

10.0 Transportation Network

The purpose of the transportation chapter of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide an inventory and analysis of the variety of transportation modes in the City of Monroe. For this purpose, several different planning efforts were reviewed including *Building a Community Vision Together, Ouachita Parish, LA – Strategic Plan Volume 1 (Empowerment Zone Application) June 1994*; *Monroe Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update – December 2004*; *Downtown Monroe Traffic & Parking Study, June 2003*; *City of Monroe, LA – State of the City 2007*; *Revitalization for the Southside District, June 2001*; *I-20 Tax Increment Corridor Survey, December 1996*; *Ouachita River Bridge Supplemental Study, draft July 1995*; *Monroe Regional Airport, Master Plan Update, August 2002 (including iterations dated January 2003 and December 2003)*; *Monroe Transit System Maps, Rates, Fees, and Times (via website: www.monroela.us/transit_routes)*; *Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan – Executive Summary, December 2003*; and *Monroe Regional Airport – Master Plan Update, December 2003*. In addition, information regarding Ouachita River crossing locations, bikeway trails, and pedestrian access on existing roadways was retrieved from various city and state websites referenced throughout this section.

The City of Monroe transportation system inventory covers a variety of multimodal system elements including streets, sidewalks, trails, transit lines, air transport, rail transport, and ports. By reviewing all available modes of transportation in Monroe and providing consistency with state, regional and parish plans, this inventory complies with the objectives of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). In addition, preparation of this inventory follows closely with the mission of the Northeast Louisiana Regional Public Transit Plan (draft 11/15/2006) whose main purpose is “to identify and serve potential new markets without regard to political jurisdictional boundaries to passengers in the Northeast Louisiana region, providing greater access to jobs, healthcare, retail, and recreation to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of Northeast Louisiana citizens”³⁵.

10.1 Roads and Traffic

The City of Monroe maintains its streets through the Public Works Department. Inter- and intra-state streets within the City include those maintained by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD).

³⁵ Northeast Louisiana Regional Public Transit Plan: Draft 11/15/2006, p. 1



Three highways within Monroe are designated as part of the National Highway System. They include: Interstate 20 (I-20), part of the Eisenhower Interstate System, which facilitates east-west traffic to and from Monroe; US Highway 165 (Sterlington Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive) which facilitates north- and southbound traffic around the City; and US 80 (Louisville Avenue and DeSiard Street) which facilitates traffic east- and westbound in and out of the City. These routes further provide ingress and egress from cities within Louisiana to Monroe. For instance, I-20 provides access to Atlanta, Georgia, Birmingham, Alabama, and onto Dallas, TX and other cities beyond. US -165 provides connection south to Alexandria, Louisiana.

State roadways include the following: LA 139; LA 15 (South 2nd Street and Winnsboro Road); US Highway 165; LA594 (Millhaven Road) and LA840-6 (North 18th Street, Forsythe Avenue and Forsythe Bypass).

In the downtown section of Monroe the streets are established as a grid system with Interstate 20 and the Ouachita River as guiding borders. High capacity movement is provided by the Lea Joyner Memorial Expressway from I-20 into and out of the downtown area via 5th and 6th Streets, respectively. Other heavily traveled roadways within downtown include South Grand Street, Walnut Street, and Washington Street.³⁶ Throughout 2006, 95% of the asphalt-covered city streets were rebuilt or resurfaced. US 165B (Business) facilitates traffic north and south through the center of downtown. The majority of streets north of DeSiard Street are two-lane roadways (except 5th and 6th) while many of the roads situated south of DeSiard are one-way primarily designed to facilitate traffic onto I-20.

Traffic signal timings aid in the flow of traffic within the downtown area, however the majority operate only as pre-timed signals versus having signalization coordination. An exception to this is the signalization along the Louisville Avenue (US 80) corridor. This corridor was upgraded by LADODT in spring 2002, which improved signal timings and progression of traffic during peak hours. In addition, Highway 165 has some portions that are signalized. Further, restricted and/or prohibited left-turns were implemented at several cross streets along this corridor during peak hours.

Upcoming or Ongoing Highway Improvement Projects

Completed transportation improvement projects include: Stage Zero study of the Kansas/Garrett Connector overpass, which will ultimately provide access over the Kansas City Southern rail line. Stage Zero looks at the feasibility of a project.

The purpose of the Kansas Lane Project is to upgrade and widen Interstate 20 interchange to align with Kansas Lane and so provide access from outlying rural areas into the regional retail center. As recently as September 2007, the State Bond Commission approved \$2 million in funding for the Kansas-Garrett Interchange project.

