

V. LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION PLANS

The Land Use and Transportation Plans were developed from the goals and objectives, population estimates and the inventory and analysis of existing conditions.

A. Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan establishes location and space requirements and projects future and existing land use trends to satisfy the population projections and other impacts on the growth of the area to meet the County land use goals (See Exhibit 14). It should be noted that the proposed Plan more than accommodates even the most optimistic 20-year growth projections for the County. Exhibit 15 provides a table and chart of the acreage associated with each land use category.

1. Development of the Land Use Plan

The intent of the Land Use Plan is to identify appropriate and feasible areas of the County for the desired uses and create an environment where they will be encouraged to develop in those areas. Particular emphasis was placed on the following items:

- Promoting residential and commercial growth in appropriate areas
- Identifying areas for immediate and future industrial development
- Appropriate use/development of the Airport area
- Identifying and planning for the desired I-69 route

- Sensitivity to land use compatibility around the Town
- Unique treatment for the northern part of the County
- Identifying appropriate areas to maintain agricultural operations
- Consideration of the effects of large capital projects (e.g. Airport, River Park, golf course) on future land use
- Redevelopment of Mhoon Landing

Public and private projects that were already underway or had been approved for development were incorporated into the Plan.

Floodplain areas were protected as much as possible in the Land Use Plan. Considering the population projections for the next twenty (20) years and the amount of available land in Tunica County, there was no reason to recommend any new development (other than transportation facilities) in the floodplain.

Areas initially identified as having potential for residential development included the following:

- Dry side of the levee near Tunica Lake
- Areas west and south of the Town limits
- Dundee community
- Hollywood community
- Robinsonville community
- East side of Highway 61 near Highway 304
- Woolfolk Road west of Highway 61

Areas initially identified as having potential for commercial development included the following:

- Around the future I-69 interchanges
- Within the Resort Area (northern part of the County)
- Between the Airport and the Battle Area
- Areas with existing commercial uses

Areas initially identified as having potential for industrial development included the following:

- Around the Airport
- Mhoon Landing
- Along the proposed rail spur
- Areas with existing industrial uses

2. Description of Land Use Classifications

Land use classifications were assigned to all of the unincorporated areas of the County. As noted before, the proposed Plan is designed to more than adequately accommodate the growth expected in twenty (20) years. It is intended to provide a foundation and guide for future development.

Land in unincorporated Tunica County was placed in one (1) of twelve (12) land use categories that are described in the following paragraphs.

a. ***Agricultural***

Acres: 72,909

Percent of total land use: 24.7

Character: This classification focuses on agricultural production and maintenance of agricultural and open space character. Some residential uses will be allowed but are not intended to be the primary uses in this district. Individual houses (not in subdivisions) and a sparse population are anticipated. The agricultural classification also includes flood-prone areas where additional development should not occur.



Uses: A wide range of agricultural uses will be allowed, including crop production, livestock production, aquaculture, forestry, cotton gins and lumber mills. Single-family residential development will be allowed on parcels at least five (5) acres in size. Migrant farm worker housing will also be permitted. Manufactured housing will be allowed if certain design guidelines are met.

Explanation: Agriculture is an important part of the history and economy of Tunica County. The vast majority of land in the County is still used for agricultural purposes. It is important to designate areas for agriculture to continue, expand and thrive without the encroachment of incompatible uses that could interfere with agricultural operations. A classification was also

needed for areas where development is not advised because of existing environmental conditions. Additionally, since the extension of public utilities to these areas is not expected during the twenty (20) year planning period, intensive residential or commercial development is not appropriate or practical.

b. *Agricultural-Residential*

Acres: 84,405

Percent of total land use: 28.6

Character: The character of the agricultural residential areas will be similar to the existing land use patterns in the southern portion of the County, with a mixture of agricultural and single-family residential uses. Agriculture will continue to be the dominant use in these areas. Residential development is expected on an individual basis with very few subdivisions. Established rural communities will continue to exist but population density will be low and scattered throughout these areas.



