult, to determine the skill level of riders and conditions of the roadway.

Figure 3 shows the routes that were reviewed in the 1995 St. Croix County Bicycle Transportation Plan, and how they currently rate in terms of bicycling suitability. A number of other routes are included to provide data for consideration of alternative or additional routes where they may be necessary due to suitability concerns on existing routes, or due to a desire to expand the bicycle route system.

The most significant changes to roadway suitability occurred in the rapidly urbanizing western portions of the County, in the vicinities of the cities of New Richmond, Hudson, and River Falls, and the villages of North Hudson and Somerset. In cases where roadway segments appear as moderate or poor for bicycling, alternative routes were considered. Where the currently unsuitable route is still the best available route, improvements will be considered, such as paved shoulders or intersection reconfigurations that might make the segment more suitable for bicycling. In a few cases, such as CTH A (Hudson to New Richmond), CTH E (Houlton to Burkhardt), and CTH I (near Burkhardt), volumes are so high, that even paving shoulders will not bring the facilities up to a suitable biking standard. In these situations, paved shoulders might still be recommended, in order to provide some surface for those who absolutely need to use these facilities as a necessary connection in their bicycle trip. The high volumes are likely to lead highway professionals to pave the shoulders for safety and maintenance reasons. These shoulders will offer some space to those bicyclists that must use this route, due to the lack of existing alternatives. In the case of CTH A, an off-road trail opportunity may be available to provide for safer bicycle travel in the future.

Off-road facilities and opportunities

Suitability ratings can be of marginal importance where limited travel route options or improvement options are available, and where special needs exist for travel by younger children. An example of this is the route between the communities of Baldwin and Woodville, which share a school district. In this area, the obvious on-road route, Rose Lane, is particularly busy around school start and release times. This traffic, combined with curvy conditions and narrow right-of-way, led the committee to consider off-road accommodations. Off-road alternatives are also considered where there is demand and opportunity for enjoyable recreational bicycling, particularly in scenic or recreational areas. Such off-road trail facilities are suitable for all riders, and address the desire for bicycling facilities for families with children. In working toward the stated goal of pursuing improvements that will provide safe recreational bike/pedestrian opportunities for families and children, it is critical to identify a

bikeway/pedestrian system in St. Croix County that will provide bicyclists and pedestrians with safe and convenient access to major centers of employment, education, shopping, housing, and recreation. There are a few off-road bicycle/pedestrian facilities that already exist in the County, as shown on Figure 3. The Wildwood Trail was established and maintained by the County, with significant public support and grant dollars. The trail is located on the old St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway Company right-of-way, which was purchased by the County in 1970. The trail is multi-use, serving snowmobiling in the winter, bicycling and hiking in the other seasons. The trail stretches seven miles, from the Village of Woodville, through the Town of Eau Galle, to the county line, taking advantage of the old railroad's underpass of Interstate I-94. Other off-road facilities exist within several communities, and many more are expected to appear as local plans are implemented, but the only existing County off-road facility is the Wildwood Trail.

Rail corridors, such as the one that became the Wildwood Trail, offer the best opportunities for trail development. Railroad beds provide a reasonably level, linear, and cleared corridor, typically with relatively few highway crossings. It is very important to note, however, that their most critically attractive factor is the single ownership of the property at the time that the railroad decides to abandon the corridor. If the appropriate governmental unit, usually the DNR on behalf of the state, county, or municipality, does not take action to acquire the property when the railroad files for abandonment, the right-of-way normally reverts back to adjacent property owners. Once this occurs, the corridor no longer exists under one owner, but potentially hundreds. Over time, these individual owners may develop the property, building houses or roads, or use the old corridor for agricultural access or a driveway. This is the general scenario with many of the old railroad corridors in St. Croix County. Many former rail corridors are all but indistinguishable from the surrounding landscape. Upon examining aerial photographs and historic record of railways in the County, some corridors can only be detected in small segments along their original path, with a couple of notable exceptions.

Some potential exists for the extension of the Wildwood Trail, continuing along the abandoned Minnesota-Wisconsin rail bed toward Glenwood City. This would take further advantage of the valuable crossing of I-94 and create a longer stretch of off-road recreational trail, with opportunities to connect to Glen Hills County Park, and other facilities and communities.

The long abandoned corridor of the Wisconsin Central railroad between the Village of Emerald and Glenwood City is also fairly intact. It traverses mainly large agricultural holdings and there are only a few property owners, so portions of it present potential for a good off-road bicycle facility between these communities.

Perhaps the most valuable and promising opportunity exists in the former C&NW railroad bed, which runs northeast from Hudson, alongside CTH A and through Willow River State Park, New Richmond, and on to Deer Park. This corridor has some long sections that are still easily discernible on the ground, and is in the ownership of relatively few individuals. Requests have been made to the County to consider this corridor for trail improvement and as an extension to a state trail system. It would ultimately connect to the Wild Rivers State Trail in the Rice Lake area. This is a very desirable trail corridor and acquisition or purchase of easements should be pursued. This corridor coincides with Segment #14 in the WDNR's *Wisconsin State Trails Network Plan*. (See Figure 1.) The counties of Barron, Douglas, and Washburn, participate in a group known as the Wild Rivers Trail Coalition. This group is seeking to expand their scope and membership into neighboring counties. The Coalition has had extensive experience in multi-use trail implementation and would be an excellent resource.