³⁶ Downtown Monroe Traffic & Parking Study, Wilbur Smith Associates, June 2003 Update, p.5



In December 1996 a study of the I-20 tax increment corridor was conducted. The purpose for the I-20 study was to research ways to fund infrastructure improvements in the District. The corridor that was studied included approximately 15 miles of state/federal maintained roads, approximately 1.5 miles of Parish maintained streets, 6 miles of city maintained streets and just under ½ mile of private drives. The study was conducted to determine what additional costs would be incurred by the City if all of the study area were annexed in to the City and conversely, the anticipated revenue to be gained from property taxes. For purposes of this subsection of the Comprehensive Plan, a summary of the transportation impacts anticipated from annexation of the adjoining roadways is presented as follows:

Nutland Road and Millhaven Road Site - It was determined that if commercial development occurred at this location, a traffic signal would be warranted at this intersection. Other possible improvements would include widening of Nutland Road; realignment and widening of US Highway 165 Service Road at Millhaven Road and realigning Booth Street to connect to US Highway 165 Service Road.

Infrastructure improvements identified as tools to encourage annexation included:

- Easy on-off service roads
- Additional exit ramp
- Landscaping and visual enhancements
- Lighting for both safety and aesthetic appeal
- The restrictive off-premises sign ordinance
- Tourism information center at proposed Chennault exit
- Outside public art projects such as a “Welcome to Monroe” symbol

A Transportation Infrastructure Model for Economic Development (TIMED) program is part of an economic development incentive for the State of Louisiana. This \$4.7 billion improvement program includes the widening of 536 miles of state highways to four lanes on 11 project corridors, widening and/or new construction on three major bridges and improvements to ports and airports. It is the single largest transportation program in Louisiana State history.

Specific to the City of Monroe, US 165, as part of the TIMED program, is undergoing widening to a four lane highway. The project covers the entire 173 miles of highway with its inception at I-10 east of Lake Charles, continuing north through Monroe, onward to Bastrop where the highway becomes US 425, and ending at the Arkansas state line. To date 12 segments are complete, representing 51% overall project completion, and 13 segments are under construction. Voted for by the people of Louisiana, TIMED was created by Act 16 of the 1989 Louisiana Legislature. It is funded by a four-cent gas tax that was established in 1989 and will remain in effect until all projects are complete. A series of bond sales have aided funding and accelerated construction. The US 165 project is slated for completion in 2010.

Forecasts for economic support from the TIMED project indicates that for each dollar invested in transportation improvements, the state of Louisiana gains \$2.60 in added benefits, and for every \$1 billion spent, more than 42,000 jobs.³⁷

³⁷ US 165 TIMED Fact Sheet, http://www.timedla.com/upload/files/news/US%20165_Fact%20sheet.pdf



In December 2004, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development implemented a study of travel forecasts and highway capacity deficiencies of roadways within the Monroe area. The “Monroe Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update” identified existing and projected transportation problems within the Monroe metropolitan transportation system as a first step in developing a transportation plan for the City. Several studies were reviewed in concert with the analysis, including: 1996 Long-Range Transportation Plan, Ouachita Loop Major Investment Study, Kansas Lane Connector Feasibility Study, 2003 Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan, and the State Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and associated project letting schedule.

The aforementioned studies identified roadways that were presently and forecasted to be deficient, as defined by the volume/capacity ratio. Volume/capacity ratios are used as indicators of areas that require necessary capacity improvements for future year planning. For determining deficiencies within the areas roadways, the year 2000 volume/capacity ratios were used. Segments of roadways within Monroe that were identified as severely deficient from a capacity standpoint in the year 2000 model include:

- Ramp to/from west on US 165 to I-20
- DeSiard Street between Kansas Lane and Airport Avenue
- Northeast Drive between Bon Aire Drive and leading to US 165

For 2010 deficiencies, imbalances between future traffic and the future committed transportation network were measured. For traffic forecasts thereafter, i.e. 2030, future forecasts were measured by the socioeconomic data for each area to determine estimated future internal trips. Table 3-1 lists the seven committed projects in Monroe through 2010. Of these, three are either ongoing, being funded through the State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), or were included in a construction bidding process in 2003-2004. Four projects were scheduled for bidding in 2007 and 2008.

