

CHAPTER 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Marion County Rural Transportation System Plan (RTSP) provides the framework for developing an efficient, well-balanced, and cost-effective transportation system for the next 20 years. The plan addresses the Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) requiring the County to develop and adopt a 20-year transportation plan. The area covered in the RTSP includes all rural County transportation facilities outside the urban growth boundaries of the 20 cities within Marion County. Transportation issues located within urban areas are addressed in individual city plans.

The 2000 Census listed the population of Marion County as 284,834 people. In 2003, it was estimated at 295,900. By the year 2020, the State Office of Economic Analysis projects the population of Marion County to be 359,581, which represents a 26% increase (or a 1.2% annual growth rate) over the 20-year period. This population growth will likely lead to increased traffic volumes and intensify the need to maintain an efficient transportation system. To accomplish this the county will concentrate improvements along key corridors throughout the County. These corridors facilitate the movement of goods and traffic within the County ('intra-county') and to key locations outside the County ('inter-County').

Over the next 20 years, the County will continue to keep maintenance and preservation of the existing roadway system its top priority in terms of resource allocation. Approximately \$11.3 million per year will go towards operations, maintenance, and pavement preservation. Based on existing revenue sources, it is anticipated that only \$850,000 per year will be available for rural capital improvements. Over a 20-year time span, this amounts to a total of \$17 million. Unfortunately, this represents only a small fraction of the amount identified to address our rural needs, which would exceed \$129 million (not including an additional \$100 million in urban needs). Therefore, the County must select only its highest priority improvements for funding over the next 20 years. Table 2-1 provides a list of rural improvements that the County intends to pursue with the \$17 million. The plan presented makes the best possible use of available resources, while balancing projects that address mobility, safety, and roadway preservation.

The transportation picture will look different 20 years from now than it does today. With forecast growth in population, economic activity, and travel demand, several key roadways will be facing capacity issues. Safety issues and needs will continue to increase as roadway usage increases. While a good transportation network, with good connections to the national transportation network, is critical to the economy of the County, we do not anticipate adequate funding available to meet these needs. While available funds will be used as efficiently as possible to maintain and improve the road system, drivers are likely to face longer delays and more congested roads. With congestion and gas prices likely to increase and energy reserves likely to decrease, other modes of transportation (such as rail, transit, carpooling, cycling, and walking) will increase in importance, as will efforts to give people a better option than driving by themselves. Land use patterns will also play a key role, as they tend to shape driving habits.

The investment decisions that we make now, and the collective traveling habits that we as a community develop, will be a significant factor shaping our transportation experience in the future. The County will do its best to maintain a good transportation infrastructure and provide transportation options, but it is the people, through the responsibility of the transportation choices they make, that will have the largest role in shaping the future transportation system of Marion County.