

Guiding Principles

Implementing *Coulee Vision 2050* will require consistency and collaboration between communities – ultimately, ownership of the regional vision is a shared responsibility. The land use and transportation policies and infrastructure decisions that are made by individual communities, and the ability of neighboring communities to reach boundary agreements, will determine how successful the La Crosse-La Crescent region will be in achieving the preferred land use vision and mobility choices.

The *Coulee Vision 2050* planning process, and identification of the preferred regional land use alternative, resulted in the identification of overriding themes. These themes were used to develop more specific land use and transportation vision statements – or guiding principles that are intended to shape future policy, land use, infrastructure and transportation decisions throughout the region. These principles are to be used by all stakeholders – local, county, and state agencies – to make decisions that are consistent with the regional vision. The overall themes, and guiding principles, are not listed in any particular order and are intended to be used collectively.

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Overall guiding themes identified through the *Coulee Vision 2050* planning process include:

❖ **Healthy Communities**

- ✓ Our communities have clean air and water and are safe and convenient to walk and bike.

❖ **Universal Access**

- ✓ All residents of the region can meet their daily travel needs, regardless of age, ability or income.

❖ **Economic Competitiveness**

- ✓ Business growth is supported by a transportation network that moves people and goods efficiently, on all routes through the region.

❖ **Quality of Place**

- ✓ The unique coulee landscape and unique urban places are valued and enhanced through transportation decisions.

❖ **Flexibility**

- ✓ Mixed-use development, multi-modal transportation systems, connected street networks, and new technologies and techniques are all embraced.

Land Use Principles

The following land use principles are intended to help regional and local stakeholders develop policies and implement improvements that are consistent with the vision statement and guiding themes. The land use guiding principles (in no particular order) include the following:

1. Housing and neighborhoods in the City of La Crosse will attract new investment and more residents, especially through renovation and enhancement of existing housing stock.

- ❖ This principle encourages the City of La Crosse to reinvest in the existing housing stock and neighborhoods to support infill development that will benefit the City and the entire region.

2. Senior housing options will continue to expand, and new housing intended for residents who remain mobile and active should be located within a 10-minute walk of retail and services.

- ❖ This principle recognizes the need to provide housing options to accommodate an increasing aging population. Sites in close proximity to clinics and hospitals should be prioritized for assisted living facilities.

3. New housing will continue to include a range of housing types and lot sizes, including a priority on single family lots smaller than ½ acre.

- ❖ This principle recognizes that single-family detached housing should generally occur on lots smaller than 1/2 acre, including a mix of conventional suburban formats with more than 70 feet of street frontage and also narrower lots, sometimes using alleys. Housing with attached units should grow as a percentage of the overall housing mix, including both rental and owner-occupied units in twindo, townhome, low-rise multi-unit and high-rise multi-unit formats appropriate to the site and setting.

4. The region places a high priority on infill development to enhance the utilization of existing urban infrastructure and enhance the concentration of uses so that more residents are within a 10-minute walk of their daily retail needs.

- ❖ This principle recognizes that maintaining existing infrastructure should be an especially high priority near major transit stops. Each community will identify locally-appropriate locations and strategies to allow taller, more land-efficient buildings as compared to existing development. Careful site and building design should be required to minimize negative impacts to nearby residents and community character.

5. New buildings and development areas will often include a mix of uses.

- ❖ This principle encourages communities to seek appropriate ways to allow residential, retail, and office uses to be intermixed, within the same building, the same site, or the same development, especially where doing so allows for more efficient land use. Local governments should actively advocate for such outcomes and should consider the use of incentives to help overcome resistance to such development common among banks and lenders.

6. Towns, villages and cities will pursue and approve boundary agreements that allow some growth in unincorporated areas.

- ❖ This principle recognizes that town governments have an important role in the effort to limit sprawl. Towns desire some tax base growth, and that growth can be directed close to existing urbanized area through the creation and maintenance of boundary agreements that establish limits on municipal annexations and allow limited extensions of urban services. More specifically, cities and villages will offer to extend their sewer and water service into defined town growth areas outside municipal boundaries, without annexation. The intent of the boundary agreements is to allow limited *urban* development in towns, including *by requirement* the full complement of urban features, services and facilities that make an effective multimodal transportation system possible. This should include sewer, water, stormwater management, and sidewalks and trails that are maintained for year-round use. The boundary agreements also need to include commitments to restrict rural development. The objective of all participants in this effort is to prevent more development that has poor transportation options and outcomes, and increase development that enables and is served by more transportation modes.

Transportation Principles

The following transportation principles are intended to help regional and local stakeholders develop policies and implement improvements that are consistent with the vision statement and guiding themes. The transportation guiding principles (in no particular order) include the following:

1. New roads for the primary purpose of facilitating regional commuter traffic will generally be avoided – community preference is for expansion of existing roads and transit enhancements instead.