Table 10-1 Deficiency Identification for Year 2010 and Committed Projects

Project	Location	Improvements	Status
Thomas Road	I-20 to Cypress Street	Widen to 5-lanes	Under construction
Old Sterlington Road	US 165 to Finks Hideaway	Widen to 4-lanes	Let 07
DeSiard Street (US 80)	US 165 to Gilbert	Widen to 5 lanes	Let 04
Finks Hideaway Phase I	US 165 to Holland	Widen to 5 lanes	Let 06
US 80	US 80 at Kansas Lane	EB & WB Left turn lanes	TIP
Kansas Lane Connector	US 80 to US 165	New 4 lane road	TIP
I-20	Ouachita River-Garrett	Pavement reconstruction	TIP

Source: Monroe Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update, Travel Forecasts and Deficiency Identification, Technical Memorandum No. 2, December 2004

Of the projects listed in Table 10-1, the following highway segments were identified as possibly having less traffic congestion as a result of committed projects and associated capacity improvements identified above:

- US 80 – Cypress Street between Avant Road and Wallace Dean Road
- Well Road between Cypress Street and I-20



- Arkansas Road between Forty Oaks Palm Road and Wallace Road and between Good Hope Road and Warren Drive
- Northeast Drive between Bon Aire Drive leading to US 165
- Fink's Hideaway Road, western-most section

The remaining highway sections in the table were forecasted to remain or are projected to become severely deficient.

Forecasts for year 2030 indicated that the following segments of roadway will reach severely deficient status over and above that identified for year 2010:

- Riverside Drive between Forsythe Avenue and Louisville Avenue
- Garrett Road north and south of I-20

A strategic plan for revitalization of the area situated south of Interstate 20 was prepared in 2003. The plan, titled "Revitalization for the Southside District" identified six goals for transforming the area. Of these goals, two pertained to transportation. Goal 2 identified the US 165 corridor as an impetus for economic development due to its proximity to the Southside area. The report recommended improvements to the thoroughfare along with providing better access to the Louisiana Purchase Gardens and Zoo from I-65. The second goal addressed a need to study the reasons why business does not locate along the highway.

Intermodal Deficiencies

While highway capacity deficiencies are of utmost concern and usually experienced by most citizens of a community, the ability for efficient movement of people from one mode of transportation to another can also become hindered and consequently inefficient. The transportation plan update indicated that primary intermodal facilities in the Monroe metropolitan region include the Monroe Regional Airport, the Ouachita Parish Port, and the Monroe Transit Bus Terminal. In determining the efficiency of the intermodal system, a review of the Kansas Lane Connector Study was performed. This study indicated that a need exists for improved connectivity and capacity from I-20 northward towards the Monroe Regional Airport. The current access from I-20 via Kansas Lane is inefficient having no direct connection and an at-grade railroad crossing. In 2007-2008, the City Engineering Department was continuing work with the Kansas City Southern (KCS) railroad to devise a plan to close at-grade crossings in the City. Four of these crossing were closed by 2008.

Other areas of deficiency include the existing bus terminal and transit operations center. Both are in need of renovation to facilitate efficient operations. The Ouachita Port was also identified as being in need of improvements; impediments to freight movement and the need to establish a connection with the Ouachita Port and the National Highway System was identified (see subsection 3.4.5). The east-west rail traffic has seen substantial growth which has impacted traffic flow primarily in the downtown Monroe area.

Overall, inefficiencies were noted in connectivity from I-20 to Kansas Lane and the Monroe Regional Airport, including the associated business and industrial park that exists adjacent to the airport.

Additional areas of primary-noted transportation deficiencies that were identified included:

- Projected capacity constraints and congestion on I-20 impacting east-west regional travel and freight movement through the Monroe metro area



- Capacity deficiencies for projected future travel demand on primary east-west arterials in Monroe, specifically west of Ouachita River on LA 616, US 80/15 and LA 15.
- System efficiency on urban roads could be maximized via signal system connectivity and coordination within the urban routes.
- Need for preservation and rehabilitation improvements to existing transportation system including bridges and highways
- Security enhancements for the metro bus transit system – this item was being addressed in 2008
- Renovation of transit maintenance facilities, operations center and bus terminal.

Gateway makeovers have taken place or are scheduled for the following locations: Monroe Regional Airport; the Louisville Corridor; Winnsboro Road; and DeSiard Street.

