

Transportation

Introduction

The transportation element provides guidance to the community on the management of its roadway, trails, air, rail and public transportation systems. It helps the City decide where transportation facilities should be located, how they should function, and what they should look like. Investments in transportation infrastructure shape community character and development patterns perhaps more than any other aspect of city building. Where roads go, development follows. The transportation element describes how people and goods in Hot Springs will move.

The importance of the transportation system demands that investments in transportation improvements be considered carefully and in a context much larger than just that of reducing congestion or improving the supply of parking. While those two considerations are important, there are also others that demand attention, such as the influence on overall development and investment patterns, impact on community neighborhoods and the ability to accommodate the needs of multiple modes of travel.

This plan update offers policy guidance on the management of Hot Springs' transportation systems based on community preferences and the community's long-range vision. Addressing transportation issues requires the consideration of trade-offs. Widening a roadway to increase its capacity can impact the neighborhoods the roadway goes through and spur development in more remote areas. While the short-term decrease in congestion and commute times may



Figure 3.01 - Increasing the diversity and number of viable transportation options – whether for personal, business, or recreational needs – is something Hot Springs residents want to accomplish over time. (Image source: Studio Cascade, Inc.)

motivate the roadway's improvement, it may come at the cost of decreasing investment in neighborhoods nearer the community's center and along the roadway's path. The community's vision and planning direction will help Hot Springs consider these trade-offs and make as informed a decision as it can.

Relationship to the 1997 Comprehensive Plan

Hot Springs prepared an extensive transportation element for its 1997 comprehensive plan, addressing the community's expected transportation needs through 2020. That plan provided the context for transportation thought, including the various components of the transportation system as described in the following paragraphs:

Roadways

The 1997 plan calls for a series of roadway improvements, many of which were intended to alleviate congestion on the highway system by providing more direct arterial routes between traffic generation areas. For example; the traffic generated by the residential areas west of Central could take one of these newly developed arterials to the west, rather than the Central, Grand, and Albert Pike route.

The plan also recommended a program of improving the vertical grades, horizontal alignment, additional pavement width and adding curb and gutter and/or proper shoulder width to the existing and proposed arterials as part of the overall area's transportation development. Specific standards for such development regarding minimum right-of-way width, pavement and shoulder width were to be made a part of the street development standards. Protection of needed rights-of-way were to be made a part of planning, zoning, and building department standard procedures.

The plan made other recommendations as well, including major east-west and north-south arterial routes should be located at intervals of between one mile and two miles to serve growth and expansion to the east and areas west and south of Lake Hamilton.

Public Transportation

According to the 1997 plan, City/County efforts were to be directed toward developing public awareness of the City bus and trolley system. Such awareness was to increase ridership and system revenue. This increase, in turn, would then allow expansion of the routes.

Air Travel

The 1997 plan calls for community leadership to take efforts to make the public aware that major scheduled airline service will not be returning to Hot Springs, unless some economic stimulus can be found. The public was to be made aware of and encouraged to utilize available services, and the asset the City has in its existing facilities for general aviation and industrial development.

- *The plan identified the airport as an important economic development asset, supporting then-existing efforts to promote industrial development there. The following specific steps were to be pursued:*
- *Develop the infrastructure for the fiber optic park and promote its use by industrial clients*

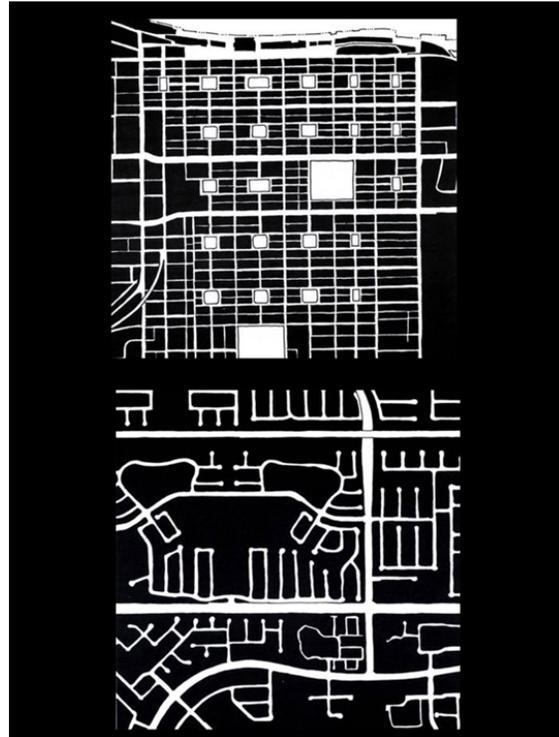


Figure 3.02 - The idea of street networks forming the “bones” of communities is an important concept. The upper street network is from Charleston, South Carolina, a place widely valued for its pedestrian-friendliness and livability. The lower layout, from Van Neys, California, shows how scale and lack of interconnectivity can all but dictate a car-centric lifestyle. (Image source: Glattig Jackson Kercher Anglin, Inc.)

