

CHAPTER NINE

Traffic and Circulation

VISION

The circulation system in the Village of Franklin consists of roads and pathways that provide a safe, efficient and pleasant way to travel by vehicle or on foot. The road system consists of a network of interconnected roads that are designed for moderate speeds, so that drivers can enjoy the pleasures of the natural roadside environment. Equally important are the pathways for non-motorized transportation, which extend throughout the Village and are designed to curve in and around natural features so as to blend into the environment.

HISTORY AND PRESENT CONTEXT

Franklin residents, like residents throughout Oakland County, are primarily dependant on automobile travel and the region's arterial road network for access to employment, schools, shopping, and services. The low-density character of Franklin and its lack of employment centers requires travel to other communities to meet these needs, and, in turn, most of the patrons visiting the businesses in the Village Center come from outside of Franklin. Fortunately, Franklin is well-served by the regional road network, with Telegraph Road and Northwestern Highway providing vehicle access throughout the area.

In addition to providing good access to and from Franklin, the local arterial and collector roads carry heavy traffic both along the periphery of the Village and also on Franklin Road and Thirteen Mile Road, which carry a substantial amount of traffic through Franklin. These traffic levels, driven by the past few decades of development in western Oakland County, have concerned Franklin residents for some time.

As highlighted in Chapter Two, Inventory and Analysis, the older major roadways are connected to Franklin's neighborhoods by a local system of curvilinear residential streets in a pattern of development begun in the 1920s. These narrower winding streets and cul-de-sacs carry neighborhood traffic at lower speeds, and are shared by pedestrians and cyclists.

Roadway Role in Defining Village Character

In addition to providing access to regional amenities, the arterial road system provides context and definition for the Village. Franklin is bounded on three sides by major streets—Telegraph Road, Inkster Road, and Fourteen Mile Road—which provide distinct and recognizable edges to the Village. These edges are reinforced by the existing zoning, which designates the lots along these borders as low-density residential, and by landscaping, such as the addition of earth mounds and tree plantings during past construction projects on Telegraph Road, in contrast to the office developments and parking lots that exist across the street at many points on Franklin's borders.

The major roads additionally remain important places from which citizens view a community, and the only way that many through travelers ever experience the community. Sections of Thirteen Mile Road, Fourteen Mile Road, and Franklin Road still remain country style roadways that are pleasant to drive when traffic volumes are low and are lined with visual elements that help to define the character and history of the Village—fences of pickets, iron, or split rails, older trees, wildflowers, and glimpses of manicured lawns and gardens.

While residents may rely on automobile travel to reach jobs and shopping, they have expressed significant and increasing interest in creating and maintaining paths or trails within the Village for

recreational use. These paths would provide for walking or cycling, without traveling on the major arterials, and could connect neighborhoods to significant natural areas within the Village and to the Village Center. Designed to be a part of the landscape, these paths could have a natural-looking surface and would curve around trees and natural contours.



Regional Conditions

In order to classify the intended use and service of these routes, the Road Commission for the County has established a functional classification system that identifies roads as arterial, collector, or local access routes. According to this classification, Franklin Village is served by a transportation network composed of two statewide arterial corridors and a series of local arterial highways. The major roads that serve Franklin are classified as follows:

Telegraph Road	<i>Statewide Arterial</i>
Northwestern Highway	<i>Statewide Arterial</i>
Fourteen Mile Road	<i>Local Arterial</i>
Thirteen Mile Road	<i>Local Arterial</i>
Inkster Road	<i>Local Arterial</i>
Franklin Road	<i>Collector Road</i>

These three street types - statewide arterials, local arterials, and collectors - have characteristics that distinguish them from one another. These street types and definitions are consistent with the Road Commission's Master Right-of-Way Program.

Northwestern Highway

This multi-lane divided highway slices along the southwestern boundary of the Village to Twelve Mile Road and then continues as the Lodge Freeway into Southfield and Detroit. The highway is important to Franklin residents because of the accessibility and entry to the Village provided at Franklin Road. However, the highway is also important to area residents as the link to Interstate 696 and the northern boundary of land proposed for intensive development.

