



Washtenaw County  
Department of Planning & Environment

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April 30, 2007

Carol Thompson, Chair Planning Commission  
Developmental Services Department  
Charter Township of Van Buren  
46425 Tyler Rd.  
Van Buren Township, MI 48111-5217

Re: Draft South Side Master Plan Review

Dear Ms. Thompson:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Van Buren Township's Draft South Side Master Plan (Township Plan). In accordance with the Township Planning Act, Public Act 168 of 1959 as amended, the update was reviewed by Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board and the Board of Commissioners. The Washtenaw County Department of Development Services, Department of Parks and Recreation, Road Commission, Department of Public Health, Office of the Drain Commissioner and the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) were also given the opportunity to comment on the update.

**Staff reviewed the proposed update in the context of *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County* (County Plan), plans of contiguous local units of government and the current Township Master Plan. Staff found the proposed update to be compatible with the County Plan and the plans for the contiguous communities. Although the following recommendations are not applicable to the consistency with the Washtenaw County Plan, we strongly encourage the incorporation of the following to enhance the overall plan:**

- **The county commends the Township Plan's transportation section and the effort to show what road improvements are needed to accommodate future growth. More detail on recommendations on the transportation aspect of the plan is found in the attached Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) comments.**
  - **More specific measures should be included to address the congestion at Huron River Drive between N. Haggerty and S. Haggerty.**
  - **A significant number of the roads in the South Side are unpaved. In order to support the Township's efforts to maintain a rural character on the south side of the Township, as well as to use resources**

efficiently as development progresses, gravel road capacity should be considered. A study of gravel road capacities as a means to manage growth in rural and suburban communities was prepared by the Huron River Watershed Council and can be found at [http://www.hrwc.org/pdf/PAL\\_Guidebook.pdf](http://www.hrwc.org/pdf/PAL_Guidebook.pdf).

- **The inclusion of a Greenways and Trails map and language addressing rail and non-motorized transportation is a good start to providing township residents with more transportation options. A few areas in which this plan could be strengthened include extending the bicycle lane that follows Savage Rd. to the City of Belleville, and creating a bike lane along Martz Rd to meet the bike path planned in Ypsilanti Township. Additionally, consider adding the provision of bike parking in mixed use, commercial developments and recreational areas.**
- **The plan mentions the rail line that crosses the township as an existing facility but there is no mention of the proposed Ann Arbor to Detroit commuter service being planned for this rail corridor. The planned rail service anticipates stops in the City of Ypsilanti and at Merriman Road. The township might consider strategies to facilitate Van Buren Township resident's access to the rail service, as well as the potential affects and opportunities the rail system might have. Additional discussion of the benefits of public transit and growth strategies that incorporate transit as well as alternative forms of transportation could be further explored particularly in the areas near the densest development.**
- **The proximity of the South Side to Washtenaw County may provide the township with opportunities to connect to the Washtenaw County non-motorized network and specifically the Washtenaw County Border 2 Border Trail. The prospects of this could be further examined.**
- **The Township Plan highlights concentrating new residential development near the City of Belleville to support the downtown while preserving the rural character of the area south of Hull Road. Including more language and implementation strategies to promote clustering, purchase of development rights and other conservation development techniques in the Rural Settlement and Rural Preserve Land Uses would further support this goal.**
- **The Township Plan demonstrates consideration of natural features by including a natural features inventory and providing a map with both the natural features layer and the proposed land uses layer. A possible addition to this section might be a map or description of sites not suitable to development, such as regulated wetlands, steep slopes and areas with high water tables.**

The attached staff report provides additional background regarding county comments and agency comments are provided containing additional detailed recommendations.

If you would like any additional information as you work to implement the policies included in your plan, please call me at (734) 222-6888.

