



“Dig Once” Project Portal

The Governor’s office recently unveiled the Michigan Infrastructure Council (MIC) “Dig Once” Project Portal. The Project Portal was developed over the past year by the MIC in partnership with government and industry leaders. WMSRDC Executive Director, Erin Kuhn, is a voting member of the MIC.



Michigan Infrastructure Council

The Project Portal allows authorized public and private asset owners to document future construction projects across transportation, water, utilities, and communications infrastructure. Leveraging Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology, the portal alerts owners of overlapping projects and provides pertinent contact information for collaboration.

The MIC Asset Management Champion program is coming in April. This virtual and free program is for public asset owners ranging from administration, finance, and DPW staff. To learn more about this program or to sign up, contact WMSRDC at 231-722-7878 or info@wmsrdc.org.

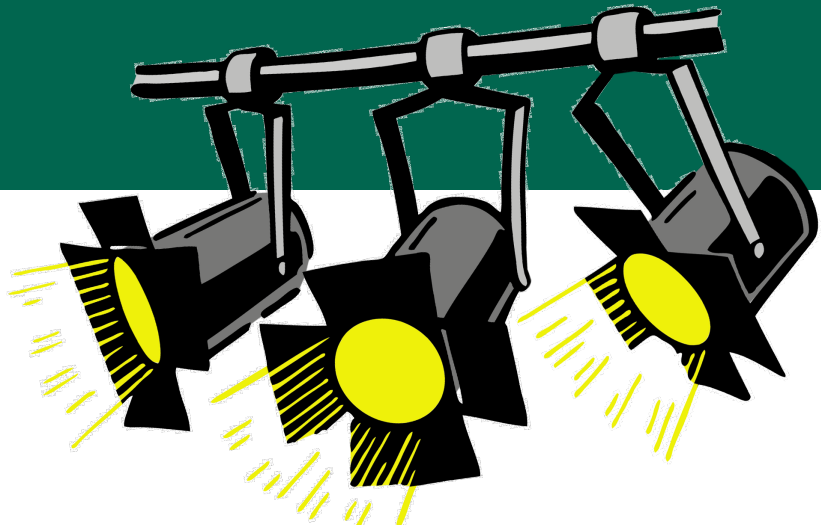
Just like the “dig once” name says, if a road is being repaired or a right-of-way is opened up for water line or utility maintenance, infrastructure owners can take advantage of that construction process to inspect, repair, and replace other infrastructure at that same time. This will allow for:

- **Cost-savings** – An estimated cost savings of 15-30% on projects can be realized when resources are shared across assets.

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SPOTLIGHT STORY

Munetrix Data-101 Webinar



Munetrix is an online platform that transforms municipal raw data into usable information that can ultimately be harnessed as powerful, actionable intelligence. In fiscal year 2020, WMSRDC became a Munetrix sponsor allowing all 120 municipalities and their citizens within the five-county region access to Munetrix's wide-ranging data.

The Munetrix comprehensive measurement dashboards allow users to easily and efficiently meet government mandates while providing a holistic picture of a government's financial well-being and how it compares to counterparts. With Munetrix, users can be fully transparent about current financial data and where taxpayer dollars are being spent. It's a single tool that encompasses all of a community's government reporting needs.



SAVE THE DATE:

Munetrix Data-101 Webinar
April 21, 2021
2:00 – 3:00

Registration details to follow

This webinar will feature Munetrix President and Co-founder Bob Kittle. He will explain how to access the Munetrix data tool through the WMSRDC website, as well as demonstrate how to navigate the system, how easy the platform is to access and understand, and how to use the information available for free, as part of the WMSRDC's sponsorship investment.

To access the Munetrix tool, visit the WMSRDC website at www.wmsrdc.org.



TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

MPO Update

The WestPlan Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has supported the state safety performance measure targets that were established by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for the federal performance measure requirements. The targets are a result of the Highway Safety Improvement Program final rule (23 CFR Part 490) that requires states to set targets for five safety performance measures. By concurring with the state targets, the MPO agrees to contribute to the accomplishment of the state targets rather than develop separate targets.

Transit Study

WMSRDC has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the West Michigan Regional Transit Systems Governance and Organizational Transition Study which will be funded in FY2021 with an MDOT Service Development and New Technology (SDNT) grant. The study will focus on a collaboration and consensus-building effort to determine if public transportation services provided by the Muskegon Area Transit System in Muskegon County and Harbor Transit in northern Ottawa County can be strengthened through an enhanced organizational or governance structure of the two agencies. The study will analyze each organization individually, identify possible cooperative opportunities, and look at the potential for consolidation of the two transit systems. This project will result in better communication, coordination, and decision-making by local governments in the region as they relate to public transportation services and mobility.

