

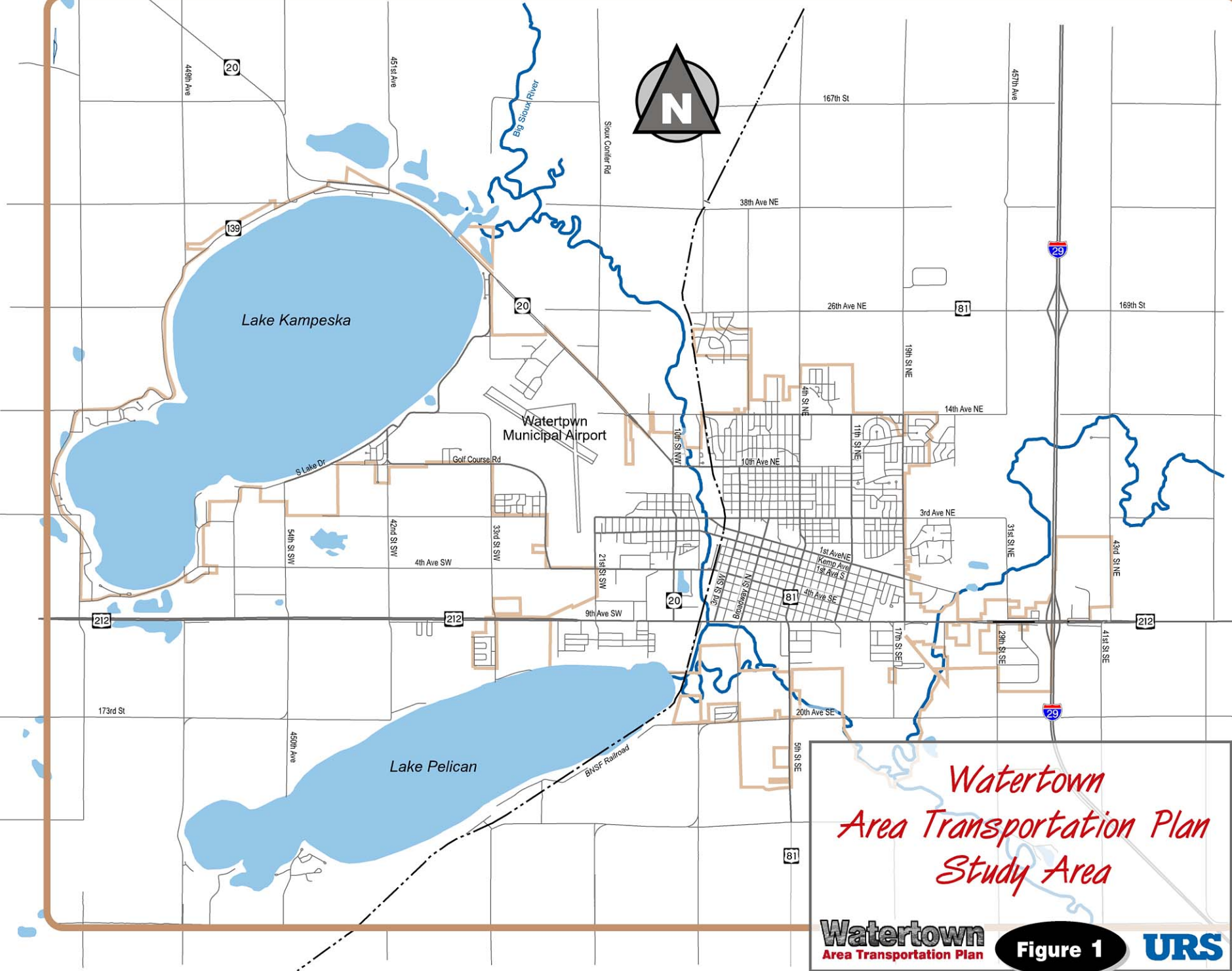
INTRODUCTION

The Watertown Area Transportation Plan provides the underlying structure for the area's transportation planning process over the next 20+ years. The transportation planning process is a collaborative effort where the existing and future demands on the transportation system are being evaluated and a set of actions and/or strategies will be developed that will guide the Watertown area to a desired outcome, as defined by locally identified issues, goals, objectives and benchmarks. The Watertown Area Transportation Plan will address the study area displayed in Figure 1.

The overall plan has considered a wide range of social, engineering, environmental and economic factors in establishing the Watertown area's transportation goals and objectives. These goals and objectives have been developed to reflect the overall values of the community and are important because they set the general course for the study. The outcome of the plan will be both short-range actions (within the next five years) and long-range actions (beyond five years) that lead to the development of an integrated, multimodal transportation system that efficiently moves people and goods. A multimodal system is one that serves and connects various modes of travel and goods transported in and through the Watertown area, including automobile, pedestrian, bicycle, transit and rail and truck freight.

