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MEMO

Date: September 14, 2026
By: Paul Wittau, County Engineer
Joseph Wilensky, AICP, CFM, Planner, PDS
RE: Recommended traffic count for W4F (Sandy Beach Road NE)

Executive Summary

2022 Traffic Counts by the Iowa DOT (DOT) for Curtis Bridge Rd NE and Sandy Beach Rd NE reflected a reduction in average annual daily traffic (AADT) compared to the 2018 counts. The reported traffic count reduction was contrary to Secondary Road's (SR) expectations and observed trends in the area. In summer 2026 SR commissioned a new traffic count through the Metropolitan Planning Organization of Johnson County (MPOJC) for the portions of Curtis Bridge Rd, Sandy Beach Rd, and Lake Manor Rd extending south from the city limits of Shueyville. This new count documented higher traffic levels than the DOT reported in 2022. While new counts from the Iowa DOT are due in the summer of 2027, SR recommends the adoption of the new, higher counts as provided by the MPOJC in the interim. If these new counts are adopted, when paired with the potential trip generation of platted and vacant lots in the area, the County's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) would prohibit new subdivisions in this area. SR and PDS staff recommend the Board adopt the new traffic counts as outlined in Figure 1/Exhibit A and direct PDS to utilize the new counts analyzing Road Performance Standards (RPS) for new subdivision applications starting in October 2026.

Discussion

Every four years the Iowa DOT performs traffic counts on various roads throughout the county. The DOT is currently completing the traffic count for this year, but the results will not be available until next summer. The last two traffic counts on Sandy Beach Rd between Curtis Bridge Rd and Lake Manor Rd (2018 and 2022) reported a decrease in traffic volumes. This reported decrease was counter to expectations and trends between previous counts. Traffic volumes have typically increased between counts, especially on roads near cities or between cities where growth and development have increased over the years.

SR requested a traffic count from the MPOJC earlier this year and the results were provided last month. The MPOJC count confirmed that traffic volumes have increased on this road since 2018 and are higher than the currently published 2022 counts provided by the DOT.

To provide the most accurate data for evaluating proposed subdivisions against the RPS in the UDO (UDO Section 8:2.7.J), SR recommends using the traffic volumes from the MPOJC traffic count (2026) shown in the table below and as a map in Exhibit A when the Board considers new subdivision applications.

Figure 1 - W4F (Sandy Beach Road NE) Traffic Count 2018 - present

Segment	AADT (2018)	AADT (2022)	AADT (2026)
Curtis Bridge Rd to Mohawk Rd	2350	1910	2310
Mohawk Rd to Roberts Ferry Rd	1810	1540	2010
Roberts Ferry Rd to Lake Manor Rd	1390	1170	1500

Land Development Implications

Per the subdivision standards in the UDO, subdivisions which create new buildable lots on properties zoned for non-agricultural use are subject to RPS standards to determine if existing road conditions are sufficient to accommodate additional development pressure. Under the RPS, the existing road traffic counts are combined with the potential trip generation of platted and vacant lots that have the right to build a dwelling and any potential new trips generated by a new subdivision request (10 trips per buildable lot). When the projected traffic counts exceed certain thresholds established in the ordinance (see Figure 1 below), then the Board shall not approve new subdivisions unless provisions are made for the upgrade of the public roadway.

Figure 2 - UDO Section 8:2.7.J.3.a - AADT Limits

Surface Type	Posted Speed Limit (mph)	Projected Vehicles Per Day Limit
Crushed Rock or Gravel	Any	400
Oiled Chip Seal	55 or greater	2,500
	Less than 55	3,000
Paved	Any	No Limit

Currently, PDS has identified 41 platted and vacant lots along Lake Manor Road NE and Sandy Beach Road NE. The projected trips from these lots, combined with traffic count totals for Curtis Bridge Rd from previous Iowa DOT counts (2014 & 2018), have traditionally “closed” the Sandy Beach Rd/Lake Manor Rd area to new subdivisions. Decreases in recorded traffic counts in 2022 on Curtis Bridge Road and Lake Manor Road allowed for limited residential development over the past 4 years, including three subdivision applications approved¹ by the Board of Supervisors and one application under review by staff².

PDS has been in communication with the County Engineer and has known that this updated count was forthcoming. Because landowners and developers make significant investment-backed decisions based on the plain language of our ordinance and the information readily available on our website, the County Attorney’s Office (CAO) advised PDS to continue reviewing the RPS conformance for new subdivision applications in this area using the 2022 Iowa DOT counts. The CAO also advised that the 2022 Iowa DOT counts be used to review any applications filed prior to the new MPOJC counts being made publicly available and the Board formally indicating that the new counts will be utilized in official review. That is the intent of this meeting.