- *Develop additional general aviation hangars, and promote their use by general aviation planes and aircraft industries*
- *Develop programs to make the public aware of the advantages of airline boarding at Hot Springs*
- *Develop a study of the land north of the airport and, where possible, develop it into industrial and commercial uses*
- *Conduct a study to determine the economic feasibility of increasing the equipment at the airport fire station to increase the FHA's rating of the airport. Pursue these improvements if economically feasible*
- *Pursue a program to upgrade the airport by remodeling of the airport terminal. This program would assist with increasing the boardings*
- *Establish a program to promote air shows and related special events at the airport*



Figure 3.03 - This plan update envisions a greater focus on development within City limits, reducing growth pressures elsewhere. In addition to cost benefits, this pattern will help reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled, and make alternate means of transportation more viable. (Image source: Studio Cascade, Inc.)

Parking

The transportation plaza's improvement has improved the intra-city transportation services, while providing an economic uplifting of the various tourist attractions and acting as a tourist attraction within itself.

The 1997 plan proposed actions to reduce traffic congestion in the downtown area and make available more parking for tourists in the downtown area. The downtown parking deck was constructed to supply additional downtown parking and to provide for continuous use of the first floor for retail and tourist uses.

Relationship to the Region's Long-Range Transportation Plan

This plan update incorporates goal and policy direction included in the current long-range transportation plan prepared by the Hot Springs MPO. Including those policies within the City's plan update ensures consistency between local and regional transportation philosophy, facilitating cooperation on specific transportation improvements and clarifying overall transportation objectives and priorities.

Hot Springs' policy framework includes goals, policies and programs that are consistent with the regional plan, identifying specific actions the City can take to ensure compliance with regional transportation objectives. The MPO's entire adopted long-range plan is included as **Appendix D** for ease of reference.

Transportation Objectives

To help address these transportation issues, this plan update advocates:

Connectivity

A good and interconnected roadway system can help communities adapt to change successfully. But connectivity means more than simply a system of arterial streets placed on a half-mile grid. Connectivity is a transportation and urban design philosophy advocating for an interwoven transportation network, discouraging cul-de-sacs and dead ends in favor of an interconnected street fabric. This approach to transportation planning allows for multiple modes to share public rights of way more effectively, provides more efficient movement of people and goods overall, reduces the need to widen arterial roadways and allows for alternative paths in the case of road blockage at any one point.

Congestion management

A traditional approach to resolving roadway congestion is to increase roadway capacity, adding lanes or restricting access to enable the road to carry more traffic at higher speed. Consequences, however, include an induced increase in roadway demand and increased pressure to develop further from a city's center. This plan encourages Hot Springs

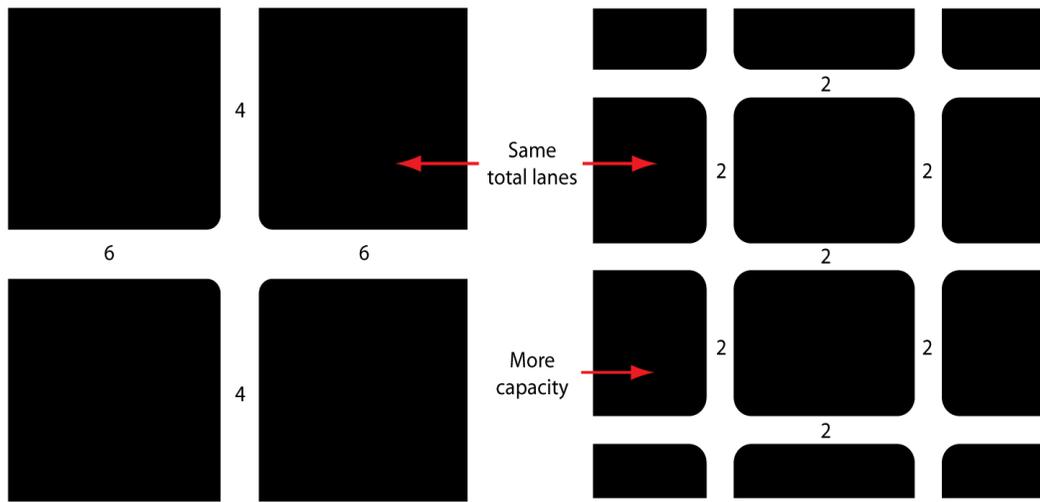


Figure 3.04 - A "connected" street network has many advantages over a sparse network, including capacity, provided the same number of travel lanes. (Image source: Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin, Inc.)

and Garland County to tolerate congestion on its arterials, encouraging people to travel less, live closer to available services and reinvest in the community's already developed areas. This is an essential companion to connectivity, allowing local streets to satisfy local transportation needs and arterials to handle longer trips.