Uses: Most agricultural uses that are allowed at the present time will be allowed in these areas. Some “heavier” agricultural uses will not be allowed unless they are already operating in the district. Single family residential development will be allowed at a den-

sity of one (1) dwelling unit per acre. Mobile homes, manufactured homes and site-built homes will be allowed.

Explanation: The conditions in the southern portion of the County are very different from the northern portion of the County in terms of the level of activity and development pressure. Existing development in these areas occurs at a slow pace in a scattered distribution and is already a mixture of site-built housing, manufactured housing and mobile homes. Residents of the southern portion of the County seemed to support the continuation of existing patterns, so a radical change was not recommended. The agricultural residential classification is compatible with existing land use patterns in the designated areas. With a few exceptions, the agricultural residential areas will not have access to all public utilities during the planning period. As a result, larger lot sizes are appropriate for these areas to accommodate septic tanks or other individual treatment systems that might be needed.

c. *Rural Residential*

Acres: 25,545

Percent of total land use: 8.7

Character: In the short term, areas within the Rural Residential classification will be similar in appearance to the agricultural residential areas with a mixture of those uses. However, the plan for the Rural Residential district is that over time, residential uses will become more dominant than agricultural uses. A mixture of large-lot subdivisions and individual residential development is anticipated. Existing manufactured housing in the Rural Residen-

tial areas can remain in place but will eventually be replaced by site-built housing. Access to public utilities will be available in some areas but not uniformly throughout the district.

Uses: Single-family site-built residences are allowed. Existing agricultural uses will continue until properties are developed for residential use. Existing manufactured housing and mobile homes will remain until they are replaced with site-built housing.



Explanation: One of the primary goals of the County is to encourage residential growth. The Rural Residential classification may assist in the achievement of that goal by providing specific locations for site-built residential development. The extension of public utilities may not reach all of the Rural Residential areas during the planning period but the locations of these areas allow for the logical extension of utilities over time. The Rural Residential classification includes areas that are appropriate for residential development but where higher densities are not feasible or compatible with surrounding areas.

d. Low Density Residential

Acres: 9,125

Percent of total land use: 3.1

Character: Low-density residential districts will consist mainly of single-family development in a subdivision setting. Residential lots may be developed within existing communities or in new subdivisions with new streets where public utilities are available. The residential population will be slightly more concentrated in these areas than in the rural or agricultural-residential districts.



Uses: Single-family site-built residences are allowed at a maximum density of 2.9 dwelling units per acre (approx. 15,000 square foot lots or larger). Existing agricultural uses will continue until properties are developed for residential use. New manufactured housing will not be allowed in these areas but existing manufactured housing and mobile homes can remain until they are replaced with site-built housing.

Explanation: Areas were designated for low-density residential use for a variety of reasons. A key factor was the identification of areas that could accommodate a higher density of development because of existing or upcoming sewer improvements. In some cases, the presence of schools, community facilities or recreational opportunities that contribute to a quality residential environment led to the des-

ignation of an area for low density residential. Additionally, a goal of the County is to broaden housing choice and expand the availability of certain housing types. The low density residential classification provides an opportunity to develop smaller lot sizes in a subdivision setting and offer something for people who do not want or cannot afford a larger lot or home. Residential growth increases the need for schools and other County services. Designating logical locations for residential development helps with the placement of community facilities and contributes to the efficiency of service delivery by the County.

e. High Density Residential

Acres: 2,546
Percent of total land use: 0.9

Character: The intent of the high-density residential classification is to allow for densities that are higher than the other residential areas. It is also the most permissive classification in terms of the housing types that are allowed. High-density residential areas may develop as single-family residential subdivisions, manufactured housing subdivisions or multifamily uses such as townhouses or apartments. Some high-density residential areas serve as transitional zones between lower density residential and commercial uses. High-density residential uses are typically located on or near major roads where infrastructure is already available.

