

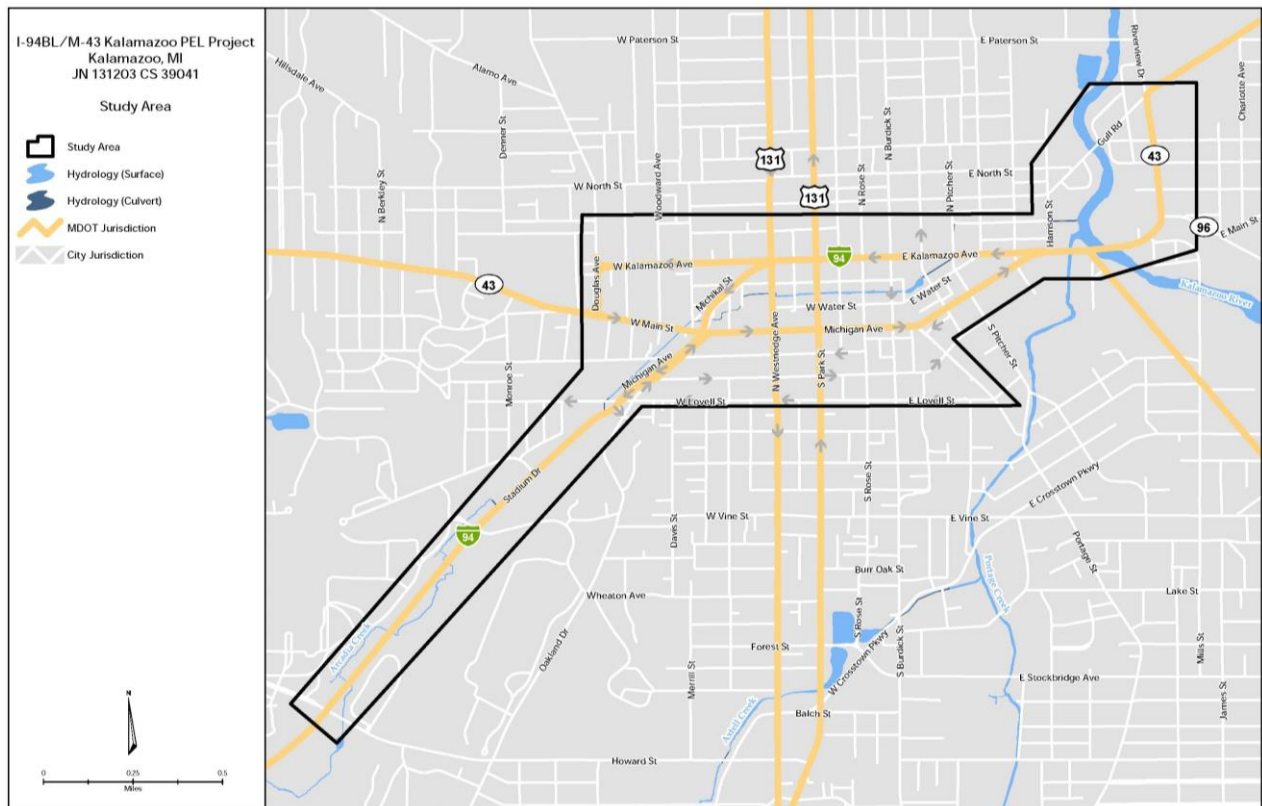
# Appendix G – PEL Questionnaire

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# Downtown Kalamazoo Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Questionnaire

FHWA's Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) process ensures the planning process follows the necessary steps to ease the transition from planning to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, if deemed necessary. This report includes a summary of the process followed for the Stadium Drive, Kalamazoo Avenue and Michigan Avenue Corridor (I-94BL/M-43) PEL study in the City of Kalamazoo (City). The project study area is shown below.

**Figure 1 Project Study Area**



The goal of the study is to select future transportation improvements to improve safety, operations, and pedestrian mobility and to provide a quality integrated transportation network for various transportation modes.

## 1. Background

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) was the sponsor of the PEL study which began in 2016 and completed in January 2019. MDOT internally led the study from inception to May 2017 at which time the consultant team of CDM Smith, MKSK and Surveying Solutions was brought under contract. This team of consultants, MDOT and the City formed the Admin Team.

The study area roadways link Western Michigan University (WMU), Kalamazoo College, multiple neighborhoods, and the Central Business District together. This corridor has many challenges starting with a relatively high average daily traffic of almost 29,000, a large number of pedestrians and bicyclists, and multiple destinations. A brief overview of the key roadways is described in the **Table 1**.

