

Chapter 6



Transportation

Goals

1. Strive to provide smooth and efficient transportation flow within the City, to nearby destinations, and to nearby connecting highways, by continuation of active transportation plan improvements when fiscally possible.
2. Enforce standard traffic rules and regulations systematically to ease congestion on local streets.
3. Include expectations for future thoroughfares and projected new traffic generators and destinations within transportation planning, and hold to that plan to accommodate future growth.
4. Ensure that roadway planning accounts for vehicular and pedestrian safety, with well-maintained and marked roadways.
5. Maintain a means of public transportation for those who rely on it for transport to work, medical appointments, shopping, and other needs, including the disabled and elderly.
6. Address the needs of through traffic (especially north-south), and truck traffic both through and within the City.
7. Maintain and facilitate improvements to the railroad system serving the City and its businesses.
8. Develop the Huron County Airport as an asset to the community and region, and the business base.

Introduction

Norwalk's transportation system involves its state and federal highways, streets and alleys, sidewalks, bicycle paths, railroad facilities, and airport. As in most communities, elements of the transportation system have been studied and recommendations have been made multiple times over the past decades. Transportation was also discussed from many perspectives during the community forums. Some of the items pertaining to transportation that were mentioned at the forums are listed below.

- Eliminate truck traffic on U.S. Route 250 through town; effective planning of industrial traffic; develop truck alternative route
- Provide accessible, affordable public transportation

- Norwalk should be people and pedestrian friendly; complete the sidewalk program
- Bicycle paths should be completed through town
- Develop the Norwalk/Huron County Airport
- Improve traffic control; alleviate traffic congestion; coordinate traffic lights and patterns
- Faster and better access to major highways
- Develop railroad access; lack of rail spurs hinders economic development
- Access management needed along the developing north side
- Need better signage for Downtown parking, promote free parking

Some specific recommendations also resulted from the forums and focus groups, including the following:

- Connect Westwind to North West Street and develop that area
- Develop center turn lanes on Benedict Avenue
- Install a light, and a turn lane on the east side, at the intersection of Old State Road and Cleveland Road (business Route 20)
- Construct turning lanes on Christie Avenue at Norwood and Benedict, and on northbound Norwood at Fair Road/Shady Lane
- Improve the intersection of Old State Road at Route 61, and Cleveland and Akron Roads on the east side of town
- Improve traffic flow on Milan Avenue (U.S. 250) from League Street northward to Milan
- Improve Old State Road as an alternative route to bypass the central city
- Northward extension of Cline Street

Functional Classifications of Ohio Roadways

When discussing roadways and their purpose, design standards, and traffic capacity, it is important to use and understand the standardized terms employed by the Ohio Department of Transportation, design engineers, and others in the field. The following descriptions are based on the manual, “Highway Functional Classification – Concepts, Criteria and Procedures”, published by the Federal Highway Administration. The functional criteria and characteristics are qualitative rather than quantitative. The following is an explanation of the hierarchy of roadways by functional classification:

- **Urban Principal Arterial:** Serve major activity centers, highest volume corridors, and longest trip demands. Carry a high proportion of total urban travel on minimum of mileage. Interconnect and provide continuity for major rural corridors to accommodate trips entering and leaving the urban area and movements through the urban area. Serve demand for intra-area travel as between central business district and outlying residential areas. Milan Avenue, from League Street north to the City limits, is an example.
- **Urban Minor Arterials:** Interconnect with and augment the principal arterials. Serve trips of moderate length at a somewhat lower level of travel mobility than principal arterials. Distribute traffic to smaller geographic areas than those served by principal arterials. Provide more land access than principal arterials without penetrating identifiable

neighborhoods. Provide urban connections for rural collectors. Norwood or Washington Street may be examples of minor arterials.

- **Urban Collectors:** Serve both land access and traffic circulation in residential and commercial/industrial areas. Penetrate residential neighborhoods. Distribute and channel trips between local streets and arterials. Distinction is sometimes made between major collectors and minor collectors, based on levels of usage. Elm Street may be considered a collector, between Woodlawn, Benedict, Norwood, and Pleasant Streets.
- **Urban Locals:** Provide direct access to adjacent land. Provide access to higher systems. Carry no through traffic movement. Many streets throughout the City and in subdivisions serve this function.

The 1997 Norwalk Thoroughfare Plan

To offer continuity among Norwalk's planning projects, it is important to consider and include the recommendations offered in a thoroughfare plan completed for the City in 1997. Several of the recommendations made in that plan are carried forward in this comprehensive plan, and should be implemented over the coming years. Those endorsed recommendations will be described in more detail in a later section of this chapter.