Uses: Site-built and manufactured single family housing will be allowed. Attached dwellings, duplexes, town-

houses, apartments and elderly housing are also permitted.

Explanation: High density residential development provides more affordable housing for casino employees and lower income residents. The high density residential classification provides an opportunity to develop housing specifically for senior citizens. The districts identified on the Plan incorporate existing multi-family developments in the northern portion of the County.



f. Manufactured Housing

Acres: 1,091
Percent of total land use: 0.4

Character: The manufactured housing classification includes existing developments in the Tunica Lake area that are comprised almost entirely of manufactured housing and mobile homes. Site-built housing makes up a very small percentage of the land use in these areas.

Uses: Individual mobile homes and mobile home parks, manufactured housing and site-built single-family homes are allowed. A limited number of service-oriented commercial uses (e.g. laundromat) are permitted with special approval.

Explanation: The character of the existing development in the manufactured housing district was established many years ago and is not likely to change during the planning period. The manufactured housing classification was chosen to allow these uses to remain but to limit their expansion into adjoining areas where different conditions are present. The Manufactured Housing classification does not restrict the development of site-built housing.



g. Casino

Acres: 12,444
Percent of total land use: 4.2

Character: Sites already occupied by casino uses and locations inside the levee with available infrastructure for gaming facilities were included in the casino land use classification. A few undeveloped areas were included to provide opportunities for additional casino development in the area.

Uses: Casino gaming areas and related uses such as hotels and entertainment facilities.

Explanation: The gaming facilities in Tunica County are specialized uses with specific location requirements. A separate classification for these uses removes them from the preservation

recreation district in which they are currently included. It also sets them apart from the resort area that will have similar elements as the casino district but different uses and less specific location requirements.



h. Resort

Acres: 18,602
Percent of total land use: 6.3

Character: The resort classification is designed for tourism-related businesses and facilities, certain residential uses and mixed use developments. Design review guidelines and special sign regulations are being considered for this area. The goal is to create a resort area with a unique identity and boundaries that will be clearly identifiable to tourists and visitors.



Uses: The permitted uses in the resort area are intended to be tourist oriented and compatible with gaming

facilities, such as restaurants, hotels, golf courses and retail shopping. Uses considered to be incompatible with the tourism industry, such as automobile body repair, farm equipment sales or lumberyards would not be allowed.

Explanation: Continuation of the gaming industry and development of the tourism industry are important to Tunica County. The intent of the resort classification is to promote the development of an identifiable area or district in the northern portion of the County where these efforts will be concentrated.

i. Commercial

Acres: 7,691
Percent of total land use: 2.6

Character: This classification is intended to accommodate a wider range of retail trade and service-oriented businesses. Areas around the proposed I-69 interchanges are likely to attract highway-type commercial uses that cater to the traveling public. Areas around the Airport may develop with related services such as car rental facilities. Other commercial areas may develop with uses to serve the resident population of the County.



Uses: The typical range of retail and service commercial businesses will be allowed. Some of the areas will likely be zoned for highway commercial operations, while others may be zoned to attract businesses to serve the resident population. Shopping centers that draw both residents and non-residents will be allowed in some areas.

Explanation: A land use classification is needed for commercial uses that are not directly related to or reliant upon the casinos or tourists, such as grocery stores, automobile repair garages, or medical offices.

j. Industrial

Acres: 12,330
Percent of total land use: 4.2

Character: The character of the industrial areas will develop over time because there are very few existing operations in the County. It is anticipated that the area around the Airport will attract light industrial and distribution-oriented uses. Heavier industrial uses may locate in the industrial area around Mhoon Landing.



Uses: The typical range of industrial uses will be allowed. Zoning classifications will affect the location of some operations.

