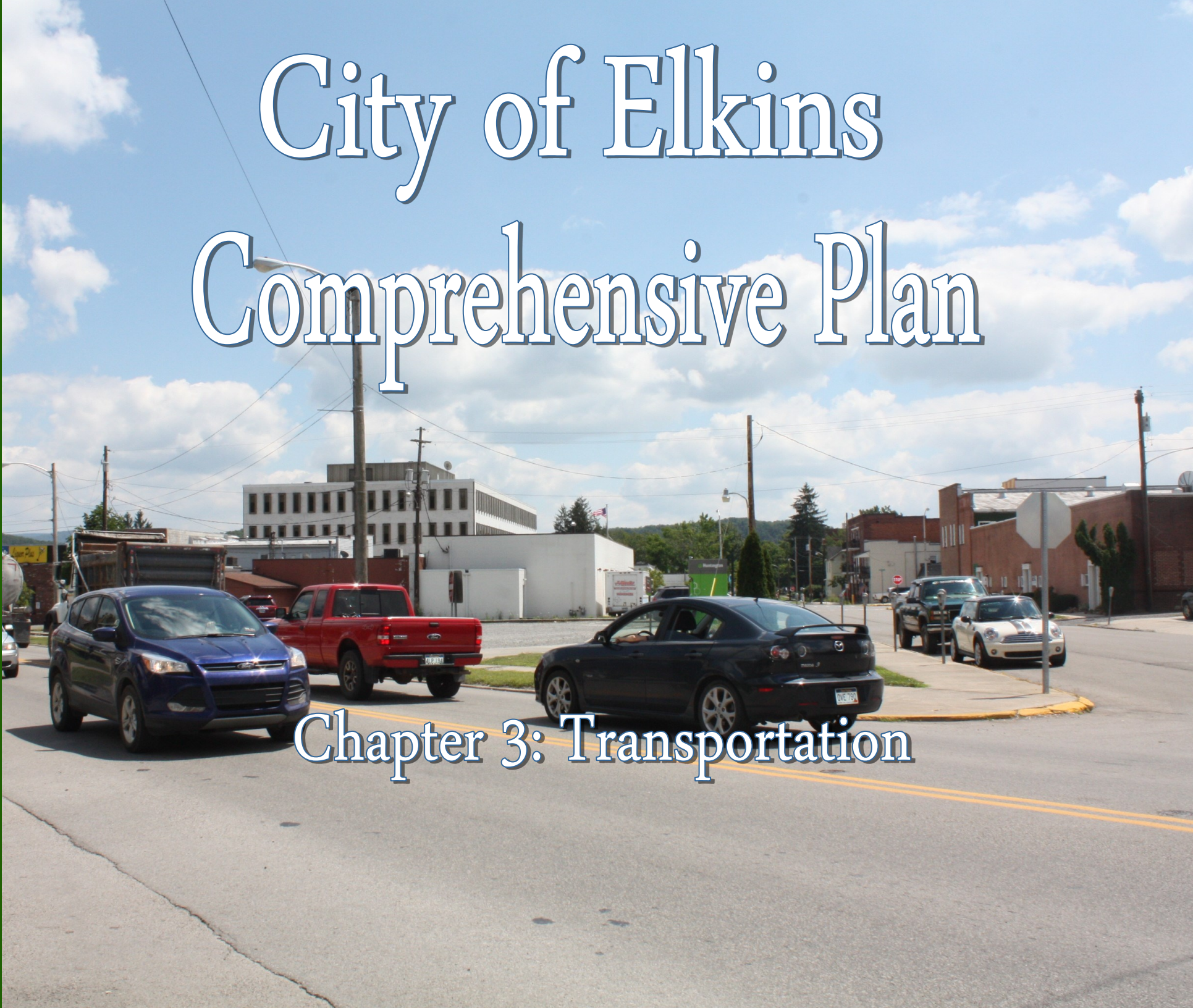


City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 3: Transportation



Background Information

During the planning process transportation was brought up several times as an issue affecting the quality of life for those that live and work in Elkins. Transportation issues can negatively impact the way a person perceives a community. Issues with transportation in Elkins include congestion, pedestrian safety, and vehicular safety. This chapter will explore the transportation network, the challenges and threats that were discovered during the comprehensive plan process, and detail what steps the City must make to address the issues.

