

CHAPTER 7

TRANSPORTATION

7.0 Introduction

Safety, travel time, operation and maintenance cost, efficiency and mobility must all be incorporated in Storey County's transportation plan. Routes and capacities of roads should be planned and built for the specific types of traffic they will carry. Future demands and growth types should also be weighed in the process. As in the case of rural areas such as Storey County, major streets should be rerouted bypassing residential areas and interval streets drafted to discourage through traffic. In a setting such as Virginia City, pedestrian movement should be considered in order to minimize congestion and promote safety. A parking element in any transportation planning effort is of major importance in Virginia City due to the narrow streets, limited availability of existing facilities and the topography of the town.

This chapter is an inventory of existing and proposed roads serving county residents. In designating transportation routes this chapter reviews the existing road network, new roads necessary for future growth, and special features unique to the county.

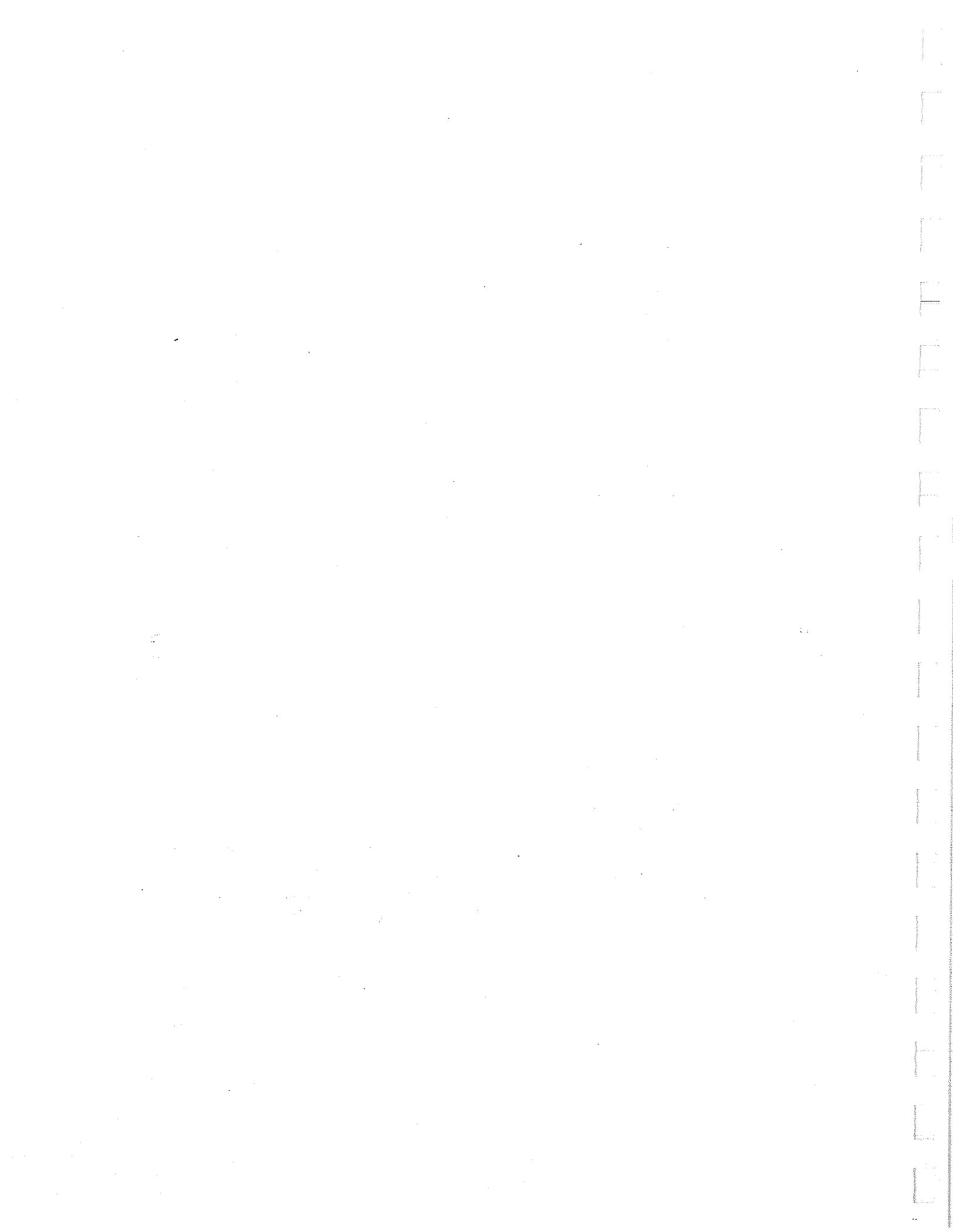
7.1 Roads

The widely separated cities of Virginia City, the Virginia Highlands, Mark Twain and the River District are connected by a two lane state highway, improved and unimproved roads.

The major transportation route to Virginia City is State Highway 341 which connects with U.S. Highway 395 near Steamboat, about 4 miles south of downtown Reno, on the north and U.S. Highway 50 near Mound-house, about 10 miles east of Carson City, on the south. South of Virginia City is State Route 342, which connects the communities of Gold Hill and Silver City, and provides a shorter but steeper route to Highway 50.

