

Chapter 6

TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION

In today's automobile dependent society, the quality of the road system and its ability to link people from home to work, to shopping, schools and recreation is critical to efficient and pleasant daily life. The road system also greatly affects and is affected by land use patterns. As new land uses are developed, road changes will be needed. How these changes are made will have an impact on the character of the community as well as on its improved roads. But an efficient and sustainable community has more transportation services than the road system. Rail, air, public transit, and bicycle and pedestrian trails are also very important. This Chapter presents background information on the existing transportation system in Montcalm County.

ROAD TYPES

Montcalm County has approximately 1,748 certified miles of roadway, which is derived from the Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) and Act 51 of Public Acts of 1951 (as amended). Map 6-1 shows the primary road network in Montcalm County as classified by the Michigan Department of Transportation. Following is a brief description of five road types which exist in Montcalm County.

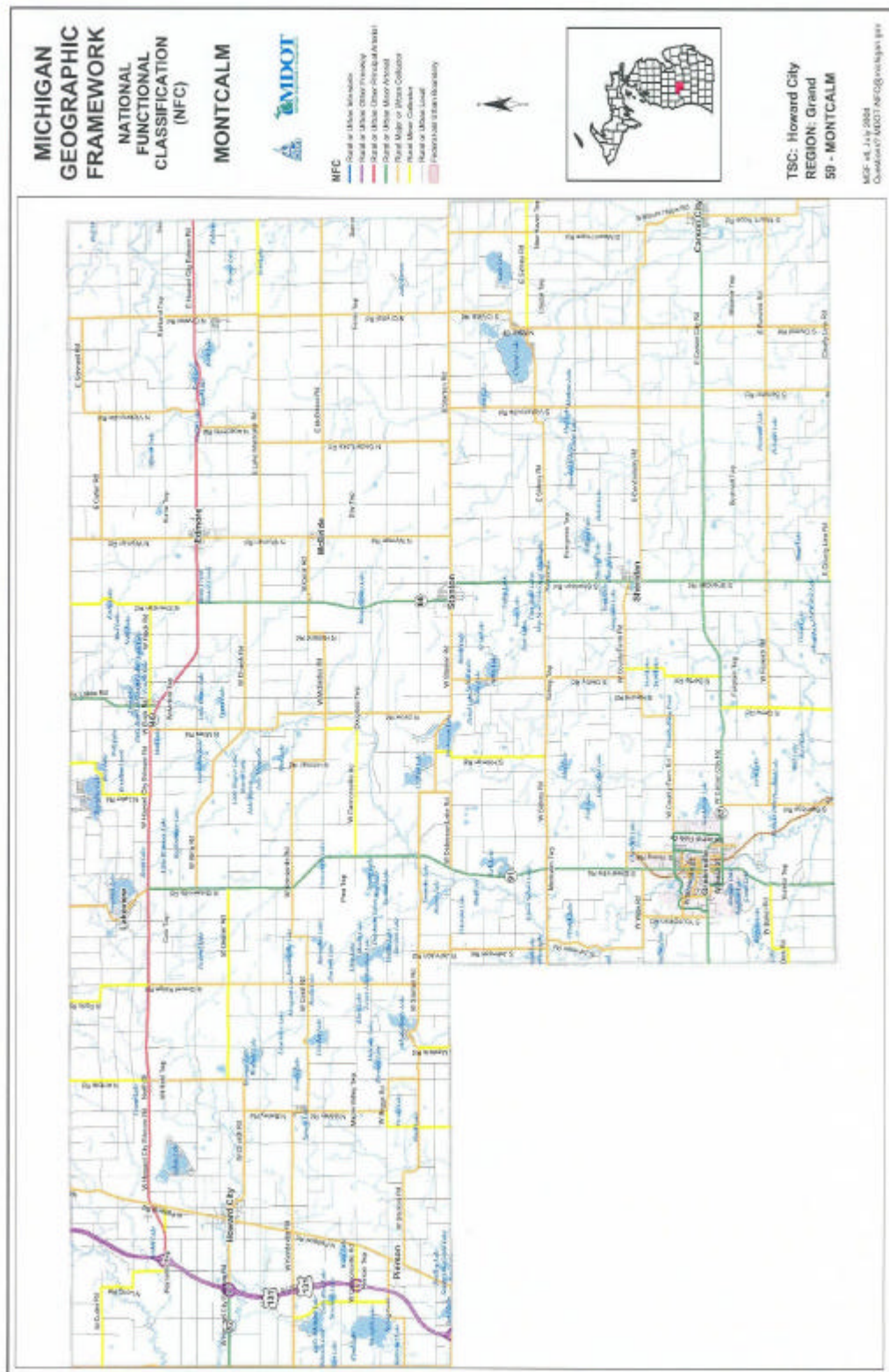
Freeways/Interstate Routes

Rural Freeways (shown in purpose on Map 6-1). These roads are intended to provide movement of large volumes of through traffic on a regional basis as well as between communities. These types of roads typically have limited access, no at-grade crossings, and no traffic stops. The legal traveling speeds on freeways are typically 55 miles per hour for trucks and 70 miles per hour for other vehicles. US-131 is the only freeway/interstate route that traverses the county. It is located in the northwest corner of the county and provides a high volume northbound and southbound link through Pierson and Reynolds townships.

Federal/State Trunklines

Federal and state trunklines are highways maintained by MDOT (and are shown in red or green on Map 6-1). They are intended to provide for movement of large volumes of through traffic on a regional basis as well as between communities. Some of these roads have channelized grade crossings and signals at major intersections. The five facilities designated as federal/state trunklines in Montcalm County include M-46, M-57, M-66, M-82, and M-91. According to MDOT, there are over 119 miles of federal and state trunklines in the county.

