

## Chapter 6: Projects, Planning, and Policies

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BCV2040, as an interim update to CV2040, provides plan objectives and action strategies developed to be consistent with the 10 federal [transportation planning factors](#) and the [goals and guiding principles](#) developed during the CV2040 planning process and to direct future planning activities.

The plan objectives and action strategies are organized under “Projects,” “Planning,” or “Policies” and given an anticipated timeline for implementation. Process- or policy-oriented strategies are continuous and ongoing; while strategies expected to produce a deliverable (plan, report, etc.) will include the year anticipated to complete the task.

Objectives and action strategies are considered short-range if they can be implemented or initiated within 1-5 years (2021-2025), mid-range within 6-10 years (2026-2030), and long-range after 10 years (2031-2040). Strategies that have

The objectives and action strategies presented here are evaluated in [chapter 7](#) for their potential environmental and social impacts.

### Projects

The goal of the objectives and action strategies offered below is to 1) complete existing and committed projects; 2) move forward illustrative projects and projects recommended in other plans; and, 3) present projects to address issues identified in [chapter 3](#) and in [chapter 4](#).

The 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as amended May 15, 2020 provides the existing and committed projects included in BCV2040. These projects, having been approved by the Policy Board, are consistent with and incorporated into this transportation plan.

Illustrative projects include projects listed as illustrative in the current TIP document, projects that were submitted for Surface Transportation Program-Urban (STP-U) or Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding but were not awarded, and projects that have been conceptualized in local plans and planning activities.

## Project Objectives, Action Strategies, and Implementation Challenges

⇒ **Objective:** Resolve the Coulee Region Transportation Study (CRTS).

**Timeframe:** 2021-2022.

### Action Strategies:

- Facilitate discussions between WisDOT and the LAPC Policy Board to either move the Coulee Region Transportation Study (CRTS) forward or remove it from the TIP.
  - Work with the WisDOT to re-evaluate the goals of the Study to consider local goals and include [strategy “H”](#) as a standalone strategy.

### Challenges:

- No resolution came of previous discussions between the WisDOT and the LAPC Policy Board.
- Despite the LAPC consistently approving “aggressive implementation of policy-based actions”<sup>39</sup> and [transportation demand management](#) (TDM) strategies to address mobility issues (strategy “H”), local policies and practices are often inconsistent with approved courses of action.

⇒ **Objective:** Fund and program illustrative projects.

- Reconstruct Theater Rd from CTH PH to STH 16, Onalaska.
- Widen CTH OS from STH 16 to Market Pl, Onalaska.
- Improve the E Main St/Green Coulee Rd corridor, Onalaska.
- Construct a shared-use trail along STH 16 from CTH PH to Landfill Rd, Onalaska.
- Construct a bicycle/pedestrian bridge over the La Crosse River, West Salem.
- Construct a bicycle/pedestrian trail along USH 14, connecting the Wagon Wheel Trail to Regional Route 1, La Crosse.
- Construct a grade-separated crossing of USH 14 (Wagon Wheel Trail Phase 4), connecting the Wagon Wheel Trail with the south sidewalk, La Crescent.
- Construct a shared-use trail along Mormon Coulee Creek, Shelby.
- Construct a shared-use trail suspended below Interstate 90 between TH 14 in Minnesota and Exit 3 in Wisconsin.

<sup>39</sup> 2030 La Crosse and La Crescent Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan, August 17, 2005.

**Timeframe:** Short- to mid-range for projects with design concepts and cost estimates; long-range for projects that are still in the conceptual/planning phase or are dependent on the construction of a future project.

**Action Strategies:**

- Prepare grant applications for project sponsors (ongoing, 2021-2040).
- Pursue a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) to fund local projects (mid-range, 2026-2030).

**Challenges:**

- Prospective project sponsors may not apply for funds if they are unsure that they can commit to the local share.
- Existing roadway needs usually exceed available resources and local sponsors tend to prioritize motorized transportation improvements over non-motorized transportation.
- Wisconsin projects submitted for TAP funding compete statewide.
- Roadway projects often move forward regardless of federal or state support but bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects tend to have to wait until federal and state support is obtained.
- Wisconsin statutes do not allow RTAs.

⇒ **Objective:** Incorporate bicycle, pedestrian, and transit considerations in all roadway projects.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2040.