Northwestern Highway currently exists as a limited access thoroughfare with a right-of-way of 204 feet and primary intersections at both Franklin Road and Inkster Road. According to SEMCOG, the highway accommodates regional traffic volumes destined toward Southfield and Detroit.

The narrowing of Northwestern Highway from six lanes to four adjacent to the Village of Franklin can create a bottleneck at peak traffic periods, causing traffic to divert through the Village. The Michigan Department of Transportation and the Road Commission for Oakland County have discussed widening Northwestern Highway to six lanes. However, these discussions have not led to widening in the past, because improved traffic flow for this segment would not lead to a comparable network at the end.

With the current Northwestern Connector project intended to streamline traffic flow at Northwestern Highway's terminus, re-examining traffic flow near Franklin may be an option in the future. At this point, however, there are no plans for increasing the number of lanes, and new plans would have to compete for very limited County and State road funding. Changes at the intersection with Franklin Road have been discussed and are included in the City of Southfield Master Plan.

Thirteen Mile Road

This road is classified as a County primary road by the Road Commission. It has a proposed right-of-way of 120 feet on the Master Right-of-Way Plan.

Thirteen Mile Road will continue to accommodate local trips of moderate length. However, with the improvement of Twelve Mile and Fifteen Mile Roads as regional east-west arterial roads, Thirteen Mile Road should be retained as a local artery.

The character of the roadway and the function it serves by bisecting the Village should be carefully evaluated before any improvements to the roadway are recommended. Restoring the rural character along the roadside will be important.

Fourteen Mile Road

This road is classified as a county local road by the Road Commission. It has a proposed right-of-way of 86 feet on the Master Right-of-Way Plan. The current right-of-way varies from 66 to 120 feet in width. The intersection at Telegraph Road is signalized in order to control traffic speeds and congestion. Fourteen Mile is not currently paved between Franklin Road and Inkster Road, and conditions on that segment of road limit speed significantly.

Inkster Road

Inkster Road forms the western boundary of the Village and exists as a local arterial roadway. The road serves moderate traffic volumes that are generated by land uses along the road, plus through traffic making connections with Northwestern Highway.

Franklin Road

Franklin Road is a collector road having two lanes that forms the spine of the Village Center. It is also an important element in defining the character of the Historic District. The road varies in both right-of-way and pavement widths along its route, and parking is provided along certain portions of the roadway within the Village Center. The roadway has become an important local route that is primarily used by residents of Franklin Village and Bloomfield Township and the major traffic generators in these communities.

Traffic Volume, Speed, and Safety

One of the most frequently stated concerns about Franklin's transportation network is traffic—both quantity and speed have been of concern to Franklin residents for decades. This was an especially pressing concern in the 1996 Plan Update, as the rapid development of western Oakland County had caused traffic levels to double or more on most of Franklin's major roadways. Traffic levels have stabilized since the early 1990s, however, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Franklin Village Traffic Counts, 1991-1995 and 2004

Location	Average Daily Volume, 1991-1995	Average Daily Volume, 2004
Telegraph Road		
Intersection with Thirteen Mile	106,000	92,007
Fourteen Mile Road		
Intersection with Telegraph	87,000	82,466
Intersection with Franklin	12,000	11,163
Intersection with Inkster	9,000	14,773
Franklin Road		
Intersection with Thirteen Mile	27,000	22,464
Intersection with Scenic Highway	9,500	16,087
Inkster Road		
Intersection with Northwestern Highway	75,000*	35,445
Intersection with Thirteen Mile	21,000	19,392

* Could not verify 1991-1995 count.

