



## West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

October/November 2016

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WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

## Regional Prosperity Projects Prioritized

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) continues to work toward the goal of improving economic prosperity in the 13-county West Michigan Region. One priority of the WMPA has been to support and promote regional projects that help reach that goal and meet the following criteria:

- Long-term impact & sustainability
- Regional Impact – proportion of the region potentially impacted by the project
- Provide employment opportunities to people with a variety of skill levels in a variety of employment sectors
- Recognize the region's strengths and challenges
- Promote and support public and private partnerships

In 2014, the WMPA went through a process to seek and identify priority projects from throughout the 13-county region. A total of 31 projects were submitted and, through a public voting process, the region selected five priority projects to support. Those projects were the Port of Muskegon, West Michigan Watershed Collaborative, Connect Michigan, Michigan Work Ready Communities, and Emerge West Michigan.

This year, the WMPA once again went through a successful project identification process. A total of 13 projects were submitted through a call for projects this summer. A public engagement meeting was then held on Monday, October 3, 2016 at Grand Valley State University's Seidman Center in downtown Grand Rapids.

Approximately 130 people from throughout the region attended the meeting to listen to presentations on each of the top five projects and use electronic voting devices to help prioritize the projects. Below is a list of the projects in ranking order based on the meeting results:

1. Grand River Revitalization: Restore a 2.5 mile stretch of the Grand River through downtown Grand Rapids.
2. Regional Force Main: Construction of a 20-mile long Muskegon County Wastewater System to Coopersville force main.
3. College Degree Credit Alignment: The four Community Colleges in

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## SPOTLIGHT PROJECT:

### FY 2017 Work Program and Budget Approved

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, at its regularly scheduled meeting on September 19, 2016, approved the 2017 Annual Work Program and Budget.

The Work Program outlines the Commission's mission and goals. In addition, it also identifies goals and objectives for each of the Commission's programs, as well as specific tasks to be completed during the 2017 Fiscal Year. These programs include:

- Air Quality
- Asset Management
- Community Development, Local Government, and GIS Services
- Economic Development
- Environmental Planning
- Federal Project Review System
- Homeland Security
- Information & Communications
- Metropolitan Planning Organization Management
- Metropolitan Transportation Assistance
- Metropolitan Area Transportation Planning
- Regional Transportation Planning
- Rural Transportation Planning
- Transit Planning

The Commission's 2017 approved budget totals \$13,269,443. This number is up approximately \$5 million over the 2016 budget due to project grant awards and increased program funding.

*“The mission of the Commission is to promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments and other regional partners.”*

## Planting Trees for Water Quality

WMSRDC is partnering with the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly (MRWA), Muskegon Conservation District, several communities and private landowners in Newaygo and Muskegon Counties to improve water quality.

The two-year, \$200,000 MRWA proposal, “Reducing Runoff into the Muskegon River Watershed” was selected for funding through the Forest Service Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant program, a collaborative effort with the US Environmental Protection Agency. The program advances the restoration of the Great Lakes through a variety of forest conservation activities.

The cities of Big Rapids, North Muskegon, Muskegon, along with Bridgeton Township, and other public and private landowners, are partnering with WMSRDC, Muskegon Conservation District, and the MRWA

to plant approximately 2,000 trees on 140 acres of urban and rural lands, preventing more than 500,000 gallons of stormwater runoff from degrading the public’s water resources and aquatic habitats.



Student drawing of trees.

## West Michigan Watershed Collaborative

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) selected the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative (WMWC) for a \$50,150 funding award. WMSRDC, Grand Valley Metro Council, and Macatawa Area Coordinating Council are providing coordination for the 13-county regional watersheds initiative.

With WMPA support, the region’s watershed groups will have the opportunity to develop funding strategies. The strategies will be based on the project’s funding feasibility study, completed by Public Sector Consultants in 2016. The project’s goal is to advance implementation of watershed plans that have already been approved for implementation by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

The purpose of the initiative is to establish funding opportunities beyond what is available through competitive grant programs. Doing so will ensure that implementation of the approved water quality improvement plans is timely, effective and sustainable.



## Port Study Update

The Port of Muskegon Infrastructure and Organizational Analysis was recently completed and presented to the Muskegon County Port Advisory Committee at their regularly scheduled meeting on September 27th.

The study was conducted by Martin Associates and was funded through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration with local matching funds provided from the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance, Verplank Dock Co., Andrie Inc., Great Lakes Dock & Materials, Consumers Energy, Muskegon County, City of Muskegon, Mart Dock, Muskegon Area First, and the Mecosta County Development Corporation.