**Action Strategies:**

- Develop a design guide to assist urban communities incorporate all users, especially children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, in roadway projects (short-range, 2021-2025).
- Utilize the STP-U ranking process to prioritize multimodal projects (ongoing, 2021-2040).

**Challenges:**

- Minimum design standards issued by the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and DOT policies can be barriers to providing accommodations in constrained environments when federal and/or state funds are attached.

- The STP-U application available from WisDOT only provides check boxes for multimodal components. The project description is often lacking in detail.

⇒ **Objective:** Double Amtrak train service through the La Crosse area.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2025.

**Action Strategies:**

- Work with State agencies, Amtrak, and advocacy groups to implement the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago (TCMC) second Amtrak train (continuing).

**Challenges:**

- The reduction in state and local revenues due to the COVID-19 pandemic may delay implementation of the TCMC project.
- Minnesota and Wisconsin have not yet committed to consistent financial support.

⇒ **Objective:** Implement the yet-to-be realized short- and mid-range service improvements recommended in the [Grand River Transit Service Enhancement & Policy Plan](#).

**Timeframe:** 2021-2025.

**Action Strategies:**

- Work with MTU to modify Route 6 for service to the Amtrak Station and the Indian Hill neighborhood.
- Work with Onalaska to re-establish full service to Route 9.
- Participate in La Crosse MTU Board and Onalaska Utilities Committee meetings (ongoing).
- Prepare a new transit development plan (2022).

**Challenges:**

- The La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU) currently prioritizes the purchase of electric and clean diesel vehicles to replace rolling stock that is beyond its useful life. The replacement of vehicles is critical in the short-term to improve the condition of MTU rolling stock—55 percent of which is beyond its useful life—and to decrease the incidences of major breakdowns.

- The level of service for Route 9 is established by the city of Onalaska, which also administers the Onalaska/Holmen/West Salem Public Transit (OHWSPT) shared-ride service.
- ⇒ **Objective:** Establish a signed system of intercity bicycle routes that have a high level of comfort.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2040; implementation has begun but needs to be phased over time.

**Action Strategies:**

- Continue to plan routes with the LAPC Committee on Transit and Active Transportation (CTAT).
- Continue to coordinate with local communities to sign identified routes.
- Continue to work with local communities to address connectivity, access, and comfort issues.
- Utilize off-road facilities to the greatest extent possible.
- Use identified routes to target locations for bicycle facility improvements.

**Challenges:**

- Connectivity and access barriers take time to address. Signing projects may need to be phased.

## Planning

The planning process can be challenging at many levels, ranging from acquiring data to engaging the public to developing and implementing plans and programs. The following objectives and action strategies strive to address issues we have identified to achieve a more effective, coordinated, and locally sensitive planning process.

### Planning Objectives, Action Strategies, and Implementation Challenges

- ⇒ **Objective:** Make the LAPC more effective as a metropolitan planning organization. The LAPC has been effective at producing the planning documents required by Federal planning law (Transportation Improvement Program, Planning Work Program, Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Public Participation Plan, Title VI) and additional plans and study reports when time allows, but the LAPC has been less effective in engaging in an inclusive planning process or in influencing local policy.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2040, continuing and ongoing.

### Action Strategies:

- Work with member communities to involve LAPC staff in local planning activities (i.e. comprehensive plan updates, corridor studies, land use plans).
- Work with the Policy Board and planning area communities to provide the opportunity for the LAPC to review/comment on local comprehensive plans during plan development and updates.
- Develop a continuous and inclusive public process that incorporates equity into all planning decisions.
  - Utilize website for education and public input.
  - Develop a social media plan (2021).
  - Assess community, social, and health impacts.

### Challenges:

- The LAPC is often overlooked as a stakeholder in local planning activities.
- La Crosse County has strict policies on the establishment and use of social media sites.

⇒ **Objective:** Provide equitable access to and development of transportation facilities and networks. An environmental justice analysis is always conducted for the annual transportation improvement program, the quinquennial metropolitan transportation plan, and the roughly decennial transit development plan, but these occasional considerations are insufficient in addressing equity in our planning process.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2040, ongoing.