- **Major Street Extensions**
 - Extend Executive Drive across Benedict Avenue and connect to Fair Road (Shady Lane). This would make a direct connection between Executive Drive and Shady Lane without the current jog onto Benedict, and provide a major collector of east-west traffic on the south side.
 - Extend the U.S. 20 bypass on the east side of Norwalk to the north to intersect with SR 61, and then continue northwest to U.S. 250 North of Norwalk. (This major acquisition and construction project has been discussed for a long time.)
 - Extend Perrin Road north from Gibbs Road to SR 61. This would serve as a minor collector, and take some traffic off Old State Road.
 - Extend South Pleasant Street southward from its terminus into Elm Street and generally parallel with Norwood Avenue, connecting to Fair Road. This would create a minor collector and open significant acreage within the City for infill development, likely residential.
 - Extend Republic Street west across Milan Avenue, connecting to Plank Road. This major collector would benefit some industrial traffic and provide additional east-west access in the northern growth area along the U.S. 250 corridor. Also, Pleasant Street could be extended north of Washington Street to Lovers Lane Road, connecting to the westerly Republic Street extension and providing a route from northern U.S. 250 to West Main Street avoiding the 250 corridor in town.

- Provide East-West connection between Milan Avenue and Whittlesey Avenue, creating a major collector (This has been accomplished with the construction of Westwind Drive).
- Construct an access road between Plank Road and Cline Street, effectively extending Cline Street northward. This access road, parallel to Milan Avenue (U.S. 250) and providing access from the Eagles building on Cline Street to the Drug Mart/Aldi's complex and the Apples shopping center, would terminate to the north at Westwind Drive at its intersection with Plank Road. Construction would channel north-south traffic accessing these destinations on a formalized access road alignment and relieve congestion on U.S. 250.
- Extend Ontario Street southward, connecting to the City-owned rail right-of-way, and then continuing within the rail right-of-way to connect Schauss Avenue and East Main Street. (This project has been largely completed as planned, resulting in a more directly traversed major collector for truck and car traffic northward from east Main Street to Ontario/Republic Street.)
- Extend North Pleasant Street farther to the north. This would connect to the westward connection of Westwind Drive and provide a northwestern loop and major collector, opening agricultural land for development.
- Extend Christie Avenue across Norwood Avenue and connect to the extended S. Pleasant Street. This minor collector would create an inner loop connecting Benedict Avenue and W. Main Street, and would presumably handle some traffic generated by the middle school on Christie and the high school on Shady Lane.
- Local street extensions recommended in the 1997 plan included extending West Willard Avenue west to Whittlesey and north to what is now Westwind Drive; and extending Grand Avenue to connect to Sherman Street.
- Major road and intersection upgrades included upgrading Ohio Street between Jefferson Street and Whittlesey Avenue, widening Benedict Avenue from Executive Drive to Norwood Avenue (with the provision of a center turn lane), widening League Street between Whittlesey Avenue and Milan Avenue (this has been completed), upgrading Ontario and Republic Street, and studying, then improving as deemed important, intersections at Old State Rd. and SR 61, Executive Drive and Benedict Avenue, Fair Road and West Main Street, Schauss Avenue and East Main/Cleveland Rd. (this has been accomplished), Cline St. and League St. (this has also been completed, with provision for right turn only from Cline), Whittlesey and League (also completed with the widening of League St.), and Old State and Akron Rd. (SR 18).

Past and Present Trends in Transportation

ODOT provides traffic counts at key intersections on state and federal routes. The three most recent traffic counts were taken in 1992, 1999, and 2002. Looking at the results of those counts may provide some insight into traffic patterns and changes in Norwalk.

