



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

Michigan Division

315 West Allegan St., Room 201  
Lansing, Michigan 48933

**Federal Highway  
Administration**

January 3, 2006

Ms. Susan P. Mortel, Director  
Bureau of Transportation Planning (B340)  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
Lansing, Michigan

Dear Ms. Mortel:

Finding of No Significant Impact  
I-196 from East of US-131 to I-196/I-96 Junction  
I-96 from West of Leonard Street to West of Cascade Road  
M-37/M-44 from South of M-21 to North of Knapp Street  
City of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township  
Kent County, Michigan

Reference is made to your letter of December 14, 2005, which requested a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the proposed project. We have completed our final review of the Environmental Assessment document and conclude the proposed project will have no significant impacts to the environment. Accordingly, our signed FONSI determination is enclosed. Please transmit a notice to the affected federal, state, and local government units, informing them the FONSI document will be available from your Department, or our office, upon request from the public.

By our adoption of the FONSI and completion of the public comment/hearing requirements of 23 U.S.C. 128, the MDOT is authorized to proceed with further project development.

Sincerely,

Ronald L. Krauss  
Area Engineer – Grand Region

For: James J. Steele  
Division Administrator

Enclosure

cc: Margaret Barondess, MDOT, Transportation Planning (B340)  
Mike O'Malley, MDOT, Transportation Planning (B340)  
Molly Lamoreaux, MDOT, Transportation Planning (B340)  
Vicki Weerstra, MDOT, Grand Region  
Dennis Kent, MDOT, Grand Region  
File: MA 04-A-07

Word# P- 18991

Federal Highway Administration  
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Kent County, Michigan

The FHWA has determined that this project will not have any significant impacts on the human or natural environment. This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the attached Environmental Assessment and "Project Mitigation Summary 'Green Sheet' For The Preferred Alternative". In addition:

- The proposed project will require the purchase of additional Right-of-way. Acquisition assistance and advisory services will be provided by MDOT in compliance with the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, as amended, and Act 87, Michigan P.A. 1980, as amended.
- The proposed project will impact approximately 2.08 acres of wetlands (0.63 acres of palustrine forested, 1.16 acres palustrine emergent shrub scrub, and 0.29 acres palustrine emergent). Using a 2 to 1 mitigation ratio for forested and 1.5 to 1 mitigation ratio for emergent wetlands, a total of 3.51 acres (0.43 acres of emergent, 1.82 acres of scrub shrub, and 1.26 acres of forested) of wetland mitigation is required for this project. An Act 451, Part 303 permit will be obtained from the MDEQ—that will include a wetland mitigation and monitoring plan.
- The proposed project requires construction access to the Grand River. An Act 451, Part 31 and Part 301 permit will be obtained from the MDEQ—that will include a construction staging plan.
- It has been verified that MDOT conducted the Public Involvement Process accordingly.

The Environmental Assessment provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an environmental impact statement is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the Environmental Assessment.

12/30/05  
Date

David Calabrese  
Responsible Official

Field Operations Group Leader  
Title

**DOCUMENTATION SUPPORTING A FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT  
IMPACT FOR THE I-96, I-196 AND M-37/M-44 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS  
IN THE CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS AND GRAND RAPIDS TOWNSHIP, KENT  
COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

**SECTION I**

**PROPOSED PROJECT**

**1.1 Public Involvement**

An Environmental Assessment (EA) and Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation for the proposed I-196/I-96 corridor improvements in the city of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township, Kent County was approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on November 4, 2005. Legal notices announcing the public hearing and availability of the EA were placed in the Grand Rapids Press and the Grand Rapids Advance with a combined public circulation of 160,000 people. A total of 39 people attended the public hearing that was held on November 29, 2005 at the Grand Rapids Township Hall. The hearing was held in accordance with Federal and State Public Involvement/Public Hearing procedures. The public comment/hearing requirements have been met as certified by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Public Hearings Officer. A copy of the letter is included in Appendix A.

**1.2 Project Description and Proposed Alternatives**

This EA and Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation is for corridor improvements on I-196 from the Grand River to the I-196/I-96 junction; I-96 from Leonard Street to Cascade Road; and M-37/M-44 (East Beltline) from M-21 (Fulton Street) to Knapp Street in the city of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township, Kent County, Michigan. These improvements are being proposed to enhance mobility, improve access to the Grand Rapids metropolitan area, and enhance traffic safety.

MDOT proposes the following actions as part of the Build Alternative:

- Construct additional weave/merge lanes on I-196 between Ottawa/Ionia Avenues and College Avenue interchanges and between College Avenue and Fuller Avenue interchanges.
- Construct an additional travel lane on I-196 between the Grand River and I-96 junction, and on I-96 between Leonard Street and Cascade Road.
- Separate weave and merge traffic by constructing freeway collector/distributor routes, adding travel lanes, and/or auxiliary lanes on I-96 from Leonard Street through the I-196 junction, M-44 (East Beltline), M-21 (Fulton Street), and Cascade Road interchange area.

- Construct additional ramps at I-196/Ottawa Avenue, I-196/M-21 and I-196/I-96 interchanges.
- Construct additional travel lanes and intersection improvements (turning lane improvements, signal modifications, etc.) on the East Beltline (M-37/M-44) between Knapp Street and M-21.
- Joint City of Grand Rapids and MDOT improvements on connecting cross streets and interchanges are also proposed, including Fuller and College Avenue approaches, Division (US-131BR)/Ionia Avenues boulevard proposals, and new off ramp to north bound Division Avenue.

In addition to the construction actions listed above, MDOT proposes to rehabilitate, replace and widen or conduct preventative maintenance on 29 structures along the I-196 corridor. These structures will be designed to accommodate future freeway widening.

### **1.3 Corrections and Clarifications to the Environmental Assessment**

1. Figure 1.4 (project phasing plan) has been has been revised to address typographical errors.
2. Figure 6.1 (parks and trails map) was inadvertently left out of the final printed version of the document. It was available to for public review on the website.

### **1.3 Project Mitigation**

The project mitigation summary “Green Sheet” prepared for this project is included in Appendix B.

## **SECTION 2**

### **COMMENTS AND RESPONSES**

The following are summaries of letters and comments that were received as part of the public record and comments that were received at the public hearing. Each comment or concern has been addressed with a response. Copies of correspondence received from Federal, State and local agencies are provided in Appendix C. Written copies of comments submitted at the public hearing and by citizen stakeholder groups can be found in Appendix D.

**Comments were provided via email and responses to comments follow. A copy of the complete email can be found in Appendix D.**

- 1) Lane Expansion: I am opposed to any expansion involving additional lanes on I-196 between the river and I-96. For over 30 years Belknap Lookout has been detached and fragmented from the rest of the city because of I-196. Additionally, the City Master Plan calls for improved connections to minimize the

impact of freeways as barriers for neighborhoods. The expansion of I-196 does not minimize its impact on surrounding neighborhoods.

**Response:** The additional lanes on I-196 are being constructed within the existing state owned right-of-way (ROW), adjacent to the existing freeway lanes, and in some cases within the median, and will not create additional fragmentation of the referenced neighborhood.

2) The expansion also will increased noise and air pollution for surrounding neighbors and is a quality of life issue. MDOT highlighted last night that sound proofing is cost prohibitive and not part of the plan.

**Response:** Noise analysis was completed based on existing federal standards as required, and primarily because the I-196 improvements are within the existing ROW noise levels do not change to the point of requiring mitigation. Based on the MPO air quality conformity analysis, congestion is reduced and air quality is improved with the construction of the proposed improvements.

3) Finally on the point of expansion. This is a 30 year plan, but funding freeway expansion wasn't even creative or future thinking 30 years ago. I thought that the point of M-6 was to alleviate pressure from downtown traffic, what went wrong that now we are adding more lanes.

**Response:** As indicated in the EA, this is a long term plan for improvements. Improvements will be made based on traffic and mobility needs and as funding becomes available. As indicated in the EA, many areas are currently congested and will need improvements to enhance traffic flow and safety. Traffic volumes on I-196 are expected to increase as new jobs are created in the Life Sciences corridor near downtown Grand Rapids. M-6 was developed to address traffic congestion in the southern metro area, and was never intended to provide substantial relief to traffic going into and through downtown Grand Rapids. As such, it is accomplishing its intended purpose.

4) Cost: The estimate we were given last night was \$375,000,000 in 2005 dollars for a roughly 4 mile stretch with work being completed in 2030. My understanding is that the cost for I-196 will be paid for by local, state and federal dollars. I don't see this as a fiscally responsible choice for the City of Grand Rapids or the State of Michigan. We need to be investing these dollars in building up the identity of Grand Rapids as a progressive and creative city, not an antiquated dinosaur that thinks the automobile is the future. If there are legitimate safety concerns on I-196 then only fund those, but not the expansion of additional lanes.

**Response:** The cost estimate is for the total build out of the plan. This will be accomplished incrementally as warranted by traffic need and within the federal, state, and local resources available during any given time frame, to minimize the

financial impact. Improving I-196 and access into downtown Grand Rapids will help to support the evolution of the metro area's economy toward the rapidly expanding Life Science industry, as well as other sectors of the economy expanding in the downtown area.