Another partially intact, but long-abandoned rail corridor is an old rail corridor between Baldwin and Woodville. Portions of this old rail bed run roughly parallel to the active Union Pacific line,

but it diverges to the south as it approaches the Village of Woodville. Much of this old corridor would be very difficult to restore, as trestles/bridges have been removed, portions of the line run through very wet areas, and Rose Lane was built over other portions. Still, in an effort to create a safe bicycle route between these two communities, portions of this old corridor may prove to be helpful, as shown in the next section.

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Figure 3.

**Bicycling
Suitability Ratings**



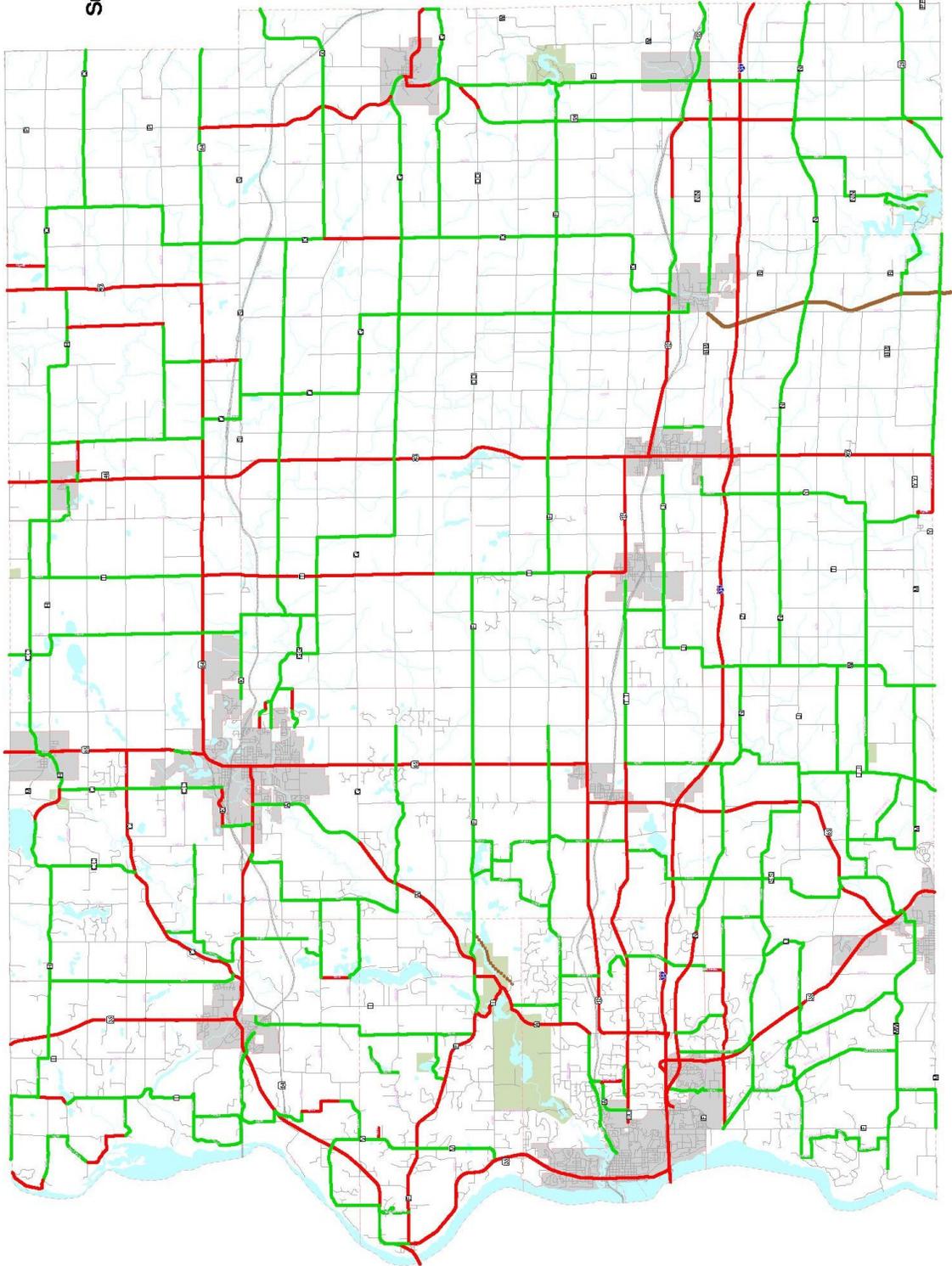
- Rural Bicycle Route Ratings
 - Suitable (Good Rating)
 - Unsuitable (Poor or Moderate Rating)
- Rural Off-Road Bike Trail Ratings
 - Good
 - Needs Improvement
- Other Features
 - Municipal Boundaries
 - Incorporated Areas
 - Surface Waters & Lake Drainageways
 - Non-Relaid Roadways
 - Railroads

Bicycle rating based on Wisconsin Rural Bicycle Planning Guide street width and average traffic volume; data for percent of yellow line and percent of truck traffic is not included. Gravel roads were rated as needing improvement. Ratings may not be applicable for some incorporated areas.