Table 6-1: ODOT Average Daily Traffic Counts for Norwalk

Traffic Section	1992			2000			2002		
	Pass.	Comm.	Total	Pass.	Comm.	Total	Pass.	Comm.	Total
U.S. 20									
SR 61 spur	5520	2060	7580	4920	5460	10380	4540	5280	9820
SR 61	5520	2060	7580	4920	5460	10380	4540	5280	9820
U.S. 250	3440	1740	5180	3620	2910	6530	3620	2740	6360
SR 18	2330	980	3310	2820	1910	4730	2540	1550	4090
Co Rd 245	3670	1140	5520	5630	1950	7580	4960	1620	6580
SR 601	4340	180	5520	4580	2050	6630	4180	1880	6060
SR 61 (includes Main St.)									
SW Corp. Norwalk	3820	200	4020	3510	160	3670	3310	200	3510
Leave Norwalk 61 spur	7390	340	7730	6250	350	6600	5870	280	6150
West Street	8290	370	8660						
U.S. 250 (Whittlesey)	9190	390	9580	8970	380	9350	8550	260	8810
Milan Ave.	11910	500	12410	10020	310	10330			
Cleveland St.	6720	150	6870	5990	120	6110	4830	80	4910
NE Corp. Norwalk C-52	3920	190	4110	3890	190	4080	4160	200	4360
SR 601	3820	160	3980	3850	140	3990	3360	130	3490
U.S. 250									
N. Corp. Norwalk	13280	810	14090	14150	1110	15260	13170	1060	14230
Plank Rd.	16870	830	17700						
Milan Ave. enter League St.	8980	700	9680	6910	540	7450	8660	680	9340
League enter Whittlesey	7560	720	8280	11690	560	12250	11170	540	11710
SR 61 (Main St.)	11860	650	12510	11960	570	12530	10470	650	11120
SE Corp. Norwalk	10200	610	10810	11960	570	12530	10470	650	11120
U.S. 20	9770	1700	11470	7620	2690	10310	7170	3160	10330
T-148 (Norwalk Rd.)	4210	1870	6080	5070	3120	8190	5400	3220	8620

Source: Ohio Dept. of Transportation

The above table shows that traffic counts along the major State and Federal highway corridors have not increased over time and, in fact, have decreased slightly in a number of cases. The U.S. 20 numbers refer largely to the southerly bypass that skirts the southern boundary of the City. That highway witnessed a significant increase in daily traffic counts between 1992 and 2000, easing somewhat in 2002 (owing perhaps to improvements to the Ohio Turnpike, which parallels it). SR 61 counts refer to intersections along West and East Main Street, respectively. Along this arterial route, which connects residential areas to the east and west with the central business district, traffic counts are very similar between 1992 and 2002. The counts increased throughout the route between 1992 and 2000, and fell slightly in 2002.

U.S. Route 250 is the most well traveled corridor in Norwalk, with its highest daily count at the northern corporate limits, entering the increasingly commercial corridor along Milan Avenue. Counts exceeding 11,000 vehicles per day (down from 12,000+ in 2000) are sustained from the League/Whittlesey intersection to the southeast corporate limit, at the

location of Fisher-Titus Medical Center. Along the U.S. 250 corridor, traffic counts generally increased through town from 1992 to 2000, then fell back slightly in 2002, with the exception being the south side of town, where it increased slightly.

Larger Trends

The Ohio Department of Transportation issued a planning document entitled “Access Ohio 2004-2030”. The third chapter of that document was entitled “Demographics, Economics, and Travel Patterns – Conditions and Trends”. Some of the statewide trends reported or projected in that chapter are worth repeating here, as they have implications for the transportation system in Norwalk, as they do for any community in Ohio.

- Ohio’s population is projected to grow by 8.5 percent between 2000 and 2030, with the greatest growth (over twenty percent) in metropolitan fringe counties, such as Delaware and Medina. Within this projection, Huron County’s population is projected to grow by 7.6 percent.
- Ohio’s population is in fact shifting more than it is growing. The overall effect is some decentralization of the population, spreading out and creating a new pattern of urban boundaries. With this lower development density comes an increased dependence on the private automobile, with increased demand on the State’s highway system. Longer driving distance may extend peak commuting periods.
- ODOT also envisions a trend toward increased single-occupancy driving and vehicle miles traveled.
- Ohio’s population is getting older, and the state’s “baby boom” population includes approximately one-third of the state’s population. Between 2000 and 2030, it was projected that those over 65 will increase by 750,000 (or 49.8 percent) and those aged 35-54 will decrease by about 250,000 (or 7.4 percent), suggesting that there may be fewer people in the traditional workforce making trips during peak travel times. Also, an increase in the number of older drivers may result in a greater mid-day peak.
- Although people over age 65 make 22 percent fewer overall trips than younger people, they actually make a comparable number of non-work trips as those under 65. In fact, older men make substantially more non-work trips and travel slightly more miles than younger men, but because of their flexibility, they tend to avoid peak times and make most of their trips between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.
- Between 1990 and 2000, the number of households in Ohio grew 8.7 percent, nearly twice the percentage increase in general population growth of 4.7 percent. In 2000, Ohio’s average household size was 2.49 persons, less than the national average of 2.59 persons, and this trend toward smaller household size is expected to contribute to an increase in the number of vehicle trips per person.
- Between 1960 and 2000, the number of registered vehicles in Ohio grew by 162 percent, from 3.9 million to 10.3 million. Today, there are more registered vehicles than people in Ohio, with 11.9 million vehicles registered in Ohio in 2002, including 8,347,600 passenger cars, 1,664,000 noncommercial trucks, and 900,000 commercial vehicles.
- Rates of automobile ownership in Ohio are not expected to increase as rapidly as they have in the past because the U.S. market for automobiles is expected to reach a saturation point between 2015 and 2025.