5) Pedestrians: As an avid bike commuter, runner and walker I must advocate for more pedestrian oriented development in regards to the I-196 plan, and specifically the bridges and Division Ave boulevard.

**Response:** The Division Avenue boulevard concept was requested by the city and will involve city as well as MDOT funds to complete. When the segment is ready for design and construction, MDOT will work with the city to identify opportunities to enhance pedestrian and non-motorized access.

6) First and foremost are the Coit Ave overpass and Lafayette Ave underpass. If these bridges are redone, they must be done in a way that is safe and promotes walkability for Belknap Lookout. Three quick stories: A month ago I saw a young mother walking her baby in a stroller to the hospital crossing Coit Ave bridge. She had to take her child out of the stroller because the current sidewalk has about a 1 foot edge and she was fearful that the stroller would tip. She ended up carrying the child, pulling the stroller until she made it to the other side. Another recent story is that Immanuel Lutheran on Michigan has a partnership with Coit Elementary in Belknap. They bus kids 3 blocks for programming because they don't feel the overpass and Michigan are safe for kids to walk. Finally, the most dangerous part of my bike commute in the morning is avoiding cars coming out of the parking ramp near this overpass. With additional medical towers being constructed at Coit and Michigan, this will only get worse.

**Response:** Many of the problems indicated involve city streets, and as such are a local responsibility. MDOT will work with the city to identify opportunities to enhance pedestrian and non-motorized access. As MDOT bridges are replaced, pedestrian and non-motorized traffic will be considered during the design phase. As part of MDOT's Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) policy, stakeholders will be involved in the design process, and non-motorized options will be considered, funding responsibilities will be identified, and funding options will be explored.

7) The Division Ave Boulevard looks great. I think of any part of the plan, this makes the most sense, but it should be the first. With the additional north bound exit, I think this road could be better utilized. Chances are it will reduce traffic congestion at College and Leonard exits and may reduce enough pressure that expansion becomes unnecessary. Again, I would advocate that this boulevard be pedestrian friendly. It can be a connector making pedestrian traffic flow better by tying in with the stairs that come down the hillside. The plan should also include a strategy for recognizing and enhancing the Master Plan's TOD at the intersection of Plainfield/Leonard. The Division Ave project must be integrated and coordinated with all the other activities happening on the Medical Mile, North

Monroe, Creston and Belknap. The impression I got at last night's meeting was that MDOT new nothing about these other initiatives and were designing the projects independently.

**Response:** The Division Avenue boulevard will be a joint MDOT/city of Grand Rapids project and was identified conceptually in this document. As a joint project MDOT will rely of the city for coordination and compatibility with city plans in the areas impacted. I-196 improvements are being coordinated with other Life Sciences corridor projects, with the city and within the financial resources available.

**Written comments were received from the Federal Aviation Administration via letter dated December 8, 2005. A summary of FAA comments and MDOT responses follows. A copy of the FAA letter can be found in Appendix C.**

1) The FAA recommends a separation distance of 10,000 feet between airports and hazardous wildlife attractants.

**Response:** Comment acknowledged; project is several miles from the Gerald R. Ford International Airport.

2) The FAA recommends that wetland mitigation projects be sited at least five miles between the farthest edge of airport operations and the wetlands.

**Response:** Comment acknowledged. Proposed wetland mitigation sites will be more than five miles from the edge of airport operations.

**Written comments from Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) were received via letter dated December 13, 2005. A summary of MDEQ comments and responses follows. A copy of the MDEQ letter can be found in Appendix C.**

1) A Corps of Engineers permit will be needed for work on the I-196/Grand River crossing. Section 2.19 needs to be corrected as it says a corps permit is not needed.

**Response:** This statement in the EA is correct based upon a letter from the Department of the Army, Detroit District, Corps of Engineers, dated 24 September 2004. This letter was not included in the EA and will be appended to the EA in Appendix C.

2) Section 2.16 water quality-post construction- During early field inspections USF&WS and MDEQ asked for improvements to the water quality runoff at the I-196 crossing of the Grand River. Currently there are scuppers in the bridge which allow for direct runoff into the river from the road. Additionally, impacts from coffer dams are not addressed in the EA.

**Response:** MDOT will evaluate the feasibility of eliminating bridge deck drains from the I-196 crossing over the Grand River in accordance with the MDOT's statewide storm water discharge permit. Pursuant to the requirements of the permit MDOT will utilize storm water best management practices, including the reduction or elimination of bridge deck drains to the maximum extent practical.

3) Section 2.14. It is unclear where Detention Pond D is.

**Response:** The conceptualized detention pond D is located in the northwest quadrant of the I-196/I-96 interchange. The feasibility and need for this detention area will be evaluated during the final design phase of the project. If additional impacts to wetlands result from development of the detention pond, the area of impact and required mitigation will be determined as part of the permit application process.

4) Table 2.5- it would have been helpful to list the drainage areas in this table rather than a reference number.

**Response:** Comment acknowledged.

5) Section 2.15- MDEQ should be consulted early on (before applying for a permit) on construction method at the I-196 crossing

**Response:** MDOT will seek early input from MMDEQ during the pre-application consultation meeting.

6) Section 2.14-MDEQ would like to be consulted early on steps to minimize impacts to stream within the I-196/96 interchange

**Response:** MDOT will seek early input from MMDEQ during the pre-application consultation meeting.

7) Section 2.17, top of page 35 should read approximately 1.16 acres of P\_, EM\_, Scrub-shrub wetland instead of 1.21

**Response:** This change will be made to the text to reflect the information provided in Table 2.6 as 1.16 acres.

8) Section 2.18, 3rd paragraph- 2.25 acres of emergent wetland mitigation should read 0.43 acres of emergent and 1.82 acres of scrub shrub.

**Response:** The text will be changed to reflect the need to mitigate for 0.43 acres of emergent and 1.82 acres of scrub-shrub wetland.

**Written comments received during the public hearing are summarized below with MDOT responses. Copies of the written comments can be found in Appendix D.**

1) Redesign of the US-131/I-196 interchange is needed regardless of the space constraints.

**Response:** Comment acknowledged; but this interchange is beyond the scope of the EA.

2) There is no sign on M-6 EB and I-96 advising motorists that Grand Rapids is left/west. People unfamiliar with the area are confused.

**Response:** Comment acknowledged and the situation will be investigated.

3) Create a dedicated through lane for west bound I-96 going downtown. Keep weave/merge lanes out of it.

**Response:** Comment acknowledged; through lanes are proposed for westbound I-96 and I-96 into downtown Grand Rapids with this EA.

4) East Beltline double left turns. Revise traffic at Calvary Church entrance. At peak times dedicated through lanes are needed or more staging room and longer light cycles to move volume of traffic.

**Response:** Comment acknowledged; signal timing will be evaluated as warranted, additional through lanes on the East Beltline are planned with this EA.

5) Local traffic is using Calvary's lot as a shortcut to East Beltline.

**Response:** Comment acknowledged.

6) Several Comments in support of the project and encouraging it to be put on a faster completion schedule were received.

**Response:** This is a long term plan. Improvements will be implemented based the proposed schedule in the EA, and based on statewide and regional needs, priorities, and financial resources.

7) Excerpt and paraphrase from hearing transcript: Is there is some kind of bridge railing that allows motorists to see the river while driving in a standard sedan? It would make the downtown more beautiful.

**Response:** As part of MDOT's CSS policy, stakeholders will be involved in the design process and issues like the one noted will be considered.

**Written comments were received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) via letter dated December 13, 2005. A summary of USFWS comments and MDOT responses follows. A copy of the USFWS letter can be found in Appendix C.**

- 1) Since data on threatened and endangered species is updated continually, we recommend MDOT request updated lists if the project initiation date extends beyond six months of the date of the letter.

**Response:** Section 2.12, Endangered and Threatened Species, pages 28-29. MDOT will request a new listing of federally endangered, threatened, or proposed species if the project initiation date is later than June 16, 2006.

- 2) The EA should acknowledge the need for bird surveys on bridge structures prior to the start of construction.

**Response:** Section 2.13, Fisheries and Wildlife, pages 29-30. MDOT will conduct a survey for the presence of migratory birds prior to the start of construction as per standard practice.

- 3) Section 2.17 of the EA describes mature woods which will be lost as a result of the project. Potential impacts to wildlife species are not described or included in the EA.

**Response:** Section 2.17. The comments presented in Section 2.13, Fisheries and Wildlife is accurate for the Beech-Maple woodlot present at the I-196/I-96 interchange. Due to the size and juxtaposition of the woodlot the wildlife use has been altered from the characteristic fauna associated with this cover type. Bird species characteristic of Beech-Maple woodland, Wood Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Scarlet Tanager, Hairy Woodpecker, American Redstart, Great Crested Flycatcher were not observed during the breeding season. Bird species characteristic of edge conditions were found during the surveys. These species include Northern Cardinal, American Robin, Downy Woodpecker, and Black-capped Chickadee. As a consequence, breeding habitat for about 2-3 pairs of American Robins and Northern Cardinals, and single pairs of Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee, and American Goldfinch are likely to be removed within the project area. Foraging habitat, including food, cover and shelter resources for the above-mentioned species and mammals, including Woodchuck, Fox Squirrel, and Eastern Chipmunk will be removed. None of the species impacted represent particularly rare or unusual species in terms of overall distribution or population numbers within the region. This cover type within the region is however, being removed by residential and commercial development adjacent to the project site and in the immediate vicinity based upon direct observation and zoning and land use plans.

