

Working Case Study

TH 8, Lindstrom

Summary

Background: Lindstrom, located on Trunk Highway (TH) 8, between Taylors Falls and Forrest Lake in Chisago County, has experienced a considerable amount of traffic flow problems and safety concerns. This corridor was originally developed to connect the northern tier of Wisconsin to the Twin Cities, though the typical user's purpose has changed. The percentage of commercial interstate traffic is less today than when the highway was constructed, as the quantity and proportion of recreational travel through the corridor has increased. Also, the amount of commuter traffic from Lindstrom on TH 8 has increased, particularly with I-35 and the growth of commercial development in the northern Twin Cities. Lindstrom, Chisago County, and even western Wisconsin have recently become a reasonable commuting distance to the Twin Cities and this type of travel places a significant demand on a roadway.



Lindstrom, also known as "Little Sweden," is a picturesque, idyllic small town. Swedish immigrants, who found that the woods and water reminded them of their native land, originally settled the area that now makes up the town. The photo on the right is of Gustaf Anderson's house, one of the original settlers of Lindstrom. This property is one of many located within the central part of Lindstrom listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Trends: Significant population growth within both Chisago County and the TH 8 Corridor has occurred since 1980. Within the study area, population has grown by 70 percent. The County has also had significant growth, 63 percent since 1980, and is projected to grow by 73 percent between 1990 and 2020, resulting in a county population of 52,680. As Chisago County and western Wisconsin continue to develop, peak travel demand due to commuters may be expected to increase. Another important trend is employment and economic development, as over 40 percent of the working population commutes out of the county for work. Additionally, large volumes of recreational travel through the study area into northern Wisconsin are expected to continue.

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Transportation Issues: The TH 8 Corridor is functionally classified as a principal arterial, even though access points to local land uses have been left unmanaged or controlled. The purpose of the corridor study is to address the capacity and safety needs of TH 8 as recreational and commuting traffic increases along the roadway. Currently, much of the corridor is operating near or at capacity and many public concerns have been voiced about the safety of the roadway. Also, this portion of TH 8 is characterized by having numerous access points, with a substantial amount being private driveways. These characteristics, combined with the large volume of traffic, have resulted in concerns for the quality of traffic operations, slower travel speeds of vehicles traveling through the corridor, and safety for local traffic trying to access TH 8. The primary access to TH 8 is from private driveways. Too many access points along a roadway have been found to decrease safety, decrease travel speeds on the corridor, and inhibit the quality of traffic operations. Business and property owners within the Corridor are concerned about losing their access to TH 8 and feel that their businesses will be hurt if their driveway is consolidated with others.



This view, looking east, shows the entrance into Lindstrom from TH 8. This photograph was taken from the bridge linking North Lindstrom Lake with South Lindstrom Lake.



Downtown Lindstrom consists of small, local storefronts and restaurants. Downtown Lindstrom is known for its concentration of antique and other specialty stores.

Vehicle speed has been voiced as a concern through this Corridor, which combined with the high amounts of access points can be potentially hazardous. Also, the coordination of transportation investments and economic development is necessary to support any new or existing businesses. Currently, over 40 percent of the population commutes outside the County for employment, which places considerable demand on the highway. Also, this places Lindstrom as a bedroom community for the Twin Cities, which is not the goal of the community.

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Parkland Issues: Currently, there are three parks within Lindstrom in the vicinity of the project area.

Cultural and Natural Resources: Within the TH 8 corridor, there is a preponderance of lakes and other natural resources. The central business district of Lindstrom is located on a narrow isthmus between North and South Lindstrom Lakes. This contributes to the charm and uniqueness of this area. Cultural resources within downtown Lindstrom include three dwellings listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP): the Gustaf Anderson house (1879), the Frank A. Larson house (1898), and the C.A. Victor house (1905). In addition, there are 15 previously recorded architectural resources within the city, of which approximately half are commercial buildings or churches located along TH 8.

Land Use: Over the last 20 years, this area has seen moderate population growth and according to the Minnesota Planning Agency is projected to have the third fastest growing population of any non-metro county in Minnesota. The TH 8 corridor within the town of Lindstrom consists of much of the Central Business District, residential neighborhoods, and some light industrial operations. One of the main employment centers in the Corridor is the Chisago Lakes Middle School and School District offices, which is located on the east end of Lindstrom on TH 8. The residential uses in the Corridor are comprised mainly of single family homes. The commercial uses are mainly local retail and service oriented businesses, though some national chain stores do exist.

Note: The facts of this case study may be modified slightly from reality for teaching purposes.



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