- The increase in households, vehicle ownership and licensed drivers has translated into an increase in Vehicle Miles Traveled (or VMT). Looking at these changes (a doubling between 1960 and 2000) in combination with the limited number of new lane miles of roadways being constructed (less than a 15 percent increase) clarifies why congestion has increased.

Railroad Transportation

Norwalk is served by one east-west rail line, which is owned and operated by the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad. The railroad offers switching and other service to sidings along their line. The number of industrial and commercial properties serviced by the railroad and adjacent to the main line is limited. In order to assemble a large industrial property adjacent to the rail line, it is necessary to consider land outside the current City limits, such as farmland to the west, north of U.S. Route 20 and south of Washington Street. However, there is some potential within the City for vacant land adjacent to the railroad property to be served by existing facilities or a new spur.

Norwalk-Huron County Airport



Private noncommercial air traffic is handled for the Norwalk area by the Norwalk-Huron County Airport, located three miles east of Norwalk and just south of U.S. Route 20. The airport is a public use, general aviation facility that was constructed in 1968. The airport is owned by Huron County, and is guided by a six-member Authority whose members are appointed by the County Commissioners. The airport is managed by NOFA, Inc., a contract management company.



The airport features a 4,209 by 75 foot, east-west runway, of which 3,969 feet are usable for landing and the full distance is available for takeoff. The current runway configuration does not provide adequate coverage to meet the “95 percent criterion”, whereby all runways should be oriented such that aircraft may use the airport at least 95 percent of the time with crosswind components not exceeding that of the critical aircraft (which in this case is a Beechcraft Bonanza). The airport is served by three designated taxiways, connecting the main ramp, runway, and business complex. The airport has an FBO (fixed base operator) building with various amenities for pilots and passengers. Hangars provide storage for three aircraft in Building A, eight aircraft apiece in Buildings B and C (T-hangars), and private storage in Building D. A business complex building stores an additional three aircraft. Water is supplied to the airport by Northern Ohio Rural Water, and

sanitary sewerage is covered by an on-site septic tank. Power is provided with three-stage electricity from Ohio First Energy, and gas is supplied by a 150-gallon propane tank with service to the FBO Building and business complex.

The current fleet at the airport includes 28 based aircraft, of which 25 are single engine, one is multi-engine, and two are rotorcraft. Projections in the current airport master plan call for that number to increase to as many as 38 based aircraft by the end of the planning period, 2026. Further, airport staff state that there is a waiting list of ten aircraft for hangar space.

The airport's operations in 2005 included 3,648 local operations and 2,752 itinerant operations, for a total of 6,400 operations. The general aviation operations forecast conducted by the master plan's author projects this to increase to 5,415 local and 4,085 itinerant operations (9,500 total) in 2026. The plan notes that the proximity of Norwalk Raceway Park accounts for an increase in operations in season during racing events.

Another trend that will have a positive effect on the airport is stated in the master plan: "The predicted increase in light jet and charter/fractional ownership aircraft makes the Airport an attractive option. Airport management states that air taxi/corporate aircraft have accounted for at least 10 to 16 operations a month. A new air taxi service called "Sky Taxi NE" has begun local service in northeast Ohio. Norwalk-Huron County Airport is one of three airports in the area from which the air taxi will have service."

The Airport Master Plan notes that current trends having a bearing on the development of the airport include the use of global positioning systems for navigation, the increasing use of charter/air taxi services, and the growing Very Light Jet aircraft market. Providing facilities for business jet aircraft increases the accessibility to small markets and cities by jet aircraft. The plan recommends that "To assure flexibility and the potential response to the increased activity of larger business jets over 12,500 pounds MTOW (maximum takeoff weight), consideration should be given to lengthening the usable runway to 4,300 feet...to accommodate future demand of B-II aircraft. This would require an overall length of the runway to be 4,968 feet with the existing displaced thresholds." Also recommended is a partial parallel taxiway to provide access to the most active runway end or a full taxiway linking both runway ends to the apron and terminal areas. A future phase of the report will examine the need for a second, crosswind runway.

Public Transportation

Public transportation service is provided throughout Huron County by Senior Enrichment Services of Huron County. This agency operates a fleet of vans and other vehicles, supported in part with funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation. Curb to curb transportation to and from any point in Huron County is available on demand, but the rider must call to request the ride 24 hours in advance. The cost of a cross-town ride in Norwalk is \$2.00 in 2006. Transportation is also available in Norwalk from two local taxicab businesses.

Strategies and Recommendations

Recommendations from the 1997 Thoroughfare Plan were examined by the transportation resource panel and planning consultant, and several of them are incorporated where applicable, along with additional recommendations.