Access over the Ouachita River

The Ouachita River meanders throughout the City of Monroe in a north-south direction. Two locations are served by movable bridges maintained by the LADOTD: Louisville Avenue (becomes Bridge Street as it crosses the river and enters West Monroe) and DeSiard Street (becomes Coleman Avenue as it crosses the River and enters West Monroe). The other crossings are I-20 and the railroad bridge.

Deficiencies in the crossings were identified in the December 2004 Monroe Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Specifically, a lack of volume capacity and associated traffic congestion was noted resulting in identification for improved connectivity across the Ouachita River.

A bill was passed in the Louisiana State Senate for the creation of the Ouachita Expressway Authority in 2007. House Bill 626 will allow for the formation of a planning board for a new Ouachita River bridge. The approved route will connect US 165 at Fink's Hideaway Road on Monroe's northern edge with White's Ferry Road near the Tupawek Bayou in West Monroe. The route will be called the 'North Loop Bridge'. This project will be one of LADOTD's mega-projects and would require further federal funding. US Representative Rodney Alexander, D-Quitman, of Louisiana's 5th congressional District is working to get some study money to get the project started. Once built, the bridge will provide much needed commerce and access for the north part of Monroe and West Monroe.

10.2 Bus Service

First to use soy-based bio-diesel fuel blended with ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel in all buses, the Monroe Transit System (MTS) offers service to the Northeast Louisiana Region via bus and demand-response ParaTransit. In 2006, the MTS celebrated its 100th anniversary as the nation's oldest publicly-owned transit system. Total ridership, in 2007, was more than 1.2 million region-wide. There are 13 routes that provide service in and around the City and to other modes of transportation including Greyhound/Trailways terminal, Monroe Regional Airport, and the main office of the MTS.



Other associations that provide public transportation include the Ouachita Association of Retarded Citizens, ARCO of Community Resources, Ouachita-Monroe Community Action Program (OMCAP), and Ouachita Council on Aging. Each of these associations provides transportation for the specific group of individuals indicated (i.e. people with developmental disabilities, early intervention program candidates for transportation to and from ARCO facilities, and senior citizens).

MTS service is provided every 45 minutes, Monday through Saturday, on most routes. Some routes also provide extended evening hours. All of the routes meet at the downtown transit terminal located in the block bounded by Catalpa, Grammont, Hall, and Harrison Streets. All transit routes travel along downtown streets as they leave from and return to the main terminal. There are only two downtown roadways that have three or more bus routes: Catalpa Street and Hall Street. DeSiard Street, Harrison Street, and Grammont Street have three or more bus routes traveled, however for only one block.

City of Monroe employees are able to ride the MTS at no charge via a Transit Pass Program that was implemented in 2006. Standard fares are \$1.00 – Adult; \$0.50 – Elderly/Disabled; \$0.90 – Student; free for children whose height is below the fare box; free for those making transfers; and free for employees of the City of Monroe. Riders can purchase a monthly MTS pass at \$34.00 for adult full fare; \$17.00 for elderly/disabled; and \$28.00 for students. Ten ride packages can also be purchased for \$9.00 – Adult full fare; \$4.50 – Elderly/Disabled; and \$8.00 for students.

The MTS is bicycle-friendly. Each bus is equipped to hold two bikes on the front of the bus. The bike racks are offered on a “first come, first served” basis and do not cost anything additional to the standard fare. ParaTransit vehicles, however, are not equipped for bicycles.

The ParaTransit service offered by MTS is for areas within ¾ mile of all fixed routes. ParaTransit is offered to passengers who are not able to access or use fixed bus routes due to a disability. The ParaTransit is offered at \$2.00 per trip and ParaTransit monthly packages are available for \$20.00. Half fare passes for ParaTransit service are offered for those providing proof of being one of the following: elderly (age 62 years or older); disabled (determined through an MTS application process); and/or a Medicare recipient (person possessing a Medicare Card pursuant to Title II/XVII of the Social Security Act).

According to the Monroe Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update, some of the challenges being experienced by the MTS in 2007-2008 include overloaded buses as a result of increased ridership. As a result of increased ridership, increased litter at bus stops has been noticed. ParaTransit service maintenance has been problematic and fluctuating vehicle costs have made it difficult to establish a set operating budget. Further, anticipated new diesel engine regulations and continued fuel cost fluctuations pose challenges for the MTS bus fleet. Goals for 2007 that were identified in the December 2004 Transportation Plan Update and the status of each includes:

- Purchase of two 40-foot buses and one ParaTransit – This was completed with the purchase of three new buses
- Purchase a rubber-tire trolley for downtown circulator – the circulator began service in July 2008



- Install bus stop shelters to improve bus stop appearances – Ongoing. Five were installed to September 2008.
- Begin service earlier and extend night service to Saturdays – Saturday night service has been initiated; earlier service had not yet started as of September 2008
- Extend bus transit pass program to area employers and schools – No progress to 2008
- Continued development of a regional transportation plan – Ongoing.