**Table 1: Key Roadways**

Street	Segment	# of Lanes	Speed Limit (mph)	On-Street Parking (Y/N)	Road Type
Douglas Ave	Main to Kalamazoo	3	35	No	One-Way Pair
Kalamazoo Ave	Douglas to Michikal/Westnedge	2-3	30-35	No	One-Way Pair
Kalamazoo Ave	Pitcher to Michigan	3	30	No	One-Way Pair
W Main St	Douglas to Michikal	3-4	35	No	One-Way Pair
Michigan Ave	BUS 94 to Westnedge	5-6	30-35	Yes	One-Way Pair
Michigan Ave	Kalamazoo to King	5-6	30	No	Undivided
Michigan Ave	King to Riverview	4-6	40	No	Undivided
Michigan Ave	Pitcher to Kalamazoo	3-4	30	No and Yes	One-Way Pair
Michigan Ave	South to Main	2-3	35	No	Divided
Michikal St	Main to Kalamazoo	3	35	No	One-Way
Riverview Dr	Michigan to Gull	4-5	40	No	Undivided
Stadium Dr	Oliver to Lovell	4-6	35	No	Undivided
Stadium Dr	Howard to Oliver	5-6	45	No	Undivided

The study area is highly developed with commercial and retail businesses and residential properties bordering the commercial zone as well as serving as a commuter corridor.

Over the years a number of studies have been undertaken by the City, MDOT, and local groups to evaluate traffic operations, address traffic problems and evaluate improvements to the downtown streets with the goal to enhance access and the economic viability of the corridor. Most recent studies have looked into transforming downtown Kalamazoo into more pedestrian-friendly and less vehicle-dependent, and to make the parking system operate more effectively. The recent studies are listed below:

- 2018 – City of Kalamazoo Complete Streets Policy
- 2017 – KATS Pedestrian, Greenway, and Transit Plan
- 2017 – Imagine Kalamazoo Master Plan & Strategic Vision Plan
- 2016 – KATS 2045 Transportation Plan
- 2016 – Downtown Kalamazoo Five Year Transportation Plan, Parking, and Mobility Plan
- 2014 – Stadium Drive and Michigan Avenue Corridor Study (charrette)
- 2014 – Residential Market Potential Analysis
- 2010 – City of Kalamazoo Master Plan (and on-going update)

## 2. Methodology Used

The methodology used for this study was based on past MDOT studies of similar type projects and follows an alternatives development and evaluation process typically associated with NEPA alternatives analysis. The scope of work for this study included documentation of the PEL process which was done throughout as the study developed. The purpose for completing this documentation is to:

- Summarize the environmental analysis and potential impacts completed thus far for use when funding is secured and NEPA classification is pursued.
- Engage and solicit input from stakeholders and members of the public.
- Refine the study purpose and need statement.
- Develop a Preferred Alternative for use in securing funding and considering phasing.
- Document the method of solving existing traffic congestion and crash issues.

NEPA-like terminology was used in the project documentation to accommodate future NEPA classification if necessary. For instance, the study includes a Purpose and Need Statement which went through multiple reviews. The decision makers throughout the study process consisted of the entire Study Team as described above in the Background section. Key coordination points between decision makers included the collection of relevant data, crash analysis, and traffic operation analysis. MDOT provided the preliminary environmental information and additional resource coordination occurred with FHWA and Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). FHWA attended numerous project meetings and SHPO was included indirectly through incorporation of the concurrent historical property survey that was completed in the Fall of 2018. Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and SHPO were included in the Local Advisory Group (LAG) but did not attend any meetings.

As the PEL was reaching the alternatives stage, a jurisdictional transfer of the key roadways in the study area was agreed to by MDOT and the City. This option was explored when the City decided the best avenue to achieve their downtown street vision was to have full control of the network. Overall MDOT and the City functionally have different responsibilities and priorities. As a result of these discussions, the PEL study recommendation was the jurisdictional transfer of which the City may utilize the information completed to date for their future use. Further jurisdictional transfer information can be found in **Section 8.1** of the Downtown Kalamazoo PEL Report.

## 3. Agency Coordination

Coordination with FHWA, other MDOT divisions, and local agencies occurred throughout the planning process. A series of project progress/informational meetings also occurred. The project technical team held 12 scheduled meetings which included representatives from MDOT, FHWA, WMU, Kalamazoo College, local philanthropic organizations, the City, KATS, and Kalamazoo Downtown Partnership. The project also incorporated a Local Agency Group.