Strategy 1: *Smooth and efficient flow of traffic*

Strive to provide smooth and efficient transportation flow within the City, to nearby connecting highways, and by continuation of active transportation plan improvements when fiscally possible.

1. Utilize better access management, especially on major thoroughfares, to improve traffic flow. Access management involves minimizing the number of intersections with major arterials, eliminating or prohibiting entrances to and egress from individual private establishments, and developing parallel service roads to handle local traffic. In some cases, one-way streets can be considered and configured to eliminate multiple exits onto one street.

Access management has become increasingly necessary to overcome a number of adverse social, economic, or environmental impacts. Among those are an increased number of vehicle crashes, a reduction in roadway efficiency, unsightly commercial strip development, degradation of scenic landscapes, more cut-through traffic in residential areas because arterials are overburdened, and increased commuting time, fuel consumption, and vehicle emissions as driveways and traffic signals intensify congestion and delays along major roads.



Scenes along the US 250 North corridor, where traffic issues will increasingly require access management

City officials can consult the Ohio Department of Transportation’s “State Highway Access Management Manual”, which describes regulations that provide for greater safety and improved traffic flow on State highways. The strategies included in this manual can be applied to non-state highway arterials and thoroughfares as well. Further, some of the principles and practices of access management include the following (and are described in more detail on the following page):

- Limiting the number of driveway permits for an area, thereby restricting the number of driveways;

Principles of Access Management

The goals of access management are accomplished by applying the following principles (source: National Transportation research Board):

1. **Provide a Specialized Roadway System:** Different types of roadways serve different functions. It is important to design and manage roadways according to the primary functions that they are expected to serve.
2. **Limit Direct Access to Major Roadways:** Roadways that serve higher volumes of regional through traffic need more access control to preserve their traffic function. Frequent and direct property access is more compatible with the function of local and collector roadways.
3. **Promote Intersection Hierarchy:** An efficient transportation network provides appropriate transitions from one classification of roadway to another. For example, freeways connect to arterials through an interchange that is designed for the transition. Extending this concept to other roadways results in a series of intersection types that range from the junction of two major arterial roadways, to a residential driveway connecting to a local street.
4. **Locate Signals to Favor Through Movements:** Long, uniform spacing of intersections and signals on major roadways enhances the ability to coordinate signals and to ensure continuous movement of traffic at the desired speed. Failure to carefully locate access connections or median openings that later become signalized, can cause substantial increases in arterial travel times. In addition, poor signal placement may lead to delays that cannot be overcome by computerized signal timing systems.
5. **Preserve the Functional Area of Intersections and Interchanges:** The functional area of an intersection or interchange is the area that is critical to its safe and efficient operation. This is the area where motorists are responding to the intersection or interchange, decelerating, and maneuvering into the appropriate lane to stop or complete a turn. Access connections too close to intersections or interchange ramps can cause serious traffic conflicts that result in crashes and congestion.
6. **Limit the Number of Conflict Points:** Drivers make more mistakes and are more likely to have collisions when they are presented with the complex driving situations created by numerous conflict points. Conversely, simplifying the driving task contributes to improved traffic operations and fewer collisions. A less complex driving environment is accomplished by limiting the number and type of conflicts between vehicles, vehicles and pedestrians, and vehicles and bicyclists.
7. **Separate Conflict Areas:** Drivers need sufficient time to address one set of potential conflicts before facing another. The necessary spacing between conflict areas increases as travel speed increases, to provide drivers adequate perception and reaction time. Separating conflict areas helps to simplify the driving task and contributes to improved traffic operations and safety.
8. **Remove Turning Vehicles from Through Traffic Lanes:** Turning lanes allow drivers to decelerate gradually out of the through lane and wait in a protected area for an opportunity to complete a turn. This reduces the severity and duration of conflict between turning vehicles and through traffic and improves the safety and efficiency of roadway intersections.
9. **Use Nontraversable Medians to Manage Left-Turn Movements:** Medians channel turning movements on major roadways to controlled locations. Research has shown that the majority of access-related crashes involve left turns. Therefore, nontraversable medians and other techniques that minimize left turns or reduce the driver workload can be effective in improving roadway safety.
10. **Provide a Supporting Street and Circulation System:** Well-planned communities provide a supporting network of local and collector streets to accommodate development, as well as unified property access and circulation systems. Interconnected street and circulation systems support alternative modes of transportation and provide alternative routes for bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers. Alternatively, commercial strip development with separate driveways for each business forces even short trips onto arterial roadways, thereby reducing safety and impeding mobility.