Sincerely,

Anthony VanDerworp, Director  
Department of Planning and Environment  
Washtenaw County

Attachments

Staff Report

Washtenaw County Public Health

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS)

Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC)



## Washtenaw County Department of Planning & Environment

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### Staff Report

RE: Charter Township of Van Buren Draft South Side Master Plan Update

Staff Report Date: May 10, 2007

### Background

The Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment (P&E) received the Charter Township of Van Buren Draft South Side Master Plan Update on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007. In accordance with the Township Planning Act, Public Act 168 of 1959 as amended, the County is providing comments to the Township, as a contiguous community.

The proposed update was reviewed for consistency with *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County* (County Plan). The Washtenaw County Department of Development Services, Department of Parks and Recreation, Road Commission, Department of Public Health, Office of the Drain Commissioner and the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) were also given the opportunity to comment on the document.

### Summary of Update in context of County Plan

A prominent concern throughout the Township Plan is the congestion of roads and circulation. The county commends the Township Plan's transportation section and the effort to show what road improvements are needed to accommodate future growth. The planned extension of Hull Rd with bike lanes allows residents to directly access Rawsonville Road to commute out of the Township and provides greater connectivity within the Township. One road segment noted as being particularly high congestion Huron River Drive between N. Haggerty and S. Haggerty. However the plan does not include steps to remedy the situation. Because this small segment of road experiences the highest congestion, improving traffic flow in this area should be further developed.

A significant number of the roads in the South Side are unpaved. As development progresses, gravel road capacity should be considered. In order to support the Township's efforts to maintain a rural character on the south side of the Township, as well as to use resources efficiently as development progresses, gravel road capacity should be considered. By comparing a build-out analysis to existing road capacities, the impact of development and traffic on gravel roads can be predicted and roads which are currently or which would become over capacity can be identified. Considering the determined capacity for each gravel road enables communities to make more informed land use decisions regarding location, provisions and limits for development, as well as prioritize roads for improvement and maintenance. This will also support the Township's efforts to maintain a rural character on the south side of the Township.

A study of gravel road capacities and impervious surfaces as a means to manage growth in rural and suburban communities was prepared by the Huron River Watershed Council in partnership with Planning & Zoning Center, Inc., Livingston County Department of Planning, Washtenaw County Department of Planning & Environment, and the Livingston and Washtenaw County Road Commissions. The product is a guidebook titled “How Much Development is Too Much: A Guidebook to Using Impervious Surface and Gravel Road Capacity Analysis to Manage Growth and Suburban Communities”. This guidebook coaches communities on how to determine the traffic capacity of gravel roads as well as the degree to which local streams can handle increasing impervious surface area. Guidebook: [http://www.hrwc.org/pdf/PAL\\_Guidebook.pdf](http://www.hrwc.org/pdf/PAL_Guidebook.pdf) .

The inclusion of a Greenways and Trails map, in addition to language addressing rail and non-motorized transportation, is a good start to providing township residents with more transportation options. A few key areas in which this could be strengthened include:

- Strategically placing bike lanes to promote interconnectedness. For example, in Ypsilanti Township’s most recent Master Plan update, Martz Rd. is planned as a future bike path. In order to promote a more regional, cross-jurisdictional non-motorized transportation network, Van Buren Township should consider including a future bicycle lane along Martz Rd. Continuing the bicycle lane that follows the entire length of Savage Rd. to the City of Belleville is a step that could be taken to improve interconnectedness of the non-motorized transportation system, as well as provide a destination for pedestrians and bicyclists;
- The addition of a provision for bike parking in mixed use, commercial developments and recreational areas; and
- The proximity of the South Side to Washtenaw County may provide the Township with opportunities to connect to the Washtenaw County non-motorized network and specifically the Washtenaw County Border 2 Border Trail. The prospects of this could be further examined.

The plan mentions the rail line that crosses the township as an existing facility but there is no mention of the proposed Ann Arbor to Detroit commuter service being planned for this rail corridor. The planned rail service anticipates stops in the City of Ypsilanti and at Merriman Road. The township might consider strategies to facilitate Van Buren Township resident’s access to the rail service, as well as the potential affects and opportunities the rail system might have. Additional discussion of the benefits of public transit and growth strategies that incorporate transit as well as alternative forms of transportation could be further explored particularly in the areas near the more dense development. Further detail on recommendations on the transportation aspect of the plan is found in the attached Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) comments.