Map 6-1 National Functional Classification System Road Network in Montcalm County



Source: Michigan Department of Transportation

Table 6-1
Federal and State Trunkline ADT, Montcalm County Segment Average 2003

Fed-State Trunklines	Average Daily Traffic
M-82	3,700
M-46	6,583
US-131 Expressway	24,975
M-91	9,866
M-66	6,800
M-57	10,000
Total	61,924

The traffic count data was taken by the Michigan Department of Transportation and is collected using mechanical counters that record the volume of traffic passing a point or segment of a road, in both directions, during a 24-hour period. Overall, the heaviest traffic can be seen on US-131 with a Montcalm County segment average of 24,975 vehicles. Among the county's roads, the heaviest amount of traffic can be seen on the western portion of M-57 with an average of 13,400 vehicles, and the southern portion of M-91 (the county segment average for these roads are lower due to the smaller amount of traffic on the remaining portions of the road).

**-LEGEND-
TRAFFIC VOLUMES**

1-2000	2001-5000
5001-10000	10001-20000
20001-50000	50001-100000
100001 & ABOVE	

□ INTERCHANGE
 (I-75) INTERSTATE ROUTE
 (US-2) U.S. ROUTE
 (MD-57) STATE ROUTE

Montcalm County Fact Book
February 2006
6-3

County Primary Roads

The major function of the county primary roads is to provide for through traffic between areas and across communities, as well as direct access to abutting property. They are shown in orange and yellow on Map 6-1 and only extend between city limits. These paved roads are designed to move traffic at a range of design speed between 35 and 55 miles per hour. In addition, these roads are typically subject to necessary control of entrances, exits, and curb cuts. Examples of such roads in Montcalm County include Mt Hope, Federal Road, and County Farm Road. According to MDOT, Montcalm County has approximately 379.6 miles of county primary roads.

County Local Roads

These roads provide for internal traffic movement within the County and connect local land areas with the major arterial road system. They are thin gray lines on Map 6-1. Providing direct access to adjacent properties is an important function of these roads. These roadways typically have speed limits in the range of 35 to 45 miles per hour. The majority of the county's roads fall under this classification. Examples of such roads in Montcalm County include Backus Road near Greenville, and Peoples Road north of Stanton. Montcalm County has approximately 1,122 miles of county local roads.