Goals for 2008 include:

- Purchase six new buses to complete fleet replacement, including one hybrid bus
- Begin service to commercial and industrial areas of West Monroe
- Work with employers and other governments to meet growing demand for transit in new areas
- Refurbish 2003 vehicles to improve passenger comfort
- Explore fare box upgrade to enhance revenue collection process and passenger count data

10.3 Rail Service

Rail line service for freight movement is prevalent and predominant within the City of Monroe and specifically within the downtown area. There are three active rail lines that go through the downtown area and extend beyond the city limits. The Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi (AL&M) railroad generally cuts through the center of the city in a north-south direction. The Union Pacific railroad traverses the City in a north-south direction south of I-20; after it passes I-20, the rail line then continues in an east-west direction north of I-20. The Kansas City Southern (KCS) runs east/west parallel to DeSiard Street and Millhaven Road and then crosses the Ouachita River.

A switching yard is operated in the downtown area of Monroe by Kansas City Southern (KCS). This rail line has nine at-grade crossings all occurring within the downtown Monroe area. The only grade-separated crossing is provided by the Lea Joyner Memorial Expressway. According to the Downtown Monroe Traffic and Parking Study, June 2003, the KCS operates approximately 23 trains per day within the downtown area; all at varying times. According to this same report, citizens reported routine delays at all of the nine at-grade crossings situated between Walnut Street and just east of the Lea Joyner Memorial Expressway.

10.4 Air Service

The Monroe Regional Airport had its beginnings in 1927 when it was known as Selman Field. At that time the airport was used by Huff-Daland Duster Company, the first aviation company devoted to crop dusting operations.³⁸ From this business the company ventured into the then-new business of carrying passengers for hire in 1929. The new company was renamed Delta Air Service and eventually became Delta Airlines. By June of the same year, passenger service and air mail service was inaugurated. Jet service to Monroe began in 1968 by Delta Airlines and then followed shortly thereafter by Southern Airways.

³⁸ Monroe Regional Airport Master Plan Update, Preliminary Draft, August 2002



During the period from the 1980s through the 1990s, the airport went through a transformation, having the need to upgrade and renovate its then 50-year-old facilities. During the mid-1990s a new air traffic control tower was built and access to the passenger terminal was improved.³⁹

The airport consists of over 2,600 acres and has three active runways with the primary runway oriented in a northeast/southwest direction. The airport property is bordered to the west by former Army landside property that remains under airport control but has been released for non-aviation purposes. It is bordered to the north by the Union-Pacific Railroad right-of-way; and to the south by the Kansas City South Railroad and I-20. Just within the east side of the airport proper there is a golf course, Chennault Park.

The airport operates as a publicly owned, public-use airport facility offering scheduled commercial service. The airport also provides service to general aviation patrons, including business and corporate users. The airport has been designated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as one having particular interest to the nation's air transportation system, known as the National Airspace System, and as such is included in the FAA's National Plan of Integrated Airport System (NPIAS). This designation indicates the airport is of essential need in servicing civil aviation and to support the Department of Defense and Postal Service. The NPIAS designation makes the airport eligible for federal funding under the FAA's Airport Improvement Program (AIP).

Commercial carriers that provide service in and out of the City of Monroe include Atlantic Southeast Airways (ASA), Continental Express, Northwest AirlinK, and American Eagle. Non-stop service is provided to two hubs: Atlanta, Georgia and Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas. Regional jets and turboprops provide the service. In April 2002, Delta Airlines ceased operation of its mainline service to Monroe.

In 2001, the airport enplaned 95,309 total passengers and therefore was considered to be a Commercial Service – Primary Airport.⁴⁰ In December 2001, there were 547 commercial service airports in the United States, 419 of them being primary airports. American Eagle Airline began service to Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, Texas in June 2006 from Monroe.