Rating data from Wisconsin DOT
WISDOT database as of March 2007



November 28, 2007



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Recommendations

Proposed Bikeway System

The recommended bikeway system improvements are made up of a total of paving 15 miles of currently gravel roads for shared roadway facilities, 50 miles of shoulder paving, and approximately 65 miles of separate bicycle trail facilities development, as shown on Figure 4. In addition, there are many miles of the shared roadway facilities which require no improvements, and many are currently signed and maintained by the County as bike routes. The shared roadway, paved shoulder, and off-road facilities that will require some improvement are listed in Figure 4a, and include rough cost estimates for the needed improvements. Jurisdiction of the on-road facilities is also listed in Figure 4a and shown on Figure 5.

In addition to the routes shown on Figure 4, it is recommended that both of the active railroad lines, currently operated by Union Pacific Railroad and Canadian National Railroad, be acquired should either rail operator file for abandonment. Both routes, but particularly the Union Pacific line would provide valuable bicycle/pedestrian or multi-use trail connections to St. Croix County communities. While neither line is showing any sign of abandonment in the foreseeable future, it is important to be ready should the potential arise.

While bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be considered in all highway project development, bridges are of particular importance. Bridges typically provide for a limited number of crossings of significant barriers to travel, such as rivers, deep valleys, high volume and limited access highways (i.e. I-94), or railroad tracks. Also, bridge structures are very expensive, last a very long time, and are not easily adapted once they are built. For these reasons, it is very important that adequate space and accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians be considered and included in the design of any new structure. The failure to do so can result in a 75+ year long barrier to safe travel by these modes, and major gaps in a bicycle route system.

Cost of Improvements

Too many variables affect the cost of these proposed improvements to include cost estimates in this early planning stage. Cost estimates will need to be given further consideration at the time of preliminary design and/or grant application. There are typically no improvement costs for shared roadway facilities, however, some increased levels of maintenance may be required to keep the pavement in a condition suitable for biking. The cost of shoulder paving costs should be estimated based on the addition of 4 feet of pavement on each side of the road during a highway resurfacing or reconstruction project. In some cases the roadway currently has inadequate width for shoulders. In these cases, only the marginal cost for the paving of the shoulders should be considered. This is due to the fact that the Facilities Design Manual recommends 4 foot shoulders on facilities with quite low traffic volumes. Design Class C-2 includes county highways classified as collectors with 400-750 ADT. At this level, it is recommended that the driving surface be constructed at 22-24 feet, with 6 foot shoulders. Standards are similar for town roads with recommendations for 22 feet of driving surface and 6 foot shoulders for town roads with ADT of 401-750 ADT, or 4 foot shoulders for town roads with an ADT of only 251-400. In short, any facility recommended to have paved shoulders should be constructed or reconstructed with shoulders of adequate width, regardless of bicycle travel. Therefore, the only cost shown is a rough estimate for the additional paving of the shoulders.

Many improvements to existing roads are accomplished through resurfacing or reconditioning. These processes are much less onerous than full reconstruction of a road, and dimension requirements, as per the Facilities Development Manual, are significantly less than those noted for new construction or reconstruction. Some relevant tables from the Facilities Development Manual, as they apply to county trunk highways and town roads can be found in Appendix H of this report.

Trail facility costs can vary even more widely depending upon surface type, terrain, number of road crossings, and structure needs. The acquisition of land, as may be necessary for the

implementation of some of the recommended facilities, is often a cause for complications in cost estimation. Preliminary design will be needed to estimate the individual project costs.

Supporting Facilities and Programs

The provision of supporting facilities, along with bicycle safety education and enforcement programs are integral components of a comprehensive approach to promoting safe bicycling. In order for many of the supporting facilities and programs to be effective, they need to be implemented in areas of population concentrations within the County, at the community level. For this reason, the cities and villages in the County will likely become the principle implementing entities for this aspect of the plan. Many municipalities already have programs in place, or the ability to develop them, through existing administrative or organizational structures such as police departments, schools, park departments, and civic organizations. County-wide coordination of these efforts can enhance their effectiveness.