Transportation Network

Roadways

The City of Elkins is the county seat of Randolph County and as such receives a large amount of traffic. Three major routes travel directly through the heart of Elkins; US Route 219, US Route 33 and State Route 92.

US Route 33 connects the City of Elkins with the City of Buckhannon to the west and the Monongahela National Forest to the east. US Route 33 is part of Corridor H. Corridor H is part of the Appalachian Development Highway System, that once finished, will run from I-79 in Weston to I-81 in Strasburg, Virginia. Corridor H travels through two national forests and mountainous terrain in West Virginia, which has led to many environmental concerns about the construction of the roadway. Currently, approximately 75 percent of Corridor H is completed (www.corridorh2020.com).

US 219 connects Elkins to the Town of Parsons in the North and the Town of Beverly and Snowshoe Mountain Resort in the South. State Route 92 connects Elkins to the City of Belington in the North and then intersects with US 219 south of the City.

In 2009, West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) conducted traffic counts in order to better determine the level of traffic in Elkins. The traffic counts were then used to calculate average daily traffic (ADT) of roadways in Elkins. Average daily traffic refers to the number of vehicles traveling through a point on streets in a 24-hour period.



Intersection of Sycamore Street & US 219



The following are the results from the counts:

- ☀ US 219 / US 33 entering the City from the North- 11,800 ADT
- ☀ US 219 / US 33 at the intersection of Harrison Avenue- 17,400 ADT
- ☀ US 219 / US 33 (Randolph Avenue) at the intersection of Locust- 17,700 ADT
- ☀ US 33 leaving the City of Elkins in the East- 4,900 ADT
- ☀ US 219 leaving the City from the South- 20,800 ADT
- ☀ SR 92 near the State Police headquarters- 1,001 ADT
- ☀ South Davis Avenue at the Tygart River- 6,900 ADT

Parking

There are various parking lots and spaces for the public to park located throughout the City of Elkins. Most are located in the downtown business district. Parking lots are located at:

- ☀ Railroad Avenue (200 block)- 22 metered and 12 permit only spaces besides SWECO Furniture
- ☀ Railroad Avenue (400 block)- approximately 100 free spaces in the gravel lot behind City Hall
- ☀ Kerens Avenue (200 block)- 24 metered spaces, 16 permit-only spaces, and 35 2-hour spaces in the Seneca Mall lot



Table 1: Parking spaces in the City of Elkins		
Number	Type	Location
164	Free, no time limit	City Hall, Depot Street, Tablet Square, and on-street
199	Metered spaces	Throughout downtown
170	Time sensitive spaces	Throughout downtown
18	Handicap	Throughout downtown
3	Reserved for specific businesses	Throughout downtown
554	Total spaces available	

Table 1: Parking spaces in the City of Elkins displays the total amount of parking that is available within Elkins. There are a total of 554 spaces available within the City, most of them located within the downtown business district.

Pedestrian Network

The City of Elkins has a network of sidewalks throughout its municipal limits to aid those wishing to travel by foot. It is the property owner's responsibility to maintain the sidewalks. Property owners are also responsible for cleaning ice and snow off their sidewalks.

Allegheny Highlands Trail

The Allegheny Highlands Trail will eventually connect the City of Elkins with the Town of Davis. The trail follows the former Western Maryland Railway for 25 miles from Elkins to Hendricks. The Highlands Trail Foundation is spearheading the construction of the trail. The trail currently starts in the Highland Park area of Elkins. The ultimate goal is to extend the trail into the heart of the City of Elkins at the railyard depot. In 2013, the Randolph County Development Authority entered into an agreement with the West Virginia Division of Highways to administer the design and construction of the AHT into Elkins.



Public Transit

Country Roads Transit provides public transportation to residents in Randolph and Upshur Counties. Country Roads Transit provides services to the City of Elkins via a North and South loop. The Elkins North Loop provides service to the following areas:

- ☀ Gateway Apartments
- ☀ Maplewood- Highland Park
- ☀ DMV-DHHR
- ☀ Randolph Village Apartments
- ☀ Tygart Valley Apartments
- ☀ Elkins Manor
- ☀ Crystal Springs

- ☀ Davis Medical Center
- ☀ Senior Center (Transfer)



The Elkins South Loop provides service to the following areas:

- ☀ Senior Center (Transfer)
- ☀ Davis & Elkins College
- ☀ Downtown-Banks
- ☀ Kroger
- ☀ Save-A-Lot- Big Lots
- ☀ Valley Village Apartments
- ☀ Valley Point Mall
- ☀ Wal-Mart

The cost to ride the bus is \$2.50 for adults, \$30 for a monthly pass, and children under the age of 6 are free.