The Township Plan highlights concentrating new residential development in areas near the City of Belleville in order to support the downtown as well as preserve the rural character of the area south of Hull Road. By providing for mixed use, walkable areas near Belleville and conservation development to protect natural features and agricultural areas, the Township is taking a comprehensive approach to sustainable land use planning and is consistent with the goals of surrounding jurisdictions. Including more language

and implementation strategies to promote clustering and other conservation development techniques in the Rural Settlement and Rural Preserve Land Uses would further support this goal.

The Township Plan demonstrates the importance of considering natural features by including a natural features inventory and providing a map with both the natural features layer and the proposed land uses layer. This map may serve as a generalized reference for considering that natural landscape when making future land use decisions such as reviewing development proposals. To the extent possible, future development should avoid negatively impacting natural features such as wetlands wooded areas. In such cases, conservation development should be encouraged. A possible addition to this section might be a map or description of sites not suitable to development, such as regulated wetlands, steep slopes and areas with high water tables.

### **Contiguous Community Land Uses**

- Southwest (Augusta Township): The northeast corner of Augusta Township touches the southwest corner of Van Buren Township. The uses at this meeting point are compatible. Augusta plans for a variety of housing types, from low to mid density single family residential to multiple family and manufactured housing community. The Van Buren side of the border is planned for low density residential, as well as a small section of commercial.
- West (Charter Township of Ypsilanti): Along the western edge of the South Side section of Van Buren Township lays the Charter Township of Ypsilanti. A large majority of the land use opposite Rawsonville Rd. is Industrial, as compared to the variety of Residential, Rural Preserve and Light Industrial land uses planned for adjacent Van Buren.

### **Contiguous Community Comments**

None provided.

### **Review of Plan in Context of Contiguous Community Master Plans**

The proposed plan update is consistent with the master plans of adjacent communities.

### **Applicable County Department Comments**

Washtenaw County Public Health : See attached

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS): See attached

Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC): See attached



**Public Health Review and Comment for:**  
 Charter Township of Van Buren South Side Master Plan

1. The plan includes elements that **increase access to physical activity.**

	Not Addressed	Somewhat Addressed	Adequately Addressed	Not Applicable To this review
A. Opportunities for use of non-motorized transportation are evident in the plan (bikeability, walkability, multi-use paths).	1	3	5	N/A
B. Connectivity between schools and residential areas are promoted in the plan (Safe Routes to School).	1	3	5	N/A
C. Preservation of green/open space including parks is evident in this plan.	1	3	5	N/A

**General Comments:**

2. The plan includes elements that **increase access to healthy eating resources.**

	Not Addressed	Somewhat Addressed	Adequately Addressed	Not Applicable To this review
A. The plan promotes mixed use development (retail including access to grocery stores and residential uses).	1	3	5	N/A
B. Grocery stores and super-markets can be accessed by non-motorized transportation.	1	3	5	N/A
C. The plan includes elements that support or improve the	1	3	5	N/A

local food system (including preservation of agricultural land /urban agriculture and community gardens).

**General Comments:**

3. The plan includes elements that **promote emotional well-being and social connectivity.**

	Not Addressed	Somewhat Addressed	Adequately Addressed	Not Applicable To this review
A. The plan includes elements that promote the use of, and access to, public transportation.	1	3	5	N/A
B. The plan includes elements that promote connectivity between residential development and retail.	1	3	5	N/A
C. The plan incorporates affordable housing options into residential developments.	1	3	5	N/A
D. The plan includes built elements that increase community cohesion and neighborhood activities.	1	3	5	N/A

