



**Michigan Association of Planning
A Chapter of the American Planning Association**

**Draft
Surface Transportation Policy
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Summary and Background

Transportation systems play an integral role in our communities. We depend on them to get to jobs and school, to move freight, and for recreation. They consist of roads, bridges, transit routes, walking and bicycling facilities, shipping ports, airports, rail lines, international border crossings, and intermodal facilities.

Transportation systems are much more than just a means to move people and goods. These systems directly affect quality of life and economic development. Transportation systems play a significant role in a business's decision to invest in a community. Michigan's transportation systems have, in the past, been principally concerned with efficient movement of freight for manufactured goods. This has resulted in an extensive, high-capacity road and highway network in support of over-the-road freight and automobile traffic. The efficient movement of freight throughout our state and across our international borders is critical to the health of our economy. However, as Michigan's economy diversifies from large-volume manufactured goods to include more low-volume specialty and technology related items and services, transportation systems must be able to meet these changing needs.

A critical element to the new transportation paradigm is the ability to quickly and efficiently move large volumes of people in their daily tasks. In this regard, a person's mobility and ultimately quality of life is dependent on the transportation systems. Pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motor vehicle drivers of all ages and abilities depend on the transportation network to provide safe and convenient access. An efficient system with multiple transportation options can make a community more attractive to a greater number of people representing different demographics. Since tourism is a vital component of the state's economy, good road and transit systems are important not only to residents but also for visitors to our state.

A key demographic that many communities now seek to attract are young, highly educated, upwardly mobile professionals, sometimes referred to as knowledge workers, because of their effect on the local economy. It is understood that this group can choose where to locate and seeks communities that provide the high quality of life that is afforded, in part, by bicycle facilities, pedestrian features, transit options, recreational opportunities, and proximity to quality housing choices. It is also understood that companies seeking a knowledge-based workforce will locate in an area that is attractive to that demographic. Michigan must provide a policy framework and incentives to cultivate prosperity and attract new residents and commercial investment. The decisions made that successfully attract and retain this demographic will result in the economic development and investment that will benefit all sectors of our population, who equally benefit and desire a high quality of life.

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Development and implementation of 21st-century transportation systems that include enhanced transit service requires appropriate, stable funding sources. Measures including asset management programs, operations management, and integrated decision-making with environmental quality, land uses, and economic development decisions, help ensure the best use of limited transportation dollars. While our transportation network consists of many modes, this surface transportation policy will focus mostly on roads, bridges, transit routes, and walking and bicycling facilities.

Transportation Issues

The connection between transportation and land use planning

Land use and transportation infrastructure are intrinsically related in that both dictate the way the other will function. Transportation infrastructure shapes the form of land use, while land use changes drive the need for transportation infrastructure. Evaluating the impacts of land use on the transportation system is a necessary component of the planning process. Of particular importance is the consideration of this interplay of infrastructure and land use in the context of “down” or “right-sizing” communities. To the extent that communities make strategic decisions to reduce the scope, area of service, or adjust current levels of infrastructure, transportation investment must be a primary component of such decisions.

Michigan transportation planners have historically been concerned with moving people and goods *through* a place, while land use planners are usually focused on the interaction of goods and people *within* a place. In addition, land use plans are formulated at the local level, while most transportation plans are formulated at the regional (Metropolitan Planning Organization) and state level. Planning at different levels of government with different constituents, priorities, timelines, and goals can lead to further conflicts between land use and transportation plans.

Conformity with regional land use plans is not compulsory, so local land use plans may even conflict. A disjointed, isolated local land use plan that conflicts with neighboring plans can lead to equally uncoordinated transportation systems.

Additionally, federal investments in multimodal transportation are competitive with priority given to areas that demonstrate coordinated regional land use and transportation policies. Improved coordination between regional land use and transportation planning will not only direct limited resources to their best use, but will make Michigan more competitive in pursuing federal assistance with transportation projects.

