

“We must work together to create a regional multi-modal transportation network that is safe, sustainable, efficient, effective, and accessible in order to maintain and enhance economic vitality and quality of life.”

Jim O’Neal, Mayor, Springfield

Transportation is essential to all aspects of the community, from education to recreation. The movement of people and goods is important for the health and vibrancy of the community.

Transportation choices and sustainability are the emerging themes of the regional transportation network. The Market Street Action Plan and the Springfield Strategic Plan both highlight the need for sustainability.

Transportation funding shortfalls are a major issue for all modes of transportation within the region. The roadway network, sidewalk system, and public and school bus systems face funding shortages.

BLUE RIBBONS

Roadway Traffic

The five-county area that comprises the Springfield Metropolitan Statistical Area has grown by more than 68,000 people in the last 10 years, accounting for an 18.5 percent growth rate during the last decade. This growth has placed increased pressure on the transportation network.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average commute time remains within 1 percent of that of the last decade. It has risen from 17 minutes to 17.63 minutes for drivers within Springfield and increased from 19.17 minutes to 19.45 minutes for drivers in all of Greene County.

While traffic flow remains a concern for commuters, many improvements have been completed to avoid severe traffic congestion. These improvements were funded by partnerships between the City of Springfield, Greene County, and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT). In the City of Springfield, voters renewed a Capital Improvement sales tax in 2010 and Transportation sales tax in 2008 to fund transportation projects. Greene County also uses sales taxes to fund major transportation projects. One example of collaboration is the Kansas Expressway and I-44 interchange. Constructed as a diverging-diamond interchange, it was the first of its kind in the nation and received the 2010 Governor’s Award for Quality and Productivity for reduction in accidents and reduced traffic delay.



Kansas Expressway and I-44 Diverging Diamond Interchange

Another way that traffic flow has been improved is through the incorporation of Intelligent Transportation Systems. A new Regional Transportation Management Center opened in early 2011 provides a system to monitor and improve traffic flow through a computerized traffic signal system with closed circuit real-time traffic cameras and a 9-1-1 live data dispatch feed. Message signs were also installed in 2011 to inform drivers of accidents or congestion in order to take a detour.

Safety

The World Health Organization has declared traffic injuries and fatalities a World Health Issue. In 2010, the City of Springfield was honored with three awards recognizing the comprehensive improvement of safety for automobiles, pedestrians and bicyclists. These awards include:

- 2010 Springfield Safe Community and Injury Prevention Award;
- 2010 Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Public Agency Council Achievement Award of Excellence; and the
- 2010 Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Edmund R. Ricker Transportation Safety Award

The overall number of accidents has been steadily decreasing due to intersection improvements and also to red-light cameras, which have been suspended due to court challenges. In 2008, the City began to implement a neighborhood speed reduction program, which led to an overall average speed reduction of 1 mph to 3 mph citywide. Springfield also has implemented a Traffic Safety Education program that provides signs and brochures to promote personal responsibility with regard to traffic safety.

In the 2009 *Community Focus* report, an increase in pedestrian and bicycle accidents* was reported as an emerging issue. Over the past two years, the actual numbers of accidents have been decreasing. While this issue still needs monitoring, the safety programs implemented by the City have begun addressing the issue.

All Accidents*	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Fatality Accidents	16	14	20	18	22	9	17	10	19
Injury Accidents	2,500	2,342	2,484	2,144	2,097	2,090	2,001	2,093	2,121
Total Accidents	8,316	8,097	8,109	7,921	7,629	7,849	7,487	7,436	7,409

*All accidents include Bike & Ped

Source: City of Springfield 2010 Traffic Data Book

Airport

The new Springfield-Branson National Airport terminal opened in 2009 with additional capacity to allow for more convenient travel. From Springfield, passengers can get non-stop service to 10 cities, up from 6 cities in 2000 and down from 12 cities in 2006. Nationally air travel has been decreasing, and that is true of the Springfield airport as well. However, the total number of annual passengers is still up by 12 percent since 2000.



Springfield-Branson National Airport Terminal

2000	710,961
2001	657,224
2002	652,283
2003	653,253
2004	721,958
2005	888,738
2006	864,999
2007	882,904
2008	779,995
2009	811,771
2010	796,251

Source: Springfield-Branson National Airport

Public Transportation

City Utilities operates both a fixed route bus system and an on-demand paratransit system for disabled riders. A lack of transit capacity* was identified as an emerging issue in the 2009 *Community Focus* report. Since that time ridership numbers have decreased. In 2008, a new fare structure was enacted, which led to less recreational ridership. The new fare structure has alleviated the transit capacity issue on the busiest routes, allowing for more ridership focused on reaching a destination.