The complete study and executive summary can be found at [www.wmsrdc.org](http://www.wmsrdc.org).

## Deconstruction Grant Update

The Muskegon County Deconstruction Feasibility Study steering committee met on October 14th. Committee members were presented with the draft study to review and provide comments. WMSRDC, in partnership with Michigan State University Center for Community and Economic Development, received a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to conduct the study, which is expected to be complete by January 2017.

The study was proposed to assess the feasibility of creating and sustaining an innovative comprehensive building deconstruction cluster to collect structural debris from communities around the Great Lakes, and recycle and repurpose the material into marketable projects. The project supports business development and job creation in the region while supporting continued use of the Muskegon Port after decommissioning of a major coal-fired power plant.

## Economic SWOT Analysis Facilitated by WMSRDC

This fall, WMSRDC embarked upon a SWOT Analysis of the region's economy. A SWOT Analysis is an effective tool which is commonly used to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to a given subject. In order to maximize the effectiveness of the analysis, a series of focus groups are being conducted with economic development organizations in the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo and Oceana. WMSRDC has also made an effort to seek input from an even wider audience by making a SWOT form available online. The online SWOT Analysis can be viewed at <http://wmsrdc.org/project/ceds-2018/>. The online SWOT is open to the public; however completed forms should be returned to WMSRDC by mid-December.

The SWOT Analysis is a necessary component of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS); a document which is required to maintain the region's designation as an Economic Development District by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). This designation enables communities within the WMSRDC region to remain eligible for EDA funding programs. Results of the SWOT Analysis will be a critical component of the CEDS document, as they will influence discussions about the direction of the regional economy and strategies to ensure its long-term success, viability, and durability.



## TIP Approved

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has approved the FY2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for The West Michigan Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (WestPlan). Throughout the process of developing the plan, commission staff worked closely with the WestPlan Technical and Policy Committees, as well as state and federal partners. The WestPlan Technical and Policy Committees approved the plan at their meeting in May of 2016.

The TIP is a short range planning document that covers a four-year span of project programming for the WestPlan area. The TIP includes federally funded transportation projects that will be completed in Muskegon County and Northern Ottawa County. Projects identified in the TIP are primarily road construction type projects, which are generally either reconstruction or resurface projects. There are also transit and marketing projects, as well as non-motorized and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) projects that include signal projects, bus purchases, and trail projects.

TIP Funding estimates are generated through MDOT, and it is expected that the WestPlan MPO will fund approximately \$60 million in transportation projects in FY2017-2020. With this approval, the WestPlan TIP, along with 13 other MPO TIP's, will be added to the MDOT State Transportation Improvement Program.

## Non-motorized Plan to be Updated

In 2013, WMSRDC contracted with the consulting firm Progressive AE to assist with developing a non-motorized transportation plan for the Muskegon County/ northern Ottawa County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The study focused on identifying existing non-motorized trails as well as on-road bicycle facilities within the MPO boundaries. The plan also identified potential future plans and connections that would link different trails throughout the regional network.

WMSRDC staff will be updating the plan in FY2017. Some of the identified connections have been completed, and some may be currently moving forward. Staff will be meeting with local municipalities to review their individual portions of the plan and to collect current data. Maps will also be updated to show new or expanded facilities as well as areas where road projects may have included expanded shoulders.

Once updated, the plan will continue to be used as a tool for future planning through the MPO Long Range Plan as well as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). It is expected that this "living document" will continue to be updated every few years to ensure its accuracy and to monitor the non-motorized network in the region.

## Road Ratings

WMSRDC recently completed the process of collecting data for its annual Asset Management Program. Asset Management is an emerging planning tool for public officials, planners, engineers, and others. Asset Management is based on an inventory of each local road network within the region. It provides data that will allow transportation officials to monitor, plan, and strategically improve the road network.

In 2002, the Michigan Transportation Commission formed an Asset Management Council and enacted the Asset Management Program. The Council is appointed by the Transportation Commission and answers directly to the Commission and legislature. Its goal is to inventory all 39,000 miles of federally eligible roads within the State of Michigan, and according to the data collected, determine future distribution of ACT 51 transportation funds. Approximately 50% of the federal aid eligible roads are rated every year.

In addition to rating the Federal Aid roads, WMSRDC staff will also rate a municipality's local roads on occasion. During the summer of 2016, staff rated local roads for the City of Muskegon, the City of Roosevelt Park, the City of Grand Haven, and Mason County.