Supporting Facilities: The provision of supporting facilities is important to the overall success of any effort to promote bicycling. Bicycle parking facilities, in particular, should be provided at trip origins and key destinations, and should offer protection from theft and damage. Bicycle parking facilities can range from bicycle racks to enclosed bicycle lockers. They should be available at the same locations currently available for motor vehicle parking and should address user needs for both short-term and long-term parking. Bicycle parking facilities should be available at locations such as community shopping centers, libraries, recreation areas, and government offices. Bicycle racks can accommodate short-term parking requirements, however, bicycle lockers may be preferred for long-term parking needs. The location of bicycle parking facilities should ensure that bicycles will not be damaged by motor vehicles or disturbed by other parked bicycles. Parking facilities should also not interfere with normal pedestrian flow.

In addition to bicycle parking facilities, there are several other physical improvements that can complement a bikeway system. For example, turnouts or rest areas may be provided on long, uninterrupted bicycle paths/trails to increase the safety and comfort of users. Printing and distribution of bikeway system maps is a high benefit/low cost project that can be implemented as the system is developed. Maps can help bicyclists locate bikeways, parking facilities, and identify the relative suitability of different segments of the bikeway system. Maps can also help bicyclists avoid problem areas, such as narrow, high speed or high volume roads, and barriers. In addition, maps can provide general information on “rules of the road” and bicycle safety information.

Education Programs: Bicycle safety education programs are routinely conducted through cooperative efforts by local schools, park/recreation departments, and municipal police departments. These programs generally focus on the younger bicycle rider at the elementary school level because they represent the age group statistically involved in the highest percentage of reported bicycle crashes. All bicycle safety programs stress the use of helmets by bicycle riders to prevent head injuries that can result from even minor bicycle crashes. Information from the Consumer Product Safety Commission has determined that 75% of all bicycle crash fatalities result from head injuries. These bicycle safety programs are specifically targeted at the highest at-risk group of bicycle riders and focus on the major safety issues. While these programs provide the largest benefit for the investment, a more comprehensive education program targeted at adult bicyclists and motor vehicle operators to encourage adherence to the ‘rules of the road’ could certainly enhance the bicycle environment in the County, and encourage riders of all age to get out and ride. An expanded public education process to reach bicyclists beyond the elementary school level could be incorporated with driver training programs and driver license examinations, as well as through a more active involvement through physical education curriculum, and middle or high school bicycling clubs. Other public institutions and private organizations, such as service clubs and medical centers, are also good sponsors and hosts of such activities.

Enforcement: The enforcement of bicycle, as well as motor vehicle, regulations can also be made more effective through the educational process. Bicyclist, motorists and law enforcement personnel can all contribute to a safer bicycling environment through continuing education and training programs regarding the interaction of bicyclists and motorists on the public road system. Law enforcement refresher courses that incorporate Wisconsin Statutory references to bicycle equipment and use (Appendix F) will help to reinforce a greater sense of responsibility on behalf of bicyclists and motorists alike.

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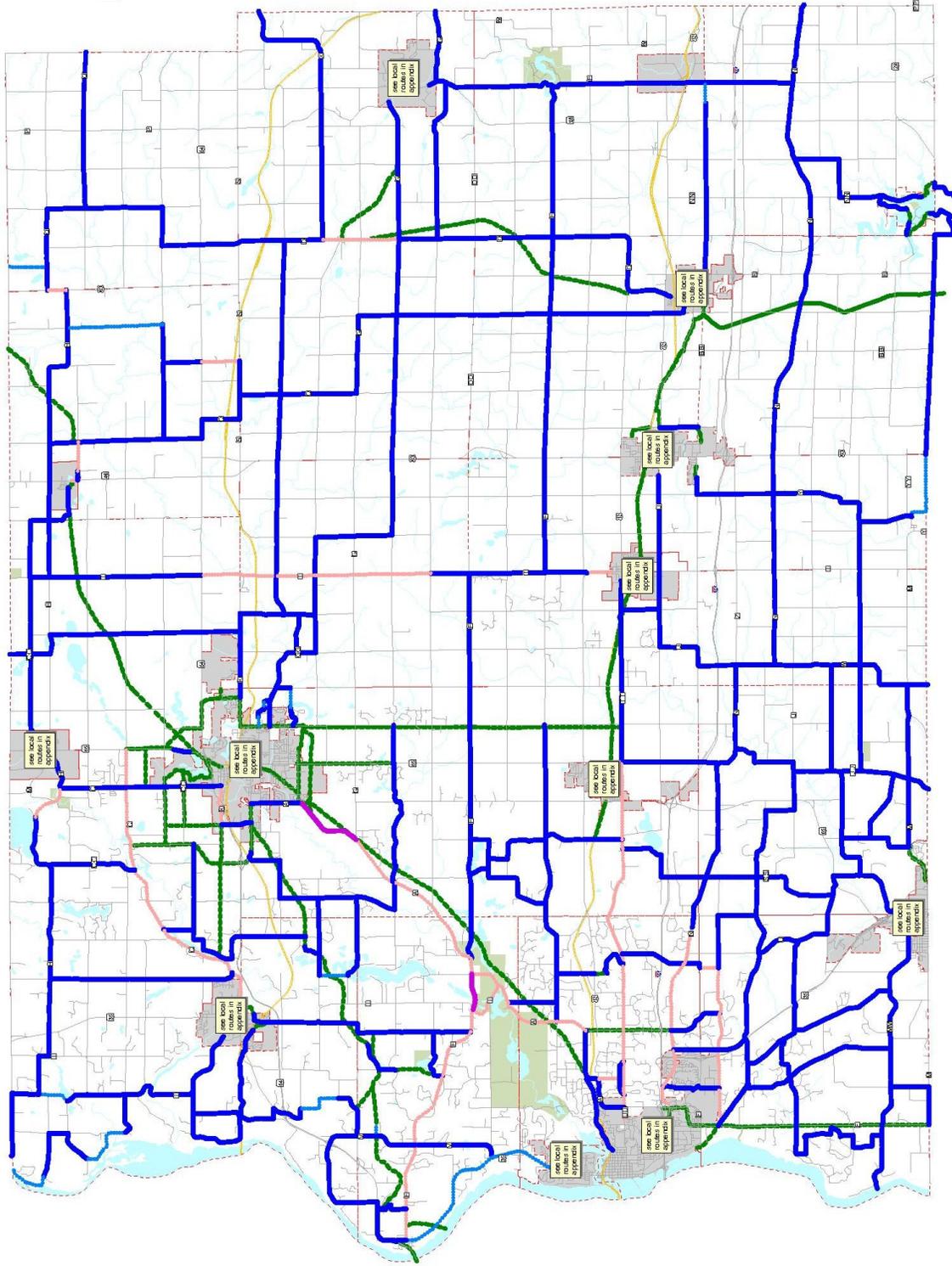
Figure 4.