- Installing a median or other means to prevent left turns in areas where turning movements are being limited.
- Providing a turning lane and room for acceleration/deceleration for the planned limited access points.
- Ensuring clear views through limitation of signage and appurtenances at corners where limited access is allowed.
- Planning shared access to multiple sites through one driveway or roadway.
- Regulating the minimum distance between access points, and between intersections with cross-streets.

It is recommended that a corridor plan be developed for the U.S. 250 North corridor, from League Street north to the City limits. This corridor has witnessed significant growth in the number of adjacent businesses that generate traffic, as well as the number of vehicles and turning movements along this segment. Plans are underway to join Cline Street to Westwind Drive to the west of Route 250, providing access to a number of retail centers, including Drug Mart, the Apples shopping center, Wal Mart and the adjacent plaza, and a number of outlots. Longer-range plans may relieve corridor traffic further through a connecting road from Willard Avenue to Westwind, west of the Drug Mart and Norwalk Korner's buildings.

The 250 North corridor should be planned more comprehensively, with the emerging Norwalk Commons mixed use complex, and other developments to follow. Corridor planning should consider turning lanes approaching intersections, service road alignment, sidewalks to accommodate pedestrians, improved intersections, where necessary, to accommodate truck turning movements, signalization at key intersections, and visual improvements (including landscaping, signage, construction of a gateway, and funding sources for corridor improvements). A plan should be developed within two years, and implemented within five years.

2. Define and improve truck routes to better move through and around town. While the completion of a northerly bypass is not likely, existing routes could be enhanced to handle truck traffic and turning movements. Northbound traffic can be directed on Route 61 as well as Cleveland and Akron Roads, to turn north on Schauss Avenue, using Republic Street through the Firelands Industrial Park to reach U.S. 250 north.

While it is recognized that the construction of a new bypass is improbable, given the funding constraints and priorities of the Ohio Department of Transportation, it is still important to advocate for the bypass improvement whenever appropriate. Future funding scenarios, coupled with increased tourist-based and other traffic, may make such a project – which would include a lengthy environmental review phase, acquisition of significant acreage, and engineering and construction – feasible at some future date. The bypass alignment would present a new corridor north of the existing terminus of the U.S. 20 bypass, to the north, then curving northwesterly to join the existing U.S. 250 south of Milan.

A less expensive alternative to the new alignment of a U.S. 250 bypass is the upgrading and designation of existing roadways as a truck bypass. Such a bypass will involve

Greenwich-Milan Townline Road (which diverts from U.S. 250 south of Norwalk and joins SR 601 to the north, and which is scheduled for improvements by the Huron County Engineer). A closer bypass alignment would include Old State Road northward from U.S. 250 at the five-point intersection, widening Akron Road from Old State westward to Main Street, and improvements to the intersection of Main Street, Akron Road, and Schauss Avenue, which, with Ontario and Republic Streets to the north, could serve as segments of the bypass. Realignment and improvement of roadways to serve as truck bypasses and remove through traffic from the downtown can be considered a moderately long-range activity, taking up to ten years to complete.

3. New technology should be used to manage traffic lights and improve traffic flow, particularly along the SR 61 (Main Street) and U.S. 250 (Benedict/Whittlesey) arterials in the downtown. Potential use of newer technology should be pursued to manage traffic lights in this area and maximize traffic flow at any given time. It is possible that conversion of traffic lights may be cost prohibitive. Thus, it is suggested that a plan for overall system-wide improvement, especially in the Downtown area, be formulated, then budgeted to the extent possible within a multi-year capital improvements plan. This should occur within five years.
4. Improve the gateways to the City at U.S. 250 (North and South), Cleveland Road/Main Street (formerly Route 20), Akron Road (formerly Route 18), and S.R. 61 (East and West Main Street). A series of impressive and uniform gateways along each of these roads will convey a sense of entry into the City. Beyond the gateways, efforts should be considered to create a sense of “avenue or boulevard” with landscaping and other uniform treatments. See the Community Character chapter for more discussion of gateways, which should be constructed within two years.



Gateways as they exist at U.S. Route 250 south (left) and Cleveland Road from the east (right).

5. Consideration should be given to turn lanes along busy segments where there are considerable turning movements. Turning lanes would aid traffic flow at major intersections along Benedict Avenue (such as Elm and Christie), at Christie and

Norwood (particularly impacted by the Middle School traffic), and for northbound traffic approaching Fair Road on Norwood. Turn lanes, which can involve acquisition of additional right of way, can be constructed within five years.

6. To maintain traffic flow during special events that involve street closures, consider temporary traffic patterns for the downtown area. It is possible that such detours should include one-way traffic on Seminary and Monroe Streets. This could be implemented within one or two years, if deemed necessary.