Railroad

The City of Elkins is known throughout the state for its railroad history. The WV Central and Pittsburgh Railway was developed in the late 1890s in Elkins, which led to the City experiencing new levels of growth. The railroad left Elkins in four different directions; north to Cumberland, MD; west to Belington, WV; south to Huttonsville, WV; and east to Durbin, WV. The railroad continued to expand and in the 1930s began to offer passenger service. At one point, 18 passenger trains were leaving Elkins a day. By the 1980s all railroad service had ended and the railyard sat vacant for many years. CSX now uses portions of the lines for freight operations. The West Virginia State Rail Authority purchased other portions of the original railroad and contracts to the Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad for a tourist railroad train. The train runs from Elkins to Belington and Durbin.

Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad

The Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad (DGVRR) operates out of the train station in Elkins. The DGVR offers five different tourist trains for visitors to experience.

- ☀ Mountain Explorer Dinner Train- 4 hour, round-trip dinner train ride through the forests of West Virginia

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- ☀ Tygart Flyer- 4 hour trip that travels through a 1,500 feet tunnel through Cheat Mountain and to the "High Falls of the Cheat" waterfall
- ☀ Cheat Mountain Salamander- 9, 6.5, and 3 hour rides through the forests of Cheat Mountain
- ☀ Durbin Rocket- steam locomotive that leaves the Durbin station and travels through the Monongahela National Forest along the Greenbrier River
- ☀ Castaway Caboose- overnight package that includes a train ride on the Durbin Rocket with an overnight stay in an refurbished caboose car



Durbin and Greenbrier Valley

The DGVR also offers many special excursions throughout the year, such as the Polar Express, Cottontail Express, Wine Train, Ramps and Rails, Riverside Blues Train, Night with the Stars, Wild West, and Forest Festival Special.

The Elkins Depot Welcome Center

The Elkins Depot Welcome Center is located in the rail yard and serves as not only a welcome center but the home of the Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad and future trailhead of the Allegheny Highlands Trail. The center was built by the Western Maryland Railroad Company in 1908.

In 2013, approximately 42,000 people stopped at the Elkin Depot Welcome Center.



Elkins Depot

Elkins-Randolph County Regional Airport

The Elkins-Randolph County Regional Airport is located two miles south of Elkins on Airport Road. The airport provides service for private flights as well as hangar space, fuel, vehicle rentals, and dining. Approximately 500 flights use the airport yearly.

River Transportation

Even though the Tygart River is located in Elkins, it is not navigable for commercial traffic. There are no ports in close proximity to Elkins.

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment takes into account the public participation received during the planning process. This information includes Planning Commission input, open house results, public meeting responses, and stakeholder interviews. Information from studies concerning the transportation network in Elkins has been included as well. Identified transportation issues are shown on *Map 3-1: Transportation Concerns*.



Road Network

The City experiences a high level of traffic due to its location at the intersection of major routes, and its position as the County seat, and the largest incorporated area in Randolph County. When asked about transportation issues in Elkins, most respondents felt traffic was the number one transportation issue. Most residents are concerned with the amount of traffic on Randolph Avenue. The average daily traffic counts for Randolph Avenue suggest a high level of traffic with almost 18,000 cars traveling through this part of the City a day. Many would like to see a bypass or the conversion of the roadway into a three (3) lane roadway with a center turning lane. Other suggestions include installing more crosswalk lights, and left-turn lights, and re-routing traffic through different routes in town, especially truck traffic. Other transportation network issues include the left-turn at McDonalds, the paving of local roads, and snow maintenance of local roads.

Parking

The availability of parking is very important to the health and vitality of the City of Elkins' Central Business District. The City's ON TRAC Program recognized that parking is very important and therefore completed a parking study in 2013. Parking standards call for at least 75 spaces per 1,000 people in a central business district. There are a total of 554 spaces as discussed on page 3-3. Based on that standard, the Elkins CBD exceeds the minimum number of parking spaces, however only 105 of those spaces are within the core of the CBD (Davis Avenue and Third).