**General Comments:**

**References:**

- 1) Washtenaw County Public Health comments for Environment and Planning Master Plan.
- 2) Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities (2006). Available at: [www.mihealthtools.org/communities](http://www.mihealthtools.org/communities)
- 3) Promoting Active Communities (PAC). Available at: [www.mihealthtools.org/communities](http://www.mihealthtools.org/communities)
- 4) Robert Wood Johnson: Active Living Research
  - a. Designing for Active Recreation (Updated February 2005).
  - b. Designing for Active Transportation (Updated February 2005)
 Available at: [http://www.activelivingresearch.org/index.php/What\\_We\\_are\\_Learning/117](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/index.php/What_We_are_Learning/117)

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A  
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## WASHTENAW AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

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705 NORTH ZEEB ROAD 2ND FLOOR  
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 48103-1560  
PHONE: (734) 994-3127 FAX: (734) 994-3129  
WEBSITE: WWW.MIWATS.ORG  
E-MAIL: WATS@MIWATS.ORG

Community: Van Buren

Month of Committee Action: N/A

Date Received: May 8, 2007

South Side Master Plan Review

Sections reviewed:     Entire plan  
                               Other

### Transportation Component Implications:

The proximity of the South Side to Washtenaw County may provide the township with opportunities to connect to the Washtenaw County non-motorized network and specifically the Washtenaw County Border 2 Border Trail. The prospects of this could be further examined.

The plan mentions the rail line that crosses the township as an existing facility but there is no mention of the proposed Ann Arbor to Detroit commuter service being planned for this rail corridor. The planned rail service anticipates stops in the City of Ypsilanti and at Merriman Road. The township might consider strategies to facilitate Van Buren Township resident's access to the rail service.

Additional discussion of the benefits of public transit and growth strategies that incorporate transit as well as alternative forms of transportation could be further explored particularly in the areas near the densest development.

### Comments by Section and page:

Page 1.1 Please identify the boundaries of the planning area identified as "The South Side".

Page 2.2 Objective 11: It is unclear if the objective is suggesting landscaping as appropriate pedestrian walkways or not. Landscaping is not an adequate pedestrian path and is not accessible by all potential users.

Page 2.4 Objective 11: Consider changing the word "highway" to "transportation".

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#### POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- CITY OF ANN ARBOR • ANN ARBOR TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY • ANN ARBOR TOWNSHIP • CITY OF CHELSEA • VILLAGE OF DEXTER •
- DEXTER TOWNSHIP • EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY • MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION • NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP • PITTSFIELD TOWNSHIP •
- CITY OF SALINE • SCIO TOWNSHIP • SOUTHWEST WASHTENAW COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS • SUPERIOR TOWNSHIP • UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN •
- WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS • WASHTENAW COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION • CITY OF YPSILANTI • YPSILANTI TOWNSHIP •
- EX OFFICIO: FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION • SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS •

AN INTERMUNICIPALITY COMMITTEE ORGANIZED UNDER ACT 200 OF PUBLIC ACTS OF MICHIGAN (1957)  
REPRESENTING WASHTENAW COUNTY

Page 2.5 Objective 14: Consider adding “and each other” after “activity centers”. It is important for developments in close proximity to each other to be connected through non-motorized facilities. This can reduce the number of short vehicle trips that add to congestion, fuel consumption and air quality problems.

Page 2.6 Objective 6: Consider adding “and planning agencies” after “adjacent communities” and the word “transportation” after “expansion”.

Page 3.1 Population over the age of 60 doesn't match table 3.5 where population over 65 is reported.

Page 3.7 Consider adding additional economic analysis such as income.

Page 4.2 Third paragraph last sentence: The meaning of this sentence is unclear. Is the intent that paving gravel roads will save more money than maintaining them or that maintaining paved roads will save more money than not maintaining roads?

Page 4.2 Discussion of regional commuting patterns is important. It may benefit the plan to also examine commute trips coming into the Township and City of Belleville as well as those leaving the township.