County City Streets

Streets within the boundaries of a city or incorporated village are under the jurisdiction of and are the responsibility of that city or village. The arterials within the city limits, which serve as the major more heavily used roads, are in green. The collectors, which serve as secondary branch roads to the arterials, are in orange. The local streets are thin lines in gray and are all on Map 6-1. There are 32,856 miles of city streets in Montcalm County (27,425 miles of arterial and collector city streets and 5,696 miles of local city streets).

TRAFFIC ON COUNTY ROADS

The state trunkline system is the spine and the county road network is the arteries in the local transportation system in Montcalm County. This network is extensive and in generally good condition. Table 6-2 illustrates the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) on major county roads within Montcalm County.

The highest average daily traffic on county roads in the County is on Federal Road (old US-131) in Pierson Township (7,448), followed by Stanton Road in Day Township (6,108), and Federal Road in Reynolds Township (5,801). Federal Road runs parallel to US-131, which results in the high volume of traffic in the adjacent communities.

Each township in the County contributes funds for road improvements to supplement the gas tax revenues received by the County Road Commission. This enables road resurfacing, intersection and other safety improvements that otherwise would not be possible. Despite the township contributions, there are more road repair and improvement needs than current revenues can pay for. If future development of residences along county roads continues at the rates projected in Chapter 2, the increased traffic will widen the gap between needs and available revenues.

Table 6-2
Average Daily Traffic, Montcalm County Major Roads

Township	Road	Counter Location	ADT
Belvidere	North County Line Road	1/8 mile W. of Sheridan Rd.	1,062
Bloomer	Mt. Hope Road	N. Carson City limit	2,240
Bushnell	Condesary Road	1/8 mile E. of M-66	2,087
Cato	Lakeview Road	Lakeview N. Villiage limit	3,655
Crystal	Mt. Hope Road	1/8 mile N. of Condensary Road	3,244
Day	Stanton Road	1/8 mile W. of Sheridan Rd.	6,108
Douglass	Stanton Road	1/8 mile E. of Derby Road	5,031
Eureka	Wise Road	1/8 mile E. of Youngman Road	4,448
Evergreen	Sidney Road	1/8 mile E. of M-66	2,706
Fairplain	Fenwick Road	1/8 mile W. of M-66	1,046
Ferris	Stanton Road	1/8 mile W. of Vickeryville Road	3,996
Home	Wyman Road	North Edmore Village limit	2,153
Maple Valley	Stanton Road	1/8 mile W. of Gravel Ridge Road	2,176
Montcalm	Sidney Road	1/8 mile E. of West County Road	5,060
Pierson	Federal Road	1/8 mile N. of South County Line	7,448
Pine	Stanton Road	1/8 mile E. of Lake Road	3,838
Reynolds	Federal Road	1/8 mile S. of Howard City limit	5,801
Richland	Crystal Road	1/8 mile S. of M-46	4,728
Sidney	Sidney Road	1/8 mile E. of Hillman Road	4,648
Winfield	Gravel Ridge Road	1/8 mile S. of M-46	1,114

Source: Montcalm County Road Commission, 2003

AIR TRANSPORTATION

The residents of Montcalm County travel to Gerald R. Ford International Airport, in Grand Rapids, or the Capital City Airport in Lansing for the closest commercial air passenger service. Ionia County Airport also provides limited, private air service to Montcalm County residents. There are three airports in Montcalm County. Two are classified as U-3/U-4 airports and the other as a U-1/U-2. A brief description of the classification descriptions for these airports, taken from the *Michigan Aviation System Plan (MASP)*, follows.

Airport Classifications (in Montcalm County)

U-1 and U-2

Mayes Airport in Carson City is a U-1/U-2 airport, which are generally small facilities with primary and crosswind turf runways that are intended to respond to aviation needs of communities under a population of 2,500. Typically, these airports have less than 10 registered aircraft, fewer than 10,000 annual operations, lack all-weather capabilities and may be closed during a portion of the year. Approximately 75% of the general aviation aircraft types can be accommodated at this classification of airport.