Explanation: Areas of the County were designated for industrial use as part of an ongoing effort to diversify the economy of the County. It is anticipated that the completion of the Airport, the construction of I-69 and other road and rail improvements by the County will attract industrial users. The area between the Airport and the proposed I-69 corridor creates a defined area with a high level of accessibility to several modes of transportation. Mhoon Landing, the site of the first casinos in the County, was viewed as a viable location for industrial use because of the access to the Mississippi River and the infrastructure that is already available to the area.

k. Public Facilities

Acres: 1,654
Percent of total land use: 0.6

Character: This classification includes large public facilities that currently exist in the County or are under construction.

Uses: The Tunica County Airport, the Battle Arena and Exposition Center, the Tunica Museum, River Park and the proposed golf course, tennis center and convention center were included in this classification.



Explanation: Public facilities, particularly one such as an Airport, have an effect on the location of other land uses. It is important to show these facilities and their relationship to the other use classifications on the Plan. Areas reserved for future facilities were not shown on the Plan since they will occur within other land use classifications as needed.

l. Preservation Recreation

Acres: 46,413
Percent of total land use: 15.7

Character: The Preservation Recreation areas include lands that are still in a natural state or are too remote or inaccessible for any significant development to occur. The majority of the Preservation Recreation land is located between the Mississippi River and the levee. The category also includes the Askew Wildlife Refuge/Management Area in the southeastern portion of the County.



Uses: Low-impact recreational uses such as campgrounds and RV parks and residences on large tracts would be allowed in these areas. Hunting and fishing clubs are allowed if certain conditions are met. Use of the Askew

Wildlife Management Area is subject to State and Federal restrictions.

Explanation: The intent of the Preservation Recreation district is to preserve natural areas in the County and protect environmentally sensitive places where development would not be feasible or appropriate.

3. Explanation of Special Circumstances

a. Resort Area

i. *Background* - The Resort Area developed from the desire to unify and promote tourism efforts in the northern portion of the County. A defined resort area provides an opportunity for “massing” of tourist attractions in close proximity to each other, making it easier for visitors to find and access the facilities. It provides more opportunities for linkages between tourist activities. Along the same lines, the development of a resort district allows the County to define incompatible land uses that would detract from the flavor and orientation that the visitor desires.

Massing tourist facilities within a defined area gives visitors a sense of arrival to the destination. It allows the Tunica experience to be “served up” to them and makes it easier for visitors to figure out what their choices are. A well-defined area also helps the host community to develop the identity of the destination and determine what the Tunica experience will be. Attention can be focused on the creation of a special place; a unique environment that is different from other parts of the County and the surrounding region.

ii. *Resort Area Conceptual Land Use Plan* - A more detailed plan within the Land Use Plan was developed for the Resort Area. The intent of the Resort Area Conceptual Land Plan (Exhibit 16) was not to dictate the exact location of the permitted uses but to make recommendations to enhance future development within the district.

The residential land uses proposed in the Resort Area included Low and High Density Residential as described in this section. An additional classification, Medium Density Residential was introduced for this area. (It is not one of the categories in the overall Land Use Plan). This land use was placed in areas between commercial and low density residential to serve as a buffer. Specific uses in this classification included townhouses, zero-lot line houses and detached and attached single family houses on small lots.

Commercial uses in the Resort Area were divided into three (3) classifications: Resort, General, and Entertainment. Resort Commercial was recommended generally along Highway 61, Casino Strip Resort Boulevard, and Grand Casino Parkway. These locations represent the “front door” to Tunica County and the entire Resort Area. Commercial uses in this area should be restricted to avoid any uses with unsightly outside storage and other uses that would not contribute positively to the aesthetics of the area.

General Commercial was proposed south of Highway 304 and on both sides of Highway 61. It was also proposed for both sides of Highway 304, east of Casino Center Drive Extended.

These areas are intended for major shopping facilities and may include "big-box" uses such as discount stores (e.g. Wal-Mart, K-Mart) and indoor lumber and hardware sales (e.g. Lowe's, Home Depot).