A 1990 Master Plan for the Monroe Regional Airport forecasted annual enplanements for the years 1993 through and including 2010. These values were then extrapolated to forecast enplanements for 2022. With base year 1988 enplanements of 114,275 persons, the forecasted annual passenger enplanements were projected to grow at an average rate of 2.8%. These projections appeared optimistic when then compared with actual enplanement levels recorded at the airport. Actual enplanements over a ten year period (1992-2002) show a steady decline since 1998 with the most significant drop occurring during 2000 and 2001. Although Delta Airlines discontinued the mainline service, their subsidiary, Atlantic Southeast Airways has supplemented this loss with the addition of multiple regional jet flights.⁴¹ The withdrawal of Delta Airlines essentially made the airport a regional/commuter market airport.

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Monroe Regional Airport Master Plan Update, August 2002

⁴¹ Ibid



Forecasted air enplanement for 2015 is 153,100 persons and 235,700 persons by 2030. This is based on growth rate estimates provided by Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) and Year 2000 enplanements of 126,900 persons.⁴²

Air cargo service at the Monroe Regional Airport consisted in 2000 of 38 tons inbound and 41 tons outbound, for a total tonnage of 79 tons in 2000.⁴³ The forecast for air cargo tonnage is 82 tons in 2005; 102 tons in 2010; 126 tons in 2015; 157 tons in 2020; and 247 tons in 2030.⁴⁴

2007 Improvement Projects

The City Public Works Department received a \$50,000 grant from the Small Communities Air Service Development fund for air service. Generally, the award is aimed at improving air service, not establishing airlines.⁴⁵

Runway 4-22 was repaved, after funding totaling \$600,000 was provided specifically for this effort. An airport lighting renovation project was underway in 2007-2008. A new airport terminal is presently in the design phase and will be partially funded by this money. The City hoped to secure \$20 million in funding for construction of the new terminal building from the US House Appropriations Committee.⁴⁶ Louisiana State Sen. Bob Kostelka indicated that since the terminal is a high priority project for the state, the money would be secured by the legislature, but furthered by indicating that state interest in providing matching funds was necessary in securing the federal monies.

Louisiana State Rep. Rodney Alexander, helped secure approximately \$2 million in federal funding from the House Appropriations Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Subcommittee appropriations bill (T-HUD) to begin construction of the terminal to handle increased ridership, improve security and energy efficiency, and allow for future expansion.⁴⁷

The proposed 60,000-square-foot terminal building would house with four airline ticket offices, a gate lounge; baggage claim; automobile rental areas and office space; office space airport, local and federal officials, retail and dining area and common space. The budget for the project was estimated at \$36 million plus financing costs in April 2008. This budget includes design, management, testing, construction, and related administrative costs including the preparation of this application. The design phase of the project was anticipated to conclude by the end of 2008 with construction taking place between 2009 and 2011. In June 2008 an FAA grant of \$1 million was announced with the expectation that additional funding would be forthcoming.

⁴² Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Executive Summary, December 2003, p. 13. Source: FAA Terminal Area Forecasts, FAA Aerospace Forecast, FY 2000-2011, Airport Management Records, WSA.

⁴³ Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan, Chapter 6 - Summary Analysis of Freight Movement, Tabulated data source: 2000 Reebe TransSearch, ACI, and Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA), December 2003

⁴⁴ Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Executive Summary, December 2003, p. 14. Source: Airports Council International, airport management, WSA

⁴⁵ The Small Community Air Service Development Grant Program - 2007

⁴⁶ Officials Pursue More Airport Money, The Ouachita Citizen, April 4, 2007

⁴⁷ Ibid



Intermodal Access/Network

I-20 provides a regional transportation link to the airport, as it traverses the region in an east-west direction. An interchange off I-20 provides direct access to the airport. However, the route leading to this point is problematic due to traffic control devices (including traffic signalization), traffic engineering and an at-grade railroad crossing that causes frequent delays during train crossings. The LADOTD State TIP (December 2003) had designated the following state level planned improvements for the roadway network:

- Widening of US 80 for two miles to the east; to start 1.5 to 2 miles from intersection of US 80/Kansas Lane
- Interchange Improvement, US 80 at Kansas Lane
- Interchange Improvement, US 80 at SR 594 – Completed
- Capacity Improvement, US – 165, Computerized Traffic Signal System

No railroad access for passenger use to the airport exists, even though there are railroad tracks that traverse the north and south borders of the airport. Passenger rail does not exist within Monroe. The nearest passenger rail terminals in northern Louisiana are located in Shreveport and Bossier City.

The Monroe Transit System provides bus service to the Monroe Regional Airport Terminal Building. Taxi and limousine service is available at the airport. In addition, the airport is served by complimentary shuttle service offered by major hotels in the area. Four rental car companies are based at the airport: Avis, Budget, Hertz, and National.

