



The scenic overlook provides stunning views of the river and surrounding natural beauty. Its proximity to downtown and parking make it convenient for all visitors.



Trains regularly block and delay traffic on Hwy 76, sometimes for hours, including school buses and emergency vehicles.



The well-maintained trails along Riverfront Park provide access to the marina, fishing docks, and scenic views of the Mississippi River.



Due to the lack of sidewalks in The Bench neighborhood, people walk in the street or in residents' yards, which can feel unsafe and intrusive.



Pedestrians and cyclists enjoy the Edgar Street trail for the wide, well-maintained surface, benches, trees, and dog stations.



High-speed traffic on HWY 18 creates challenges for drivers attempting to enter and exit the Driftless Wetland Centre.

What Factors Affect Transportation in Marquette?

Transportation is integral to small-town life and a vibrant economy. In the context of the Community Visioning Program, we recognize walking, biking, and driving as quintessential modes of travel to various destinations important to residents and visitors. Access to these destinations is crucial for many everyday activities—getting to work and school, participating in community events, and providing for basic needs such as food, health care, and healthy activity.

In this participatory assessment, we want to find out which factors and conditions affect transportation use in Marquette, where these factors and conditions are most prevalent, and how they influence route and transportation choices locally. Because residents have the best knowledge of how Marquette's transportation system works, we use focused, small-group conversations, mapping, and photos of the best and worst to understand local transportation.

Different Users = Different Needs

To capture insights about transportation from a variety of perspectives, we invited Marquette residents with different transportation needs to participate in focus groups. A total of 47 residents attended Marquette's workshop. Participants were separated into five user groups and the Marquette steering committee.



Actives

(13 participants): This user group represents those in the community who engage in outdoor recreation, including cycling, walking, running, swimming, skiing, etc. The availability of multiple venues for outdoor recreation matters to this group.



Mobility Challenged

(4 participants): This user group is directly affected by accessibility barriers such as high curbing and uneven sidewalks that make it difficult to operate mobility-aiding equipment effectively. Handicapped parking, curb ramps, and smooth surfaces are critical transportation features.



Older Adults

(6 participants): Accessibility—both in terms of physical access and proximity—is a major concern for this user group. Because some people in this user group do not or are unable to drive, having goods and services within walking distance is important.



Youth

(12 participants): This group uses primarily non-motorized modes of transportation, so pedestrian- and bike-friendly streets and sidewalks are important. These users value the ability to get to destinations on foot or via bicycle and having goods and services within walking distance.




Parents

(7 participants): Safety of their children is a primary concern of this user group. Access to safe and easy routes to school activities is another significant factor to this group. Parents of young children desire smooth, wide surfaces for strollers.



Steering Committee

(5 participants): The common denominator for this user group is that their observations are influenced by special knowledge of the transportation system acquired during the Community Visioning assessment process. As a result, this group is more representative of decision makers.



Actives


"...One of the wetlands..is right behind the casino, and it's kind of developed naturally...it's one of those little things that's nice to walk."

"...there [are] no sidewalks..[so] I walk the streets all the way around The Bench, come down [Anti Monopoly Street], and I'm out in the street crossing the railroad tracks before I get on the sidewalk."

"I'm an avid biker. Have been for decades and decades. [Marquette] is a terrible place to ride a bike."

"Sometimes [trains will] stop...on the tracks in front of the river [on River Drive], and if you're boating...and you want to get back into town...they'll be there for an hour sometimes."

"...it would be nice to have a trail that goes out to the wetlands center. And then eventually from the wetlands center out to Bloody Run [County Park] would be really, good."



Youth


"There are not many [sidewalks] at all...when there are cars going, you have to go out into someone's yard...and there [are] usually...cars parked on the side of the road, so sometimes you can't see cars...coming."

"I think there should be a trail going to McGregor, because..I can't walk on the highway."

"[Second Avenue is] really steep, and if they don't [put] salt and sand on it, it's just slippery, so you [have] to take [Brown Street]. It's just not as steep."

"Sometimes it's nice to walk [along the Edgar Street trail]...It's usually just kept in [good] condition. It's just quite open..."