Page 4.3 It would be helpful to include recommendations to alleviate the crash problems.

Page 4.7 While using the frequency of crashes is an important tool in safety planning it is also important to examine the severity of crashes and examining the exposure crash rates.

Page 4.9 The WCDPS' definitions is a helpful tool in the identification of possible congestion, however, it is unclear if this information is supported by local knowledge and experience. It would be helpful to identify the delays caused by congestion and when it occurs such as peak times. The Township might consider examining transportation demand management strategies to help alleviate the congestion problem.

Page 4.9 Second paragraph last sentence. Comparable data is available for the portions of Rawsonville Road are under the jurisdiction of the Washtenaw County Road Commission. It would be useful to provide a complete picture of the roadway and its needs.

Page 4.11 Rail: The plan should consider the potential affects and opportunities the Ann Arbor to Detroit Commuter Rail might have for the Township.

Page 4.11 Non-motorized: The Washtenaw Area Transportation Study recently completed a non-motorized plan for Washtenaw County which could provide information on paths adjacent to the Township. Due to the proximity of the South Side to Washtenaw County, opportunities to plan for and extend the future system may present themselves.

Page 4.13 Roads and Circulation: consider adding sidewalks to the list of transportation system components.

Page 4.14 Local Roads: The term “primary streets” is not mentioned in the list of road classifications, if you are referring to major and minor thoroughfares, it would be helpful to keep the same categories.

Page 6.12: Consider adding the provision of bike parking in mixed use and commercial developments as well as recreational areas or any areas that may attract people make trips by bicycle.

COMMISSIONERS  
WESLEY PRATER  
CHAIR  
FRED J. VEIGEL  
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DAVID E. RUTLEDGE  
MEMBER

**WASHTENAW COUNTY**  
**BOARD OF COUNTY ROAD COMMISSIONERS**  
555 NORTH ZEEB ROAD  
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 48103

STEVEN M. PUURI, P.E.  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
ROY D. TOWNSEND, P.E.  
DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING  
COUNTY HIGHWAY ENGINEER  
KENNETH D. NIXON  
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS  
TELEPHONE (734) 761-1500  
FAX (734) 761-3239

May 11, 2007

Van Buren Township Planning Commission  
46425 Tyler Road  
Van Buren Township, MI 48111

RE: Charter Township of Van Buren South Side Master Plan

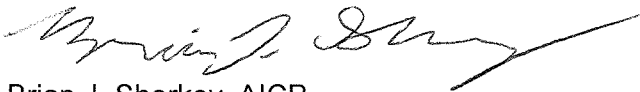
The Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) has received a draft of the new Van Buren Township South Side Master Plan. The west border of Van Buren Township is shared with Ypsilanti Township in Washtenaw County. All public roads in Ypsilanti Township are under the jurisdiction of the WCRC. After review by Planning Staff, the WCRC has the following comments.

The Planning Staff review specifically focused on the following roads: Rawsonville Road, shown on the Circulation Plan map as a "Major Throughfare", Martz Road, shown as a "Minor Collector", the proposed Hull Road extension to Rawsonville Road and Bog Road being designated as "Major Collectors", and Huron River Drive, shown as a "Minor Throughfare".

After comparing these roads with the Washtenaw County Right-of-Way Master Plan, it appears that the only potential conflict with our Plan is Huron River Drive. Huron River Drive, known as Textile Road in Washtenaw County, is an important road in Ypsilanti Township and the WCRC has designated it as having a 120-foot future ROW. This is inconsistent with the "Minor Throughfare" designation that the draft plan has assigned it. Additionally, it appears that there are no plans to continue either Bog Road or Hull Road west into Washtenaw County.

The WCRC is glad to have the opportunity to review these proposed changes. Should you have any further questions or concerns, please contact me.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Shorkey, AICP  
County Transportation Planner

CC: Steve Puuri, WCRC  
Roy Townsend, WCRC  
Jim Harmon, WCRC