The main issue with parking in downtown Elkins is enforcement of parking regulations. Fluctuations in police department staffing levels often make it difficult to field parking enforcement officers, with the result that business owners often report that vehicles are parked in the same 2-hour spaces all day without being ticketed. These vehicles typically belong

to employees at other businesses or downtown residents. Business owners would like to see residents and employees use City parking lots.

Other issues related to parking include unreadable or faded parking signs, inconsistent parking meters, and lack of directional signage. The City Parking Lot behind City Hall is also a concern as it is not paved nor does it have lighting.

Pedestrian Network

Pedestrian safety is one of the main concerns of residents in Elkins. Issues with pedestrian safety include poor sidewalk conditions, lack of sidewalks and crosswalks, and no bicycle network. There are also many obstacles for persons with limited mobility. Pedestrian safety is a concern by many on Randolph Avenue, near the Train Depot, and the Central Business District. Some residents would like a sidewalk constructed on the 5-lane (US 219) for those wishing to walk to the shopping plazas from downtown. Solutions to pedestrian safety concerns include more crosswalks with lights and buttons, especially in the downtown.

In 2013, the Planning Commission conducted a walkability tour with a representative from the West Virginia University's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. The following issues were discovered during the walkability tour:

☀ Intersection of 4th Street and Davis Avenue

This intersection poses problems for drivers as the double wide sidewalks and crossbar reduce visibility at this intersection.

☀ Intersection of 4th Street and Railroad

The main problem at this intersection derives from the trees and bushes that hinder the sight distance of motorists.



Intersection of 4th Street and Railroad Avenue



Railroad Avenue at the Depot

☀ Railroad Avenue

There are many pedestrian issues along Railroad Avenue. First, many motorists far exceed the posted speed limit of 15 MPH. Portions of Railroad Avenue are also exceptionally wide, making it difficult to cross the street. There are no crossbars or signs to aid pedestrians crossing. Tour buses park in this area as well, blocking the views of drivers leaving the Railroad Restaurant.



☀ Third Street

There are low-hanging branches on trees, which reduces driver visibility. There is also a lack of lighting in the alley behind the Seneca Mall.

☀ Intersection of Third Street and Kerens

Trash receptacles near the crosswalk pose a concern as they can block the presence of small children.

☀ Intersection of Randolph Avenue, Fifth Street, Kerens Avenue, and Sycamore Street

Many residents use 5th Street or Kerens Avenue to walk to the City park. In order to cross Randolph Avenue to get to the park, a pedestrian must first cross Kerens Avenue. However, no crosswalk exists on Kerens Avenue. The sidewalk also ends before the curb so



Intersection of Third Street and Kerens

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Intersection of Randolph Avenue, Fifth

pedestrians must walk across the grass area. Handicap accessibility also proves troublesome at this intersection.

☀ Randolph Avenue

Randolph Avenue is one of the biggest pedestrian obstacles due to its location at the confluence of four major roadways. The area between Kerens Avenue and Davis Avenue is of the greatest concern because many residents travel this route to visit the City Park, as well as college students and staff walking to and from the downtown area. The large entrances to businesses in this area further compound the issue because it forces pedestrians to cross great distances without a sidewalk.

☀ College Street

The sidewalk on College Street does not continue all the way to Davis & Elkins College, therefore pedestrians are forced to walk in the street. There is no crosswalk or crossing light at the intersection of Randolph and College.

Public Transit

Many residents would like to see improvements made to the public transit system in Elkins. Country Roads Transit (CRT) provides fixed routes in the City of Elkins, however many residents are under the assumption that the bus is only for senior citizens. Residents feel that CRT should market its service better, as well as advertise the routes available. Residents also stated that more bus shelters are needed along the designated routes.

The Randolph County Housing Authority and CRT completed a transit study in 2012 to determine how to better connect residents with their community via public transportation.



