



## Regional Development Commission

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# New Transportation Improvement Program Under Development

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Muskegon and northern Ottawa County area is beginning the process of developing a new four-year document for the programming and implementation of transportation projects in the area. The document is called the Transportation Improvement Program or TIP for short. In order for any of the state or local agencies, including transit, to receive federal funding for a transportation project, it must be included in this TIP document.

The projects considered for the document are submitted and selected by MPO committee members. These projects include proposed improvements to the major transportation infrastructure of the area for the fiscal years 2023-2026. In addition, general road, safety, maintenance, transit and non-motorized projects are all considered.

MPO representatives from eligible agencies meet to discuss possible projects and their relationship to each other. Opportunities for collaborating, combining, or complementing each other's projects are explored as well. The funding for future improvements is very limited, so coordination is important. **The process for proposing local road projects, Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) projects, and transit operating and capital projects in the MPO for the 2023-2026 TIP begins in September 2021.**

*Public comment is encouraged at each phase in the development of the new TIP document. Please contact us for further details or speak directly to the responsible road agency in your area.*

The purpose of this document is to provide the public with information regarding the activities of the Muskegon and northern Ottawa County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The public is encouraged to contact Joel Fitzpatrick, Transportation Planning Director at (231) 722-7878 ext. 160 or email at [jfitzpatrick@wmsrdc.org](mailto:jfitzpatrick@wmsrdc.org) concerning transportation issues in the MPO area.

## **Schedule of Development of the 2023-2026 TIP**

The process for developing a new Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) extends over many months. After preparing a preliminary project list for the four-year program, the MPO requests public comment on the proposed list. The list of projects also undergoes an assessment related to air quality impacts for ozone. A portion of Muskegon County is a non-attainment area for exceeding the national air quality standard for ozone. The TIP is also required to be financially constrained.

In addition, the MPO reviews the project list to see if there will be any disproportionate impacts on areas of the community which are designated as “environmental justice” areas. These are areas where there are higher than average percentages of persons who are considered low income or traditionally underserved, such as minority communities. Once all of the reviews are complete, an updated final project list and all supplemental materials are compiled into a draft final TIP document. In April 2022, this document will be available for public review and comment.

In May 2022, it is expected that the MPO Committees (the Technical and the Policy Committees) will formally act on adopting a finalized new Transportation Improvement Program for 2023 to 2026. As noted above, comments are solicited throughout the process and there will be an opportunity at the May 2022 Policy Committee meeting for final comments on the TIP before action is taken by the Policy Committee.

Following action by the Policy Committee at the end of May, the new TIP will be submitted to the MDOT and the federal funding agencies for their review and approval. This process takes several months. Once approved, the FY 2023-2026 TIP is scheduled to be effective as of October 1, 2023 (which is the start of the 2023 fiscal year).

## **Maintaining the 2023-2026 TIP After It is Adopted**

The process for maintaining the new Transportation Improvement Program is ongoing. The document is fully updated every two to three years, but changes occur between updates. Projects can change, be removed, and/or new projects added. Certain categories of federal funding are awarded on an annual basis. In order for the funds to be spent, the projects selected for those funds need to be added to the existing TIP. All of these types of changes are done through an “amendment” process. The amendment process requires a re-evaluation of financial soundness (called fiscal constraint), a double check of environmental justice issues, and a review of air quality impacts. The amendment process incorporates public involvement as well. Amendment and public involvement details are posted at <https://wmsrdc.org/program/transportation/>.