

10

REGIONAL CONTEXT



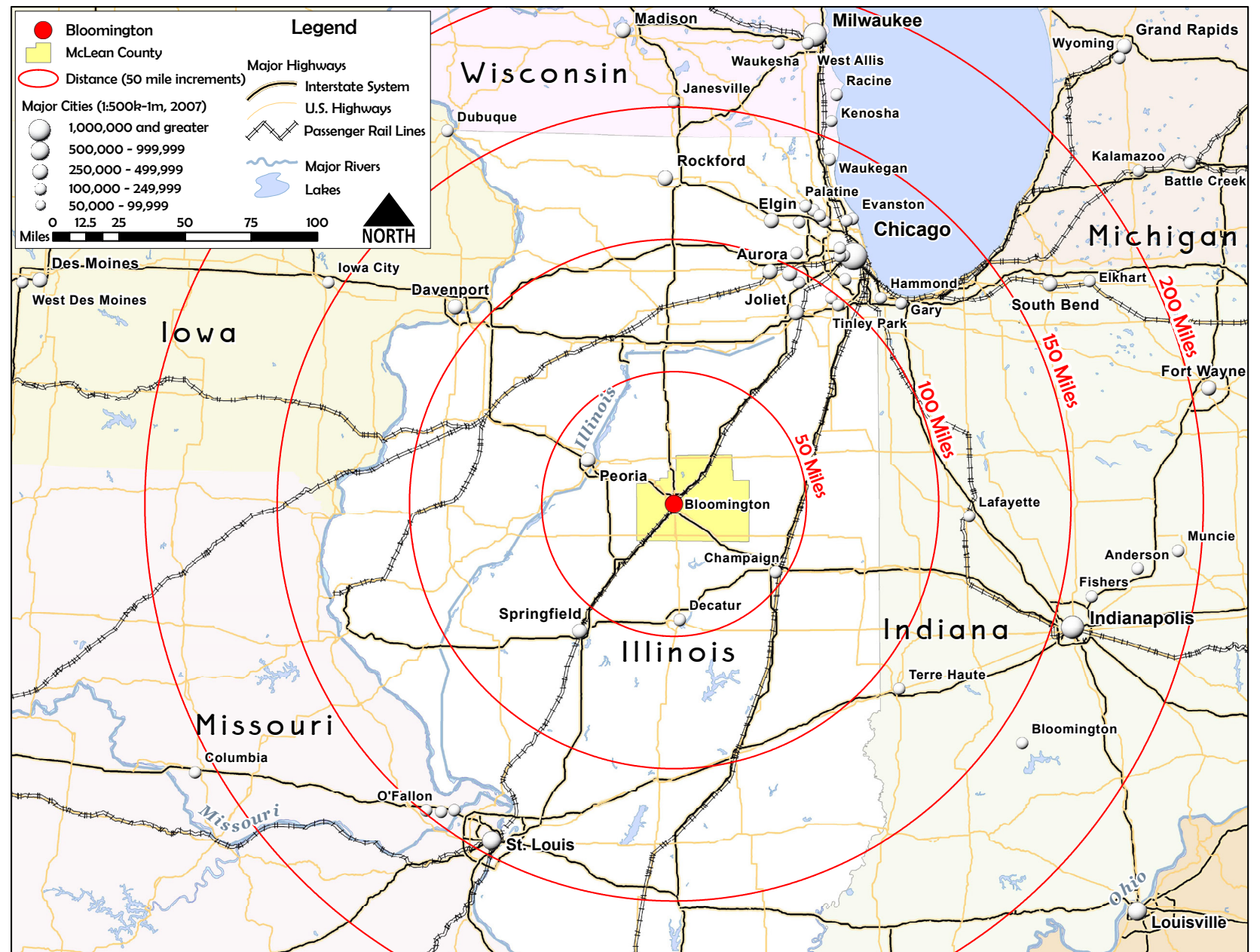
Bloomington occupies an advantageous position at the crossroads of our region, the core of the Central Illinois concentration of population, surrounded by highly productive agricultural land, and the nexus of substantial economic, infrastructure and transportation resources. The City's many connections with the surrounding region engender a complex set of interests that extend beyond the City boundaries. Some concerns reflect potential impacts on Bloomington from exterior interests, others impacts Bloomington may have on surrounding areas, and some involve interrelating impacts.

REGIONAL WATER PLANNING

In recent years Bloomington and other local governments have engaged in an ongoing process of planning for future water supply for residents as well as commercial, industrial and agricultural use. The need to plan for this essential resource grows ever more urgent, as we anticipate serving a larger population of individuals and business requiring water, and as we see the serious impact of sustained drought in Illinois and across the country. An improved understanding of regional hydrology in the era of climate change is also needed. Continued planning to secure adequate water resources in the context of regional interests can be addressed in the comprehensive plan through discussion of several aspects of water sourcing and protection, including the following:

- Regional supply studies – what further study should be conducted and implemented under the comprehensive plan

Figure 10.1 Regional Context



Source: McLean County Regional Planning Commission

to evaluate future need, and determine future water sourcing?