Strategy 2: *New or Modified Roadways, Future Thoroughfares, and Addressing Through Traffic (north-south)*

Include expectations for future thoroughfares and projected new traffic generators and destinations within transportation planning, and hold to that plan to accommodate future growth. Address the needs of through traffic (especially north-south) and truck traffic both through and within the City.

1. It is recommended that, subject to engineering feasibility studies and the City's ability to finance these significant capital improvements, the following roadway improvements be planned in order to spur planned growth in target areas and improve accessibility and traffic flow within the City. These recommendations are depicted on the thoroughfare improvement map, and should be considered as long-range activities that will occur as the City grows, with their timeframe dependent upon the City's rate of growth.
 - Extend North West Street to the north to connect to an extended (to the west) Westwind Drive. Within the new rectangle of developable land that is bounded by these new roads, three streets might be extended north: Pleasant Street, Newton Street, and State Street.
 - Extend Republic Street westward from its terminus at U.S. 250, to Plank Road, or further west beyond Plank Road to Whittlesey.
 - Extend Pleasant Street from the point where it turns and becomes Elm Street (adjacent to Jaycee Park), southward to Fair Road. This extension will allow infill property, much of which is currently agricultural farmland, to be converted to residential development.
 - Extend Industrial Parkway in the Firelands Industrial Park, which currently ends at a cul-de-sac, further east, to intersect with Route 601 or Perrin Road.
 - Extend Firelands Boulevard, serving a residential subdivision on Norwalk's south side, east to Old State Road, opening more land to residential development.
 - Consider widening some of the City's well-traveled roads, such as Benedict Avenue and Cleveland Road from East Main Street to the City limits.
 - Extend Ohio Street westward to North West Street, using the Ohio Edison right-of-way along the former Pennsylvania Railroad corridor. This road extension will be helpful in providing access to businesses and industrial plants located on the west side of the city, and potentially for business access to the Wheeling and Lake Erie rail line.

2. To ease turning movements and traffic flow, improve intersections where major routes converge. Recommended intersections for improvement include:
 - Cleveland Road and Old State Road
 - East Main Street and Old State Road
 - Old State Road and Townsend Avenue – eliminate the four way stop; allow through traffic on Old State.
 - Williams and Willard Avenues on Milan Avenue. These streets need better demarcation.
 - Milan Avenue at Cline Street. This intersection will be reconfigured when Cline Street is extended northward past the Drug Mart shopping area.

Strategy 3: ***Vehicular and Pedestrian Safety***

Ensure that roadway planning accounts for vehicular and pedestrian safety, with well-maintained and marked roadways.

1. Consider the growing future needs for parking in Norwalk’s central business district, including exploration of alternatives to increase parking spaces in high-demand locations. Expanded street parking and lots are viable alternatives. While parking garages have been discussed, they are cost prohibitive without a significant revenue stream from parking fees.



Other measures can help improve the ability of customers and others to park in the downtown area. Business owners and employees should be encouraged to park in off-street lots, and not on the street. It should be understood by all stakeholders that on-street parking is for short-term use by customers and patrons, and that off-street parking is a preferable location for long-term parking by employees.

It has been widely acknowledged during the planning process that there is no significant parking problem in the downtown. Aside from a small number of critical times during special events, ample parking is available within one to two blocks of virtually every destination in the central business district. Rather than a parking problem, it is more likely that there is a parking *perception* problem. Drivers may not be aware of available parking lots and spaces. Thus it is recommended that free parking lots and their locations are promoted with improved signage, including wayfinding “you are here” maps, and with marked distances to lots from Main Street.

Certain portions of lots or spaces should be set aside for downtown residents' long term parking needs, including the use of stickers for residents. Municipal zoning requires a set number of spaces per dwelling unit, but the creation of new upper floor housing units cannot always be accompanied by the creation of new parking spaces. Thus, the existing supply of spaces should be examined to determine which spaces are marginal for short-term parking purposes, but satisfactory in meeting residents' needs. A downtown overlay zoning district could account for the realistic parking needs of specific uses downtown.