Passenger using bike rack on front of City Utilities bus.

Transit Ridership	
2005	1,659,279
2006	1,903,926
2007	2,047,496
2008	1,599,278
2009	1,475,617
2010	1,406,547

Source: City Utilities

City Utilities has purchased five new paratransit route buses to provide service by appointment to disabled passengers. All but two of the 25 fixed route buses have surpassed their useful life and many are more than 14 years old. Replacement buses are needed in order to continue to provide transit service in coming years.

Sustainable Transportation Network*

The City of Springfield and Greene County are working together to provide a sustainable transportation network through sidewalks, trails, and bicycle routes. A sustainable transportation system is one that is equitable within and between generations, is affordable and efficient, offers choices, limits emissions, and minimizes consumption of non-renewable resources.

The City of Springfield has signed more than 60 miles of designated bike routes and is enhancing the system with additional pavement markings and signs. To further facilitate connections between greenways, the City of Springfield is working on a project named The Link, which will enhance sidewalks as well as bicycle route signage, primarily on existing streets with minimal vehicular traffic. The League of American Bicyclists awarded the City of Springfield a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Community designation in 2010 for bicycle-route improvements and educational and promotional programs for bicyclists.

The City of Springfield has constructed more than 40 miles of sidewalks to elementary schools based on priorities submitted by each school and has identified a goal of having a sidewalk on at least one side of every street within a half-mile of elementary schools. In order to meet this goal, 100 miles of sidewalk need to be constructed. About \$1 million per year has been dedicated through the quarter-cent transportation tax to meet this goal. Greene County is addressing this need by constructing sidewalks with road projects near schools. In conjunction with construction



The City of Springfield has constructed more than 46 miles of sidewalks to elementary schools since 1989.

improvements, the City manages a Safe Routes to School Program to encourage safe walking programs at schools.

Other sustainable transportation programs include the completion of 105 miles of greenways, 15 streetscape projects in the Center City that provide improved pedestrian and bicycle linkages, a road diet program that reduced the number of automobile lanes to provide for bicycle lanes, and a regional rideshare matching system to provide options for sharing the commute.

RED FLAGS

Transportation Funding Shortfall*

The overall traffic volume remains steady in spite of rising gas prices and an economic recession; however, transportation funding is declining. Both federal and state fuel tax revenues from the motor fuel tax are declining due to more fuel efficient vehicles and people traveling less. Local transportation funding is provided through sales tax, which experienced declines through the prolonged recession. The problem is so serious because the Missouri Department of Transportation's budget has decreased from \$1.2 billion last year to \$662 million in 2011. By December 2012, the Missouri Department of Transportation will be reducing staff by 1,200 due to the decreasing ability to fund construction projects. The local impact of this state and federal funding shortfall is that no new improvements will be funded to address safety or congestion although maintenance work will continue.

Paratransit Service and Coordination

Paratransit service and coordination have been red flags in previous *Community Focus* reports. The 2007 report identified a shortage of door-to-door transportation service for the elderly and disabled. The shortage of service persists due to a lack of funding and liability insurance costs. Transit providers are unable to cover the costs to provide service through ridership fares alone. Medicaid and Medicare will provide a percentage of the costs, but additional funding is needed from government sources in order to provide services to all who need it.

While additional coordination is occurring among the more than 20 non-profit transportation providers that offer services to the elderly and disabled, a need still exists for coordinated dispatching. Funding is needed to provide a central calling system that would allow for clients to call a single number and have a ride scheduled with an available provider.

Need for a Regional Transit System*

The ridership of the public transportation system is expected to increase over the next 10 to 20 years due to the aging baby boomer population. Increasing gas prices also will affect ridership. Increased investment will be needed to provide service to additional customers and more frequent service.

Currently, service is only provided within the City of Springfield city limits. A regional system would allow for service to those living in other cities and outside of the city limits. A new funding source is needed to expand transit service. The Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO) and City Utilities are conducting a study to determine what the costs for such a system might be.

Funding Shortfall for all Public School Busing

In previous *Community Focus* reports, the reduction of state funding for public school bus service was identified. State funding continues to be reduced. The Springfield Public School district has been able to maintain service despite the shortfalls. In addition, the state law requirement that a yellow school bus transport students in order to get state reimbursement for this service is an obstacle to collaboration.

*Indicates Emerging Issue in 2009 Community Focus Report