### Action Strategies:

- Update the travel model to consider all users (2021-2023).
- Develop a signed, intercity bicycle route system.
- Prioritize projects that fill gaps and improve connections for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Develop a regionally integrated transit system.
- Conduct a study of spatial mismatch (2023).
- Complete community, social, and health assessments as appropriate.
- Supplement Census data with quantitative and qualitative local data to identify areas of underrepresented populations.

**Challenges:**

- Proxy data may be required if local data are unavailable.
- ⇒ **Objective:** Develop local performance targets for the planning area in lieu of supporting state targets. While efforts have been made to localize the discussion of state targets, it is difficult to instill local meaning in a statewide value.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2022.

**Action Strategies:**

- Work with our committee membership to develop targets for the planning area or other defined geography.

**Challenges:**

- Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is needed to calculate safety rates and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation does not calculate VMT for geographies smaller than counties.
- ⇒ **Objective:** Ensure local comprehensive plans and BCV2040 and future metropolitan transportation plans (MTPs) are consistent. A [review](#) of local comprehensive plans revealed inconsistency between the transportation and land use goals in local comprehensive plans and those approved in CV2040.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2040, ongoing.

**Action Strategies:**

- Review BCV2040 goals and guiding principles during the planning process for the 2025 MTP update. Considerations will include not only the urbanized area but also urbanizing and rural areas of the planning area (2022-2023).
- Work with planning area communities to:
  - Achieve a common understanding of planning goals and to develop a cooperative process for achieving goal consistency.
  - Create a framework for incorporating community and MTP transportation and land use goals into appropriate agency planning documents (2024).
  - Consider MTP goals and guiding principles when making transportation and land use decisions.

- Consider modifying the planning area boundary to remove wholly rural areas (i.e. town of Greenfield) and not anticipated to urbanize within the next 50 years (2022-2023).

#### Challenges:

- The LAPC is often overlooked as a stakeholder in local planning activities.
- Local governments value their autonomy and may be reluctant to include LAPC participation in local planning processes.

⇒ **Objective:** Integrate freight planning into the LAPC planning process. The limited input the LAPC obtained from the freight community during the CV2040 planning process suggests few issues with freight movement in the area. Considering identified constrained and congested road conditions on state highways, we suspect that some mobility challenges do exist.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2025.

#### Action Strategies:

- Evaluate truck freight logistics in the planning area to determine if there are mobility and delivery issues.
  - Determine the feasibility of preparing a truck freight plan.

#### Challenges:

- Private freight companies are difficult to engage in planning activities.

⇒ **Objective:** Develop an integrated regional transit system. While some coordination exists between MTU and OHWSPT (free transfers) and MTU and SMRT (share bus stops), federal/state policies regarding “duplication of service” and local policies preventing direct service to destinations in a neighboring community has resulted in riders engaged in time-consuming, multi-transfer transit trips.

**Timeframe:** Short- to mid-range, 2021-2030.

#### Action Strategies:

- Prepare a regional transit development plan for the cities of La Crosse (MTU) and Onalaska (OHWSPT) and the County of La Crosse (SMRT) (2022).
- Develop an action plan for pursuing an RTA (2026).

#### Challenges:



- Wisconsin law does not enable the formation of RTAs.
- ⇒ **Objective:** Become the first Vision Zero metropolitan planning organization. Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and serious injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. WisDOT and MnDOT have developed the safety programs, Zero in Wisconsin and Toward Zero Deaths in Minnesota, for their respective Strategic Highway Safety Plans.

**Timeframe:** Short- to mid-range, 2021-2030.

**Action Strategies:**

- Develop a Vision Zero plan for the planning area (2026).
- Coordinate with Safe Routes to School planning (ongoing).

**Challenges:**

- Local elected officials may resist publicly committing to Vision Zero.
- Local government resources may be insufficient to implement Vision Zero strategies.

## Policies

As an advisory organization the LAPC works within a narrow band of authority and must rely on the membership of its Policy Board and committees to consider/incorporate LAPC plans and programs in their own planning activities.

### Policy Objectives, Actions Strategies, and Implementation Challenges

- ⇒ **Objective:** Prioritize STP-U projects that support federal performance measures.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2040; ongoing.

**Action Strategies:**

- Incorporate consideration of federal performance measures in the STP-U project ranking criteria (2020-2021).

**Challenges:**

- Local goals may conflict with federal goals.

