

Why no interchange at McCoy Road?

Over the years, The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has received inquiries about a potential interchange on I-75 at McCoy Road in the city of Gaylord. MDOT's proposed I-75/M-32 interchange (Exit 282) reconstruction project has elevated these inquiries again. This I-75/M-32 interchange project is rooted in the need to replace the existing I-75 bridges over M-32 due to their poor condition. This also creates an opportunity for MDOT to evaluate and incorporate geometric, operational, and safety improvements at this interchange.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements for new interchange proposals require that MDOT show that regional needs are not met with the existing interchanges to justify a new interchange. Preliminary input from FHWA indicated that there would have to be a compelling reason to allow a new interchange. This would be based on an extensive analysis that demonstrates a failure of the existing system to handle traffic demand. Analyzing the traffic volumes on I-75, merging traffic from on- and off-ramps, and the ability to clearly sign between the interchanges would also have to be completed and shown to be a minimal negative impact. MDOT must also show that the existing interchanges are optimized for today's travel needs before a new interchange would be considered by FHWA.

The 2004 [I-75 Gaylord East-West Crossing Study](#) conducted by the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments looked at the possibility of adding interchange on I-75 at or near McCoy/Milbocker Road (listed as Alternative 2) and found that, while it would provide the "best benefit for commercial truck access into the industrial areas near the airport, it does not solve peak hour traffic congestion problems at the two existing I-75 interchanges." According to MDOT's most recent traffic volume counts (2021), a large majority of traffic on M-32 in Gaylord has an origin or destination on that corridor and is not "pass-through" traffic. For that reason, a significant traffic diversion off M-32 should not be expected with a new interchange at McCoy Road. The operations and capacity of the I-75 Business Loop (BL) from McCoy Road to the south interchange (Exit 279) via I-75 BL currently provides a very good level of service. The extra distance to travel from McCoy Road to the existing south interchange is not seen as significant. Currently, and using predicted traffic volumes for 2045 with modest expected improvements, the north interchange operates at an acceptable level of service. The south interchange operates at an excellent level of service.

A new interchange would be a substantial independent investment that is not seen to be feasible at this time due to high costs, right-of-way constraints, geometrics, limited physical space, and FHWA requirements. There are also safety and operational concerns with a new interchange that is only 1 mile away from an existing interchange. Any new interchange would be an independent project that is outside the purpose and need of the M-32 interchange reconstruction project. MDOT will continue to look at the safety

and efficiency of the M-32 interchange as a secondary goal of the reconstruction project by investigating the feasibility of alternative designs, including both major changes and smaller improvements such as access control along surface streets, traffic signal control, modifying ramp terminals and intersections, adding turn bays, or lengthening vehicle storage. These are measures that will ensure this interchange meets the needs of regional traffic today and into the future.