MDOT provided the preliminary environmental information, and environmental agency coordination was completed. The NEPA process would require resource agency, FHWA, and tribal coordination to continue. Detailed agency coordination information can be found in Section 3.2 of the Downtown Kalamazoo PEL Report.

## 4. Public Coordination

The MDOT Kalamazoo Transportation Service Center (TSC) and Southwest Region have worked closely with the City and the public for many years to make improvements in and around the greater Kalamazoo area. However, in the last few years, MDOT has seen a tremendous increase in the amount of public concerns generated within this corridor. The majority of the concerns centered on the need for improved pedestrian/bicycle safety.

MDOT met with the Governor's Office of Urban Initiatives to discuss potential solutions to the concerns raised by the public. MDOT and the Governor's office developed a steering team that consisted of representatives from WMU, Kalamazoo College, local philanthropic organizations, the City, Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study, and Kalamazoo Downtown Partnership. The steering team agreed to oversee and participate in a coordinated condensed charrette to gain the necessary input and generate potential solutions to the concerns raised by those using the Stadium Drive and Michigan Avenue Corridor.

The public outreach efforts were robust. Leading up to and throughout the charrette week (September 30 to October 3, 2014), an interactive map was available online. Attendees at charrette events were given the opportunity to complete questionnaires. Over 1,200 interactions were documented with the public. The local newspaper, the Kalamazoo Gazette, hosted real-time chat groups where City and MDOT officials answered questions from the public.

These public concerns and charrette led to the beginning of the current PEL process. The PEL was scoped to have five public meetings across the project schedule, with only two occurring prior to the jurisdictional transfer. Public meeting #1 was held on April 20, 2016 at the Metro Transit Center. MDOT presented to 78 interested persons at the meeting. Public meeting #1 introduced the project and explained the PEL process. The comments were focused around the following:

- Convert one-way streets to two-way streets
- Pedestrian crossing and safety
- Bike Lanes
- Intersection improvements
- Traffic calming

Public Meeting #2 was held on October 20, 2016 at the Metro Transit Center. MDOT presented the draft Purpose and Need document to 46 interested persons at the meeting. The comments were focused around the following:

- Pedestrian crossing and safety
- Intersection improvements
- Traffic calming
- Walkability
- Quality of Life

Detailed public coordination information can be found in Section 3.1 of the Downtown Kalamazoo PEL Report.

## 5. Purpose and Need Statement for the PEL Study

The study's draft Purpose and Need with input from the Admin Team, LAG, and public prior to alternatives analysis and provided the criteria for alternative comparison. The Purpose and Need was refined based on comments received from the public meetings and stakeholder outreach. Additional details are included in Chapter 5 of the Downtown Kalamazoo PEL Report.

The purpose of the Downtown Kalamazoo PEL study is to improve **safety** and **operations** for all users of various transportation modes and pedestrians within the project area and to provide a quality integrated transportation network for economic prosperity for the downtown business community and quality of life through safe mobility options for all users.

The study will address the following needs:

- Improve the safety of the corridors within the study area.
- Improve operations and connectivity for users of all modes by implementing context sensitive solutions. Update/optimize operations at intersections to provide balanced operations for all modes.
- Create a plan to focus future MDOT and local agency projects within the study area corridors that improve operations and safety for all users (drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, transit users and commercial traffic).
- Identify and recognize historic features and natural resources in order to avoid and minimize impacts.
- Maintain economic viability through active downtown businesses in the study area.
- Coordinate with publicly adopted community plans within the context of downtown Kalamazoo, neighborhoods and campus areas.
- Optimize the existing transportation infrastructure to coordinate with adopted community and neighborhood plans.

## 6. Range of Alternatives

The study team developed the following draft illustrative alternatives. It was during this stage of the PEL Study that the jurisdictional transfer discussion began and was ultimately the recommendation of the PEL Study. While the draft illustrative alternatives were presented to the Admin and LAG, they were not presented to the public.

- **Alternative 1A: Two-way conversion.** This alternative converts Kalamazoo Avenue, Michigan Avenue, Douglas Avenue and Main Street to two-way streets within the study area. Park Street and Westnedge Avenue were initially also converted to two-way streets but due to operational concerns were changed back to one-way streets. The City has expressed desire to also convert these streets to two-way but realizes it is not an immediate study goal.
- **Alternative 1B: Two-way conversion without Michikal.** This is the same alternative as 1A with the key change of deleting the Michikal link.