PDS notified local development firms in early summer 2026 that these new counts were forthcoming so they could caution potential clients who were exploring development. There is one application currently in progress for which the RPS analysis would be affected by the new MPOJC counts (SD26-000010 Haganman Sandy Beach Farm, Filed July 1, 2026). Per CAO guidance, PDS staff will review that application using the 2022 Iowa DOT counts.

If the newly provided traffic counts are adopted by the Board of Supervisors, new subdivision applications for those properties that rely on Lake Manor Rd, Sandy Beach Rd, and Curtis Rd for public road network access would no longer be in compliance with the UDO’s RPS should not be approved.

The attached Exhibit B outlines the area that would be impacted by these proposed replacement traffic counts.

¹ PZC-24-28564, PZC-25-28745, SD25-000003, and SD26-000015

² SD26-000010

Exhibit A – IDOT Traffic Counts (2022) with MPOJC Traffic Counts

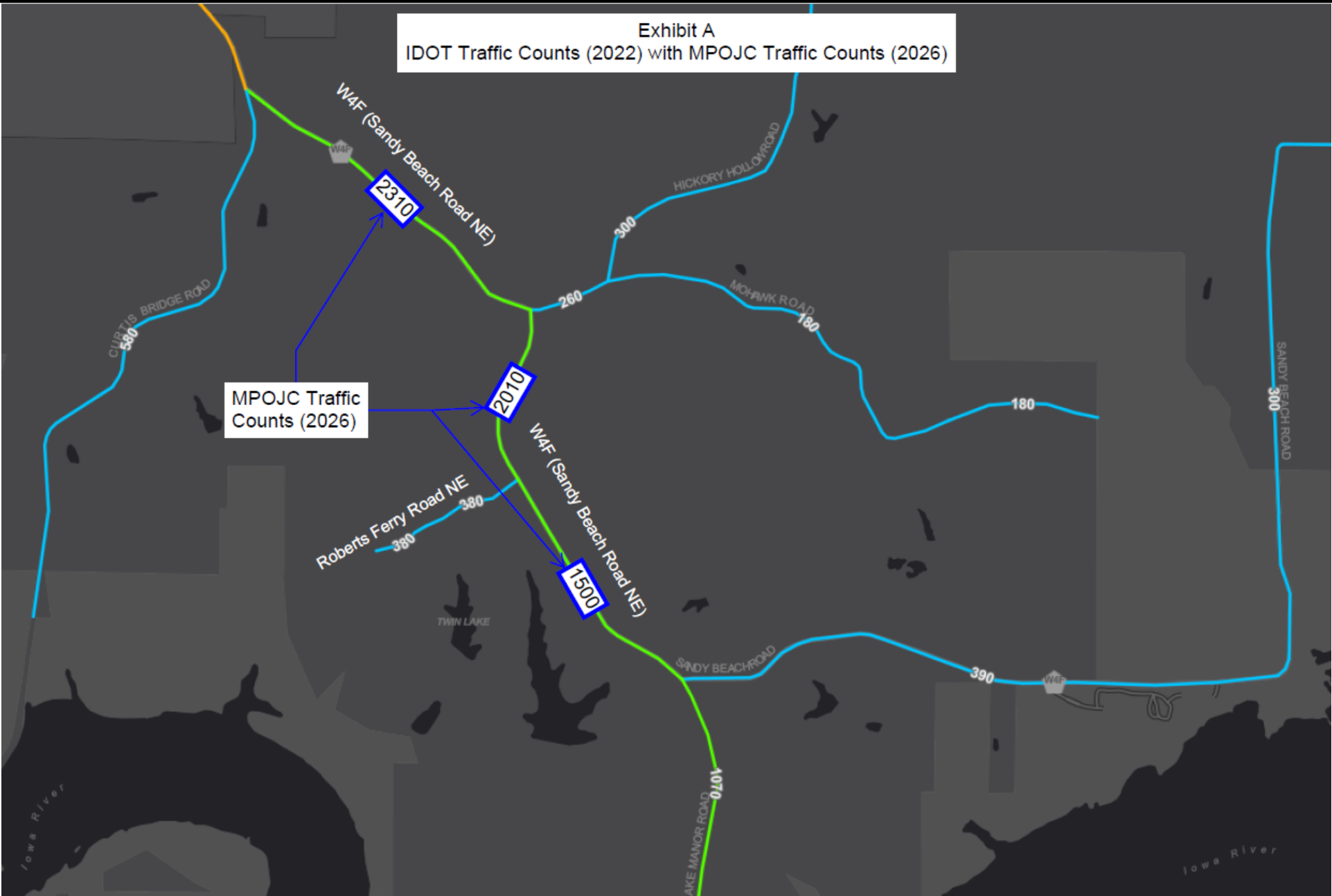


Exhibit B – Impacted Development Area