This project will include staff and corporate counsel efforts, as well as facilitation and planning services to be sought from a third party vendor. The vendor may be a transit industry planning firm or a Michigan-knowledgeable community collaboration organization. WMSRDC will be integrally involved in convening partners to the discussion and will work closely with the Muskegon Area Transit System (MATS) and Harbor Transit.

Traffic Counts Underway for Spring

Staff recently began the process of selecting locations for spring 2021 traffic counts. Every year, WMSRDC contracts with an engineering consulting firm for traffic counting services. The chosen consultant will conduct traffic counts at approximately 100 locations within the Muskegon Urbanized Area.

In order to ensure the most accurate traffic counts available, the consultant will follow guidelines prepared by the Michigan Department of Transportation. These include avoiding times of increased tourism, avoiding holidays and festivals, avoiding areas affected by road closures, and counts being done when local schools are in session to avoid changes in traffic patterns.

The count data will be entered into the Region's online traffic count database system which WMSRDC maintains. This system is integrated with Google Maps to assist users in retrieving and presenting data and information. Users of the system can search for data points on the map or search directly in the database.

Asset Management Training

WMSRDC staff attended virtual asset management training sessions on February 23, 24, and 25 in preparation for the next round of federal-aid road rating. In addition, staff attended training in rating gravel roads on March 2.

In a typical year, WMSRDC staff, along with MDOT and a county road commission employee, collect condition information for approximately half of all the federal aid roads within the region and northern Ottawa County. In 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions, no data was collected. Fortunately, Michigan's Asset Management Council is allowing FY2020 funding to be carried over into FY2021. WMSRDC staff will coordinate with appropriate agencies in the spring to follow new rules that ensure statistics on 100 percent of all Federal Aid roads are collected in 2021.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CEDS Strategy Committee Update

In 2020, CEDS Strategy Committee meetings were changed from in-person gatherings, to a virtual format. This has led to greater attendance and participation in the last three quarterly CEDS meetings. Indeed, this has been an unexpected and welcomed consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. On January 29, WMSRDC hosted the winter (virtual) CEDS Strategy Committee with about twenty individuals from across the region in attendance. Topics of discussion included an update on EDA funding, broadband efforts across the region, the GVSU/WMSRDC Entrepreneurial Support Analysis, and economic development updates from around the region. Notes from the meeting are available on the Economic Development page on the WMSRDC website.

CARES Planning Update

The CARES Act, a federal stimulus bill that passed in March 2020, brought much needed assistance to many sectors of the nation's economy. Last July, WMSRDC received a CARES Act supplemental planning grant through the US. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) to support pandemic response and recovery activities in the realm of economic development.

So far, WMSRDC has utilized this aid to support local broadband improvement efforts, provide technical assistance to local governments seeking EDA economic development grants, and complete technology upgrades that will allow WMSRDC staff to continue serving our region throughout the pandemic and beyond. Last, but not least, WMSRDC will soon begin the process of developing an economic resilience plan that will consider effects of past economic disruptions (including the COVID-19 pandemic) and seek to prepare the region for future disruptions. Once completed, the economic resilience plan will be incorporated into other state and federal mandated planning documents, such as local Hazard Mitigation plans and transportation planning documents.

Entrepreneurial Support Analysis

In September 2020, WMSRDC and the Grand Valley State University (GVSU) Muskegon Innovation Hub were the recipients of a grant from the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration to study the entrepreneurial ecosystem in West Michigan.

The study will provide valuable information regarding services currently available to entrepreneurs and small businesses, including needs that aren't being met and opportunities for growth. The study will be particularly timely in light of disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The firm Public Sector Consultants was selected through a competitive bid process to conduct the study, which is now underway and is expected to be completed this coming spring.



Many Projects Making Progress Over the Winter

Winter arrived in West Michigan, but that didn't slow down the WMSRDC Environmental Program. A mild start to the season allowed on-the-ground restoration to continue into January (see photos and captions of current projects below). During January and February, WMSRDC continued to provide staff support for the West Michigan Watershed Partners, including coordination on grant proposals to improve the region's water resources and fish and wildlife habitat. Proposals under consideration through the NOAA/WMSRDC Regional Partnership include fish barrier removals and stream habitat restoration on Little Cedar Creek and White River in Muskegon and Oceana counties, and the Stony Creek/Marshville Dam fish habitat restoration project in Benona Township.