- 4) Efforts should be made to eliminate direct discharges of bridge deck runoff to the Grand River. Additionally, the EA indicates coffer dams will be utilized during construction on bridge structures. Temporary water quality impacts may result from in-stream construction activities.

**Response:** MDOT will evaluate the feasibility of eliminating bridge deck drains from the I-196 crossing over the Grand River in accordance with the MDOT's statewide storm water discharge permit. Pursuant to the requirements of the permit MDOT will utilize storm water best management practices, including the reduction or elimination of bridge deck drains to the maximum extent practical. Regarding the coffer dams, we believe the potential impact from construction coffer dams is limited to benthic macro invertebrate populations within the coffer dam areas and will not have significant adverse impacts on benthic habitat outside the coffer dam areas.

**Written comments were provided by the West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC) via letter dated December 15, 2005. WMEAC comments have been paraphrased. The comments in their entirety are included in Appendix D.**

1) Any expansion of the highway system will cause significant environmental impact due to increased consumption of natural resources, energy, and increased impacts to the natural environment. It is unclear whether MDOT assessment tools determined these impacts to be significant. In essence the EA indicates that while human health (at specific locations) may not be harmed by the project, the health of the natural environment will be minimally impacted. This does not seem to be a sufficient examination of the total environmental impact.

**Response:** The environmental analysis conducted utilized accepted protocol for environmental assessments. The analysis did not indicate impacts were significant and therefore an environmental impact statement was not warranted. Some of the issues that you have raised, specifically regarding energy consumption, are beyond the scope of this EA. However, the improvements proposed will reduce congestion and delays for freeway traffic, and local traffic accessing the freeway, which will improve the operation and energy efficiency of vehicles using the highway. Additionally, MDOT will consider the re-use of crushed concrete as aggregate base material for new sections of road during the design phase when appropriate.

2) The City of Grand Rapids has made a commitment to reduce greenhouse gasses by working towards a light rail system. Choosing the preferred alternative puts funding into non-sustainable transportation strategies at the cost of funding towards a light rail system, at the cost of funding alternatives that get people out of cars and into transit (such as a light rail system), and getting trucks off the roads and onto rail freight.

**Response:** The city of Grand Rapids and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) strongly support the preferred alternative in this EA. It will help to provide improved access to the downtown area and support

redevelopment and job creation activities in the Life Sciences corridor adjacent to downtown. Mobility improvements in the core Grand Rapids area are not, however, limited to the proposed long-term freeway improvements. MDOT is actively participating in the Interurban Transit Partnership's (ITP) major transit investment (GT-2) study, and is also one of the financial partners in the GT-2 study. The transit options reviewed during the GT-2 study process, including light rail, street cars, and bus rapid transit, are not expected to eliminate the need for all highway improvements, nor will highway improvements alone address the mobility needs in the city. The alternatives still being considered in the ITP study include transit options that are closer to the neighborhoods and businesses in the city, and can provide more direct service to the community and have a better chance for success. It is necessary to look at and to make decisions that address freight and passenger, highway and non-highway transportation needs of the area. This is an on-going effort that will continue through the MPO planning process. However, some of these issues are beyond the scope of this project and the MPO planning process. We encourage WMEAC to provide input on this process via their memberships on the MPO committees.

3) Choosing the preferred alternative will induce greater traffic flow and ultimately encourage more traffic and sprawl. More traffic and sprawl will in turn increase impacts to the natural environment.

**Response:** The Preferred Alternative was selected in order to maintain existing infrastructure and improve safety and traffic flow conditions from existing traffic conditions. The highway improvements proposed in this EA are along urban corridors already developed. MDOT is responding to existing traffic congestion on these roadway segments and providing support for redevelopment activities in the downtown area. Therefore while we agree that urban sprawl is one of the most challenging issues being faced by Michigan communities, we believe that controlling sprawl begins with the local units of government and their ability to develop and implement wise land use planning choices.

4) Another important consideration is the unreasonable investment in a system whose future is very short. Is the issue of long term traffic patterns due to changing fuel prices taken into consideration by MDOT?

**Response:** Many of the traffic issues identified (congestion and safety) require immediate attention and can be more effectively and efficiently addressed during planned system preservation activities over the next 5 to 10 years. Other improvements are more long-term and will be implemented based on transportation needs, priorities and funding availability at that time. Other issues noted are beyond the scope of this project level EA.

5) The sustainability of Grand Rapids must be founded on justice. The proposed investments direct large amounts of money for access to the City by whom? The access strategies do not help all people in the community equally.

**Response:** As indicated in the city of Grand Rapids support letter, these improvements will promote economic development in the Life Sciences corridor near downtown. The additional 2000 or more new jobs being created in this area will be available to residents within the city. MDOT has also indicated that we will work with the city of Grand Rapids to help facilitate pedestrian connections to the neighborhoods north of I-196 and the Life Sciences corridor, as bridges are replaced over the freeway, during subsequent individual project development activities, consistent with the MDOT Context Sensitive Solutions Policy.

Providing a transportation system that serves all community members requires a strategic approach to urban planning and local support for appropriate transportation options. MDOT is committed to maintaining existing transportation infrastructure vital to all segments of society. Timely emergency service response and efficient transportation of goods are important to all segments of the population, regardless of demographic characteristics. Improvements to I-196/I-96 will enhance safety, improve traffic flow, and correct deteriorated roadway segments and bridges.

6) We hope that MDOT incorporates a triple bottom line (environmental, economic and social sustainability) approach into their thinking and rework the proposed recommendations accordingly. We see this as evident in the proposed collaboration on the Turner Gateway Project where rain gardens and other community based collaborations are taking place, and we encourage more of this type of work.

**Response:** MDOT has been working with the local units of government and the Grand Valley Metro Council, through the MPO planning process to develop long term comprehensive strategies for addressing transportation needs in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. We would like to encourage WMEAC to continue working with local units of government and the MPO so that long range plans that address some of your concerns can be feasibly developed.

7) Short of re-working the overall plan, WMEAC recommends selection of the No Build alternative for the reasons given.

**Response:** MDOT acknowledges WMEAC's comments, but can not at this point in the process recommend selection of the No-Build Alternative, or delay the proposed project, because of the current infrastructure, safety

and traffic flow needs. Additionally, comments received during the public comment period were substantially in support of the project. Therefore, while we are supportive of some of the concepts that WMEAC has presented, MDOT believes the Preferred Alternative best addresses the purpose and need of the EA.

8) WMEAC has indicated that it is in the process of exploring the interest for community-wide public forums.

**Response:** MDOT encourages public input into our planning process and we encourage WMEAC to continue its efforts towards improved public input. The I-196 EA has been available for public comment since mid-November 2005, the public was invited to the hearing on November 29<sup>th</sup>, and public input received during this process was in support of the proposed project. This project has also been discussed through the MPO planning process on several occasions since the first public meeting last year. In addition, more direct contact of affected neighborhood groups in the project area was undertaken in coordination with the City of Grand Rapids Planning Department.

**Written comments were received from the Environmental Protection Agency via letter dated December 12, 2005. Responses to these comments follow. A copy of the letter can be found in Appendix C.**

1) We are concerned about the EA's lack of documentation on public meetings. The EA states that two existing businesses will be displaced. These businesses are located in a neighborhood with significant minority and low income populations. This issue raises Environmental Justice issues if disproportionate impacts to low-income or minority neighborhoods.

**Response:** Comment acknowledged. Notice of public information and stakeholder meetings was provided to community organizations in the immediate area of the project. MDOT also e-mailed notice to community organizations regarding the public hearing in conjunction with the City of Grand Rapids Planning Department. These organizations represent both minority and low income residents, and combined they cover the census tracts within the City of Grand Rapids that have the highest concentration of those populations.

2) The EA does not document the public's concerns stated at the public participation meetings. The EA should include detailed notes from all past public information meetings.

**Response:** Comment acknowledged. As described in the response to the previous comment, communities within the project area were notified of opportunities to provide public input. Section 3.2 of the EA describes the dates and locations of meetings which were held to facilitate early coordination with the local communities and stakeholders. Comments received during the process have been incorporated into the findings and recommendations of the EA. Input that was received at meetings and the public hearing were generally supportive of the project, with several individuals asking for a more expeditious project completion date because of current traffic flow conditions.

**APPENDIX A**

**Public Involvement Certification Letter**



ENNIFER GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
LANSING

GLORIA J. JEFF  
DIRECTOR

December 14, 2005

Mr. James J. Steele  
Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration  
315 West Allegan, Room 201  
Lansing, Michigan 48901

Dear Mr. Steele:

**Certification of the Public Hearing on the Environmental Assessment and Section 4(f) Evaluation  
for the Proposed Improvements to I-196, I-96 and M-37/M-44 in the City of Grand Rapids and  
Grand Rapids Township, Kent County, Michigan.**

This is to certify that a public hearing was held in accordance with federal and state public involvement/public hearing procedures. The hearing was held Tuesday, November 29, 2005, at the Grand Rapids Township Hall, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. A total of 51 people attended the hearing, one of them provided court reporter comments and eight provided written comments. Additionally, during the comment period the study team received two e-mails, one fax, and four letters from resource agencies.