Commercial Entertainment is proposed west of Casino Center and Old Highway 61 and on both sides of Casino Way to the levee. This area could include the uses permitted in the Commercial Resort areas and may also include such uses as restaurants, bars, taverns and outdoor recreational facilities. It is intended to assist in tying the various casino complexes together into a larger and more diversified entertainment area.

b. Mhoon Landing

The industrial use classification was recommended for Mhoon Landing by the project team because it has many attributes that make it potentially desirable for industrial development. It has water, sewer, arterial roadway access and a port facility already in place.

Unlike the industrial area proposed around the Airport, the Mhoon Landing area is almost immediately available for development by an industrial user. The industrial area around the Airport, while an excellent location, is probably ten (10) years away from being ready for industrial use because of the timing of I-69 and the Airport improvements.

However, despite the factors that make Mhoon Landing a viable location for industrial development, the owners of the Mhoon Landing proper-

ties have a different vision for the area. During the development of the Comprehensive Plan, the property owners were in the process of negotiating with a group that wanted to bring casinos back to Mhoon Landing. The deal went so far as to have a boat docked at one of the old casino sites in preparation for renovation and eventual use. The parties involved are slowly trying to put this plan into action. As of this writing, the casino operation is many months away from opening, if it is able to open at all.

The County does not want to discourage or interfere with a business venture by any of its property owners. However, given the level of investment of gaming facilities in the Robinsonville area, the long-term viability of a casino at Mhoon Landing does not seem very promising. The County has to consider what will be beneficial over the long term for all of its property owners and citizens.

In the interest of balancing the long-term benefit to the County (industrial/economic development) and the current negotiations by the property owners, a compromise was reached in terms of the application of the land use classifications in the Mhoon Landing area. Following the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the casino interests will have five (5) years to try and make the casino operation work. If it is successful, the uses would be reflected as such on the Land Use Plan. If the efforts to bring casinos back to Mhoon Landing fail after five (5) years (or before), the area would be shown on the Land Use Plan as an area for industrial development.

c. Tourism Nodes

The Tourism Nodes Map (Exhibit 17) shows existing and future (projected) centers for tourism or visitor activity in Tunica County. Each area has the potential to offer visitors a unique experience.

Resort Area – The Resort Area is designed to be the primary tourism center of Tunica County. It is the area that draws the most visitors (over 10 million per year) and has received the most investment in terms of physical improvements, advertising and promotion. Current plans are to continue these efforts.

Battle Arena/Tunica Museum – The Arena and the Museum (recently opened) do not attract large numbers of visitors at the present time. However, the area has potential for improvement. The Museum offers a cultural tourism experience with artifacts associated with the Mississippi River, cotton and the history of Tunica County. The level of activity in this area is expected to increase when the Airport construction is complete and the surrounding commercial area develops as shown on the Land Use Plan.

Downtown Tunica – The Town of Tunica is not under County control but it is increasingly becoming part of the tourism package of the County. The Town has a Main Street Program that actively promotes historic preservation and commercial revitalization in the downtown area. The Town center has the potential of being a specialty shopping area combined with its Southern town charm.

Tunica Lake – Tunica Lake is different from the other tourism nodes because it offers a different experience. In addition to its local reputation for good fishing, there are a number of fishing events (including a Bass Pro tournament) held there. It is also a part of the connection to the Mississippi River. The potential exists to further develop the Tunica Lake experience with such things as fish restaurants, guided tours and other lake and river activities.

4. Evaluation & Summary of the Proposed Land Use Plan

- A large area for commercial land use is shown on the Plan to the east of the Town of Tunica and west of the Airport. The amount of land in this area that is designated for commercial use is significantly more than would realistically be absorbed during the twenty (20) years covered in this Plan. However, it is predicted that a substantial percentage of this commercial area will be occupied by Airport-oriented commercial operations, such as car rental agencies, long-term parking facilities and shuttle services. The activity produced by the Airport and the presence of community facilities such as the Battle Arena may draw other retail businesses to the area. The rationale for the commercial designation is partly due to the fact that the area is too close to the Town to be appropriate for industrial and is too close to the Airport for residential use. Commercial uses seemed the most appropriate and compatible for this particular area.