Other pending WMSRDC grant proposals are through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Sustain Our Great Lakes and Michigan EGLE. They are focused on water quality and coastal habitat in Muskegon Lake's Ryerson Creek watershed. Grant partners include the Muskegon County Road Commission, Oceana County Road Commission, Conservation Resource Alliance, United Way of the Lakeshore, and the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership.



Top left: Coastal Zone Reforestation contractor planting trees in Muskegon under a project funded by a USFS GLRI grant.

Top middle: Erosion blankets have been installed at the MLNP project site to reduce runoff impacts over winter. This site is funded through a GLRI grant administered by the Great Commission and NOAA.

Top right: Fish habitat was improved and installed offshore at the AMOCO site. The project is funded by Great Lakes Commission and NOAA through a GLRI grant.



Lower left: Construction was underway this fall at the Lower Muskegon River restoration project as part of a 53 acre habitat and reconnection project funded by a GLRI grant administered by the GLC and NOAA.



GIS AND PLANNING

Got Maps???

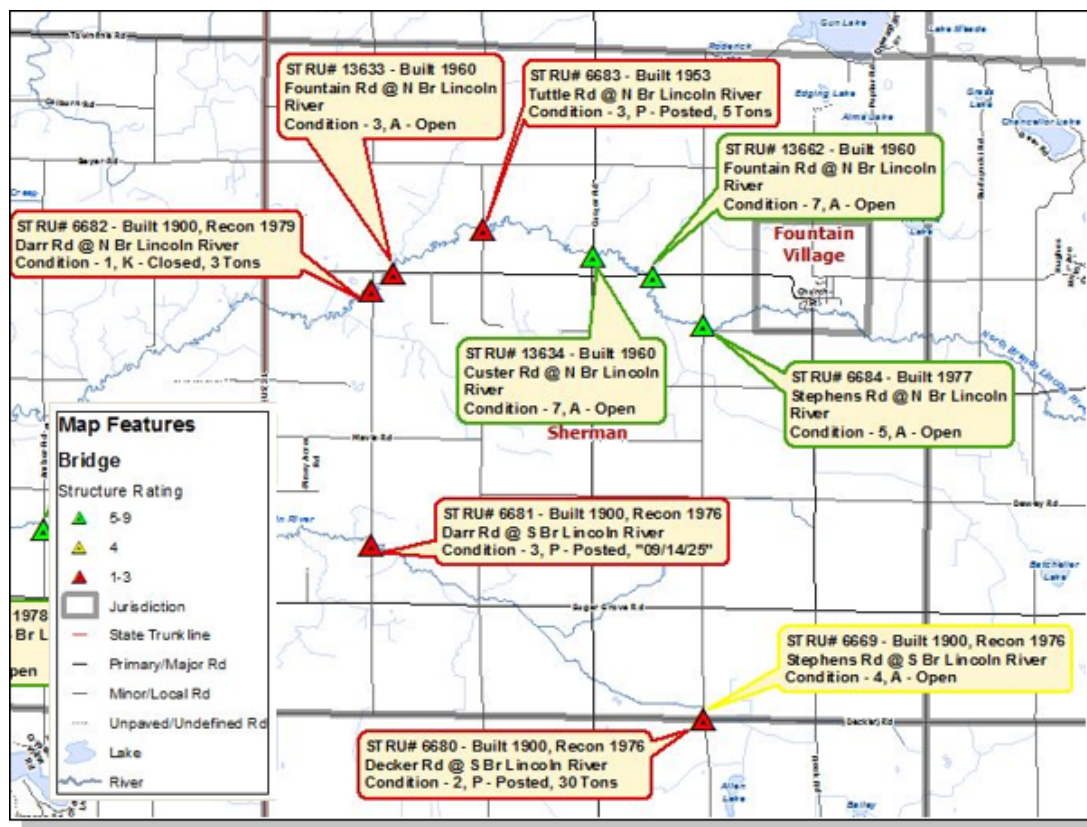
If you're looking for GIS or mapping services, WMSRDC can help with basemap data creation such as parcels, hydrology, zoning, and roads. WMSRDC can also offer services for special projects such as cemetery mapping, crime tracking, emergency services, recreation assets, or economic development projects. WMSRDC's GIS technician can create specialized map data for just about anything and develop custom maps for planning, mailings, or websites. WMSRDC can also house and maintain GIS data such as parcel combinations and splits, storm and drinking water lines, sanitary sewer lines, culverts and roads. Specialty maps can also be created to promote parks, trails, campgrounds, and other local attractions for tourists and local residents.