U.S. Interstate 80 runs mostly along the northern bank of the Truckee River in Washoe County, only 3/4 mile is in Storey County. Interchanges and bridges at Lockwood, Mustang, Patrick, Tracy/Clark and Painted Rock provide access to communities, ranches and other development along the southern bank which is part of Storey County known as the River District. Although there are a couple rough, unimproved 4-wheel jeep trails linking the River District to Virginia City travelers must use Interstate 80, U.S. Highway 395 and Nevada State Route 342 for access to and from Virginia City.

Six Mile Canyon road, a two lane improved and maintained gravel road, connects Virginia City with the community of Mark Twain and continues to intersect U.S. Highway 50 about 6 miles northeast of Dayton in Lyon County. Within Mark Twain are paved and unpaved roads maintained by the county.



Virginia Highlands residents are five miles away from Virginia City. Access is provided by State Highway 341. Within the Highlands area local and collector paved and unpaved roads are maintained privately.

7.2 Other Transportation

The Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way crosses back and forth across the Truckee River on the county's northern boundary. Although there are no scheduled passenger stops in the county, there is an industrial siding at Clark Station.

The restored Virginia & Truckee Railroad at Virginia City is the only other rail line in the county. The V & T is operated solely as a tourist attraction. A recent extension of the road crosses State Route 342 to connect with the Gold Hill depot. Future extensions may continue the line to American Flat and Mound House on U.S. Highway 50. This extension of the V & T will have an increasingly significant impact on the economies of both Gold Hill and Virginia City. The Tri-County Railroad Commission has been established to raise money, condemn land, and provide extensions of V & T Railroad through Lyon County to the northeast area of Carson City.

Except for these two limited services, there are no bus, railroad, taxi or air transport services located within the country. An Elderly/Handicapped Transportation program in Virginia City is sponsored by the Senior Citizens of Storey County.

Carson City provides scheduled bus service and has an airport without scheduled airline service; there are also a few freight trucking firms. Reno provides scheduled bus, airline, freight, and rail facilities. Several charter bus companies in Reno provide tourist related transportation for Virginia City visitors.

7.3 Vehicle Registration

In 1990 there were 2,893 vehicles registered in Storey County. Of this total, 54% or 1,553 were passenger cars and 31% or 891 were trucks. Data from the 1980 Census indicate that 96% of all households in the county have access to at least one motor vehicle and 68% had access to two or more vehicles. (Table 7.1)

7.4 Areas of Concern

Six Mile Canyon Road - This road is the fastest route between Mark Twain and Virginia City. However, it is a dirt and gravel road that is often steep, curvy, and narrow. Inclement weather can create dangerous driving conditions. Because of this many commuters are forced, and school buses required, to take the paved roads that add seventeen miles of travel at considerable time and cost.

Virginia Highlands Area - Steep grades and sharp and blind corners are a problem, especially for school buses, in some sections of the Virginia Highlands. Poor weather conditions can create hazardous driving conditions. Many cul-de-sacs do not have sufficient turn around space for emergency vehicles.

Virginia City Parking - The main street in Virginia City is "C" Street and has long been identified as having insufficient parking for tourists and residents.

Accessibility - Most of the area of Storey County is inaccessible to automobile traffic, and perhaps, given the existing potential and perceived need for development in the county, this situation may be desirable. However, two paved roads are definitely needed and have been recommended in various planning documents for the past twenty years. For socio-political reasons it is absolutely necessary that the Six Mile Canyon road from Virginia City to the Mark Twain area be paved and an all-year road be constructed from State Route 341 to the River District linking the north and south ends of the county. Both the growth in the Mark Twain area and the tedious and round-about linkage now afforded through Dayton point to the need for improving the Six Mile Canyon Road.

Construction of a road to link Virginia City with Lockwood is also recognized as necessary, though no group has put forth sufficient energy to see its fulfillment. The existing Largomarsino Road is only passable part of the year. It follows a tortuous route over rough topography and would thus require major reconstruction. In view of the complete absence of any suitable road link within Storey County between the Truckee River area and Virginia City, reconstruction and paving of Largomarsino Road should be considered by county officials as being the number one priority. However, the Virginia Range Wildlife Protection Association is concerned about the impact on Storey County's wild horse population if an improved road is completed. These concerns need to be addressed before a decision is reached.

Steep grades and unpaved roads are a problem throughout the county, especially for emergency vehicles and school buses. Residents and county officials traveling between the River District and Virginia City must first travel to Sparks and Reno. A connecting road through Largomarsino Canyon would cut some 15 miles from this route. Without these two connecting roads, Virginia City itself will become more irrelevant to the majority of Storey County residents.

LICENSED MOTOR VEHICLES
Storey County
Table 7.1

	1970	1980	1983	1989	1990
Passenger Cars	584	945	1137	1496	1553
Trucks	208	470	619	841	891
Trailers: Commercial and Utility	46	158	200	341	266*
Motorcycles	31	47	45	52	53
Recreational Vehicles	-	-	-	58	60
Travel Trailers	-	-	-	-	70*
Totals	869	1620	2001	2781	2893

*Beginning in 1990, travel trailers were separated from commercial and utility trailers.