10.5 Water Freight Transportation and Access for Boaters

The Ouachita River provides the City of Monroe with access to the U.S. Inland Waterway System. Three terminals exist within Monroe and house petroleum products, grain, and sand, gravel, and fertilizer. The Greater Ouachita Port is located approximately one mile south of the Interstate 20 bridge on the west side of the Ouachita River. The Greater Ouachita Port Commission secured \$8 million in state and federal funding over the past year for the construction of a container-handling dock that houses a 275-ton capacity crane used to load and unload barges. Of the total \$8 million, \$1.2 million was secured in bonds for the constructing, acquiring, improving and equipping the Ouachita dock and related facilities. The construction of the new intermodal facility is hoped to significantly enhance the local economy by enabling existing businesses to handle and move containers through multiple transportation modes.⁴⁸

An operational rail spur was forecast to become part of the dock facility by fall 2008, offering existing businesses a fully functional intermodal facility that will then attract new businesses.⁴⁹ During the 2006 fiscal year, a \$1 million grant was secured to construct 1,000 linear feet of rail spur that serves outbound needs of Graphic Packaging.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ http://www.house.gov/alexander/content/press/archive_2007/070719a.htm

⁴⁹ "Crane now operational at Greater Ouachita Port", The News Star, July 21, 2007

⁵⁰ "Georgia company looks to expand at Ouachita port", The Ouachita Citizen, Wednesday, April 4, 2007.



Ouachita Terminals reported monthly imports and exports totaling 418 exports and 150 imports for March 2007. During February 2007, the port had a record high of 434 exports.⁵¹

10.6 Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel

In 2006, the City Engineering Department constructed sidewalks along Orange Street to help improve public safety for pedestrians and school children.

In 1986, the City adopted a Bicycle and Jogging Trails Plan. Three trails located on Spencer Avenue, Lexington Avenue, and Riverside Drive were built as a result of this plan. The City has also completed a subdivision sidewalk inventory. The City of Monroe ordinances for subdivisions requires sidewalks be installed on both sides of the street except where they are determined not to be practicable by the planning commission. Sidewalk maintenance is the responsibility of the homeowner.

Bicycle and jogging trails parallel the Ouachita River and Bayou DeSiard. Other portions of the City's trail system continue into the neighborhoods and throughout the downtown area. The 1988 Monroe Comprehensive Plan identifies long term plans to expand the system to connect neighborhoods with each other, adjacent parks, commercial areas, and public use facilities.

A 1996 study prepared for the entire state of Louisiana indicated that a river walk was planned for the Ouachita River in Monroe and West Monroe. Totalling 3 miles, the path was to have a seashell surface and include benches and lighting. The location of the path was to be on the levee crown and at the base of the floodwall. In concert with development of the study, public meetings were held to gather the public's input regarding bicycle and pedestrian trails. Most participants indicated that it was their belief trails did not receive funding and/or were side-stepped because of a lack of communication between government agencies. One of the main issues mentioned was the poor condition of existing streets within the City. A majority of the streets have no sidewalks or shoulders and as such implementation of bicycle or pedestrian trails would seemingly require additional right-of-way access. Further, the public indicated that motorists need to be cognizant of bicyclists and pedestrians along the roadways and highways. It was the consensus of meeting attendees that automobile motorists are ignorant of other modes of transportation and that pedestrians and bicyclists are not 'entitled' to a portion of the road. A final comment was a suggestion for utilizing the existing levee system as a possible trail route. This would offer a non-motorized route, free from automobiles and motorized bicycles, and provide for a peacefully scenic trail along the river.

A report titled "Mean Streets 2004" was prepared by a nationwide network consisting of more than 800 organizations devoted to improving the nation's transportation system. According to the Surface Transportation Policy Partnership, from 1995 to 2003 the number of pedestrian fatalities per 100,000 persons in Monroe increased from 1.37 to 2.04. Of the eight cities ranked in Louisiana, Monroe was rated as having the highest pedestrian danger index when compared to these other cities. This was due to the increase in number of deaths over the study period. Additional information pertaining to the increase in pedestrian deaths was not readily available. Other cities that were studied included New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

⁵¹ Ibid



10.7 Parking

The 2003 Downtown Monroe Traffic and Parking Study recommended parking improvement alternatives for the downtown area. The demand and needs analysis identified additional on-street parking spaces are necessary specifically near the courthouse complex and St. Francis Medical Center. The study revealed that while most streets already have maximum capacity for on-street parking, usage of these spaces and turn-over should be enforced such that better use of the existing spaces is realized.