Neighborhood impact

Transportation projects impact the neighborhoods they adjoin. The Albert Pike couplet is a good, local example of such a project: Though it serves a primary intent of speeding traffic flow to the west, its configuration effectively isolated a 16-block neighborhood from the rest of the community. Since then, that area has experienced a cycle of disinvestment, with deteriorating housing stock, declining property values and erosion of neighborhood character and safety. Goals and policies in this plan urge the State, County and City to design and create transportation improvements that serve both the larger goals of Hot Springs and those of the districts they pass through, supporting neighborhood vitality, walkability, safety and overall value.

Parking

The community asks for additional parking in its downtown, anticipating that increased parking availability will stimulate retail prosperity and tourism. This plan takes a slightly different approach, suggesting that parking should be considered as a strategic element to encourage housing in and near downtown Hot Springs. A larger population housed within walking distance of the City's center

can help stimulate commercial growth, without adding pressure to construct more surface parking downtown.

Safety

Transportation safety is paramount. This plan suggests Hot Springs take a slightly different approach at achieving it, however. Conventional transportation planning and design dictates a "forgiving" roadway approach, allowing drivers to make mistakes without dire consequences. Wider lanes, brighter lights, stronger barricades, larger signs and restricted access, while effective safety measures, also tend to increase driver speed. This plan proposes that Hot Springs' transportation system be designed to reduce driver speed, making streets flow more efficiently, and increasing both driver and pedestrian safety.

Freight mobility

While it is important to develop and maintain a transportation network that's safe and accommodating to pedestrians and bicyclists, it is also important to recognize that freight mobility enables communities to survive as economic creatures. Goods must be able to move to and through Hot Springs, and this plan encourages a robust system to support community prosperity.

Multiple modes

Participants in this process value choice in how they get about. This update responds by calling for transportation and land use practices that

accommodate transportation mode choice, favoring the concepts of shared or complete streets and increasing the mixing of diverse land uses in the community's more urban areas.

Electronic versions of the matrix are hyperlinked to **Appendix B** for easier review and cross-referencing.

MPO Long-Range Plan

The Federal Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1973 required any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000 people to establish and maintain a designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Hot Springs' MPO is designated by the Governor of Arkansas and led by a 12 member policy board including representatives from are city, county and transportation agencies. This board is supported by a 17-member technical committee and MPO staff.

On September 16, 2010, the Hot Springs Area MPO adopted its 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan. This 121-page document lists detailed area-wide transportation policies, and is intended to guide regional transportation planning and investment, as well as to provide the required basis for Federally-funded transportation projects. The MPO's 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan is included as **Appendix D** in this document, and is provided primarily for reference purposes. The version included is as adopted by resolution 2010-09; readers should refer to the MPO to ensure review of the most current version.

Goal & Policy Intro

Each of the goals and policies contained in the following section have been selected from the entire matrix as closely associated with transportation objectives, though there may be others arguably key to the success of community goals not under this heading. The numbering and order of items in no way indicate City priority or relative importance.

Descriptive text below each goal provides background and indicates how it serves the community vision. The full goal/policy matrix (Appendix B) includes descriptive text below each policy, indicating a generalized category as well as the critical intent and benefits of the policy.

■ Transportation & Related Goals

Establish and maintain an environment of safety throughout Hot Springs and its service area. (G.02)¶

Background: Public safety and the protection of property - both private and public - is one of the primary roles of government. This goal serves to anchor the full range of plan policies supporting City investments and actions supporting the health, safety and welfare of Hot Springs and its residents.

Grow and sustain a balanced, resilient economy for Hot Springs, providing community prosperity. (G.03)¶

Background: Hot Springs residents understand the need to maintain economic diversity - capitalizing on opportunities related to the National Park, Lake Hamilton, small business and industry, Downtown, Oaklawn Park, convention, educational and other economic drivers. Reflecting these values, this goal anchors strategies that help build and sustain a diverse, balanced economic base for the City of Hot Springs.