U-3 and U-4

Two airports in Montcalm County, Lakeview Airport – Griffith Field and Greenville Municipal Airport, are classified as a U-3/U-4 airport. These airports are generally medium utility facilities with a paved primary runway and a turf crosswind runway intended to respond to the needs of communities over a population of 2,500, recreational centers and geographically isolated areas such as population islands. Typically, these airports have more than 10 registered aircraft, fewer than 20,000 annual operations, may lack all-weather capabilities, but remain open throughout the year. Approximately 95% of the general aviation aircraft types can be accommodated at this classification airport.

Montcalm County Airports

Greenville Municipal Airport – Greenville, MI

This facility provides service to Greenville and Montcalm County and is owned by the City of Greenville. This is Montcalm County's largest airport based upon "on field aircraft" and "aircraft operations." The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported the average aircraft based on the field for this facility at 46 with average aircraft operations of 39 a day (14,235/yr). Of those aircraft, 37 are single-engine while 9 are multi-engine airplanes. Local general aviation constitutes 64% of its operations, with 28% being transient general aviation, and 8% air taxi. The airport has four runways, two paved and the other two turf. The longest is a paved runway at 4,200 ft. with a width of 75 ft. This facility is designated as a U3-U4 airport.

Lakeview Airport – Griffith Field - Lakeview, MI

This is Montcalm County's second largest airport based upon "on field aircraft" and "aircraft operations" and is also designated as a U3-U4 facility. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported the average aircraft based on the field for this facility at 39 with average aircraft operations at 14,000 per year. Of those aircraft, 32 are single-engine while 2 are multi-engine airplanes and 5 are helicopters. Local general aviation constitutes 70% of its operations which is primarily seasonal agricultural crop dusting, with 30% being transient general aviation. The airport has two runways, both paved with the longer of the two measuring at 3,500 ft. in length and 75 ft. at its width.

Mayes Airport – Carson City, MI

Currently, the facility is a small utility airport, limited to accommodating single-engine propeller-driven aircraft. Airport operations tend to be limited to daylight hours with common airport closures due to inclement weather. Seasonal closures are also common at this airport. The average number of aircraft based on the field for this facility is under 10, with airport operations totaling an average of only 48 per month. Fifty percent of the operations are transient general aviation, while the other fifty percent are local general aviation.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Local transit services and public transportation systems can be an integral part of a community's transportation system if they transport significant numbers of people and offer access to jobs and shopping areas to individuals without other personal transportation options. Public transit systems also provide a method of transportation for senior citizens and persons with physical disabilities that make it difficult to operate a vehicle. In addition, public transportation systems eliminate individual vehicle trips from the roadway thereby reducing traffic congestion and air pollution. Following is a brief description of the public transit services in Montcalm County.

Greenville Transit System, Dial-a-Ride

Greenville's Dial-a-Ride Transit System provides affordable public transit throughout the City and the Greater Greenville area. The system operates four buses Monday through Saturday with four daily stops to Stanton on Monday through Friday. Arrangements for rides are demand responsive and may be utilized by Dial-a-Ride tokens that are available at City Hall and the Greenville Transit Garage.

The annual ridership for the dial-a-ride system was 54,927 passengers in 2003 and ran a total of 135,015 miles. Total eligible expenses in 2003 were \$309,951.

School Bus System

Each of the seven K-12 school districts and the Montcalm Intermediate School District and Eight Cap (Head Start Program) within Montcalm County operates its own bus system for student transportation. The bus routes and the size of the bus fleets are unique to the individual school systems and may transport students to and from school, to school athletic events and on field trips, but they represent significant duplication of services.

TRAILS

Montcalm County's bicycle and non-motorized paths or trails offer users a variety of recreational opportunities in safe areas that provide the space and accessibility for activities such as biking, walking, jogging, in-line skating, roller skating and cross country skiing. As described below, some areas are designated as a bike or non-motorized route. However, people also take advantage of any local and primary roads with wide shoulders and low traffic flow for the same types of activities.

In addition to locally designated recreational trails, there exists a national organization called the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy that assists in creating recreational trails. Michigan's chapter of this organization is known as Discover Michigan Trail. This group attempts to enhance communities by converting thousands of miles of abandoned rail corridors, and connecting open space, into a nationwide network of public trails. This program is often referred to as the "rails to trails" program.