"There's no sidewalk [along Highway 76 from Anti Monopoly to the bridge]...you [have] to walk either through the parking lot of the casino or...cross the street."



Parents


"I think the wetlands center could be a great hub for many trails...because...you have good accessibility to surrounding areas, [and] you could park there and then hit a trail system and go [to] about three, four, five different areas..."

"...we talked about a trail between Marquette and McGregor...but there's no place to...really put it."

"We walk our dogs downtown, and I [have] to cinch up the leash because if they veer into the street a little bit, they'll get their head taken off, [traffic is] going so fast through there."

"I'd love to see a trail from Effigy Mounds to Pikes Peak and even through Bloody Run [County Park] so that [it's] all connected..."

"I've actually run down [County Road] B45 to town, and [I don't feel safe] because I'm out on the road and there [are]...A lot of blind curves."



Older Adults

"The problem with [County Road] B45 is [that] all the culverts... get plugged up with debris...[the] whole way to the top of the hill [after] gully washes."

"...coming back from the wetlands center heading east [on Highway 18], if we want to turn up B45... there's traffic coming behind you and when you start to turn, [it's] building up]. You wonder if you aren't going to get rear-ended."

"...[the evacuation road is] beautiful. We walked it when we were in the Great Place Program trying to... connect [Marquette and McGregor] with trails."

"There [are] a lot of people [who] walk their dogs, go get the mail...or [bike along the Edgar Street trail]."

"I think that'd be a pain for anybody [who] has to go to work, to sit through [the] trains that are there over a half hour."



Mobility Challenged

"...when you have teens [who]...like that physical activity, streets aren't the best to go on...the people driving on your roads don't like them there, [and] all the wonderful rocks and debris...on some of those hills coming off Marquette aren't exactly ideal..."

"I'd like to see a few [boardwalks] put in places that we could utilize for kids...it would have been nice if I'd had a place to just push [my child's] wheelchair out and let [them] get some fresh air..."

"We're not going to walk...or ride our bike on [Highway 18]...It's just...really busy... so we just don't even [want] to cross..."

"They've talked about... putting...a [walking] path on the top of the edge of the bluff so it goes over the highway and keeps people off...I think it'd be worth it and...it'd be well used."

"I think the biggest issue with Marquette is it's small but it's spaced out...you have little hubs... but there's nothing connecting them... except for a highway."



Steering Committee

"Highway 76 from...North Street... all the way to McGregor has been asphalted to death, and it's [all] potholes now. The gutters don't work anymore [because] they're filled in. If you're driving to McGregor during a mild rain you got to be cautious."

"...we can't get [the kids] to the river without crossing Highway 18, which is a problem."

"I want a box culvert under [Highway 18] so we can walk from [the wetlands center] to...downtown, to the riverfront."

"...We walk down along The Bench with my kids, and we usually come back on the backside of the [casino] parking lot to avoid crossing [Anti Monopoly Street] because [it doesn't feel safe] to cross with kids..."

"...[The wetlands center is] flat, ... there's a lot of opportunity in the valley to put more trails so people could hike, bike, [or] walk..."

Marquette

What People Said

Transportation Assets and Barriers Analysis
 Julia Badenhop, Sandra Oberbroeckling, Britney Markhardt
 Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation



User Types	Destinations and Activities			Valued Qualities and Features			Undesirable Qualities and Features					Most Desired Improvements and Activities			
	The Bench	Driftless Area Wetlands Centre	The Riverfront	Scenic Views	Trails	Access to Natural Areas	Issues Caused by Train Traffic	Flooding & Drainage Problems	Inadequate Sidewalk Infrastructure	Winter Weather Challenges	Speeding Traffic	Local Cyclist/Pedestrian Connections	Local Vehicular Connections	Regional Trail Connections	Transportation Safety Features
Actives	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mobility Challenged	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Older Adults	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Youth	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Parents	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Steering Committee	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Actives walk and bike for exercise or recreation and to destinations in town. They also drive. They would like any new trails to be pea gravel for biking. This group likes to walk in the wetland behind the casino. Actives also appreciate the amenities at the park in Timber Ridge.