- The construction of the Airport will render the immediately surrounding area unsuitable for residential development. Existing residential uses in the area, such as the White Oak Subdivision, can be accommodated, but the Plan does not recommend additional residential development in this area. Industrial use is proposed for the area north, south and east of the Airport and west of the proposed I-69 corridor.
- The Plan provides numerous opportunities for commercial development to increase the range of goods and services available to residents and workers
- The Plan sets up areas for immediate (Mhoon Landing; NE corner of County) and future (Airport area) industrial development to diversify the economic base and create more employment opportunities in the County
- The Plan attempts to coordinate future development with existing and community facilities and infrastructure
- The Resort Area creates an identifiable area to sustain casino uses and promote tourism development
- The Plan discourages development in environmentally sensitive areas
- Development is limited in the proposed I-69 corridor to ease future land acquisition efforts
- The Plan provides areas for the maintenance and growth of agricultural operations
- The amount of land designated for residential, commercial and industrial use is more than what is needed to accommodate the projected growth during the planning period. However, the Plan puts a solid framework in place for decision making during the next twenty (20) years and beyond

5. Selection of the Recommended Land Use Plan

The proposed Land Use Plan was presented first to the Board of Supervisors and other County officials and then to the general public during a week of meetings that took place in varied locations in the County (See Chapter II).

Changes made to the Plan as a result of the public hearings include the following:

- A small industrial area was added in the Highway 3/Counce Rd/Arkabutla Dam Rd due to its proximity to the landfill, a future I-69 interchange and an existing rail line in the area
- An industrial area was added in the northeast corner of the County at the request of the Chamber of Commerce to provide a high-profile site for a large industrial user
- A flood-prone area south of Mhoon Landing Parkway that was designated for agricultural use was changed to preservation recreation

because of the potential to use the area for hunting camps and other outdoor recreational activities. A portion of the same area was changed again when it was determined to be suitable for residential development (rural density).

- The alternate I-69 route was changed to meet with Highway 61 at a point further south in the County
- A five (5) year time period was allotted to re-establish casino development at Mhoon Landing
- More commercial uses (under certain conditions) were allowed in the Cutoff area
- A low-density residential area was added on Woolfolk Road near its intersection with Highway 3

B. Transportation Plan

The Transportation Plan was developed in conjunction with the Land Use Plan. The purpose of the Transportation Plan is to:

- Analyze the functioning of the existing vehicular transportation system
- Provide classifications for all existing and proposed streets, roads and highways; classify the road system as arterial, collector and local streets
- Establish minimum right-of-way widths and pavement width requirements for each roadway classification
- Address problems related to pavement markings, multi-way stop intersections, parking, traf-

fic signals & signing, access control, speed limits and railroad crossing signalization.

- Project future vehicular transportation needs and future alternative transportation needs
- Consider the use of rail or rapid transit in the interconnection of casino areas, tourist centers of activity and the Airport.

The Transportation Plan emphasizes the roadway network but includes recommendations for other transportation elements in the County. At the present time, the roadway system dominates the transportation network in Tunica County. Private mass transit service is provided by the casinos but its contribution to the network is limited. There is some bicycle riding in the County but it is done more as a recreational activity than a form of transportation.

1. Development of the Transportation Plan

The Transportation Plan was developed in conjunction with the Land Use Plan. Recommendations for future transportation improvements were based on the capacity of the existing transportation network and the projected traffic volumes associated with the Land Use Plan.