- ❖ This principle recognizes the desire of stakeholders to focus improvements along existing regional corridors and to promote alternative transportation modes, including expanded regional transit service, as a way to effectively accommodate future development and address capacity deficiencies.

2. The region will have a flexible and fully interconnected grid of streets and highways.

- ❖ The principle recognizes the importance of developing a flexible, interconnected roadway network that safely and effectively address future year mobility needs. New development areas will connect to the existing network in multiple places. Existing choke points, such as the Mormon Coulee Road railroad overpass south of La Crosse, will be relieved through the construction of new streets that provide a detour option in case of unplanned road closures.

3. A Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) will be created to fund and maintain transportation systems.

- ❖ This principle supports the formation of a RTA that would expand public transportation services and establish a sustainable local funding source for regional transportation systems. The concept of developing an RTA is consistent with the current MTP and steps

should be taken at both the local and regional levels to encourage the State of Wisconsin to allow the creation of a RTA. Emphasis should be placed on improving universal access to major destinations within the region, including all schools; La Crosse, La Crescent, Onalaska, Holmen and West Salem downtowns; hospitals; airport; Amtrak station; Valley View Mall; etc.

4. Transit use will increase among all age groups.

- ❖ This principle recognizes the need to provide alternative transportation options for a wide range of users. As the percentage of the population age 65 and over continues to increase, it will be important to provide viable mobility options including expand public transportation. Implementing the preferred land use alternative, through increased infill development and limits on urban sprawl, makes regional transit a viable mobility option for all transportation users.

5. Fixed-route regional transit, such as Bus Rapid Transit, should be actively studied and pursued. Routes should be identified and necessary right-of-way protected (or gradually acquired) until implementation becomes feasible.

- ❖ This principle recognizes that the region should utilize new technologies to make alternative transportation modes a viable travel option compared to the automobile. Specifically, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), or BRT principles, should be explored to improve bus travel times and to enhance the overall experience for transit riders. Regional transit corridors should be identified and opportunities to implement transit improvements should be considered in all regional and local planning efforts.

6. Average commuting times, including all travel modes, will be maintained below 20 minutes.

- ❖ This principle reflects the desire of the region to maintain commuting times at a reasonable level – identified to be a goal of 20 minutes or less. Currently, the average commute within the region is approximately 15 minutes. The preferred regional land use alternative supports infill development and limited urban sprawl – principles which in turn support shorter commutes resulting in reduced travel times, alternative transportation modes that offer express services, and residential developments in urban centers which make walking a viable travel option.

7. Growth will be accommodated without a significant increase in congestion through the use of many strategies, including road and highway improvements, traffic signal timing improvements, new/enhanced transit services, enhanced and expanded bike and pedestrian facilities, scheduling adjustments by major employers, and other approaches.

- ❖ This principle recognizes that multiple strategies will be used throughout the region to accommodate future traffic levels associated with projected population and employment growth. There is a desire among stakeholders to accommodate future growth through expansion of alternative transportation modes and improvements within existing travel corridors.

8. Truck routes in the region will be efficient and clearly identified, especially including those through the City of La Crosse.

- ❖ This principle recognizes the need to strike a balance between efficiently moving goods within and through the region while promoting safety and minimizing the negative aspects associated with heavy truck traffic. This ultimately supports the desire of regional stakeholders to support the economic competitiveness of the region while preserving the unique quality of place.

9. Mississippi River locks and dams will be upgraded to accommodate modern shipping requirements.

- ❖ This principle recognizes a unique asset of the region – the Mississippi River. The river serves many purposes including the movement of freight and other goods. *Coulee Vision 2050* encourages increased investment in the Mississippi River infrastructure to ensure that the river remains a valuable regional asset that enhances the economic competitiveness of the region.

10. Interstate passenger rail service to Minneapolis and Milwaukee/Chicago will increase in frequency and reliability.

- ❖ This principle supports the region’s desire to expand interstate passenger rail service along the Minneapolis to Milwaukee/Chicago corridor. While the State of Wisconsin has recently declined Federal funding to explore high speed rail, it is the desire of the region to continue to promote alternative travel modes including expanded interstate passenger rail service.

11. Public and private landowners will reduce their subsidy of automobile use through a mix of strategies.

- ❖ This principle recognizes that a wide range of policies will be needed to effectively implement the preferred land use alternative. One such policy is for public and private landowners to reduce their subsidy of automobile use through a mix of strategies including shared parking, fees for parking, and incentives to encourage alternative travel modes such as transit. The policy would also result in a reduction of the ratio of off-street parking spaces to building area in the region, especially in community centers. Such policies are essential if regional transit is to be successful.

12. Bike and pedestrian facilities will become ubiquitous.

- ❖ This principle supports the continued focus of the region to develop bicycle and pedestrian facilities that are consistent with complete street policies and support the development of healthy communities. It is the desire of the region that the ongoing development of non-motorized facilities and trail network improvements will provide safe non-motorized access to every part of the urban area.