

Transportation Enhancement Study
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Traffic impacts almost everybody on a daily basis. Therefore, proactive transportation planning and management is critical to the future of this community and key to maintaining a high quality of life for the citizens of Stillwater while providing for the growth and future prosperity of the community. In the past, the citizens of Stillwater have enjoyed a roadway system with relatively little traffic or congestion. However, as development has continued to occur throughout the city, traffic has grown to a volume that at times, the increased traffic has become at a minimum, inconvenient. Without proactive transportation management, the inconvenience today will likely become an adverse impact in the future.

In order to initiate a systematic approach to transportation management, the City has just begun the process of developing a transportation enhancement study. The study will include the establishment of acceptable levels of service for the various elements of the transportation system, which will be used as a guide for determining what improvements to the system need to be made and when those improvements should occur. Upon establishment of the acceptable levels of service, the current arterial and collector street system will be evaluated. Future traffic patterns and growth will be predicted based on current and future land uses and projected population growth. The current street system and traffic projections will be input into a traffic model that will indicate what elements of the transportation system need to be improved over the next 20 years to maintain acceptable levels of service. From the model, specific projects will be identified and project scope and cost estimates will be developed.

Evaluation of the transportation system and identification of specific improvements is where traditional transportation master plans stop. However, evaluating and understanding the improvements that are or will be needed is only half of the picture. Without an implementation plan, the study is nothing more than a nice document to talk about and fill space on a shelf. Therefore, the transportation enhancement study will include the preparation of a comprehensive funding plan for the enhancement of the transportation system through a minimum 20 year planning horizon, it will identify funding sources to meet the current and future transportation needs and it will contain recommendations for those funding sources.

Because of limited resources, capacity enhancement must go beyond the traditional approach of just expanding existing streets or building new streets. In order to maintain acceptable levels of service on the street network, other means of enhancement will be necessary such as trip reduction or transferring trips from personal vehicles to alternative modes of transportation such as transit (the bus), bicycles and walking.

The study will provide the staff, the Planning Commission, the City Commission and the citizens of Stillwater with the information that is necessary to take a proactive role in

transportation management. The study will also give us the tools that are needed to plan for traffic mitigation as the community continues to grow and prosper. The City staff will facilitate the completion of the study but it will be up to the citizens of Stillwater to guide the study and provide for the transportation future of this community. In order to be successful, the study must have citizen input, citizen support and ultimately communitywide endorsement.

This is a unique opportunity to be involved in the development of a plan that has the potential to greatly impact the everyday life in Stillwater over the next 20 years and that will be the foundation for building a strong and lasting transportation system and will help maintain the high quality of life that makes Stillwater a great place to live. The quality of life and future prosperity of the community are tied directly to how we plan today for transportation tomorrow. The first public meeting for the study will be scheduled in January 2006 and we hope to have an overflow crowd.

Any questions or inquiries about the study may be directed to Ms. Kathleen Easley, City Planner by phone at 742-8215 or by email at keasley@stillwater.org.