Mobility-challenged individuals walk, bike, and drive cars and golf carts. They suggested building a retaining wall along Highway 76 to prevent rockslides and expressed the need for handicapped-accessibility updates in The Bench. This group described City Park as a historical location with nice amenities.

Older adults drive, walk, and bike around town. They would like more benches along the trails around town. This group suggested angled parking downtown to accommodate more vehicles. They like to walk the Edgar Street trail because it has newly planted trees, and dog-waste stations.

Youth walk and bike to get around town. Older youth also drive. They enjoy living close to the Mississippi River because it is easy to go fishing and boating. Ice skating on the basketball court in The Bench is a favorite winter activity for youth. This group suggested upgrading the old logging trail that overlooks the river.

Parents drive cars and UTVs, walk, and run. They are primarily concerned with the safety of their children. This group envisioned making the Driftless Wetland Centre a trailhead and a hub for four or five proposed trail loops. They would like signage posted to promote local destinations

Steering committee members, walk, bike, and drive. This group wants to reduce the noise of the train horns by installing sound-mitigation panels at the Highway 18 overpass or adding crossing gates where the tracks cross the road. They spoke of poor lighting along Highway 76 near the casino.

"The Bench" offers a plethora of recreation opportunities making it popular among residents. Parents let their kids walk and bike there because the traffic is low. Youth take advantage of the ball fields and basketball court. People enjoy exploring the old logging trails off the evacuation route.

The Driftless Area Wetland Centre is a hub of activity for kids, trails, featuring educational programs, an area the center are able to take in scenic views and bird and wildlife activity.

All user types appreciate living on the Mississippi River and access to the riverfront. Residents walk to the docks and the marina to go fishing and boating and for bird-watching. They can experience the river up close at the "Bridge to Nowhere", overlook on the river.

Residents or railages take pleasure in the many scenic views in the area. The scenic overlook at the apex of the Emma Big Bear Trail offers a panoramic view of the center trails, the new trails at Bloody Run County Park, the Sturgeon Slough Hiking Trail, and the old logging trails.

Participants in all groups talked about their love of nature, birds, and wildlife, which are available in abundance along the riverfront. Bloody Run County Park, its wetlands, the wetlands center, and the old logging trails, and throughout the wooded bluffs.

Trails parked on the tracks is a significant problem, particularly for people living in The Bench, who are essentially cut off from the rest of town when a train is parked across Highway 76. The ear-splitting sound of train horns at all hours are also a nuisance.

Several flooding and drainage issues emerged during the focus groups. For example, heavy rains carry debris down Pleasant Run Road, clogging culverts and causing some drivers to avoid the road, and causing debris to pile up at the entrance to wetlands center.

Many people walk in the street because the sidewalks are broken, uneven or missing, which is stressful for The Bench. Anti-Monopoly Street, Highway 76, and Highway 18.

The hilly terrain in Marquette is prone to winter weather challenges caused by snow and ice. Focus-group participants named Pleasant Run Road, 2nd Street, Chicago Street, and Brown Street as roads that are treacherous during the winter.

Speeding traffic is distressing to adults. Pleasant Run Road and Highway 18 carry a lot of fast-moving trucks. Turning into and out of the wetlands center, turning left onto Pleasant Run Road, and crossing Highway 76 to the wetlands center, Timber Ridge, and the apartment complex.

Improving cyclist/pedestrian connectivity in town and to certain destinations would like better, vehicular access to 2nd Street from The Bench to downtown to create a second egress from that neighborhood and building a bridge over the creek and the railroad tracks.

Adult residents would like better, vehicular access to trail connections to regional recreation areas such as Bloody Run County Park, Pikes Peak, and Effigy Mounds would significantly enhance residents' quality of life.

Some residents want to improve safety for drivers, walkers, and cyclists. Turn lanes on Highway 18 at the wetlands center and the intersection of Pleasant Run Road, a shoulder and a push-button crossing signal along Highway 76, and bike lanes were a few ideas presented.

Marquette

Emerging Themes

Transportation Assets and Barriers Analysis

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