Multi-jurisdictional nature of transportation planning

The following chart shows how road jurisdiction varies in Michigan:

Jurisdiction	Number of Agencies	Type of Road	Miles Responsible	Percent of Total Miles
Michigan Dept of Transportation (MDOT)	1	State Highways & Interstates	10,000	8%
County Road Commissions	83	County Roads	90,000	75%
Cities and Villages	533 (in 2005)	City or Village Streets	20,000	17%

County road commissions have jurisdiction over all public roads, except state highways, in all townships in the state. Additionally, some county road commissions have jurisdiction over some of the primary roads in the cities and villages, while some cities and villages have taken jurisdiction over some or all of the roads within their boundaries.

Statewide there are 79 different transit authorities and 40 more that provide specialized services. In addition, a variety of local agencies are involved with non-motorized planning using either pathways in the road right-of-way or abandoned railroad corridors. This multi-jurisdictional nature makes transportation, non-motorized, and transit planning confusing and underscores the need for coordinated planning between agencies.

Condition of roads and bridges/asset management

Michigan's roads are deteriorating at an increasingly rapid rate. Over the course of a single year, the percentage of federal-aid-eligible roads in poor condition increased from 25% in 2007 to 32% in 2008. The condition of roads not eligible for federal aid may be even worse. Allowing this trend to continue will have significant financial and economic consequences, as the cost of returning a poor road to good condition is four to five times greater than the cost of maintaining a road in fair condition. In 2004, it would have cost about \$3.7 billion to bring all poor and fair federal-aid roads up to a good rating. In 2008, it would have cost \$7.2 billion, almost double what it would have cost in 2004 according to the Michigan's Roads and Bridges 2008 Annual Report (Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council).

Michigan has a significantly higher percentage of deficient bridges than the average of other Great Lake states. In 2008, 14% of the 5,679 state-owned bridges were deficient, and 17% of the county and local bridges were deficient. Progress has been made in reducing the number of poor bridges under state jurisdiction, and there has been a significant increase in the number of bridges rated fair. The trend for local agency bridges is somewhat different. While the number of local bridges in poor condition has remained constant, there is a trend of good bridges moving into the fair category. Part of the reason for the forecasted condition differences between the state-owned bridges and local bridges is that the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has an aggressive preventive maintenance program while most local agencies are not able to put much money toward on-going capital preventive maintenance.

The adoption of good pavement and asset management practices by road agencies can help check this deterioration but this practice by itself will be insufficient. Asset management means knowing the extent and condition of all roadway assets and determining the best course of action for maintenance. This includes coordinating pavement improvements with other local projects (utilities, water, sewer, etc.). Additional resources, along with the use of asset management, are needed to maintain safe roads and bridges in Michigan.

Financing Concerns

Michigan's transportation system is funded through a variety of sources, including taxes on gasoline, diesel, vehicle registrations, and auto-related sales taxes. In addition, special millage elections allow for local property taxes to be levied for local roads and public transportation service.

State transportation revenues are split among a variety of transportation entities to maintain interstate freeways, county roads, city and village roads, public transit, economic development projects, and bridges, railroads and recreation areas. Ninety percent (90%) of the funds are allocated to roads while 10% goes towards transit. Of this 10%, 1.5% is diverted for cost of collection further reducing the amount of money available for transit. State revenue is falling and will continue to do so as cars continue

to become more fuel efficient (because gas taxes are based on gallons sold and not the price of gas) and auto sales drop or remain stagnant.

Some state and local expenditures, such as transit capital-related purchases, are eligible to be funded with federal dollars for up to 80% of their eligible project costs. The remainder is matched locally by road agencies, and is matched at the state level for transit-related purchases. Michigan receives back only 92% of federal gas tax receipts.

Expected deficits to the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) and Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTF) may mean that Michigan will turn back an expected \$1 billion in federal funding in 2010 if the state cannot provide the 20% match required. That number is expected to grow dramatically as the funding gap widens.