Bicycle System Recommendations



- Shared Roadway Bike Routes
 - Paved Shoulder Bike Routes
 - Existing Bike Trails (off-road)
 - Potential Bike Trails (off-road)
- Other Features**
- Municipal Boundaries
 - Incorporated Areas
 - Wetlands & Lake Drainageways
 - Roadways
 - Railroads

Maps of planned local bike routes, paths, and trails within incorporated areas included within the plan appendix.
If an active railroad is abandoned, the railroad right-of-way should be acquired for bicycle use.



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**Figure 4a
Recommendations Summary**

On-road recommendations:

Segment Location	Jurisdiction	Current Conditions		Improvement Description		Approximate Length (in miles)
		ADT	Total pavement width (in feet)			
CTH C (V. Somerset - CTH CC)	County	3,000-3,800	24	paved shoulder	pave 3-4' shoulders	7.50
CTH H (Cedar Dr-CTH C)	County	1,800	22-24	paved shoulder	pave 3-4' shoulders	1.10
210 th Av (CTH C-STH 65)	T. Star Prairie		22	paved shoulder	build up and pave 3-4' shoulders	1.00
CTH K (CTH KK-CTH CC)	C. New Richmond	4,200*	22-28	paved shoulder	pave 5'-6' shoulders to provide refuge for bicyclist who need to use facility	1.10
CTH E (old 35-CTH I)	County	3,500-3,800*	30	paved shoulder	pave 5'-6' shoulders to provide refuge for bicyclist who need to use facility	6.60
CTH I (CTH E-CTH A)	County	2,500*	32	paved shoulder	pave 5'-6' shoulders to provide refuge for bicyclist who need to use facility	1.20
CTH A (CTH U-CTH G)	County	3,300-8,700*	24-30	paved shoulder	pave 5'-6' shoulders to provide refuge for bicyclist who need to use facility	8.70
CTH UU (Hudson-CTH U)	County	4,800*	24-36	paved shoulder	pave 5'-6' shoulders to provide refuge for bicyclist who need to use facility	2.30
CTH N (old 35 to Alice Ln)	County	1,200-4,300	24	paved shoulder	pave 3-5' shoulders depending on volumes	4.90
CTH T (STH 64-130 th Av)	County	1,800-1,900	24	paved shoulder	pave 3-4' shoulders	0.60
USH 12 (CTH T (90 th Av-Hammond)	State	2,600	24	off-road trail	separate trail facility in ROW	0.70
STH 63 (CTH H-CTH Q)	State	4,000	30	paved shoulder	add 2' to paved shoulder width, to 5'	0.50
CTH D (160 th Av-CTH G)	County	1,400	24	paved shoulder	pave 3-4' shoulders	2.00
80 th Av (USH 12-STH 65)	T. Hudson/ T. Warren	1,200	22-24	paved shoulder	build up and pave 3-4' shoulders	6.20
Tower Rd (Coulee Tr-Brummel Rd)	T. Troy/ C. Hudson		20-22	paved shoulder	build up and pave 3-4' shoulders	4.10
Brummel Rd (Town Rd to town line)	T. Troy		20	paved shoulder	build up and pave 3-4' shoulders	0.50
Pierce-St. Croix Rd, 195 th St, 4 th Av (USH 63-CTH Y)	T. Rush River		20	shared roadway	pave road surface (currently gravel)	2.00
222 nd Av (STH 46-220 th St.)	T. Cylon		24	shared roadway	pave road surface (currently gravel)	0.80
250 th St (200 th Av-CTH H)	T. Cylon		18	shared roadway	pave road surface (currently gravel)	2.50
240 th St (STH 64-CTH S)	T. Cylon		20	paved shoulder	widen and pave shoulders	1.00
265 th St (STH 63-Polk/St. Croix Rd)	T. Forest		20	shared roadway	pave road surface (currently gravel)	1.00
STH 35 (CTH E-V. North Hudson)	State	2,900	30	off-road trail	separate trail facility in ROW	5.20
Rice Lake Rd/36 th St./40 th St (221 st Av-210 th Av)	T. Somerset		20-24	shared roadway	pave road surface (currently gravel)	1.50
Marine Rd (Polk Co. line-320 th St)	T. Somerset		18	shared roadway	pave road surface (currently gravel)	1.20
42 nd St/40 th St (155 th Av-165 th Av)	T. Somerset		16	shared roadway	pave road surface (currently gravel)	1.25
144 th St & 176 th Av (140 th -CTH GG)	T. Richmond		ND		include appropriate facility in new construction	0.40
166 th St (w. of 150 th St.)	T. Richmond		ND		include appropriate facility in new construction	0.50
Dorwin Rd (Jacobs Ln-CTH A)	T. Hudson	1,200	22-26	paved shoulder	pave 3-4' shoulders	0.60
STH 46 (222 nd Av-Deer Park)	State	4,000	24-30	paved shoulder	add 2' to paved shoulder width, to 5'	0.20
CTH TT (120 th St-STH 65)	County	1,900	24-32	paved shoulder	pave 3-4' shoulders	1.00
50 th St (Rice Lake Road-232 nd Av)	T. Somerset		20-22	shared roadway	pave road surface (currently gravel)	0.80
Not yet constructed (CTH C-private drive)	T. Star Prairie		ND	shared roadway	construct road	1.00
75 th St (153 rd Av-160 th Av)	T. Somerset		18-24	shared roadway	pave road surface (currently gravel)	0.80