2. Promote a more pedestrian friendly, "Walk Norwalk" downtown. Consider an area within the central business district that is traversed by pedestrians only. Ensure safety in crossing the street through well-marked crosswalks and appropriate signalization. Enforce regulations prohibiting bicycles and skateboards downtown. These improvements can be introduced on an ongoing basis.
3. Maintain and expand the City's sidewalk repair and installation program to ensure a people and pedestrian friendly City. Specific areas should be targeted for the installation of sidewalks, because of their potential for significant pedestrian traffic. These roadway segments include North West Street and Fair Road to the Huron County Fairgrounds, pedestrian routes to the Ernsthausen Recreation Center on Republic Street, and high traffic business/retail centers such as Route 250 North, which has also witnessed an increase in access to residential areas. Improve safety at crosswalks where sidewalks approach busy intersections. Other targeted areas for sidewalks include the reservoir and the Republic Street/Route 250 intersection.
4. Utilize the expertise of the Huron County Rails to Trails organization leadership and any potential grant funding sources to expand bicycle trails throughout the City. (See the Quality of Life chapter for details on bicycle trail planning). Encourage visitors to the Downtown area with signage at trailheads leading into the central business district and around the City.
5. Explore the potential of developing the Norwalk Creek area as a "river walk" type of resource. Clean up the area, straighten the channel to improve flow and reduce flooding, and remove trees along the banks. See the Natural Resources chapter for more recommendations on Norwalk Creek.

Strategy 4: ***Enforce Traffic Rules and Regulations***

Enforce standards and traffic rules and regulations systematically to improve safety and ease congestion on local streets, by practicing these ongoing strategies.

1. Utilize modern technology to improve traffic control devices and signals to provide for the most efficient flow of traffic and to enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety. Consider automatic signals that trigger for emergency vehicles. Use traffic studies and counting devices to assess current traffic patterns and signals, eliminating and adding signals as warranted. Improve traffic coordination within the Downtown area.

2. Enforce traffic ordinances now on the books. Assess traffic speed patterns at critical spots throughout the City and target patrol problem areas. Utilize reserve forces and bicycles, where appropriate, for traffic enforcement.
3. Be consistent in new street development and street improvements, consistently following City and state guidelines.

Strategy 5: ***Support Airport Planning Efforts***

City and County government and economic development officials, as well as the Airport Board and Fixed Base Operator, should develop the Norwalk-Huron County Airport as an asset to the community and region, and to the business base.

There is no need to duplicate the planning effort now underway on behalf of the Norwalk-Huron County Airport; in lieu of specific strategies, it is recommended that the findings and recommendations of the current airport plan be supported and implemented as they are developed over the next one to two years, unless it is ascertained that formal airport planning is inconsistent with the goals of the City and this document. Nevertheless, the airport's role as an economic development asset, and its location within a potential growth area, should be integrated in overall City development planning.

Strategy 6: ***Railroad System***

Because of the potential and growing needs of industry and the desire to improve our assets to attract new industry, the City should work to maintain and facilitate improvements to the railroad system serving the City and its businesses.

1. Build a stronger alliance with the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad, especially the real estate and economic development staff, to create a more collaborative environment to foster potential growth in rail activity in Norwalk. This ongoing effort will involve NEDC, the City administration, developers, Realtors, and local businesses seeking rail access.
2. Explore the interest in expanded rail service of local industry as well as the potential interest in rail of business and industry that might be recruited to our area. NEDC would be the prime entity to carry out this task, which can be completed with an assessment of needs by 2008.
3. Identify and inventory the potential sites for rail service in the Norwalk area and strategize how partnerships and funding sources could be harnessed to develop these sites. Consideration should be given to the ready access of the switching capabilities at Hartland Center. NEDC, working with the City administration, can include this factor within their site analysis process, which is ongoing.
4. Consider more innovative uses of rail that do not require an actual industry rail siting, such as the use of container trucks at an industry site to move product to a local

container shipment area at a rail site. This is an ongoing activity involving NEDC and specific businesses within the Norwalk area. All these activities also involve close coordination with the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad.

Strategy 7: **Public Transportation**

Maintain a means of public transportation for those who rely on it for transport to work, medical appointments, shopping and other needs, including the disabled and elderly.

1. Explore ways to partner with the County as they continue to develop the consolidated public transportation system to provide for the area needs. This could include fixed route systems and/or pick-up points throughout the City. Primary entity is now Services for Aging, which is operating the consolidated system throughout Huron County. The City administration should work with them to ensure that Norwalk residents' needs are met effectively. This is an ongoing activity.
2. Encourage and collaborate with private enterprise to enhance the public transportation options. Business needs can be assessed by NEDC during their annual survey and visitation of businesses, and by HCDC during any retention and expansion survey processes.
3. Establish a shuttle service of a "Main Street Trolley" system from Norwalk Raceway Park to various pick-up points throughout the City. This activity can be explored by Services for Aging, as well as by the Chamber of Commerce, Norwalk Main Street Program, Norwalk Raceway Park, and other businesses interested in such a venture.
4. Investigate and promote options that provide out-of- county service for area residents. Such service has been provided in the past, but is subject to budgetary considerations. Services for Aging is the primary entity responsible for such planning and implementation. A preliminary assessment of feasibility could be completed by 2009, with implementation to follow, subject to funding, market demand, and feasibility.