Randolph Avenue



During the survey, passengers of CRT were interviewed to determine public transportation issues and needs. The following are a list of needs that pertain to transit in the City of Elkins:

- ☀ Better pedestrian connections to transit services
- ☀ Bus stops with roofs
- ☀ Bus stop at the Post Office
- ☀ Advertise the CRT and let people know it's not just for seniors
- ☀ Bus stops at Kroger and Boundary Avenue
- ☀ Weekend service
- ☀ Shorter routes
- ☀ Longer hours
- ☀ Reliability
- ☀ More signage

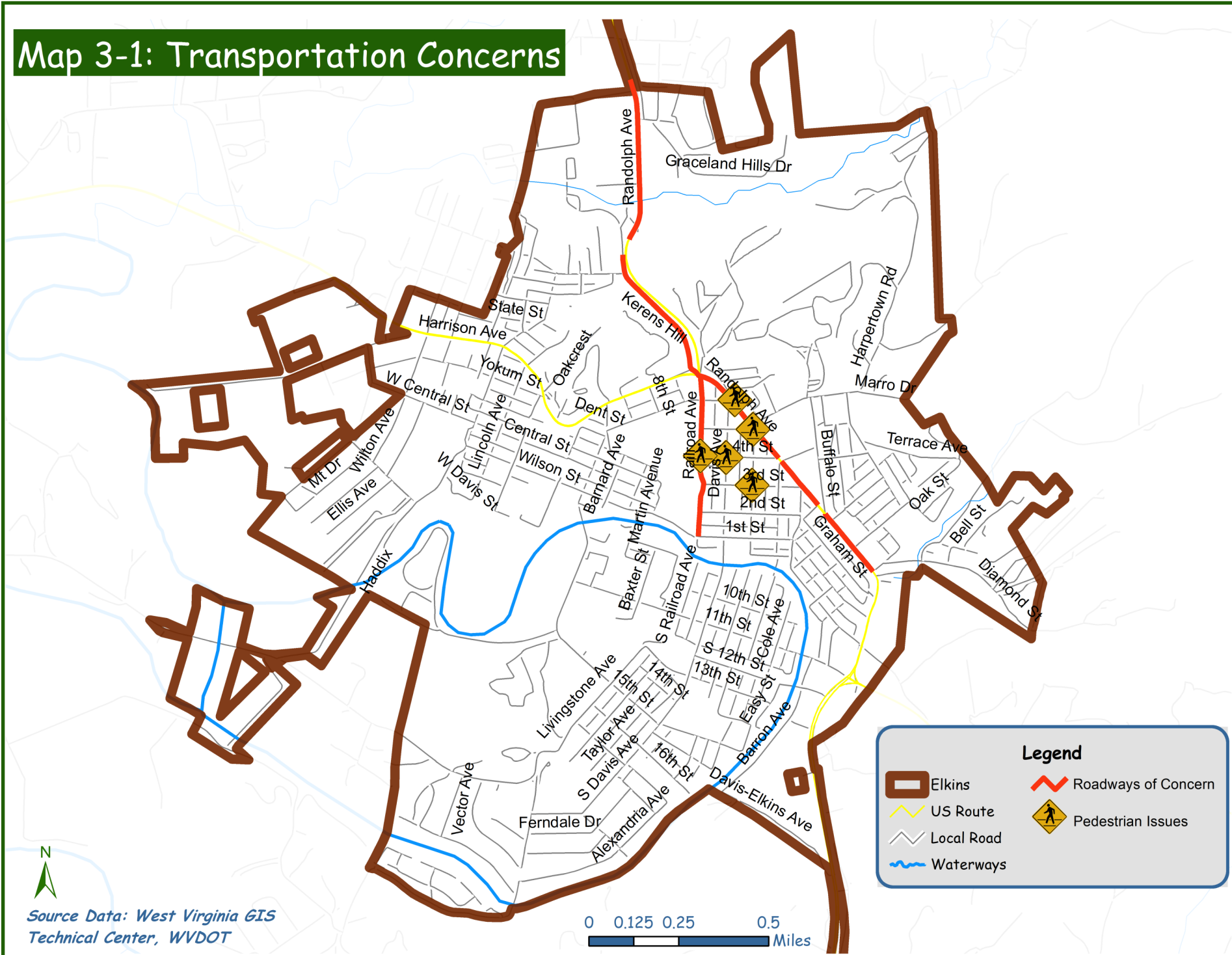
Elkins-Randolph County Regional Airport

Although the Randolph County airport is small it is very important to Elkins and the regional area. It not only serves the local aviation community but in light of the fact that airports are few and far between in the mountains it is very important for other small planes flying over the mountains in case they have mechanical problems, encounter severe storms or run low on fuel. It also serves as a central location for the many hunters, hikers and other recreational users that become lost in the mountains and require air searches to find. Many have been found and lives saved by helicopter and small plane searches.