Maintain and improve the safety, vitality, and attractiveness of Hot Springs' neighborhoods. (G.06)¶

Background: Hot Springs residents prize the overall scale and feel of their neighborhoods, and support policies keeping all neighborhoods safe, vital and attractive. Toward this goal, a diverse set of policies have been provided, including encouraging pedestrian-friendly development, support for diversity in housing types, infill and renovation efforts, and support for future mixed use neighborhood centers.

Build and maintain an effective, collaborative relationship between the City of Hot Springs and related agencies and service providers. (G.08)¶

Background: Regional value and resident quality of life depends on the entire range of agencies and service providers found in the Hot Springs area, and may not be effectively maintained without strong, inter-agency collaboration. This goal directs the City to work closely with Garland County and other key agencies to develop objectives promoting unified direction, allowing coordinated growth and greater service efficiencies.

Maintain and improve Hot Springs' transportation network, projecting need and evolving to meet plan objectives. (G.10)¶

Background: All cities require functional, resilient street networks providing for the flow of people and materials. This goal anchors policies supporting improvements Hot Springs residents envision for the existing fabric, for the growth of a 'complete streets' network, and for improved connectivity to regional ground, rail and air transportation systems.

Plan for and establish types and quantities of land uses in Hot Springs supporting community needs and the City's long-term sustainability. (G.11)¶

Background: Towns and cities exercise considerable influence over land use, in turn influencing the type and character of development, patterns of growth, and even the

net financial impact of growth on municipal coffers. Consequently, this plan supports the allocation of land use types and areas sufficient to achieve overall community objectives.

Transportation & Related Policies

- (P.03) Ensure that new construction and building renovation is compatible with the overall scale, architectural, transportation and public-space goals of the community.
- (P.05) Plan for and promote the establishment of gateway features along arterials entering Hot Springs, potentially including landscaping, signage, fountains and lighting.
- (P.06) Plan for, develop and maintain Hot Springs' greenway and trail facilities, improving recreational and transportation options for residents and visitors.
- (P.07) Collaborate with Garland County and others to develop greenway and trail facilities extending beyond Hot Springs.
- (P.08) Enhance Hot Springs' relationship with the National Park Service, improving economic, educational, facility, transportation and cultural opportunities for residents and visitors.
- (P.13) Promote land use and growth patterns that ensure all residences are within walking distance of many civic and service amenities such as parks, schools, shopping, bus stops, and trails.
- (P.16) Protect the function and utility of industrial land uses, buffering them from conflicting uses and maintaining necessary access and services.
- (P.19) Increase roadway interconnectivity throughout Hot Springs and its service area, creating an environment conducive to multiple transportation type and route options.
- (P.20) Improve Hot Springs' interconnectivity with the regional and national transportation network, including rail, highway routes, and air-travel.
- (P.21) Make walking or bicycling in Hot Springs and its service area a more convenient, safe and economical transportation alternative.
- (P.22) Increase use of the public transit system in Hot Springs and its service area, improving community access to employment, shopping, health and social needs.
- (P.23) Plan for and reserve of rights-of-way for development of existing and future highways, arterials and collector streets.
- (P.24) Support provision of truck and rail access to high-intensity commercial and industrial districts.
- (P.25) Coordinate efforts with local, State and Federal agencies on transportation improvements supporting overall plan objectives.

- (P.26) Plan for and provide service and infrastructure improvements based on population forecasts, maintaining consistent levels of service as Hot Springs grows.
- (P.42) Plan for and improve the Hot Springs Airport, seeking local, State and Federal funding to increase the capacity and use of this valuable asset.
- (P.46) Engage and maintain coordination of all long-range planning efforts between the City of Hot Springs, neighboring municipalities and Garland County.
- (P.49) Coordinate land uses, transportation access, and civic amenities between new and neighboring development.
- (P.52) Revise, update and maintain concurrency between community planning objectives and street standards.
- (P.53) Ensure that costs of providing services to new development are borne by such development, except where cost sharing is determined to aid service efficiencies and overall plan objectives.
- (P.58) Establish and maintain departmental plans for all City services, outlining specific objectives, needs, programs and performance indicators.
- (P.72) Encourage the use of alternative-fuel vehicles in City fleet and transit systems.
- (P.75) Discourage public investment in new infrastructure or motorways through natural and open-space areas.
- (P.80) Ensure new neighborhoods and residential development interconnects with adjoining residential land uses.
- (P.81) Create or enhance pedestrian infrastructure in existing neighborhoods, and ensure its provision in new neighborhoods.
- (P.82) Ensure street and transportation networks are compatible with existing neighborhood characteristics and overall plan objectives.