* - These higher volume facilities will likely not meet a suitable standard for bicycles, even with improvements, but should have wide paved shoulders to offer refuge to those bicyclists who need to use them as a connector.

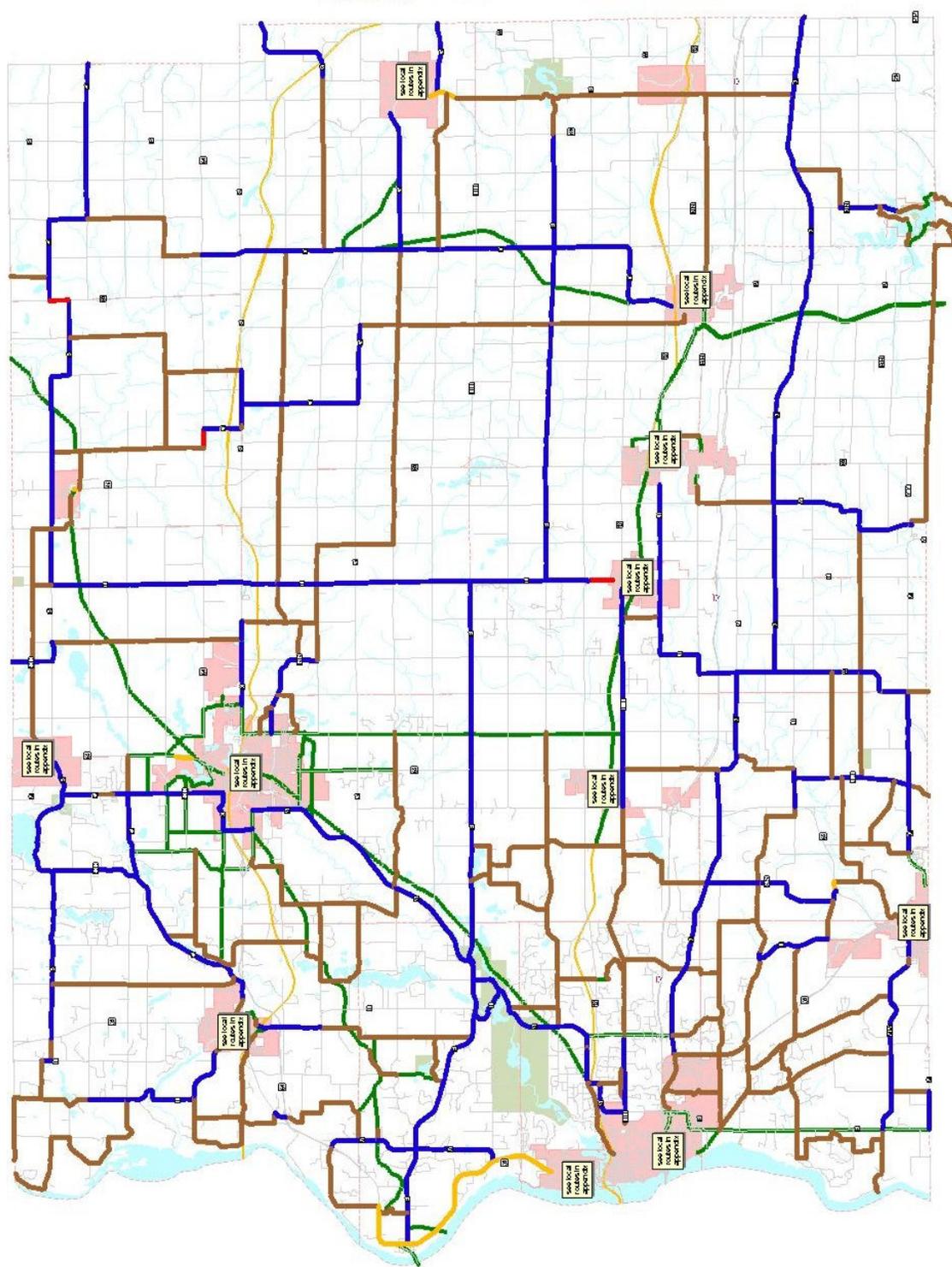
ND = No Data

Figure 4-a, continued

Off-road recommendations:

Location	Facility type	Description	Approx. length (in miles)
N. Hudson, through Willow River State Park, through Deer Park, to north County line	Off-road non-motorized trail	typical crushed limestone rural trail on abandoned railroad bed (requires more detailed study)	25.0
Baldwin - Woodville	Off-road non-motorized trail	typical crushed limestone rural trail adjacent to active railroad right-of-way (requires more detailed study)	6.0
Wildwood Trail extension to V. Emerald	Off-road non-motorized trail	typical crushed limestone rural trail on abandoned railroad bed (requires more detailed study)	10.0
V. Emerald to Glenwood City	Off-road non-motorized trail	typical crushed limestone rural trail on abandoned railroad bed (requires more detailed study)	4.0
Eau Galle Reservoir trail	Off-road non-motorized trail	typical crushed limestone rural trail connecting to Wildwood Trail	2.0
140th St./New Richmond to CTH TT	separated trail w/in or along ROW	separate bicycle/pedestrian facility (asphalt?)	9.0
Roberts to Baldwin	trail along RR r-o-w.	typical crushed limestone rural trail adjacent to active railroad right-of-way (requires more detailed study)	10.0

**Figure 5.
Recommended
Bicycle System
by Jurisdiction**



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Plan Implementation

Transportation Funding (WisDOT): Since 1993, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has committed \$139.7 million in federal funds to 493 bike and pedestrian projects throughout the state. This does not include bike and pedestrian improvements funded as incidental parts of larger projects. Most projects are funded at 80% federal funding with the balance of funding from local and state government partnerships. The primary sources of funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects are from programs started in the early 1990s under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) that have continued in subsequent federal transportation acts. While the source of most of the transportation funding is federal, grants are typically administered through WisDOT. The programs, for which St. Croix County or local entities within the county are eligible, are described below.