Legal notices announcing the hearing were placed in the Tuesday, November 8, 2005, issue of the *Advance News* in Ada/Cascade/Forest Hills, Allendale/Coopersville Ottawa, Byron Center/Ada/Caledonia/Gaines, East Grand Rapids Cadence, Grand Rapids, Jenison/Grandville/Grand Valley East, Hudsonville/Zeeland/Grand Valley West, Kentwood, Rockford/Cedar Springs, Sparta/Kent City, Walker, Wayland and Wyoming; and the Friday, November 11, 2005, issue of the *Grand Rapids Press*. A copy of the notice is included in the "Legal Notice/Informational Bulletin" tab of this document. As mentioned in the notice, the official record was held open to include comments postmarked on or before December 12, 2005.

The transcript from the hearing and the comments received is enclosed for your review and record. If you have any questions regarding this issue, please contact me or Bob Parsons, Public Hearings Officer, at (517) 373-9534.

Sincerely,

Susan P. Mortel, Director  
Bureau of Transportation Planning

Enclosures

**APPENDIX B**

**Project Mitigation “Green Sheet”**

**Project Mitigation Summary “Green Sheet”**  
**For the Preferred Alternative**

**December 30, 2005**

Environmental Assessment  
Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation

Proposed Improvements of I-196, I-96 and M-37/M-44 (East Beltline) in the City  
of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township,  
Kent County, Michigan

**I. Social and Economic Environment**

- a. *Relocations* - Adequate replacements are available for the two businesses and one residence that will be total takes for this project. Minor strips of right-of-way are also needed at several businesses and residences to accommodate turn lanes and sidewalk improvements. The minor loss of parking at several businesses will be reviewed during design to minimize or mitigate the impact. Acquisition assistance and advisory services will be provided by MDOT in accordance with the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended; and Act 87, Michigan P.A. 1980, as amended.
- b. *Maintaining Traffic* - MDOT will maintain one lane of traffic in each direction on trunkline roads but may have to detour traffic onto local roads for short periods of time. A Motorist Information Plan (temporary electronic message signs) will be developed and implemented during construction to identify lane closures and alternative routes. Coordination with local officials will occur to facilitate emergency service and school bus routes. Access to residences and businesses within the project area will be maintained during construction
- c. *Pedestrian/Bicyclists* - Non-motorized trails along both sides of the Grand River will be temporarily closed during the Grand River bridge replacement. MDOT will provide detour signing for pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles during construction and access to the remainder of the trail will be maintained. When construction on the bridges has been completed, the trails will be restored to their original condition or better. During construction, the parking of vehicles or storage of equipment and materials on any public recreational property is prohibited.

## II. Natural Environment

- a. *Bridge Deck Drainage Issues* - MDOT will evaluate the feasibility of eliminating bridge deck drains from the I-196 crossing over the Grand River in accordance with the MDOT's statewide storm water discharge permit. Pursuant to the requirements of the permit MDOT will utilize storm water best management practices, including the reduction or elimination of bridge deck drains to the maximum extent practical.
- b. *Stream Crossing/Lakes/Streams* - Construction access to the Grand River piers will be provided by a combination of cofferdams and causeways. A Construction Staging Plan will be prepared and reviewed with MDEQ and other Resource Agencies prior to the Act 451, Part 31 (Floodplains) and Part 301 (Inland Lakes and streams) permit application. The plan will include soil erosion/sedimentation controls including dewatering operations, temporary causeway/access pad design along with installation/removal phasing and stream navigation requirements (signing and lighting).
- c. *Wetlands* - Approximately 2.08 acres (0.63 acres of palustrine forested and 1.16 acres of palustrine emergent) of wetlands will be impacted by construction of the Preferred Alternative. Using the 2 to 1 mitigation ratio for forested and 1.5 to 1 ratio for emergent, this project will require a total of 3.51 acres (1.26 acres of forested wetland and 2.25 acres of emergent) of wetland mitigation. The mitigation site selected is the fish farm site adjacent to the floodplain on the south side of the Grand River in Robinson Township in Ottawa County. The wetland mitigation and monitoring plan will be included in the Act 451, Part 303 permit to be obtained from the MDEQ.
- d. *Floodplains* - The preliminary hydraulic analysis indicates the new Grand River structure will decrease the 100-year flood stage by 0.12 feet compared to the existing structure. The proposed stream and drain culvert modifications will be reviewed during design to verify hydraulic capacity.
- e. *Threatened/Endangered Species* - At the project pre-construction meeting, written identification materials/guidance will be provided indicating steps to be taken should an Eastern Box Turtle be discovered. An updated threatened and endangered species list and an updated bird survey of the Grand River structure will be obtained prior to construction.

## III. Cultural Environment

- a. *Historic Resource* - The SHPO has determined that the proposed work will have no adverse effect on historic properties. If design changes occur in the vicinity of the historic properties, the MDOT Historian must review the changes and coordinate with SHPO and FHWA.

#### **IV. Hazardous/Contaminated Materials**

- a. *Project Contamination* - A Project Area Contamination Survey (PACS) was performed for this project. Potential areas of concern have been identified and additional review (and testing if required) will occur during the design phase when slope-stake lines and construction limits are determined.
- b. *River Sediment Contamination* - River bottom sediments to be excavated for the pier widening in the Grand River will be tested prior to construction to determine potential contamination and required disposal methods.
- c. *Contamination Exposure* - A Workers Health and Safety Plan will be prepared if any asbestos, lead, or other contamination is identified.

#### **V. Construction**

- a. *Construction Access Pads or Work Areas* - Cofferdams and causeways will be constructed in the Grand River to facilitate the widening of the piers. All protection items included in the Construction Staging Plan to be developed during the design phase will be followed.
- b. *Construction Permits* - Permits under Act 451, Parts 31, 301, and 303, are required from the MDEQ for this project. Coverage under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), which is administered by MDEQ, is also required. The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers has stated that no permits for work in the Grand River will be required from their office.
- c. *Time Restrictions* - Based on the most current available data, no work in the Grand River will be allowed between March 1 and May 1 and also from September 15 to November 30, to protect fish spawning. Work may occur during these times if it is done within an enclosed cofferdam to isolate the construction activity from the water.



## **APPENDIX C**

### **Letters from Federal, State and Local Agencies**



December 12, 2005

Mr. Roger Safford  
Regional Engineer  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
1420 Front Street, NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Dear Mr. Safford:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our support for the proposed improvements to the I-196 corridor in the City of Grand Rapids.

Our Engineering, Traffic Safety and senior staff have worked closely with MDOT during the Environmental Assessment process. This process has included public input sessions and a presentation to the Grand Rapids City Commission.

The preferred alternative that emerged from the Environmental Assessment process will reduce congestion, improve air quality, provide access to employment centers and reinvest in the region's urban center. The preferred alternative will accomplish this in a manner consistent with, and in the context of, our region's multi-modal transportation strategy. The preferred alternative will also promote economic development, particularly in the critical Michigan Hill Medical Mile area of the City where more than \$1 billion in job-producing public and private investment is underway. The timing of the Environmental Assessment, the need for the recommended improvements and the preferred alternative's positive impact on economic development is promising.

Please accept this letter of support for the preferred alternative.

Sincerely,

Eric R. DeLong  
Deputy City Manager

ERD/nlm

cc: Mayor George Heartwell  
City Manager Kurt Kimball  
City Engineer Bill Cole  
Public Works Director Patrick Bush  
Assistant City Engineer Richard DeVries

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**

DETROIT DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS

REGULATORY OFFICE

GRAND HAVEN FIELD OFFICE

P.O. BOX 629

GRAND HAVEN, MICHIGAN 49417-0629

September 24, 2004

IN REPLY REFER TO

File No. 04-241-002-0

Margaret M. Barondess  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
Murray D. Van Wagoner Building  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Ms. Barondess:

This is in response to your recent correspondence regarding Department of the Army jurisdiction on proposed improvement of I-196 and East Beltline over the Grand River at Grand Rapids, Michigan (Sections 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, and 27, T7N, R11W and 12W).

As a result of the transfer of a portion of the Corps' regulatory responsibilities to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), this site is no longer within the Corps' jurisdiction. Therefore, we recommend that you contact Ms. Peg Bostwick, Lake and Stream Protection Unit, Geological and Land Management Division, MDEQ, P.O. Box 30458, Lansing, Michigan, 48909, (517) 335-3470, for a determination of State permit requirements.

If you have any questions please contact Nathan T. Schulz at the above address or telephone (616) 842-5510 x 30. Please refer to File Number: 04-241-002-0.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Tucker  
Chief, Enforcement Branch  
Regulatory Office



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

Detroit Airports District Office  
Metro Airport Center  
11677 South Wayne Road, Ste. 107  
Romulus, MI 48174

December 8, 2005

Ms. Margaret Barondess, Manager  
Environmental Section  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Ms. Barondess:

Environmental Assessment/Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation  
For

The Proposed Improvements of I-196 from east of US-131 to the I-196/I-96 from west of Leonard Street to west of Cascade Road, and M-37/M-44 (East Beltline) from south of M-21 to north of Knapp Street Intersection in the City of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township, Kent County, Michigan

The Federal Aviation Administration has reviewed the above referenced environmental assessment.