The Watertown Area Transportation Plan process will include the following elements:

1. Identify the projected transportation demand of persons and goods in the study area over the planning period (through the year 2030).
2. Identify effective congestion-management strategies that systematically address current and future transportation demand.
3. Identify and evaluate pedestrian and bicycle transportation facilities.
4. Assess methods to make the most efficient use of the existing transportation facilities to relieve roadway congestion and enhance the mobility of people and goods.
5. Use a multimodal perspective in evaluating the transportation, socioeconomic, environmental, and financial impacts of the plan.



*Watertown
Area Transportation Plan
Study Area*

6. Reflect consideration of the *City of Watertown's Comprehensive Land Use Plan*, updated in October 2004.
7. Provide a financial plan that demonstrates the consistency of proposed investments with already available and projected sources of revenue through the transportation plan's horizon year of 2030.

The elements that form the existing transportation system form the foundation of the Watertown area's future transportation needs. Therefore, documenting the existing transportation system is an important step in the transportation planning process. The purpose of this Existing Conditions Report is to evaluate and summarize the various elements of the current study area transportation system. The Watertown area's existing transportation system includes many pieces, including current:

- Roadways and Streets
- Trails and Sidewalks
- Transit Service
- Air Transportation Service
- Intercity Bus Service
- Truck and Rail Freight Movement

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The Watertown Area Transportation Plan should be founded on the consent of the general community as well as the various committees and bodies formed within the area. The plan must be a reflection of the community's expectations for its transportation system as well as what tradeoffs the community is willing to make in order to achieve those expectations. A variety of public involvement methods have been used thus far and will continue to be used throughout the remainder of the study. This section of the report summarizes the public involvement process employed thus far and the scope of the process that will follow.

A transportation plan Steering Committee has been organized and will be maintained throughout the development of the plan. The Steering Committee is a technical advisory group for the transportation plan and is composed of staff from the city, the county, the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT), the First District Association of Governments, the Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce and Focus Watertown. Three meetings have been held with the Steering Committee thus far.

A second advisory group, a Stakeholders Committee, has been established as a group of community members that will offer input throughout the plan development process. The stakeholders committee is composed of a cross-section of persons from the Watertown area that will bring a representative and diverse set of interests throughout the planning process. Thus, the stakeholders committee will be a conduit between the various community constituencies and the study team. The Stakeholders Committee will be used throughout the planning process in order to:

- Gather input on current and emerging transportation issues in the region.
- Act as a sounding board for ideas for potential modifications to the transportation system.

The first Stakeholders meeting will be held in January 2005. It is anticipated that this meeting will be the first of four or five meetings held throughout the study.

An additional tool used to involve the general public is a study website. The website (www.watertowntransportation.com) has been established to provide a constant, always available resource that is able disseminate information and receive feedback from the general public. Information at the website includes both the telephone and email contact information for the planning consultant.

Various other methods for disseminating information to the public and/or receiving their feedback have been and will be used throughout the study. These additional methods have included:

- **Local Media:** Interviews have been and will continue to be conducted with the Watertown *Public Opinion* newspaper. Additionally, the consultant gave an informational presentation on the plan at the November 15, 2004 City Council meeting, which was broadcast live and on-tape delay several times on the local government television channel.
- **Study Travel Survey:** The travel survey administered in September 2004 included a question that asked “What specific transportation issues do you think need to be addressed in the Watertown area?”. Those issues were summarized and reported to the steering committee and will be considered through the study development process. Also included in the travel survey was a plan information sheet that included the website address and contact information for the study team.
- **Organization Outreach:** Consultant staff will make presentations to local organizations as a part of increasing community involvement. The first of these was the Watertown Rotary Club in January of 2005. Consultant staff are also coordinating with a local, grass-roots project called *Vision 2015*. This community-based project is a process that identifies needs in Watertown. Consultant staff have attended all of the Vision 2015 transportation committee’s meetings to provide a summary of the transportation plan and to get feedback on transportation issues in the community.

Finally, public meetings will be/have been held at milestone points in the planning process. These public meetings are summarized in the following bullets:

- **Public Meeting #1:** September 28, 2004. This meeting included:
 - Introduction to the transportation planning process
 - What tasks are included in the plan
 - Identification of local transportation issues
- **Public Meeting #2:** Anticipated for Spring 2005. This meeting will include:
 - The development concept.

Public Involvement Process

- Traffic levels and summary of travel pattern changes associated with the concept.
- Locations of capacity deficiencies
- Presentation of the types of concepts tested and the measures of effectiveness applied through the alternatives analysis.
- The results of the first-level screening of alternatives.
- Public Meeting #3: Anticipated for Summer/Fall 2005. This meeting will be held following the results of the alternatives evaluation and preliminary recommendations for project staging of the implementation plan. Each of the alternatives would have been reviewed with the Steering Committee prior to this meeting. The content of this meeting will be presentation of the results of the alternatives evaluation, including project recommendations and staging to the general public.