The path of Interstate 69 through Tunica County affects both the Land Use and Transportation Plans. The exact location of I-69 has not been determined, but the route shown on the Land Use and Transportation Plans represents the desired route that was selected from the different corridors presented by MDOT (See Chapter II).

The route was depicted as accurately as possible on the map, based on meetings with MDOT and the firm responsible for the roadway design. A route east of the Airport was selected because it helped to create a defined area that would be conducive to industrial use because of the access to multiple modes of transportation (air, rail, roadway). Also, there are fewer existing uses associated with a route east of the Airport than one further west, which will hopefully ease acquisition of the right-of-way and reduce the number of land use conflicts. The County hopes to keep development out of the proposed corridor area as much as possible to increase the likelihood that when it becomes a reality, it will be built in the location desired by Tunica County.

The alignment of I-69 was considered to be more critical north of Highway 4 because of the location of the Airport and the Town of Tunica. The alignment south of Highway 4 could take a number of forms and is likely to be influenced by Coahoma County. Existing development in the southern portion of Tunica County is sparse and is not expected to increase dramatically over the next twenty (20) years. Most of the alternatives proposed by MDOT for the southern portion of the County would be acceptable and would not interfere with the County's land use planning for that area.

2. Description of Roadway Classifications

Four (4) classifications of roadways were proposed for the Tunica County Transportation Plan: freeways, arterials, collectors, and local streets. Each

classification is defined in the following paragraphs.

a. *Freeway* – A freeway is a fully-controlled access facility with no at-grade intersections or driveway connections. Freeways are designed for higher levels of mobility and speeds to serve longer distance travel needs. It mainly carries inter-city “through” traffic with some intra-city long-distance trips. It provides service to major commercial and employment centers.

b. *Arterial* – The primary function of an arterial is to serve long distance traffic within or through an area. The arterial system serves major centers of activity and provides a high level of mobility.. Major arterials primarily serve through traffic with a minimum number of at-grade intersections and access points. Minor arterials serve traffic from collector streets and have numerous access points.

c. *Collector* – Collector streets are designed to collect and distribute traffic between local streets and arterials. The streets are used primarily for traffic movement into, from, and within residential, commercial, and industrial areas and are located to provide direct access to abutting properties, distribute traffic effectively and preserve the identity of land uses.

d. *Local* – The primary function of a local street is to provide land access. These streets are not designed for high volumes of traffic. Local streets should be designed so that the intersections with major streets are minimized and traffic is directed to collector streets and then to arterials. Local streets within subdivisions should be de-

signed to minimize through traffic movements, and designed for low volumes in a manner to encourage low speeds.

3. Design Specifications

Exhibit 18 is a chart that shows the general, minimum standards established by MDOT and the Federal Highway Administration for the roadway classifications described in this chapter. The design standards of area streets and highways are directly related to the functional classification of the roadway network. It should be recognized that in some instances, the classifications might not exactly match the cross-section. In some cases the function or use of the roadway may provide a greater level of service than for what it was designed. There are expected levels of service or travel time associated with each classification. The level of service is dictated by pavement width, shoulder width, parking, vertical and horizontal alignment and design speeds.

In many cases, roadway classifications in Tunica County did not fit the conventional standards because of low traffic volumes and low population density. For example, some roads in the County function as arterials but are designed as collectors. These roads still function at an acceptable level of service because of the low number of vehicles per day that travel on them. Other roads may be designed as arterials and are able to accommodate far more traffic than actually travels on them.

4. Development of the Major Road Plan

The proposed Major Road Plan (Exhibit 19) represents a functional classification for the future roadway transportation needs of Tunica County. The Plan was developed in conjunction with the proposed Land Use Plan for Tunica County and incorporates projected needs for future development.

In order to evaluate future traffic conditions, it was necessary to project the growth of the existing traffic volumes. A standard four (4) percent annual growth rate was applied to the existing traffic volumes in order to estimate the volumes of traffic that may occur during the planning period. An attempt was made to develop actual growth trends from existing historical data but the trends varied widely due to the recent development in the northern portion of the county. Since this type of intense development is unlikely to occur again over the next twenty (20) years, the standard growth rate was used.