Average Daily Volume is in vehicles per day.
Sources: 1997 Franklin Village Master Plan Update;
Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County

As was stated in 1997 Traffic Calming Master Plan Update, reducing the quantity of traffic traveling through and around Franklin is probably an unrealistic goal, considering the continued development of areas to the north and west, and the region's reliance on the road network for transportation. What Franklin can do is to continue minimizing the impact of this traffic on the Village. Several of the policies recommended in the 1996 Update are still relevant, such as

reducing congestion on major arterials, such as Telegraph Road and Northwestern Highway, to prevent diversion of traffic through the Village, and the prevention of capacity-increasing road projects within the Village.

Speeding remains a concern in Franklin, especially on the segments of Thirteen Mile, Fourteen Mile, and Franklin Roads where hills or curves limit sight distances. Where these speeds cannot be reduced through enforcement of existing limits or other measures, other tactics may be used to address the concerns caused by speeding. Creating alternate routes for pedestrians and cyclists and installing four-way stop signs at problematic intersections could reduce the problems of speeding.

Table 10: Traffic Crashes at Franklin Village Intersections, 2000 - 2004

Location	Average crashes annually	Crashes per million vehicles
Northwestern Highway at Inkster	23.2	1.74
Telegraph Road at Thirteen Mile	39.8	1.19
Franklin Road at Thirteen Mile	8.4	1.02
Telegraph Road at Fourteen Mile	30.2	1.00
Franklin Road at Scenic Highway	5	0.85
Franklin Road at Fourteen Mile	3.2	0.78
Inkster at Thirteen Mile	5.2	0.73
Inkster at Scenic Highway	1	0.32
Inkster at Fourteen Mile	1.6	0.30

Source: Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County and SEMCOG

Not surprisingly, most traffic crashes in the Village of Franklin take place at the major intersections at the periphery of the Village, where traffic is heavy. When traffic volume is taken into account, however, the rate of crashes is more comparable. As shown in Table 10 and Map 8, the intersection of Franklin Road with Thirteen Mile Road has a crash rate comparable to the locations along Telegraph Road. This situation remains relatively unchanged from the previous

Village Master Plan, which identified that intersection as an issue due to the angle at which Franklin Road approaches from the south.

Circulation System Accomplishments

To Franklin Village residents, both the character of Franklin Road and its ability to accommodate traffic and parking are important concerns. In 2001, Franklin Road, between Thirteen Mile and Fourteen Mile Roads was repaved at a cost of \$1.2 million. Crosswalks and new signage were included in the project.

Signalized traffic controls have been located at Thirteen Mile Road, Scenic Highway, and Fourteen Mile Road. Nevertheless, residents have complained about excessive traffic speeds along Franklin Road since the early 1970s. The speed limit through the Village Center has been reduced to 25 miles per hour, and, in 2005, the Village installed a speed indicator on northbound Franklin Road to help people be more aware of their speeds as they enter the historic district.

Additionally, the newly installed crosswalks in the Village Center provide visual and sound cues to drivers to slow down, and the on-street parking at the Post Office creates a visual narrowing of the roadway. Together, these measures should cause traffic to move more slowly and cautiously through the Village Center, though data does not exist to measure the change.

As Franklin's roads have been repaved within the past few years, road conditions are generally quite good, and the Village should have few major maintenance expenditures in the near future.

CIRCULATION SYSTEM ISSUES

In addition to the ongoing concerns of traffic volume, speed, and safety mentioned, a number of other challenges and opportunities surround Franklin's circulatory system.

Access Control on Major Roads

As traffic volumes are unlikely to decrease in the Franklin area, the most likely way to reduce congestion is to smooth traffic flow. Smoother

Insert Map 8: Traffic Analysis

flow on the arterials surrounding Franklin can encourage through traffic to use those routes, rather than diverting through the Village.

The number of vehicle access points on Telegraph Road contributes to congestion in that area. Frequent parking lot entrances, and parking lots that exit only onto Telegraph, can disrupt the flow of traffic and contribute to congestion. Reducing the number of driveways onto Telegraph, by creating shared drives between sites or an access road running alongside Telegraph, would reduce conflicts and reduce congestion on Telegraph. Since most of the entrances affecting traffic flow on Telegraph Road are outside of Franklin, this would require collaboration with the surrounding communities to implement.