Other locations where on-street parking does not exist, such as South Grand Street near DeSiard Street, cannot be reconfigured to accommodate on-street parking. These streets are configured to provide the necessary capacity for vehicle movements and any reconfiguration to allow for on-street parking would cause additional delays and congestion to traffic. Based on the 2003 Study recommendations, parking meters have been removed from the downtown area and enforcement of parking durations have been increased along with fines for violations.

Off-street parking in downtown Monroe is heavily utilized, with a concentration occurring in the St. Francis Medical Center area and near the courthouse complexes. Additional off-street parking has been purchased by the medical center and consists of a parking facility located at the corner of Grammont and Catalpa Streets. Additionally, a new parking facility was planned for the corner of Wood Street and St. John Street to provide additional parking for State courthouse employees.⁵²

10.8 Transportation Network Findings

- Interstate 20 (I-20) serves as a major link for traffic into and out of the City. The Kansas Lane Project included a recommendation to upgrade and widen the interchange with Kansas Lane under the Kansas/Garrett/I-20 interchange. The State Bond Commission approved \$2 million in funding for the Interchange project in September 2007.
- To facilitate commercial development along the I-20 corridor, it was recommended that a traffic signal at the intersection of Nutland Road and Millhaven Road be installed. Additional improvements in this area could include widening of Nutland Road; realignment of US 165 service road at Millhaven Road; and realignment of Booth Street to connect with US 165.
- Projects identified in the Monroe Metropolitan Transportation Plan and summarized in this Chapter should be implemented to correct forecasted deficiencies for year 2010. In addition, segments of roadway that were forecasted as reaching severe deficiency in capacity in year 2030 and listed within this Chapter should be considered for implementation.
- The existing bus terminal and transit operations center are in need of renovation to facilitate efficient operations. Also, the Ouachita Port was identified as being in need of improvements. The respective improvements should occur to better the intermodal connections within Monroe (public transit/passenger railroad/airport) and to facilitate better movement of freight in and out of the Port.
- Capacity deficiencies are forecasted for future travel demand on the east-west arterials in Monroe. LA 616, US 80/15 and LA 15 should be considered for expansion to facilitate forecasted travel demand on these roadways.

⁵² Downtown Monroe Traffic and Parking Study, 2003.



- Signalization should be considered on urban roads to maximize system efficiency on and within these roadways.
- Improved connectivity, lack of volume capacity, and associated traffic congestion in the areas of the Ouachita River crossings were noted in the Monroe Metropolitan Transportation Plan. These crossings need to be reviewed and considered for making corrections to maximize the efficiency of facilitating traffic movement across the River.
- The Monroe Transit System should consider development of a regional transportation plan to make the system more efficient for moving people in and around the greater Monroe area.
- There are 11 at-grade rail crossings within the Monroe metropolitan area. Routine delays occur at each crossing, causing traffic back-ups onto adjacent and surrounding roadways. The crossings are presently under review for consideration of closing. Six crossings have been identified for closing; four have been closed. The remaining crossings should continue to be reviewed by the City Engineering Department to seek ways to either eliminate the crossings and/or consider alternatives to the at-grade crossing.
- Traffic signalization and better facilitation of traffic are needed in the area of the Monroe Regional Airport. Access from I-20 is congested due to traffic control devices that are not synchronized; at-grade railroad crossings; and slopes of existing roadways causing traffic facilitation problems. The LADOTD State TIP identified four state-level improvements for the roadway network. These recommendations should be considered for implementation.
- Bicycle and pedestrian traffic are not accommodated efficiently or appropriately along the urban streets and highways within Monroe. Although new subdivisions are required to install sidewalks along each side of the street, sidewalks exist only sporadically on existing streets within the downtown area and in existing subdivisions. Sidewalks have been installed along Orange Street in efforts to improve public safety. The City needs to conduct a survey of all city streets and determine which warrant sidewalks. Further, connectivity to other neighborhoods and nearby parks via sidewalks should be researched and implemented to instill a sense of urbanism and overall safety for pedestrians and school children.
- Additional parking is needed in the area of the courthouse complex and St. Francis Medical Center. Parking meters were removed to make parking more readily available in this area. Designation of spaces may be needed.
- The Monroe Regional Airport is a publicly owned facility that provides primarily regional/commuter air services.