- ⇒ **Objective:** Prioritize activities that favor TDM measures over activities that propose widening existing roads or building new roads to address mobility.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2040, ongoing.

**Action Strategies:**

- Work with local communities to incorporate TDM considerations in their comprehensive plans.
- Solicit member communities for local studies planning projects that study TDM to address mobility.
- Develop a list of feasible TDM best practices for urban/urbanizing/rural planning area communities (2021).
- Support local efforts to implement such programs as bike share, guaranteed ride home, transit work pass, and carpooling.

**Challenges:**

- Despite the LAPC consistently approving “aggressive implementation of policy-based actions” strategies to address mobility issues, local policies and practices are often inconsistent with approved courses of action.

- ⇒ **Objective:** Ingrain equity<sup>40</sup> in all transportation planning activities. Equity considerations have been limited to plan- and program-based “environmental justice” analyses to meet federal requirements.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2040; continuous and ongoing.

**Action Strategies:**

- Assess community, social, and health impacts.
- Develop an inclusive public outreach and education program (2021).
- Participate in the comprehensive planning process of planning area communities.
- Prioritize multimodal and transit projects.

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<sup>40</sup> The Federal Highway Administration describes equity in transportation as “seek[ing] fairness in mobility and accessibility to meet the needs of all community members. A central goal of transportation equity is to facilitate social and economic opportunities by providing equitable levels of access to affordable and reliable transportation options based on the needs of the populations being served, particularly populations that are traditionally underserved, [including]... Low Income, Minority, Elderly, Children, Limited English Proficiency, or Persons with Disabilities.”

**Challenges:**

- The LAPC is often overlooked as a stakeholder in local planning activities.
  - Local governments value their autonomy and may be reluctant to include LAPC participation in local planning processes.
- ⇒ **Objective:** Prioritize initiatives that address climate change. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation account for about 28 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, making it the largest contributor of U.S. GHG emissions. These emissions contribute to climate change and the resulting extreme heat and precipitation events that damage transportation infrastructure.<sup>41</sup>

**Timeframe:** 2021-2040; ongoing.

**Action Strategies:**

- Update STP-U criteria to explicitly consider the impact of a project on climate change (2020-2021).
- Assist local transit agencies in transitioning to electric or alternative fuel vehicles.
- Support local governments in their carbon-neutral efforts.
- Advocate for electric and alternative fuel fueling stations.

**Challenges:**

- Fleet turnover takes not only the purchase of new vehicles but also the purchase of the infrastructure needed to recharge/refuel the vehicles.
  - Alternative-fuel vehicles are significantly more expensive than traditional clean diesel vehicles.
- ⇒ **Objective:** Engage in inclusive, cooperative, and educational public outreach.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2040; ongoing.

**Action Strategies:**

- Integrate web-based mapping and data visualization tools into the LAPC website (2020-2021; ongoing).

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<sup>41</sup> See the LAPC report, *Weathering Climate Change: A Vulnerability Assessment of Road, Bridge, and Rail Infrastructure*, 2018, for impacts in the planning area.

- Redevelop and maintain website for user-friendliness, accessibility, and interactivity (2020-2021; ongoing).
- Develop and maintain a social media plan (2021; ongoing).
- Update the Public Participation Plan (2023).

#### Challenges:

- La Crosse County policies for websites and social media may limit the scope of interactivity and social media tools used.

⇒ **Objective:** Improve the exchange of information between the LAPC and planning area communities. One of the general findings of the [local comprehensive plan review](#) is that most planning area communities appear to have limited knowledge/awareness/support of LAPC plans and planning efforts.

**Timeframe:** 2021-2040; ongoing.

#### Action Strategies:

- Participate in local boards, councils, commissions, etc.
- Develop and distribute one-pagers about the LAPC and what we do (2021).
- Make remote participation (i.e. Microsoft Teams) a standard option for all meetings.

#### Challenges:

- Meetings often have conflicting schedules.

## Summary

As an advisory organization, the LAPC is challenged with implementing the MTP.

We acknowledge the importance of completing programmed projects and funding illustrative projects. We propose planning and policy strategies that support the goals and guiding principles while working within a scope of accomplishable activities.

Local and state coordination and cooperation are essential for implementing the MTP and moving the LAPC toward becoming an effective and proactive MPO. LAPC staff will utilize the planning work program to the greatest extent possible.