The cul-de-sac streets found in some portions of Franklin Village exacerbate these problems. By providing residents with only one way to reach their homes, these streets force residents to suffer from congestion on a particular arterial, regardless of their destination. Residential street layouts that provide a choice between arterial roads allow residents to choose routes that avoid the worst congestion, which also reduces their contribution to local congestion.

The intersection of Wellington Road with Thirteen Mile illustrates the problem of limited access – traffic levels on Thirteen Mile can prevent turns, and the intersection is close enough to Inkster Road that a very small number of westbound vehicles stopped for a red light can block Wellington entirely. While Wellington is not a cul-de-sac, and does allow for alternate routes, those alternates are indirect enough to be inconvenient.

Village Center Parking

Off-street parking in Franklin primarily serves the Village Center businesses and civic facilities. The 1996 Master Plan Update recognized that the businesses had enough parking overall, but that the parking was fragmented and required use of Franklin Road to travel between parking areas. That Plan recommended that parking areas be better connected to one another in order to allow more efficient use and reduce the effect of parking entrances and exits on congestion. While the

effect of creating congestion may be desirable in the Village Center to keep traffic slow, the large number of access points could pose a safety problem, particularly where driveways are adjacent to one another. The frequent vehicle access points create potential conflicts not only with vehicles on Franklin Road, but with pedestrians walking between businesses.

This recommendation has not yet been widely implemented – most of the parking lots behind Village Center businesses are still physically separated, though joining them in some cases would require only removal of a chain or other barrier between them. The new sidewalk on the east side of Franklin provides easier pedestrian access throughout the Village Center from any parking area, but connecting parking areas would still serve to decrease entrances and exits onto Franklin Road.

Parking for Civic Uses

The 1996 Update stated that not enough parking existed for civic uses in the Village Center. The police department was found at the time to have insufficient parking along with insufficient overall facilities. A new facility was constructed next to the Broughton House, addressing these problems.

The Franklin Bingham Farms Fire Department has limited space and inadequate parking. The fire hall was built in 1959 and was added onto in 2005. Currently, the department has a full-time chief, part-time clerk, and 49 volunteers, nearly all of whom live outside of Franklin. A dozen may be at the fire hall at any time, with up to 30 present on occasion for meetings. There is little delineation between the department's lot and the adjoining service station, so vehicles accessing or waiting for service next door occasionally intrude onto the fire hall lot. These conditions are tolerated, however, as no space exists to provide for the department's peak parking needs. When needed, firefighters park their vehicles along the street.

Finally, the 1996 Update expressed a need for a new public meeting space that could hold 100 people. Under the Franklin Zoning Ordinance, such a meeting hall would require 37 parking

spaces; improved pedestrian and bicycle access to the Village Center might allow this number to be reduced, and, if a new meeting space were near the Franklin Community Church, where some meetings are currently held, shared use of the Church's parking could eliminate the need to add parking to the Village Center.

Roadway Rural Character

The role of the roadways in presenting Franklin's rural character to residents and visitors means that preserving roadside character is essential in maintaining Franklin's sense of place. The 1997 Master Plan Update called for scenic corridor protection plans to be created for this purpose, though this project has not progressed. The roadside image of Franklin could be harmed in the processes of development, future road expansion or repairs, or utility work, without policies in place to mitigate damage and reinforce the existing character. Some action has been taken to prevent damage, such as maintenance tree trimming by the Village in order to prevent utility companies from seeing a need to make more drastic cuts.



Roadway Maintenance Needs

Franklin's roadways are generally in very good condition, and most major roads have been recently repaved. No major maintenance needs are outstanding, which puts the Village in a favorable position, as the Road Commission for Oakland County has predicted a major shortfall of funding due to needs elsewhere in the County.