- **Alternative 2: One-way road diet.** This alternative looks at opportunities to reduce the number of through travel lanes, intersection treatments, bicycle/pedestrian options, and parking.
- **Alternative 3A: Two-Way Conversion Hybrid with Michikal.** This alternative is a blend of Alternatives 1 and 2, where Michigan Avenue and Main Street are the only conversions to two-way.
- **Alternative 3B: Two-Way Conversion Hybrid without Michikal.** This is the same alternative as 3A with the key change of deleting the Michikal link.
- **Alternative 4: Two-way conversion with Michikal reversed.** This alternative converts Michigan and Kalamazoo Avenues within the downtown area to two-way while Kalamazoo Avenue outside the downtown area along with Douglas Avenue and Main Street remain one-way. Michikal Street remains one-way but is reversed to check the corresponding operation impacts at the Westnedge/Kalamazoo intersection.

Originally there were a number of preliminary alternatives and sub-alternatives as listed. Based on feedback from the City and MDOT, it was decided to concentrate on two-way conversions alternatives since these were the most likely to continue forward as part of a City study. Due to this, study analysis focused on Alternatives 1A, 1B, and 4.

Detailed range of illustrative alternatives information can be found in Chapter 7 of the Downtown Kalamazoo PEL Report with the draft evaluation criteria found in Chapter 6.

## 7. Planning Assumptions and Analytical Methods

The forecast year 2040 was used for the alternative analysis. The future year volumes were developed using the KATS model growth rates and a comparison of historical traffic counts. The growth rates developed were applied to existing 2017 traffic volumes to produce future 2040 traffic volumes. The process for developing future year (2040) alternative volumes was based on NCHRP 765 procedures:

1. Determine the difference (Delta) between current year (2017) volumes and the future Do Nothing volumes (2040).
2. Determine the differences between 2040 Do Nothing volumes and the Alternative volumes.
3. Balance the volumes.
4. Create Synchro inputs based on the balanced Alternative turning movements.
5. Run Synchro for each alternative and develop level of service and delay for each intersection.

## 8. Environmental Resources Reviewed

MDOT's Environmental Section was engaged in this study from the beginning of the project and assisted in the identification of potential impacts to wildlife habitat. Potential environmental resources were documented based on database reviews and reviews of past studies completed in the project study area. The other potential environmental impacts considered were ecological, noise, contamination, cultural resources, Section 4(f) and 6(f), relocation, change in land use, economic, agricultural, environmental justice, social, air quality, secondary development and



cumulative, construction, wetlands, water quality, streams, and floodplain. A complete environmental summary can be found in Chapter 4 of the Downtown Kalamazoo PEL Report.

## **9. Environmental Resources Not Involved in Study**

Potential visual and construction impacts had not been considered when the prior to the jurisdictional transfer since the preliminary alternatives had not yet been narrowed down to the practical alternatives.

## **10. Cumulative Impacts**

It is not anticipated that any of the draft illustrative alternatives would have long-term impacts. It is not anticipated that they would change land use patterns in the area or have impact on future development patterns. Although, past activity in the area, recent development trends, and local projects (non-MDOT projects) within the study area could create a cumulative impact, the impact would likely to be a positive one; cumulative effects resulting from known and anticipated actions in the area would be expected to be minimal. Meetings early on with stakeholder groups should take place to try to determine ways to minimize construction and/or detour impacts.

## **11. Mitigation Strategies**

The mitigation strategies discussed in the PEL that should be analyzed during NEPA include:

- As a result of the Northern Long-Eared Bat near the Kalamazoo River, if any tree removal or clearance of trees with 3" diameter or greater at breast height, a review by the MDOT ecologist and a consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be mandated.
- If work below the ordinary high-water mark of the Kalamazoo River is planned, then a freshwater mussel survey and relocation may be required due to the upstream presence of state species of concern.
- If any substantial substructure or superstructure bridge work is proposed, then informal consultation will be required with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) due to the potential for roosting bats.
- It is recommended a Project Area Contamination Survey (Phase I Environmental Site Assessment) be conducted to confirm known and identified potential sites of contamination.

## **12. Future NEPA Coordination**

The MDOT PEL Study recommendation is a jurisdictional transfer of streets to the City. The study data, materials, and analysis will be provided the City for their use and advancement to NEPA, if deemed necessary.

## **13. Potential Issues for Future Consideration**

Future design activities should incorporate public engagement to ensure the project considers all community concerns while offering stakeholders an opportunity to shape the look of the corridor. Additional environmental investigation is anticipated during future project phases and may require mitigation as discussed in Appendix D of the Downtown Kalamazoo PEL Report.