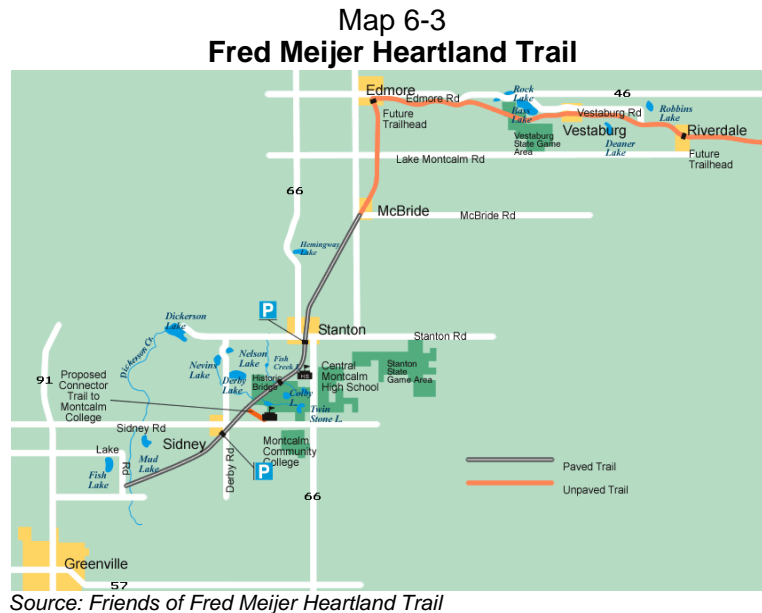
These types of trails sometimes offer a wider variety of recreational options including snowmobiling, horseback riding, hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country skiing. In many cases, once completed, the ownership and maintenance of these trails are given to the local community in which the trail is located.

Whichever the type of opportunities offered, these trails typically provide a connection between communities. Some of the trails extend only a few miles while others may extend 50 to 90 miles in length, traversing several counties.

Although there are many locations within Montcalm County that may be thought of as recreational trails because of wide-shoulders or off-road access, to mention every trail is beyond the scope of this report. The trails mentioned are those which are recognized at the state level.

Fred Meijer Heartland Trail

This non-motorized trail (the former CSX railroad right of way) runs through 41 miles of rural Montcalm County and east Gratiot County. The southern tip begins in Greenville (as the Fred Meijer Flat River trail) and winds its way north through farmland and wooded state game areas. The trail runs through the towns of Sidney, Stanton, McBride, and Edmore. At Edmore the trail turns east and heads past Cedar Lake and Vestaburg, entering Gratiot County and extends 8 more miles to Alma. Along its length it crosses several creeks and one river. Currently (2005) 13 miles of the trail is paved. Of particular interest, is the 120 year old historic bridge that spans Fish Creek just south of Stanton. (See Map 6-3.)



White Pine Trail State Park

This trail is Michigan's longest Rail-Trail State Park (formerly the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroads), stretching a distance of 92 miles (12 miles in Pierson and Reynolds Townships) from Comstock Park just north of Grand Rapids, north to the City of Cadillac. The trail is open along its entire length for all non-motorized recreational uses. Snowmobile use is restricted to the area from Russell Road (just north of M-57) to Cadillac. The trail passes through 31 municipalities and townships.

Fred Meijer Flat River Trail

The Fred Meijer Flat River Trail is the crown jewel of Greenville's park system. The trail is a nationally recognized trail, winning the American Society of Civil Engineers 2000 Quality of Life Award. The trail currently stretches approximately 1.8 miles from Tower Park to Davis Park. The paved walkway passes through hardwoods and wetlands before it runs along and crosses the Flat River. The trail provides excellent walking, biking, and in-line skating opportunities. Eventually, Phase II and III of the Fred Meijer Flat River Trail will stretch the trail nearly eight miles around the entire city and connect to the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail. The completed trail system will connect many of Greenville's neighborhoods, schools, and commercial districts.

John f:\winword\montcalm\fact book\FB Chapter 6.doc