Per Advisory Circular 150/5200-33A, Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or Near Airports, Section 1-3, "the FAA recommends a separation distance of 10,000 feet at these airports for any of the hazardous wildlife attractants mentioned in Section 2." These include, waste disposal operations, water management facilities, wetlands, dredge spoil contamination areas, agricultural activities, golf courses, and landscaping, and other land use considerations.

The FAA also recommends that wetland mitigation projects that may attract hazardous wildlife be sited at least 5 statute miles between the farthest edge of the aircraft operations area and the hazardous wildlife attractant (i.e., wetlands) if the attractant could cause hazardous wildlife movement into or across the approach or departure airspace.

I can be contacted at (734) 229-2958 if you desire further clarifications on these comments.

Sincerely,

Katherine S. Jones  
Community Planner  
Detroit Airports District Office



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARTS AND LIBRARIES  
LANSING

JENNIFER GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

DR. WILLIAM ANDERSON  
DIRECTOR

March 11, 2005

ABDELMOEZ ABDALLA  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
315 W ALLEGAN STREET  
ROOM 207  
LANSING MI 48933

RE: ER05-111 I-196 / I-96 Corridor, Grand Rapids, Kent County (FHWA)

Dear Mr. Abdalla:

Under the authority of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, we have reviewed the above-cited undertaking at the location noted above. Based on the information provided for our review, it is the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) that the effects of the proposed undertaking do not meet the criteria of adverse effect [36 CFR § 800.5(a)(1)]. Therefore, the project will have no adverse effect [36 CFR § 800.5(b)] on the Ionia Avenue Mission Hall and on the potential Belknap-Lookout Historic District, which appear to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The views of the public are essential to informed decision making in the Section 106 process. Federal Agency Officials or their delegated authorities must plan to involve the public in a manner that reflects the nature and complexity of the undertaking, its effects on historic properties and other provisions per 36 CFR § 800.2(d). We remind you that Federal Agency Officials or their delegated authorities are required to consult with the appropriate Indian tribe and/or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) when the undertaking may occur on or affect any historic properties on tribal lands. In all cases, whether the project occurs on tribal lands or not, Federal Agency Officials or their delegated authorities are also required to make a reasonable and good faith effort to identify any Indian tribes or Native Hawaiian organizations that might attach religious and cultural significance to historic properties in the area of potential effects and invite them to be consulting parties per 36 CFR § 800.2(c).

This letter evidences the FHWA's compliance with 36 CFR § 800.4 "Identification of historic properties" and 36 CFR § 800.5 "Assessment of adverse effects", and the fulfillment of the FHWA's responsibility to notify the SHPO, as a consulting party in the Section 106 process, under 36 CFR § 800.5(e) "Consulting party review".

The State Historic Preservation Office is not the office of record for this undertaking. You are therefore asked to maintain a copy of this letter with your environmental review record for this undertaking. If the scope of work changes in any way, or if artifacts or bones are discovered, please notify this office immediately.

If you have any questions, please contact Martha MacFarlane Faes, Environmental Review Coordinator, at (517) 335-2721 or by email at ER@michigan.gov. **Please reference our project number in all communication with this office regarding this undertaking.** Thank you for this opportunity to review and comment, and for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Conway  
State Historic Preservation Officer

BDC:ROC:bgg

copy: Sigrid Bergland, MDOT



JENNIFER GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
LANSING

GLORIA J. JEFF  
DIRECTOR

November 4, 2005

Ms. Pauline Spruce  
NAGPRA  
Keweenaw Bay Indian Community  
107 Beartown Road  
Baraga, Michigan 49908

Dear Ms. Spruce:

Enclosed for your information and review is a copy of the Environmental Assessment for the proposed improvements to I-196 from Leonard Street to Cascade Road and M-37/M-44 from M-21 to Knapp Street in the City of Grand Rapids, Kent County. A public hearing for this proposed project has been scheduled for November 29, 2005, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Grand Rapids Township Hall. An announcement for the hearing will be published in local newspapers.

Subject to the receipt of any information indicating that the proposed project will result in significant impacts on the environment, it is our intention to submit this document to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with a recommendation that the FHWA prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). For a project of this type, a FONSI is the final step in the environmental clearance process. After the FONSI has been approved by the FHWA, the project can proceed to the final design, right-of-way, and construction phase[s].

Comments should be submitted in writing no later than December 12, 2005.

Sincerely,  
**THE KEWEENAW BAY INDIAN COMMUNITY**

**HAS NO INTEREST IN:**

**PROJECT #:** ~~E-196-M37 Road Improvement @ Grand Rapids, Kent County~~

**SUMMER COHEN/THPO/NAGPRA**

Margaret M. Barondess  
Margaret M. Barondess, Manager  
Environmental Section  
Project Planning Division

Enclosure  
**DATE**

Scanned & distributed  
12-6-05



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
LANSING

MITCH IRWIN  
DIRECTOR

November 22, 2005

Ms. Margaret M. Barondess  
Environmental Section Manager  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Ms. Barondess:

I received your request for input on the Environmental Assessment for the proposed improvements of I-196 from east of US-131 to the I-96 junction; I-96 from west of Cascade Road to west of Leonard Street; and M-37/M-44 south of M-21 to north of Knapp Street in Kent County. Michigan Department of Agriculture staff has reviewed your maps and summary of proposed work.

Our July 23, 2004 response, as part of the early coordination process, indicated that this area is a highly developed urban/urbanizing corridor and most of the improvements will be conducted within the existing right of way. We note no major impacts to agriculture as a result of this proposed project. Consideration of impacts on established inter- and intra-county drains have been addressed. We have no additional concerns as they apply to the functions of this Department and have no opposition to a recommendation of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

We appreciate being able to provide input to this Environmental Assessment process. Feel free to contact Abigail Eaton, Resource Specialist at 517/241-3933 if we can be of further assistance on this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mitch Irwin".

Mitch Irwin  
Director



IN REPLY REFER TO:

# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
East Lansing Field Office (ES)  
2651 Coolidge Road, Suite 101  
East Lansing, Michigan 48823-6316

December 13, 2005

Margaret Barondess, Manager  
Environmental Section  
Project Planning Division  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Re: Request for Comments on the Environmental Assessment for the Proposed I-196/96 Improvement Project in Kent County, Michigan.

Dear Ms. Barondess:

We are responding to your request for comments on the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed I-196/96 Improvement Project in Kent County, Michigan. You have indicated the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration is proposing improvement of I-196 from just east of US-131 to the I-96 junction; I-96 from west of Cascade Road to west of Leonard Street; and M-37/M-44 (East Beltline) south of M-21 to north of the Knapp Street intersection in the city of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapid Township, Kent County, Michigan. These comments are prepared under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and are consistent with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended.

## **Fish and Wildlife Resources**

**Section 2.12, Endangered and Threatened Species, pages 28-29.** The EA concludes that no federally listed threatened or endangered species or species proposed for listing are found in the project corridor where construction is proposed.

If new information about the project becomes available that indicates listed or proposed species may be present and/or affected or should other species occurring in the project area become federally listed or proposed, a reevaluation of project impacts should be conducted. Because data on threatened and endangered species are updated continually, we recommend Michigan Department of Transportation request an updated list of federally endangered, threatened, or proposed species that may occur in the project vicinity, if project initiation extends beyond six months of this letter.

**Section 2.13, Fisheries and Wildlife, pages 29-30.** The EA describes the presence of limited fish and wildlife habitat in the project impact area. Wildlife surveys conducted for the project found no use by wildlife of the I-196 bridge structure over the Grand River. We recommend the final EA acknowledge that surveys prior to construction will be undertaken to assure migratory bird nests are not disturbed and/or destroyed during construction, per current MDOT policy.



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

Michigan State  
Office

3001 Coolidge  
Road, Suite 250  
East Lansing, MI  
48823-6321  
(P) 517-324-5270  
(F) 517-324-5171  
[www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov)

November 16, 2005

Mr. Robert H. Parsons  
Public Hearing Officer  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

RE: Environmental Assessment (EA) – Proposed Improvements to I-196, I-96 and M-37/M-44 in the City of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township, Kent County, Michigan

Dear Mr. Parsons:

NRCS has reviewed the proposed improvements specified in the EA for I-196, I-96, and M-37/M-44 in the City of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township in Kent County, Michigan. It is our determination that the proposed improvements will not have a negative impact on neither prime nor unique farmland. Most surrounding areas are urban in extent.

Sincerely,

JOHN A. BRICKER  
State Conservationist

cc:

Steve Utic, District Conservationist, NRCS, Grand Rapids, MI  
Carla Gregory, Area Conservationist, NRCS, Grand Rapids, MI



The Natural Resources Conservation Service works in partnership with the American people to conserve and sustain natural resources on private lands.

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Written Comments**

**From:** Bob Parsons  
**To:** fabers  
**Date:** 12/5/2005 12:34:06PM  
**Subject:** Re: MDOT Proposed Improvements to I-196, I-96 and M-37/M-44

Mr. Faber: Thank you for attending the hearing and for providing such thorough comments for the study team. With this response I am forwarding them to the team and will add them to the hearing document to be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration after December 12. We appreciate your involvement in this study. If I can be of assistance, please let me know. Thank you.