It has also proved itself to be critical in the event of severe storm disasters such as the recent derechos and during the 1985 flood that devastated the area. The WV National Guard used it as a base for the helicopters they used for searches and to bring supplies and equipment to families and motorists that were stranded because of the many roads and bridges that were wiped out.

In the last few years Congress has reduced budgets to small airports making it more difficult to provide the essential services they provide. Care should be taken to ensure these services are properly funded.

Map 3-1: Transportation Concerns





Action Plan

The transportation action plan takes into account the numerous needs identified by the Planning Commission and public throughout the planning process. As illustrated on page 3-7, there are numerous concerns regarding the transportation network in the City of Elkins. The following action steps were developed to help guide the City in addressing these issues. The action steps were also developed to help achieve the following goal:



Improve traffic and pedestrian circulation to provide a safer and more accessible transportation network for residents

Objective 1: Improve the walkability of the City

Action Step 1: Improve pedestrian safety on Railroad Avenue

There are many pedestrian improvements needed in the downtown that were detailed in the Needs Assessment beginning on page 8. Of all the pedestrian issues listed, Railroad Avenue is the highest priority due to the number of people that utilize the roadway on a daily basis. Traffic calming and narrowing the roadway should be considered to improve the walkability of the street. A pedestrian study should be initiated to determine the best solutions.

Action Step 2: Develop a sidewalk program to prioritize sidewalk improvements

The City of Elkins has many sidewalks that are in need of repair. The City should develop a sidewalk program to prioritize the most needed repairs, as well as construction of new sidewalks. The sidewalk program would utilize a point system to establish which sidewalks should be repaired or constructed first. The point system would take into account the following factors:

- Sidewalks proximity to parks, local government facilities, schools, businesses, etc.
- Connectivity with other sidewalks

- Average daily foot traffic
- Topography of street
- Conflicts with other utilities
- Available right-of-way

Many residents are unaware that property owners are responsible for repairs to the sidewalk in front of their property. The City needs to better educate property owners on their responsibility. The City should also consider using the public works department to repair sidewalks, which would significantly decrease the cost to the property owner. The property owner would then only be responsible for the cost of the materials. The sidewalk program should also include the construction of ADA accessible sidewalks.

Case Studies

Orrville, OH

Orrville City Council requires installation of sidewalks along streets that score enough points to warrant sidewalks. Points are awarded as follows:

- Need to connect areas with existing sidewalks in order to provide safe walkways for pedestrian traffic
- Street's proximity to schools, business districts, apartment complexes, or senior citizen housing
- Topography of the street
- Citizens in the area have petitioned for sidewalks
- Street is an arterial or collector street
- To eliminate the necessity of busing school children

The City pays 50 percent of the installation cost if senior citizen or handicap households meet the income guidelines for low-moderate income. There is also a cap on the maximum cost per lineal foot to be borne by each property owner.

Source: City of Orrville (www.orrville.com)

Action Step 3: Install signage and bike amenities once the bike trail is completed



Construction of the Allegheny Highlands Trail Connection from the Railroad Depot to the current trailhead is slated to begin in spring of 2015. The City should work with the Randolph County Development Authority to ensure that the trail is signed properly and bike amenities, such as bike racks, are installed at the Railroad Depot, City Hall, and along 3rd Street.

Objective 2: Investigate parking options in the downtown business district

Action Step 1: Install directional signage to all parking lots

The City has ample parking, however there are no signs that direct residents and visitors to appropriate spaces. Therefore, directional signage to parking lots should be installed. An educational program about parking should also occur that includes maps and brochures with parking spaces and lots delineated.

Action Step 2: Improve and install lighting at the City parking lot

According to the parking study completed by ON-TRAC there is enough parking in the City but limited spaces in the downtown core. A lot behind City Hall is close to the downtown and the Railroad Depot, however many residents will not park there since the lot is unpaved and not lighted at night. The surface of this lot should be improved and lighting installed.

Objective 3: Alleviate congestion in the City of Elkins

Action Step 1: Collaborate with WVDOT to explore options to address traffic congestion on Randolph Avenue.

The City should begin a dialogue with WVDOT-District 8 to discuss the various pedestrian and traffic circulation concerns on Randolph Avenue. The installation of signage, reflective crosswalks, and pedestrian signals may help with pedestrian safety and should be examined for applicability. The ultimate goal in improving Randolph Avenue should be to better connect various neighborhoods, improve pedestrian safety, and calm traffic.