Michigan's gas-tax rate ranks 31st lowest out of 50 states and our diesel tax ranks 42nd out of the 50 states. Since 1964, Michigan has continuously ranked in the bottom nine states in per capita state and local expenditures on roads. Even after the last gas tax increase (over a decade ago, in 1997, the state raised Michigan's gas by four cents per gallon), Michigan still ranked in the bottom four states.

Because the current funding structure for transportation is expected to yield significant and systemic deficits in the coming years, creative solutions are needed to create stable funding structures for a transportation system. While not unique to transportation infrastructure, broad community conversations should be undertaken to evaluate continued reliance on funding structures that rely upon consumption, be it miles traveled or gallons consumed.

Lack of transit options

One major hurdle for Michigan communities to overcome is the lack of transit options available to citizens. For too long, communities in Michigan have primarily focused on only the automobile as a mode of transportation, which is not surprising considering the state's reputation in the automobile industry.

Adequate transit options are quickly becoming the cornerstone of successful cities, counties and states throughout the country. Transit options in other states and communities include high speed regional rail lines, intercity passenger trains and buses, regional commuter trains and buses, and local light rail.

Studies continue to show that public funds spent on transit have tremendous returns. Public funding spent in other states and communities to diversify transit have generated development and redevelopment around those transit centers. Three great examples are Dallas, Texas; St. Louis, Missouri; and Portland, Oregon. In Dallas, over \$3.3 billion in new property development and redevelopment has occurred near the Dallas Area Rapid Transit light rail stations since 1999.¹ In St. Louis, development and redevelopment near the St. Louis MetroLink light rail has generated over \$1 billion.² And in Portland, over seven million square feet of new development, valued at over \$900 million, has occurred adjacent to the light rail line.³ Examples such as these emphasize how important it can be to develop and maintain adequate public transit options.

Studies by Transit Riders United have shown that for every dollar invested in public transit there is a return of \$6 to \$8 in local economic activity. One would be hard-pressed to find another outlay of money that provides that high of an economic impact locally. Furthermore, the economic impact can be seen in vacancy rates of downtown areas. In 2000, the average downtown vacancy rate for cities without rail was about 13% while in cities with rail transit, the vacancy rate was 8%. Studies also show that Americans living in areas with adequate transit save \$22 billion annually in transportation costs. For every \$10

million invested in transit, over \$15 million is saved in transportation costs to both highway and transit users, including operating, fuel, and congestion costs.

Many people, particularly younger professionals, empty-nesters, and retirees, want to live in areas with multiple transportation options. Providing quality public transportation service could be a major draw for young, talented individuals to move in to and help revitalize cities. Furthermore, one-third of Michigan residents are either older, too young, or physically or financially unable to drive an automobile. The population of citizens 65 and older will double in the next 25 years, while those over 85 will triple. The lack of transit options can cause hardship for these individuals who are not able to operate an automobile. Adequate transit options will ensure that those individuals who cannot operate an automobile remain active and productive Michigan residents. In addition, the mobility needs lower income residents must be considered in a community's transportation policies. Lower income residents often cannot afford a car, and transportation policies keep low income people far from jobs. A 1996 report by the Federal Transit Administration found that nearly one-third of the American population is transportation disadvantaged (does not have a car or access to public transportation) primarily the elderly, children, single mothers, and those in poverty.

Need for Complete Non-Motorized Systems

Non-motorized facilities are critical to Michigan communities and to the health of its residents. When sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, and other forms of non-motorized systems are conveniently located, residents are more likely to get their daily recommended amount of physical activity, according to the Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities' report. Several programs like Safe Routes to Schools and Rails to Trails, and policies like Complete Streets at both the State and local levels, address the need for more coordinated planning of non-motorized systems. Complete non-motorized systems provide transportation options for people who need or choose them, reduce vehicle congestion, improve air quality, enhance economic vitality, improve the physical health of users, and are critical to an effective public transit system. Like transit, non-motorized systems should be prioritized as they provide transportation to individuals at all stages through one's lifespan.