Robert H. Parsons  
Public Hearings Officer  
Bureau of Transportation Planning  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, MI 48909  
(517) 373-9534  
parsonsb@michigan.gov

"Seek first to understand,  
then to be understood."

Stephen R. Covey

>>> fabers <steve@cityvisioninc.org> 11/30/2005 11:26 AM >>>

Steve Faber  
(616)456-0485

I attended the Nov 29 public comment opportunity.  
Please include the following concerns and comments regarding Proposed Improvement to I-196, I-96 and M-37/M-44:

1) Lane Expansion: I am opposed to any expansion involving additional lanes on I-196 between the river and I-96. For over 30 years Belknap Lookout has been detached and fragmented from the rest of the city because of I-196. The west side of Grand Rapids experienced similar issues with US131. Additionally, the City Master Plan calls for improved connections to minimize the impact of freeways as barriers for neighborhoods. The expansion of I-196 does not minimize its impact on surrounding neighborhoods. The expansion also will increased noise and air pollution for surrounding neighbors and is a quality of life issue. MDOT highlighted last night that sound proofing is cost prohibitive and not part of the plan. Finally on the point of expansion. This is a 30 year plan, but funding freeway expansion wasn't even creative or future thinking 30 years ago. If you build it, it will fill up with cars. I thought that the point of M-6 was to alleviate pressure from downtown traffic, what went wrong that now we are adding more lanes.

2) Cost: The estimate we were given last night was \$375,000,000 in 2005 dollars for a roughly 4 mile stretch with work being completed in 2030. I believe the original estimate for the South Beltway was somewhere around 450,000,000 for 20 miles of new freeway. Although I have not heard final figures for the cost of the South Beltway, I have heard rumors of it creeping up to 1 billion once the various land acquisitions and easements were secured. My understanding is that the cost for I-196 will be payed for by local, state and federal dollars. I don't see this as a fiscally responsible choice for the City of Grand Rapids or the State of Michigan. We need to be investing these dollars in building up the identity of Grand Rapids as a progressive and creative city, not an antiquated dinosaur that thinks the automobile is the future. If there are legitimate safety concerns on I-196 then only fund those, but not the expansion of additional lanes.

3) Pedestrians: "Traffic Safety" is an oxymoron. As an avid bike commuter, runner and walker I must advocate for more pedestrian oriented development in regards to the I-196 plan, and specifically the bridges and Division Ave boulevard.

First and foremost are the Coit Ave overpass and Lafayette Ave underpass. If these bridges are redone, they must be done in a way that is safe and promotes walkability for Belknap Lookout. Three quick stories: A month ago I saw a young mother walking her baby in a stroller to the hospital crossing Coit Ave bridge. She had to take her child out of the stroller because the current sidewalk has about a 1 foot edge and she was fearful that the stroller would tip. She ended up carrying the child, pulling the stroller until she made it to the other side. Another recent story is that Immanuel Lutheran on Michigan has a partnership with Coit Elementary in Belknap. They bus kids 3 blocks for programming because they don't feel the overpass and Michigan are safe for kids to walk. Finally, the most dangerous part of my bike commute in the morning is avoiding cars coming out of the parking ramp near this overpass. With additional medical towers being constructed at Coit and Michigan, this will only get worse.

The Division Ave Boulevard looks great. I think of any part of the plan, this makes the most sense. At this point, it appears that Division is underutilized as a way to get to and from downtown. With the additional north bound exit, I think this road could be better utilized. This is slated to be the last project done in the plan, but it should be the first. Chances are it will reduce traffic congestion at College and Leonard exits and may reduce enough pressure that expansion becomes unnecessary. Again, I would advocate that this boulevard be pedestrian friendly. It can either be another barrier separating Belknap from North Monroe or a connector making pedestrian traffic flow better by tying in with the stairs that come down the hillside. The plan should also include a strategy for recognizing and enhancing the Master Plan's TOD at the intersection of Plainfield/Leonard. The Division Ave project must be integrated and coordinated with all the other activities happening on the Medical Mile, North Monroe, Creston and Belknap. The impression I

got at last night's meeting was that MDOT new nothing about these other initiatives and were designing the projects independently.

**CC:** VanNorwick, Chris; WEERSTRA, VICKI

**I-196 / I-96 GRAND RAPIDS IMPROVEMENTS  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
COMMENT FORM**

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has performed an Environmental Assessment and Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation for proposed improvements to I-196, I-96 and M-37/M-44 in the city of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township. This is your opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment (EA), which provides background on the project and presents the Preferred Alternative.

**GET INVOLVED!**

Your comments are important and will become a matter of public record. All supporting documentation to the Environmental Assessment will be prepared after the close of the comment period on December 12, 2005. All relevant comments received on the EA will be summarized and responded to in the supporting documentation.

\* \* \* PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY \* \* \*

Name BRIAN REYNOLDS E-mail REYNOLDSURVEY@  
Address 111 WEST MARSHALL CABLESPEED.COM  
City HASTINGS State MI Zip 49058

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.**

Please use the space below and additional pages if necessary. Turn your comment form in at the public hearing, or give your comments orally to the court recorder. If you wish, you may mail, fax or e-mail them (see below).

IT APPEARS THAT THE INTERCHANGE OF I-196  
AT US-131 IS NOT ENVISIONED FOR A MAJOR  
REDESIGN & REBUILD. THIS IN, MY OPINION, IS A  
MISTAKE. WITH THE LEFT EXITS AND ENTRANCES,  
THE ORIGINAL DESIGN WAS A MISTAKE. I  
UNDERSTAND THE SPACE CONSTRAINTS, BUT  
STILL BELIEVE A MAJOR REDESIGN & REBUILD IS  
NECESSARY. AS SUCH, I BELIEVE ANY (OVER)

Please return this form before you leave or mail or fax it by December 12, 2005 to:

Mr. Robert H. Parsons  
Public Hearings Officer  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, MI 48909  
Fax: 517.373.9255

MASON UPGRADE TO THE I-196 BRIDGES OVER THE GRAND RIVER SHOULD BE DONE ONLY IN THE CONTEXT OF A COMPLETE REBUILD OF THE INTERCHANGE.

I WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE STUDY AREA BE RELOCATED TO END AT THE OTTAWA AVENUE BRIDGE

THAT SAID, THE BALANCE OF THE PROJECT IS NECESSARY, WORTHWHILE, IN MY OPINION, THE BENEFITS FAR OUTWEIGH ANY NEGATIVE IMPACTS

**I-196 / I-96 GRAND RAPIDS IMPROVEMENTS  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
COMMENT FORM**

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has performed an Environmental Assessment and Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation for proposed improvements to I-196, I-96 and M-37/M-44 in the city of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township. This is your opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment (EA), which provides background on the project and presents the Preferred Alternative.

**GET INVOLVED!**

Your comments are important and will become a matter of public record. All supporting documentation to the Environmental Assessment will be prepared after the close of the comment period on December 12, 2005. All relevant comments received on the EA will be summarized and responded to in the supporting documentation.

\* \* \* PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY \* \* \*

Name BRIAN MCKAY E-mail bpmkay66@netzero.net  
Address 511 Emerald  
City GR State MI Zip 49503

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.**

Please use the space below and additional pages if necessary. Turn your comment form in at the public hearing, or give your comments orally to the court recorder. If you wish, you may mail, fax or e-mail them (see below).

I like the C-4 concept.  
start work on the 96 to 196 turn to  
the west ASAP & call that section  
after myself.

Thank

Brian McKay

**Please return this form before you leave or mail or fax it by December 12, 2005 to:**

**Mr. Robert H. Parsons  
Public Hearings Officer  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, MI 48909  
Fax: 517.373.9255**

**I-196 / I-96 GRAND RAPIDS IMPROVEMENTS  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
COMMENT FORM**

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has performed an Environmental Assessment and Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation for proposed improvements to I-196, I-96 and M-37/M-44 in the city of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township. This is your opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment (EA), which provides background on the project and presents the Preferred Alternative.

**GET INVOLVED!**

Your comments are important and will become a matter of public record. All supporting documentation to the Environmental Assessment will be prepared after the close of the comment period on December 12, 2005. All relevant comments received on the EA will be summarized and responded to in the supporting documentation.

\* \* \* PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY \* \* \*

Name Tom Duffy E-mail Tom.john.duffy@ytdh.com  
Address 2383 Thornapple River Dr  
City Grand Rapids State Mi Zip 49546

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.**

Please use the space below and additional pages if necessary. Turn your comment form in at the public hearing, or give your comments orally to the court recorder. If you wish, you may mail, fax or e-mail them (see below).

ON M-6 EB there is no sign to tell  
drivers at I-96 that Grand Rapids is left or  
west. People not from the area are easily  
confused - please put 1 sign up to  
show GR SB I96 WEST.