Local Transportation Enhancement (TE), Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program (BFPF) and STP-Discretionary (STP-D) programs

In Wisconsin, these programs have been collectively funded under the Statewide Multi-modal Improvement Program (SMIP). The TE program promotes projects that “enhance” the surface transportation system. There are 12 federally eligible categories, with bicycle and pedestrian categories typically making up almost two-thirds of Wisconsin projects awarded. The STP-D program funded projects such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities that foster alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel. Up until 1995, there was also a small Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program (BFPF) that was primarily used to fund bicycle planning related activities. Funding for the STP-D program was eliminated in the 2003-05 and 2005-07 state biennial budgets. Funding for the STP-D program was revived for the second year of the 2007-09 state biennial budget, then converted to a modified version of BFPF. Since 1993, \$72.3 million in federal funds have been committed to 320 projects through SMIP related programs.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program

The most recent federal transportation act, SAFETEA-LU, added a new bicycle and pedestrian program called Safe Routes to School (SRTS). The program addresses a long-term trend away from children bicycling and walking to school to being transported by car or bus. The trend has not only been part of the increasing levels of traffic congestion and air pollution, but also linked to child health and obesity problems. SRTS is an effort to reverse these trends by funding bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, planning and promotional projects. Projects must be within two miles of a kindergarten to 8th grade school. Unlike most federal programs above, SRTS are 100% federally-funded. The first SRTS funds were used for two projects submitted with the 2006 TE applications. The first competitive statewide cycle began in 2007. The result was 49 projects funded for \$4.9 million.