While Franklin does have a small amount of unpaved roadway, notably Fourteen Mile Road

west of Franklin Road, paving would not provide a clear improvement, and the Road Commission currently has no intention of paving this segment. While the gravel road is prone to potholes and produces dust, which are nuisances to neighboring residents, road conditions here force low traffic speeds, and limit the total amount of traffic using this road. Paving would likely encourage an increase in traffic, by making Fourteen Mile a reasonable alternative route to Thirteen Mile or Maple Road, which would also have a negative effect on neighboring residents. Some residents on and near Fourteen Mile Road are strongly opposed to paving of the road..

Non-motorized Transportation

The high-traffic roads running through and around Franklin limit the enjoyment of pedestrians and cyclists. As most of the Village lacks off-street pedestrian facilities of any kind, the traffic speeds or volumes on main roads can make pedestrians feel unsafe. This is particularly an issue for the neighborhoods to the south of Thirteen Mile Road, which serves as a barrier to visiting the Village Center and civic facilities. Within the Village Center, a sidewalk and pedestrian crosswalks were constructed during recent road work, easing pedestrian circulation within the Village Center.

While sidewalks are prohibited in most of Franklin by the Village Charter, as part of the effort to maintain a rural character, residents have indicated support for non-motorized facilities that have a "trail" or "path" feel. These non-motorized trails could run in the rights-of-way of major roads, pulling away from the street and buffered by landscaping where space allowed. Although the 1996 Traffic Calming Update to the Master Plan suggested that crossings of Thirteen Mile Road might be facilitated by pedestrian tunnels under the road, where topography allowed, this option is now view as impractical. Marked pedestrian crossings with push-button activated flashing red lights would be another option for safe passage. So far, these trails have not been created, though strong interest still exists.

The cul-de-sac layout of some of Franklin's residential streets presents another pedestrian concern; while these neighborhood streets are

themselves safe and peaceful, many of them have outlets only onto major streets, providing residents no good walking or cycling routes to other neighborhoods or the Village Center. As mentioned previously, some of these cul-de-sacs might be connected to one another to provide better access within the Village for all types of local users; connecting cul-de-sacs to each other or to major roads with non-motorized trails could be effective even in those locations where new vehicle connections are not appropriate. These trails could provide new, shorter and safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists to move within the Village limits.

Because of the area's land use patterns, little is within walking distance outside of the Village limits, with the regional arterials of Telegraph Road and Northwestern Highway creating special challenges for pedestrians. While no mass transit lines run through the Village, the Telegraph Road route run by SMART does have stops along the edge of Franklin.

Accommodations for Horses

In the past, Franklin residents have expressed an interest in providing paths or trails through the village for equestrian use. Horses are limited in their movement by major roadways just as pedestrians and cyclists are. At the present time, however, residents state this as a lower priority than many of their other transportation issues; fewer residents own horses than at the time of past plans, and many residents who do own horses keep them at locations outside of Franklin.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are some concrete actions that the Village could take in order to address some of the issues mentioned and take advantage of opportunities to improve the Village's circulatory network.

Plan to preserve scenic corridors.

In order to preserve the contribution that roadside views make to the image and character of Franklin, corridor plans should be prepared for the major roadways that outline and pass through Franklin. Where adjacent land use in neighboring municipalities is compatible, such as along Fourteen Mile in Bloomfield Township, stakeholders in those communities should be involved to maximize the impact. This corridor planning would involve community members to define the visual elements that enhance or detract from the desired character, and identify opportunities and constraints along each of the major roads in the Village.

This statement of the desired character would be used to examine the Zoning Ordinance and ensure that setbacks, landscaping, and other requirements contribute positively. The defined character would also serve as a reference when considering walking and biking paths along the roadway corridors. While the roads within Franklin do not qualify for the State's Natural Beauty Roads or Michigan Heritage Routes programs, the corridor plans would help to ensure that any future road work done in the Village adds to the stated character, rather than detracting, providing guidance for the "context sensitive solutions" process that is gaining importance in roadway agencies.

Improve amenities for pedestrians and other non-motorized users.