**Please return this form before you leave or mail or fax it by December 12, 2005 to:**

**Mr. Robert H. Parsons  
Public Hearings Officer  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, MI 48909  
Fax: 517.373.9255**

**I-196 / I-96 GRAND RAPIDS IMPROVEMENTS  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
COMMENT FORM**

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has performed an Environmental Assessment and Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation for proposed improvements to I-196, I-96 and M-37/M-44 in the city of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township. This is your opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment (EA), which provides background on the project and presents the Preferred Alternative.

**GET INVOLVED!**

Your comments are important and will become a matter of public record. All supporting documentation to the Environmental Assessment will be prepared after the close of the comment period on December 12, 2005. All relevant comments received on the EA will be summarized and responded to in the supporting documentation.

\* \* \* PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY \* \* \*

Name Jim Canham E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Address 222 N Washington Sq  
City Lansing State Mi Zip 48933

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.**

Please use the space below and additional pages if necessary. Turn your comment form in at the public hearing, or give your comments orally to the court recorder. If you wish, you may mail, fax or e-mail them (see below).

Congestion relief is needed through this  
Corridor - The project needs to be moved forward  
ASAP -

**Please return this form before you leave or mail or fax it by December 12, 2005 to:**

**Mr. Robert H. Parsons  
Public Hearings Officer  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, MI 48909  
Fax: 517.373.9255**

**I-196 / I-96 GRAND RAPIDS IMPROVEMENTS  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
COMMENT FORM**

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has performed an Environmental Assessment and Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation for proposed improvements to I-196, I-96 and M-37/M-44 in the city of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township. This is your opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment (EA), which provides background on the project and presents the Preferred Alternative.

**GET INVOLVED!**

Your comments are important and will become a matter of public record. All supporting documentation to the Environmental Assessment will be prepared after the close of the comment period on December 12, 2005. All relevant comments received on the EA will be summarized and responded to in the supporting documentation.

\* \* \* PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY \* \* \*

Name Ken Meines (Calvary church) E-mail Kmeines@cc.mi.org  
Address 707 East Beltline NE  
City Grand Rapids State MI Zip 49525

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.**

Please use the space below and additional pages if necessary. Turn your comment form in at the public hearing, or give your comments orally to the court recorder. If you wish, you may mail, fax or e-mail them (see below).

- 1.) Project is needed and if possible completed sooner
- 2.) Create a dedicated through lane for west bound 96 going to west 196 (downtown) Keep weave (merge out of it)
- 3.) East beltline double left turns. Re visit traffic at Calvary church entrance. At peak times two dedicated through lanes needed or more staging room and longer light cycles to move volume of traffic
- 4.) Local traffic using Calvary's lot as a "short cut" to E. Beltline

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Michigan Department of Transportation  
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\* \* \* PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY \* \* \*

Name Cheryl Smalley E-mail Smalleyc@gvsu.edu  
Address 3840 E Fulton  
City Grand Rapids State MI Zip 49546

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.**

Please use the space below and additional pages if necessary. Turn your comment form in at the public hearing, or give your comments orally to the court recorder. If you wish, you may mail, fax or e-mail them (see below).

Very informative meeting - I appreciate that we were notified by mail about the meeting. The m-21 interchange will affect my property and as a property owner the most important thing to me is to be kept informed. I was sorry to see that the dates for the m-21 portion had been moved out to later years.

**Please return this form before you leave or mail or fax it by December 12, 2005 to:**

**Mr. Robert H. Parsons  
Public Hearings Officer  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, MI 48909  
Fax: 517.373.9255**

**I-196 / I-96 GRAND RAPIDS IMPROVEMENTS  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
COMMENT FORM**

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**GET INVOLVED!**

Your comments are important and will become a matter of public record. All supporting documentation to the Environmental Assessment will be prepared after the close of the comment period on December 12, 2005. All relevant comments received on the EA will be summarized and responded to in the supporting documentation.

\* \* \* PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY \* \* \*

Name Steve Faber E-mail steve@cityvisioninc.org  
Address 719 Livingston Ave NE  
City Grand Rapids State MI Zip 49503

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.**

Please use the space below and additional pages if necessary. Turn your comment form in at the public hearing, or give your comments orally to the court recorder. If you wish, you may mail, fax or e-mail them (see below).

- Coit Ave Overpass needs to be pedestrian friendly to properly connect  
Beltway lookout to downtown - work with neighbors to enhance this point  
- I am opposed to Michigan Ave bridge widening and any widening of  
College Ave overpass  
- I like the Division Ave Blvd - but would like to see provision  
for pedestrian crossings at Beltway stairs

**Please return this form before you leave or mail or fax it by December 12, 2005 to:**

**Mr. Robert H. Parsons  
Public Hearings Officer  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 30050  
Lansing, MI 48909  
Fax: 517.373.9255**

**APPENDIX E**

**Public Hearing Transcripts**

1 STATE OF MICHIGAN  
2 MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
3 PUBLIC HEARING

4 - - - - -

5  
6 In the matter of:  
7 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAMMATIC SECTION 4(f)  
8 EVALUATION FOR PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO I-196, I-96 AND  
9 M-37/M-44 IN THE CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS AND GRAND RAPIDS  
10 TOWNSHIP, KENT COUNTY, MICHIGAN.

11  
12 - - - - -

13 P U B L I C H E A R I N G

14 November 29, 2005

15 4:00 p.m to 8:00 p.m.

16  
17 Grand Rapids Township Hall  
18 1836 East Beltline, N.E.  
19 Grand Rapids, Michigan

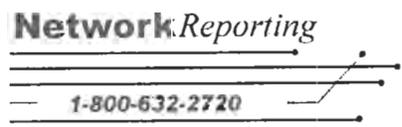
20  
21 Recorded by - NETWORK REPORTING CORPORATION  
22 Kimberly L. Van de Bogert, CER-5007



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I N D E X

Statement by Ms. Pennell . . . . . 3



## STATEMENT ON THE RECORD

1  
2  
3 Patricia Pennell  
4 8150 Thornapple River Drive S.E.  
5 Caledonia, Michigan 49316

6  
7 When it comes to the point where you're going to be  
8 replacing the bridge over the Grand River, whenever that is, a  
9 lot of people in Grand Rapids would really like to be able to  
10 actually view the river when you drive across it. So if there's  
11 some kind of bridge edges that are traffic safe that can give  
12 you a view of the river in a sedan -- like, right now you can  
13 almost see it if you're driving a semi -- that would really be  
14 nice. I understand they now have bridges -- bridge railings  
15 that are traffic safety items that can bounce you back into the  
16 traffic that you can actually see through. So that's been a  
17 comment of a lot of people in Grand Rapids, is when you're  
18 driving through Grand Rapids, you see this big beautiful city,  
19 and you see the river, and then when you cross it, you can't see  
20 any of it. And, you know, it may actually create a traffic  
21 hazzard to be able to see it, but it certainly would make the  
22 downtown area lot more beautiful. So that's my comment.

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RECORDER'S CERTIFICATE AND NOTARIZATION

I, Kimberly L. Van de Bogert, Court Recorder, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcription of the electronic recording made and recorded at the time and place of the above hearing, and is all the same so far as pertains thereto.

*Kimberly L. Vandebogert*

Kimberly L. Van de Bogert, CER-5007  
Notary Public  
My commission expires 03-13-2008

**APPENDIX F**

**Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Approval of the Long Range Plan,  
MDOT and FHWA Concurrence Letters**



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Highway  
Administration**

Michigan Division

315 W. Allegan St., Room 201  
Lansing, Michigan 48933

December 13, 2005

Ms. Susan P. Mortel, Director  
Bureau of Transportation Planning (B340)  
Michigan Department of Transportation  
Lansing, Michigan

Dear Ms. Mortel:

We have reviewed the air quality conformity analysis of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council's amendment to the "2030 Long Range Transportation Plan for the Grand Rapids Metro Area" submitted by your letter of October 26, 2005. The conformity analysis was performed for the addition of projects in Grand Rapids. The air quality conformity analysis was reviewed by the Environmental Protection Agency.

In consultation with the Federal Transit Administration Region 5, we find that the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council's "2030 Long Range Transportation Plan for the Grand Rapids Metro Area" as amended, is in conformance with the transportation related requirements of the 1990 CAAA and the regulations for determining conformity of transportation plans and programs to State Implementation Plans (SIP) for air quality as contained in 40 CFR Part 93. A new conformity finding will be required if the Transportation Plan is modified by adding or deleting non-exempt projects, or if any of the triggering events specified in 40 CFR 93 occur.

If you have any questions regarding this action, please contact Cindy Durrenberger, FHWA at (517) 702-1829.

Sincerely yours,

*/original signed by/*

Cindy L. Durrenberger  
Transportation Planner

For: James J. Steele  
Division Administrator



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**  
LANSING

GLORIA J. JEFF  
DIRECTOR

October 26, 2005

Mr. James J. Steele, Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration  
315 West Allegan Street, Room 201  
Lansing, Michigan 48933

Dear Mr. Steele:

Enclosed for your review and approval are two copies of the amendments to the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan for the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council Board (GVMC) took action on October 6, 2005, to amend the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The detailed description and documentation of these actions are enclosed. The amendments generally include the following:

1. I-196 between US-131 and the I-96 Junction, and I-96 between Leonard Street and Cascade Road; widening the freeway mainline from 4 to 6 lanes, with weave/merge lanes between major interchanges.
2. I-196/I-96/M-44/M-37 junction area; bridge replacement and widening.
3. I-96 @ I-196 and I-96 @ M-21 interchanges; adding ramps, completing or modifying the interchanges.
4. M-44/M-37 (East Beltline) between M-21 and Knapp Street; widening to improve connections to the freeway.
5. See detailed list of other related improvements noted in the Environmental Assessment.