A special project completed by WMSRDC a few years back was the mapping of the three cemeteries in Ashland Township, Newaygo

County. Ashland Township requested assistance in updating cemetery information to make it more useful. WMSRDC gathered all the existing data, met with the township supervisor, and got to work cleaning up the information, and mapping the cemeteries down to the level of individual headstones and plots. The final project resulted in an online map for the public to use to search and locate gravesites including headstone pictures. A direct result of the map and data being available online is that township staff can now securely log in and easily edit information as it warrants and the changes made are available to the public almost instantaneously.

Another map created by WMSRDC's GIS technician is the Bridges of Mason County Safety Map (see map below). This map shows all the bridges in Mason County, their condition rating, location, last date of repair, and load capacity. The bridge information, provided by the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Mason County Road Commission, is updated annually, posted to the Mason County website, and used within the county to assist emergency vehicles, oversized load deliveries, and general maintenance and safety for citizens.

For more information about WMSRDC's GIS mapping services, contact Jamie Way, GIS Specialist at (231) 722-7878 ext.150.



SLURP Survey

The Ludington Shoreline Land Use and Resiliency Plan (SLURP) is a unique project to develop a resource that will include a community-informed vision for the future land use surrounding Pere Marquette Lake, as well as resources and information to facilitate shoreline recovery and resilience efforts.

Engaging the citizenry is an essential component of any public planning process, especially community resilience planning. Initial designs for this study included at least two charettes intended to engage with local residents. Alas, the COVID-19 pandemic eliminated that possibility. As an alternative, an online survey was developed and made available throughout the month of January 2021. With help from a local advisory group, the survey was distributed, and 129 responses were collected. This was a terrific response rate, considering the short duration and the focused geographic area. Of those respondents that chose to share their relation to the Ludington community, about two-thirds were either permanent or seasonal Ludington residents and 20 percent claimed Pere Marquette Township. About 15 percent hailed from elsewhere, though a majority of those respondents claimed residency in Mason County. Many thanks to those who gave their time and input to this brief, yet successful survey!

Tree Plantings Continue

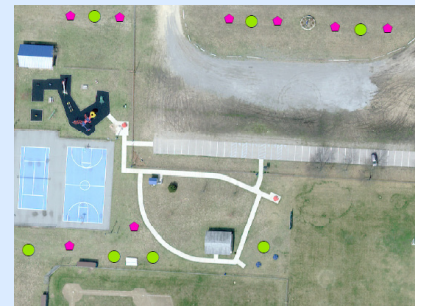
This spring, WMSRDC will continue with a US Forest Service (USFS) grant which will fund the planting of two hundred native trees. These trees will help to reduce the harmful effects of non-point source pollution by capturing surface water runoff and nutrients from flowing into waterways within the Muskegon River watershed. Utilizing green infrastructure techniques and the planting of trees helps to minimize stormwater runoff as trees draw up, store, and filter gallons of water that would otherwise flow directly into sensitive waterways and groundwater.

Last year this grant funded the planting of 44 trees in the City of Fremont along the new Cedar Street extension, 21 trees in the City of Roosevelt Park, and 47 plantings at the Muskegon Community College campus FARM site. The plantings this spring will be focused in Cedar Creek and Dalton townships. In Dalton Township, 17 trees will be planted at Beegle Field and three trees at a small public beach along West Lake. Cedar Creek Township will see

15 trees planted at the new park area adjacent to township hall and 35 trees and saplings will be planted near the township transfer station. An additional 14 trees will be planted in the City of Roosevelt Park, bringing its total to 35 trees.

Locations for tree plantings were selected last year with help from local government officials and crew as well as the types of trees best suited to the locations. Soon, the trees will be ordered and arrangements will be made for delivery and planting as weather permits. Volunteers may be sought for the planting at Beegle Field and at the transfer station.

This USFS grant is in partnership with the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly. Both groups will help with planting and finding volunteers.



Tree planting locations at Beegle Field



MIC Project Portal continued from page 1

- Efficient use of resources – This includes labor and machinery, permits and public notices.
- Reduced citizen burden – The number of detours and road closures can be minimized as well as addressing negative public perception including, “wasn’t this road just paved, and now it is being ripped up again!”

The Project Portal has been in development for over a year with much input from a variety of asset owners and infrastructure leaders across the State of Michigan. To learn more about the MIC and access the Project Portal, please visit the MIC website at www.michigan.gov/mic.

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 the planning agency for the metropolitan transportation planning (MPO) program for Muskegon and northern Ottawa counties.

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