A number of potential projects could improve residents' access to the Village Center and throughout Franklin. Creating paths for pedestrians and cyclists along major road right-of-ways would allow these users to travel more safely. Paths connecting neighborhood streets to one another could provide for easier access to the Village Center's amenities, and foster more of a

sense of connection between neighborhoods. Safe pedestrian crossings of Thirteen Mile Road and Fourteen Mile Road, particularly at Franklin Road, would increase activity in that area, encouraging enjoyment of the historic district and support for the local businesses located there.

Creating paths alongside major roads in Franklin would allow for pedestrians and cyclists and other users to move around Franklin more safely and pleasantly. Since the look and feel of roadside areas is a significant part of Franklin's character, these paths will need to be designed to complement the atmosphere of the Village. Standard concrete sidewalks would not provide the correct feel, and the Village Charter forbids sidewalks outside of the Village Center for this reason. To provide a more trail-like character, paths should be curved to follow land contours and to integrate with landscaping, as the road right-of-way allows. A variety of trail materials are available, such as granular stone, that can provide a more "natural" look than concrete sidewalk while also providing an even and stable enough surface for users including pedestrians, bicyclists, and wheelchair users, and design of these paths should be considered in any corridor plan for the roads within Franklin.

Thirteen Mile Road is of special concern to non-motorized users. Since the highest traffic levels internally within the Village occur at the intersection of Thirteen Mile and Franklin Road, and Thirteen Mile generally cuts off the southern neighborhoods of Franklin from the Village Center, a safe crossing of Thirteen Mile is needed



for pedestrians and other users. The 1997 Traffic Calming Report rejects the option of pedestrian bridges as both unsightly and only providing for some non-motorized users. The report suggests tunneling under Thirteen Mile, where terrain permits, to provide a more accessible and less visually obtrusive crossing. This option has been deemed impractical, because of engineering and funding concerns. A less costly option that should be investigated involves the designation of crossing areas with pavement striping and possibly pedestrian-activated flashing red traffic signals.

Pedestrian crossings at the Fourteen Mile and Franklin Road intersection would provide an immediate benefit, by encouraging visitors to the Franklin Cider Mill to also visit the Village Center. The Cider Mill is possibly one of Franklin's most significant attractions, despite not being within the Village proper. Creating a visible connection between the Cider Mill and the Village Center area would encourage foot traffic, allowing visitors to park once and visit both historic areas. This would be especially important if a Farmers' Market were established, as recommended in the Commercial Center chapter, drawing visitors through the Village Center from one to the other.

Since these non-motorized amenities are a priority for Village residents, a dedicated committee or task force should be created immediately to ensure that specific pathway plans are produced.

Encourage improved traffic flow on arterials.

As most of the through traffic passing through Franklin could use nearby arterials, improving traffic flow on those arterials could prevent some traffic from passing through the Village. Especially with the recent reduction of the speed limit on Franklin Road, smoothing traffic on Telegraph will make Franklin a less appealing choice for cut-through traffic, and the Village should support improvements to Telegraph Road that will have this effect.

The 1996 Master Plan Update stated that advocating for improvements on Northwestern Highway, such as creating a consistent number of lanes to reduce bottlenecks at Inkster Road, would not be effective. At the time, MDOT had rejected any such expansion, as it would simply move the

bottlenecking problem further north. With MDOT and the Road Commission for Oakland County moving forward on the Northwestern Connector project to improve flow at the end of Northwestern Highway, creating a consistent number of lanes on that road to improve traffic flow around Franklin may now be possible.

Design for speed control on village streets.

The physical features in the Village Center that limit speeding, such as textured crosswalks, on-street parking at the post office, and the electronic sign displaying drivers' speeds, would not be appropriate for other areas in Franklin. The fact that design features do affect speed, however, can be applied throughout. The Village should continue to reject any suggestions of expansions or turn lanes on the interior major roads, as these features would encourage speeding. Design options for reducing speeds from current levels are limited on the major roads, but include using trees and other landscape features within the right-of-way to provide a visual narrowing effect, encouraging drivers to slow down.