- Mahomet Aquifer – how effectively can Bloomington (and other McLean County entities) make use of the aquifer?
- Potential impacts of Clinton landfill status – what action should Bloomington and regional partners take to assess the concerns relating to hazardous waste contamination of the Mahomet Aquifer from materials in the Clinton Landfill?

ENBRIDGE PIPELINE PROJECT

(Southern Access Extension Pipeline to Crude Oil Terminal at Patoka)

- Current project status

The Illinois Commerce Commission has ruled that Enbridge, Inc. (a Canadian corporation) may use the eminent domain process to obtain right-of-way from property owners with whom the company has not arranged the purchase of property. This may result in a delay in the construction of the pipeline through McLean County, as property takings issues make their way through the courts. However, the decision of the ICC creates an immediate need to consider the local and regional impacts of the pipeline project, on Bloomington and on McLean County.

- Planning for environmental impacts

The proposed pipeline route will cross the Mackinaw River and Money Creek, with possible direct impact on the City of

Bloomington water supply at Lake Bloomington, and supplemental supply from the Mackinaw River. Other Enbridge projects have experienced pipeline failures resulting in substantial surface water contamination. A proactive approach to planning for potential environmental impacts is necessary to protect Bloomington’s interests, as well as the interests of other regional governments. The Enbridge project is also discussed in the Natural Environment chapter.

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING
OIL AND GAS

Proposals have been put forward to conduct hydraulic fracturing (fracking) operations to produce oil in McLean County. In other parts of Illinois and in other states, the use of fracking to produce natural gas and oil has resulted in substantial environmental impacts, particularly on the integrity of local waters supplies. Evaluating the potential impacts of fracking operations and the materials used in the process is important for Bloomington and the region, as we consider how to manage our resources.



The Google® autonomous car, coming soon to a street near you?



Figure 10.2 High Speed Rail From Chicago to St.Louis
Source: Midwest High Speed Rail Association (www.midwesthsr.org)

RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

Railroad infrastructure lies at the center of Bloomington's history and economic development, and the City, region and state are beginning a new era of rail development and access, of which the new high speed passenger service is simply a beginning. Elements of future rail development in Bloomington and the region may include the following elements:



- High Speed Rail - \approx 110 – 125 mph
 - Current Implementation, Chicago to St. Louis via Uptown Station, Normal
 - Future statewide rail service and connections
- Very High Speed Rail - \approx 175 – 225 mph via Uptown Station, Normal
 - Requires corridor alternatives study
 - Implementation of new rail technologies
- Regional Commuter Rail – connecting to HSR and VHRS through Uptown Station from Peoria, Champaign-Urbana, Danville, Decatur

Future rail development for both passenger and freight traffic requires a careful regional process, working with the private sector, to maximize capacity while minimizing negative impacts on the City.

AUTOMOTIVE

While Bloomington grapples with the demands of our car-oriented culture, and providing for alternative energy sources for cars, new technology is beginning to shift the future of the automobile. Google's recent announcement of its self-driving car, designed without passenger-usable steering, acceleration and braking, is a hint of an industry to come. What impact will this emerging technology have on local transportation systems, on manufacturers shifting to autonomous cars, and on our local companies that insure those cars? Industry leaders across the board are weighing in, and the stakes are high for local governments.

CIRA EXPANSION

The Central Illinois Regional Airport is established as a critical link to destinations and markets around the world. The comprehensive plan process is an ideal forum in which to consider future needs and impacts and evaluate how CIRA anticipates meeting future needs. The potential use of the airport as a primary freight hub as well as a passenger facility requires study and discussion of impacts for the City and the surrounding region.

NEW SOCCER VENUE

The loss of the soccer field complex adjoining the airport has triggered the need for a replacement venue. The comprehensive plan process can be used to evaluate needs for Bloomington and the region, consider appropriate locations that best serve the needs, and review the availability of funding for a new facility, possibly to include a community center.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Bloomington-Normal is a regional center for health care providers and services, and thus has a core interest in the implementation of health insurance reform and its impact on access to health care, including the preventive health care services that are a significant element of the Affordable Care Act. Bloomington City departments and local agencies, including the McLean County Health Department and local health and wellness agencies. MCRPC has initiated collaborative discussions with many of these agencies, which can be folded into the comprehensive plan process to support the development of local and regional objectives in providing the best possible health care services to the community.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Bloomington's PACE staff has initiated discussion with the Planning Commission regarding evaluation of City ordinances to accommodate the new state laws regarding the cultivation and distribution of marijuana for

approved medical uses. As this evaluation by the City continues, the planning process can also consider what steps Bloomington may wish to take should Illinois follow the example of Colorado and Washington, and allow broader access to marijuana for non-medical users, subject to any restrictions established in state statutes.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

With the installed base of wind energy facilities, McLean County is already established as a center for alternative energy technology and production. An effort to focus on technology-based employment should include alternative energy production and manufacturing, both to take advantage of new market opportunities, and to position the region to move beyond fossil fuels. Such a focus may also lessen the need to exploit hydrocarbons through hydraulic fracturing for oil and natural gas.