## WMSRDC Signs FY2016 Homeland Security Program Grant Agreement

WMSRDC, the designated fiduciary agent on behalf of the Region 6 Homeland Security Planning Board, was awarded \$1,296,548.00 under the Fiscal Year 2016 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP). The 2016 Homeland Security Program Grant Agreement was signed by WMSRDC on Tuesday, October 11, 2016, and all work on the grant is required to be completed by August 31, 2019.

Federal HSGP funding is provided to states, territories, and local governments to prevent, protect against, respond to, mitigate, and recover from potential terrorist attacks and other hazards. The FY 2016 HSGP plays an important role in the implementation of the National Preparedness Systems (NPS) and supports efforts to build and sustain core capabilities that are essential to achieving the National Preparedness Goal of a secure and resilient nation.

WMSRDC is responsible for the management and administration of the homeland security program for the counties of Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa.



## FY2015 Homeland Security Grant Program Update

Region 6 Homeland Security and WMSRDC continue to make progress towards the completion of the Fiscal Year 2015 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP), which is required to be completed by May 31, 2018.

As of October 14, 2016, 51 of 80, or 64 percent, of Region 6 FY 2015 HSGP projects have been approved by the Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (MSP-EMHSD). Nine Region 6 FY 2015 HSGP projects are pending approval from MSP and another 20 projects still need to be submitted to MSP-EMHSD for review and approval.

The FY 2015 HSGP covers eligible costs from September 1, 2015 through May 31, 2018, which is the end of the grant performance period.

### West Michigan GIS User Group

WMSRDC staff attended a West Michigan GIS User Group meeting which was hosted by and held at the Grand Valley Metro Council in Grand Rapids on October 11th.

This group is open to GIS and I.T. professionals from the West Michigan area. The meeting provides opportunities for each agency to discuss current and upcoming projects for input, advice and collaborations. This meeting also highlighted the GRACE Project, which stands for GIS/T Resources & Applications for Career Education and focuses on introducing grade 8-12 students to GIS across the state of Michigan.

There is often an update from the State of Michigan's Center for Shared Solutions, who provides GIS mapping data and services across the state.

The West Michigan User Group meetings are a critical resource that brings together local GIS mapping professionals and users to exchange ideas and discuss project ideas within our region.

### Ashland Twp Cemetery Mapping Project

In September, WMSRDC completed the Ashland Township Cemetery mapping project. The three cemeteries located in Ashland Township, which are Ashland Township Cemetery, Shippy Cemetery, and Danish Lutheran Cemetery, have been digitized using GIS mapping software. The new maps are available at the Ashland Township Hall.

The township is now working with Muskegon County's GIS office to make the maps and data available through an online map viewer that allows the public to explore the cemeteries online via computer or mobile device. The maps show the physical location of cemetery sections, lots, and individual plots for each person buried within each cemetery. Users will be able to search for individual names and find detailed data, including names, dates, veteran status, cause of death and even pictures of individual headstones for each plot. This system will make it easier for the Township Clerk to maintain cemetery records as well as provide an easy to use resource for the public, genealogical societies and families.

### Blue Lake Township Master Plan Update

WMSRDC has begun the process of assisting Blue Lake Township with updating the township's master plan and recreation plan. These planning documents will communicate the community's vision for the future of Blue Lake Township over the next 5 to 20 years. The master plan is intended to guide and support decision making by township leaders. Successful completion of the recreation plan will qualify the township for recreation grants offered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Both plans must be reviewed and updated as needed every five years.

To kick off the planning process, the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission will host a public meeting to discuss recreation opportunities as well as the community's overall vision for the future of Blue Lake Township. All Blue Lake Township citizens will be welcome to attend a public meeting at 7:00 PM on November 16, 2016 at the Blue Lake Township Hall. The meeting will feature SWOT Analysis to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to Blue Lake Township, as well as an opportunity to comment on recreation opportunities and assets in the township.

The Blue Lake Township master and recreation plans are expected to be complete in 2017.

## Prosperity Projects continued from page 1

Region 4 will work together to provide cohesive skills trade curriculum and alignment with national certification.

4. Hardy Pond Trail: Create a 47-mile long loop mountain bike trail around the Hardy Pond in Mecosta and Newaygo Counties.
5. West Michigan Water Systems: Conduct an inventory of water and wastewater systems within Region 4 including GIS mapping layers, a decision support system, and develop regional water systems goals and objectives.

On Monday, October 17, the WMPA voted to fund 85 percent of all five projects using existing funds available, with the hopes of funding the remaining 15 percent if FY2017 funding becomes available.

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission is a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serving 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana Counties. WMSRDC is also responsible for the management and administration of the homeland security program for the counties of Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa. WMSRDC is also the planning agency for the metropolitan transportation planning (MPO) program for Muskegon and Northern Ottawa Counties.

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