Other ongoing and previous efforts benefiting bicyclists and pedestrians

State Enhancements: From 1999 to 2002, the state enhancement program was an effort to further utilize federal TE apportionments within state budget spending authority. State highway projects scheduled through 2006 were evaluated for TE eligible elements that could be added to state highway projects and corridors above and beyond what was normally incorporated into the projects. This effort resulted in the approval of \$17.1 million of federal funds for 54 bike and pedestrian related projects. Since then, WisDOT has developed a “Community Sensitive Design” (CSD) policy that promotes many TE type activities as standard practice on state highway projects, and are funded as part of the project’s cost. As noted later on, many bicycle and pedestrian related facilities are now a routine part of state highway projects.

Highway Safety Improvement Program (formerly known as the Hazard Elimination Program): Bicycle and pedestrian projects are eligible for this program. The program focuses on projects intended for locations that have a documented history of previous crashes. Contact WisDOT Region coordinators for more details.

Incidental Improvements: Bicycle and pedestrian projects are broadly eligible for funding from most of the major federal-aid programs. One of the most cost effective ways of accommodating bicycle and pedestrian accommodations is to incorporate them as part of larger reconstruction, new construction and some repaving projects. Generally, the same source of funding can be used for the bicycle and pedestrian accommodations as is used for the larger highway improvement, if the bike/pedestrian accommodation is “incidental” in scope and cost to the overall project.

Natural Resources funding (WDNR): The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is another source of funding for trails and bicycle facilities. The general rule of thumb, is that WDNR funding is typically not used for on-road facilities, but rather for facilities where there is at least some green space between the roadway and the bicycle facility. Several grant programs are available to St. Croix County and its municipalities, through WDNR. These include: a group of programs that are under the umbrella of Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Programs, Recreational Trails Act (RTA), and Land and Water Conservation fund (LWCF).

There are currently four programs that St. Croix County could access for bicycle facility funding that fall under the Stewardship Programs. These include: Aids for the Acquisition and Development of Local Parks (ADLP); Urban Rivers (UR); Urban Green Space (UGS); and Acquisition of Development Rights (ADR). Another program, State Property Development Grants, is not available to local governments, but might be applicable for projects within existing DNR properties, with WDNR as the applicant. While some of these stewardship subprograms are intended to fund property acquisition, others apply to trail development. All are available to towns, villages, cities, counties, or tribal governments. Qualified nonprofit conservation organizations (NCOs) are also eligible for land acquisition grants.

Aids for the Acquisition and Development of Local Parks (ADLP): To enhance the quality of life for Wisconsin residents and visitors by expanding the opportunities for outdoor recreation in local parks and recreation areas. Acquiring or developing public outdoor recreation areas for nature-based outdoor recreation, including trails and supports facilities development.

Urban Rivers (UR): To improve the quality of urban waterways and riverfronts through preservation, restoration, or enhancement which will encourage economic revitalization and expand outdoor recreational opportunities that involve enjoyment of the state’s natural resources. Acquiring land or rights in land on or adjacent to rivers that flow through urban areas, in order to preserve or restore urban rivers or riverfronts for the purposes of economic revitalization and encouraging outdoor recreation activities, including trail and support facilities development.

Urban Green Space (UGS): To enhance the quality of life for Wisconsin urban dwellers by providing open natural space within or in proximity to urban development. Acquiring lands to provide natural space within or near urban areas, protect scenic or ecological features, and to provide land for noncommercial gardening. Developing a trail on lands acquired through this program is usually an activity that is allowed.

Acquisition of Development Rights (ADR): ADR funds can be used to acquire development rights for the protection of natural, agricultural, or forestry values that would enhance nature-based outdoor recreation opportunities. A new Stewardship initiative to acquire development rights (easements) for nature-based outdoor recreation purposes, including development rights for where a trail might be located or that might buffer a trail.

State Property Development Grants: To develop nature-based outdoor recreational opportunities on Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources owned land.

WDNR also administers two federal grant programs that could be applicable to bicycle facility development in St. Croix County.

Recreational Trails Act (RTA): Any governmental body, school district, state or federal agency, or incorporated organization is eligible to apply for RTA funds, which can be used for rehabilitation of existing trails, trail maintenance, trail development, or trail acquisition. Grants can be for up to 80% of the project costs of the recreational trail project, but 50% is recommended as an effort to distribute funds more widely. The funds are acquired through the transfer of federal gas excise taxes paid on fuel used in off highway vehicles, and be used for either motorized or non-motorized recreational trail projects.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): LWCF funds are available to any local government, soil and water conservation district, or school district, and can be used for both, acquisition and development of land for recreational purposes. Grant awards cover up to 50% of eligible project costs. The program is funded through the proceeds of offshore oil and gas-drilling leases, and has helped communities acquire nearly seven million acres of parkland, water resources, and open space, and has underwritten the development of more than 37,000 state and local park and recreation projects, since its inception in 1964.

Note: More details on all of these funding sources can be found in a WDNR publication: *Funding for Wisconsin Trails* (PUB-PR-464), which is available on the WDNR website: www.dnr.state.wi.us. The publication also lists local contacts for more information.