Traffic volumes within the County are very low, with the exception of US 61 and certain roadways located in the northern portion of the County. Due to these low traffic volumes under both existing and projected conditions, the classifications were based on the way that the roadways are expected to function, or operate and not based on traffic volumes. This method provides a more realistic hierarchy to the classification of the roadway network. The proposed roadway classifications are shown on the Major Road Plan. The Major Road Plan divides the

principal streets in Tunica County into the functional classifications of major and minor arterial, collector, and local streets as previously defined. Short-term (1-5 years for implementation) improvements are indicated in red on the Plan. Long-term (5-20 years for implementation) are indicated in blue. The Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Ordinance will provide the requirements for dedication and improvement of roadways associated with new development.

New roadways or roadway extensions proposed on the Major Road Plan include:

- Realignment and extension of Prichard Rd to improve access from I-69 to the Airport
- Extension of White Oak Rd and Perry Rd to US 61 to provide a more direct route from the Airport to the casino area and to improve the alignment of the intersection with Highway 61
- Extension of Fitzgerald's Blvd across Casino Strip Resort to US 61 to enhance circulation in the casino area
- Extension of Seven Mile Gin Rd to provide an additional north/south route in the southern part of the County

5. Railway Transportation

A rail spur is proposed for construction by Tunica County westbound from the existing north-south rail line near Highway 3 as part of an economic development initiative to attract

industrial users to the Airport area. The proposed spur is included with the roadway improvements on the Major Road Plan.

The idea of developing light rail service in Tunica County was raised at several meetings during the planning process. Light rail service could provide connections between such locations as the Airport, the proposed convention center, the casinos, other tourist attractions and possibly the Town of Tunica.

Development of a light rail system may be something for the County to pursue in the future, but at the present time there is not enough concentration of destinations or critical mass to make the construction and operation of a light rail network feasible. To illustrate the difficulty in providing light rail service in the Resort Area of Tunica County, the distance between the casinos was measured using the existing roadway system. The shortest distance measured was 2.8 miles from the Grand Casino to Bally's Casino. The longest distance was 8.6 miles, from Grand Casino to Casino Strip (Sam's Town, Harrah's and Hollywood Casinos). A visit to all of the casinos (starting at the Grand Casino) would be a one-way trip of approximately twenty-two (22) miles.

However, the potential exists during the next twenty (20) years to lay the groundwork for a light rail system by establishing service from the Airport to the proposed convention center location. The convention center, if developed, will be centrally located in the Resort Area of the County. It could serve as a distribution point for future

rail extensions if enough destinations are developed within the district. The distance from the Airport to the proposed convention center location is approximately 10.5 miles. According to information from the Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA), a good estimate to use for planning purposes is \$40 million per mile for light rail transit. Using this figure, developing light rail service from the Tunica Airport to the convention center would have an estimated cost of \$420 million.

be excellent. Roadways are in good condition and will be able to accommodate the projected traffic flows. Proposed roadway improvements will enhance the safety and accessibility of the roadway system. Interstate 69 will open up the County even more to residents, workers, tourists and commercial or industrial users.

6. Other Transportation Modes

In terms of pedestrian circulation, the County is in the process of installing sidewalks in denser residential areas. The Project Team encourages this practice and future development should be required to install sidewalks in low, medium and high-density residential subdivisions. However, there is not enough concentration of development at the present time to warrant an overall Sidewalk Plan for the County.

The feasibility of designating bike trails or paths could be examined in more detail with future park and greenway planning efforts. There is seemingly little demand for designated equestrian trails but they could also be examined with future park planning efforts. Some equestrian facilities may develop on private land in the preservation recreation areas or in association with tourist activity.

The future seems bright for the County in terms of transportation access. Over the long term, access to and from the transportation network will