The projects in this amendment are scheduled for completion in 2030 at a total cost of \$375 million. The funding will come from the Preservation and Capacity Improvement funding categories in the estimates currently provided for trunkline projects in the approved GVMC LRTP. The overall GVMC 2030 LRTP for the Grand Rapids metro area remains in financial constraint after these changes.

These amendments have been included in the air quality conformity analysis for the Kent and Ottawa County non-attainment areas and found to be in conformance with the requirements of the Clean Air Act, as amended. An interagency workgroup meeting was held on August 18, 2005, to review the projects and determine which projects to include in the conformity analysis. Specific information related to the air quality conformity analysis and actual mobile 6.2 runs are enclosed for review.

Mr. James J. Steele  
Page 2  
October 26, 2005

The Governor of the State of Michigan has designated the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to act on her behalf in the review of the state's urbanized area LRTPs. Pursuant to this authority, MDOT endorses these LRTP amendments and has assessed compliance with federal and state rules and regulations.

Therefore, MDOT approves these amendments and requests your concurrence that the process used to develop them is consistent with the Metropolitan Planning Organization LRTP development process requirements of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. MDOT requests federal approval of the air quality conformity analysis included in this letter.

If you have any questions, please contact either me or Sandra M. Cornell-Howe, Transportation Planner, Statewide Planning Section, at 517-335-2971.

Sincerely,



Susan P. Mortel, Director  
Bureau of Transportation Planning

Enclosure(s)  
cc: Dalrois McBurrows  
Sandra M. Cornell-Howe



**MEMORANDUM**

---

**DATE:** September 12, 2005  
**TO:** GVMC Executive Committee  
**FROM:** Chris Dingman, Senior Transportation Planner  
**RE:** Year 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan Amendment

---

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is requesting an amendment to the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council Year 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan to include improvements to the **I-196/I-96 Corridor**. As the designated metropolitan planning agency for the Grand Rapids Urbanized Area, the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC) is required to act on this proposed addition to the Plan.

The improvements being proposed by MDOT generally include the following:

- Widening the freeway mainline from 4 to 6 lanes, with weave/merge lanes between major interchanges – on **I-196** between US-131 and the I-96 Junction and **I-96** between Leonard St. and Cascade Rd.
- Separating through and local traffic at the I-196/I-96/M-44/M-37 junction area.
- Adding ramps and completing the I-96 @ I-196 and I-96 @ M-21 interchanges; and modifications to other interchanges.
- Widening the **East Beltline (M-44/M-37)** between M-21 and Knapp St. to improve connections to the freeway.

The proposed improvements are per the Environmental Assessment currently underway in the corridor and are planned for completion by the Year 2030. The cost for these projects is estimated at \$375 million. A public meeting was held on this project the evening of Wednesday, August 10, 2005 at Grand Rapids Charter Township Hall. The GVMC Transportation Technical and Policy Committees have both recommended approval of this action.

Action Requested: Approval of proposed 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan amendment.

**GRAND VALLEY METRO COUNCIL  
Board Meeting**

October 6, 2005  
8:30 a.m.  
Kent County Building

MINUTES

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Chairman Jim Buck.

**Members Present:**

Jim Beelen	Allendale Township
Dale Bergman	Sparta Township
Marta Brechting	Alpine Township
Jim Buck	City of Grandville
Pat Capek	City of Cedar Springs
Daryl Delabbio	Kent County
Mike DeVries	Grand Rapids Township
Bev Drake	ACSET Council
George Heartwell	City of Grand Rapids
Don Hilton	Gaines Township
Dennis Homeke	Algoma Township
Bill Holland	Georgetown Township
Ron Howell	Village of Middleville
Kurt Kimball	City of Grand Rapids
Pauline Lubben	City of Hudsonville
Robert May	City of Hastings
Jim Miedema	Jamestown Township
Cy Moore	Treasurer
David Morren	Kent County
Deborah Nier	City of Wayland
Sandy Frost Parrish	Cascade Township
Steven Patrick	City of Coopersville
Jack Poll	City of Wyoming
Bob Rinck	Ottawa County
Rick Root	Cannon Township
Bonnie Shupe	Cannon Township
Al Vanderberg	Ottawa County
Rob VerHeulen	City of Walker
Bill VerHulst	City of Wyoming
Ted Vonk	Kent County
Bill Wiersma	Tallmadge Township

**Members Absent:**

Cindy Bartman	City of East Grand Rapids
Brian Chodowski	Village of Sparta
Tom Fehsenfeld	At-Large Member
Brian Harrison	Caledonia Township
Doyle Hayes	At-Large Member
James McIntyre	Courtland Township
Mick McGraw	At-large Member
George Meek	Plainfield Township
Audrey Nevins	Byron Township
Tom Wiczorek	City of Ionia
Michael Young	City of Rockford

**Others Present:**

Leon Branderhorst	Grand Valley Metro Council
David Bulkowski	Disability Advocates of Kent County
David Czurak	Grand Rapids Business Journal
Kyla King	Grand Rapids Press
Gayle McCrath	Grand Valley Metro Council
Abed Itani	Grand Valley Metro Council
Don Stypula	Grand Valley Metro Council
Peter Varga	ITP
Vicki Weerstra	MDOT
Dennis Kent	MDOT
Bill Loehle	MDOT
Erick Kind	MDOT
Gloria Jeff	MDOT
Roger Safford	MDOT

**2. Minutes**

**MOTION – To Approve the Minutes of the September 2005, GVMC Board Meeting. MOVE – DeVries. SUPPORT – VerHeulen. MOTION CARRIED.**

**3. Financial Reports**

Don Stypula asked Cy Moore to give the financial report.

Cy Moore stated the projected deficit is expected to be \$110,000 at fiscal year end, which is \$90,000 less than expected when the budget was amended. The auditors will be arriving soon, and we expect to have the present the audited financials for 2004-2005 by January.

#### **4. Report from Nominating Committee**

Kurt Kimball reported on the Nominating Committee's recommendations for FY2006 officers and Executive Committee members. Those participating in the Nominating Committee were VerHeulen, Shupe, Buck, Morren, and Kimball. The committee proposed:

- Jim Buck – Chairman
- Don Hilton – Vice Chair
- Kurt Kimball – Secretary
- Cy Moore – Treasurer

In addition, the following were nominated to the Executive Committee:

- Jim Beelen
- Daryl Delabbio
- Audrey Nevins
- Rick Root
- Rob VerHeulen
- Alan Vanderberg

**MOTION – To Accept the 2005/2006 Nominations for GVMC Officers and Executive Committee Members. MOVE – Kimball. SUPPORT – Morren. MOTION CARRIED.**

#### **5. Transportation Department**

##### **A. Amendment to GVMC Transportation Air Quality Conformity Analysis**

Abed Itani explained the request for amendment to the GVMC Transportation Air Quality Conformity Analysis and answered questions.

**MOTION – To Amend the GVMC Transportation Air Quality Conformity Analysis. MOVE – Moore. SUPPORT – Vonk. MOTION CARRIED**

##### **B. MDOT Amendment to GVMC 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan**

Abed Itani explained the need to amend the GVMC 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan based on the amendment to the Air Quality Conformity Analysis and answered questions.

**MOTION – To Amend the GVMC 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan. MOVE – Vonk. SUPPORT – Poll. MOTION CARRIED.**

##### **C. Proposed GVMC Pavement Management System**

Abed Itani updated the committee on the proposed GVMC pavement management system and answered questions. He explained how the proposal would lower the costs to the MPO and result in better information and service to its members.

**Don Stypula requested a break in the presentation so Gloria Jeff, Director of the Michigan Department of Transportation, could address the group.**

Ms. Jeff talked about the importance of the transportation system and how everything related to the economy is dependent upon that system.

Ms. Jeff addressed the Council and talked about the new legacy and the new 1,800 page federal transportation funding bill - SAFETEA-LU.

The bill is still being analyzed and meetings will be scheduled to discuss what the ramifications of the bill will be.

The bill increases the availability of safety related transportation money as well as transportation education money.

There is concern that if not modified by 2009, the federal highway funding system could be in serious financial trouble.

Roger Safford spoke about the next construction season and the current 5-year plan.

**After Ms. Jeff's presentation, Don Stypula went back to Mr. Itani and the presentation on the new Transportation Management System.**

Abed Itani answered any remaining questions on the proposed pavement management system.

**MOTION – To Approve Action on the Proposed Pavement Management System.  
MOVE – Kimball. SUPPORT – Shupe. MOTION CARRIED.**

**6. Committee Appointments**

Jim Buck stated that a list of GVMC committee membership had been distributed and if anyone is interested in serving on the Legislative, Nominating, or Personnel Committees, please contact either himself or Gayle McCrath.

**7. REGIS Updates**

**Because of lack of time, the REGIS Update was cancelled.**

**8. Legislative Issues**

**Because of lack of time, the Legislative Update was cancelled.**