Complete non-motorized systems provide safe and efficient facilities that enable users to access important destinations throughout their community. The development of complete non-motorized systems can be achieved through various approaches:

- For communities or neighborhoods that developed prior to the automobile, it is important to maintain the characteristics that make them walkable. In such communities that generally feature complex infrastructure systems, it is critical that non-motorized networks are strategically analyzed, maintained, and invested in.
- For communities or neighborhoods that developed with a greater emphasis on automobile transportation, it is critical to identify and take advantage of opportunities to improve non-motorized systems, with an emphasis on safely integrating all modes of transportation together.
- New development should be designed from the outset to incorporate complete non-motorized facilities to achieve all the benefits of non-motorized transportation. The location of new development relative to existing infrastructure systems is a key determinant of successful transportation system integration.

Complete Streets policies and legislation have been considered in a variety of forums that seek to formalize the creation and investment in transportation networks that effectively provide for all modes of transportation, and for all users.

Policy Statements

- 1.** The Michigan Association of Planning supports the vision of a well-integrated multimodal transportation system that serves individual, local, regional, state, national, and global needs and achieves goals of choice, mobility, access, sustainable development, and efficiency. Cooperative and comprehensive planning processes must be the basis for public and private investment decisions.
- 2.** The Michigan Association of Planning believes that it is important to create a complete multi-modal system of infrastructure that integrates non-motorized facilities and public transit systems with other transportation modes so that Michigan residents and visitors have access to transportation choices.
- 3.** The Michigan Association of Planning recommends that transportation plans and projects reflect the diversity of concerns and needs in a community, the region, and the State, and that this is best accomplished through adoption of policies mandating active implementation of broadly inclusive and on-going public involvement programs.
- 4.** The Michigan Association of Planning supports transportation systems and facilities that are designed to provide accessibility to citizens of all abilities as MAP recognizes that non-motorized pedestrian facilities and public transportation systems are the primary mode of transportation for many individuals based on their individual ability.
- 5.** The Michigan Association of Planning urges that transportation plans and programs be developed and implemented through processes where responsibility and authority for planning and decision-making is shared among all affected stakeholders, not just those with statutory authority.
- 6.** The Michigan Association of Planning supports transportation investments that positively affect environmental quality, growth management, land use, housing affordability, social equity, historic preservation, urban design, and economic investment.
- 7.** The Michigan Association of Planning supports the concept of a “transportation account” that collapses surface transportation related funding into fewer funding streams to allow for the most flexible transportation solutions possible to ensure that state, regional, and local needs are met.
- 8.** The Michigan Association of Planning supports providing public or private funds for research, technology development, data collection, training, technology transfer, and the integration of research results into the planning process at regional and local levels.
- 9.** The Michigan Association of Planning supports the adoption of enabling legislation that allows communities to choose local options for funding local transportation priorities and that provides incentives for public-private partnerships for transportation projects.
- 10.** The Michigan Association of Planning supports transportation funding reforms that ensure that transportation funds are not diverted for non-transportation expenses.
- 11.** The Michigan Association of Planning believes that ~~adequate~~ regional planning is the best way to ensure cross agency and multimodal cooperation in building and maintaining an effective, balanced transportation system that serves diverse needs.
- 12.** Michigan Association of Planning supports the use of regional scenario planning efforts for setting local transportation funding priorities.

¹ *The Fiscal Impacts of DART's Transit-Oriented Development*, Center for Economic Development and Research, University of North Texas, Bernard L. Weinstein and Terry L. Clower (April 16, 2007), located at <http://www.unt.edu/cedr/dart.transitdevelopment.2007.pdf>.

² *The Economic Benefits of Public Transit: Essential Support for a Strong Economy*, Transportation Riders United, available at <http://www.detroittransit.org/cms.php?pageid=26#sources>.

³ *Beyond the Field of Dreams: Light Rail and Growth Management in Portland*, G.B. Arrington, Portland Tri-Met (March 1995).