

Commission Quarterly

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Asset Management

Regional staff recently completed the process of collecting data on federal aid eligible roads for its annual asset management program. Asset management is a planning tool for public officials, planners, engineers, and others. Asset management is based on an inventory of the federal aid eligible road network within the region. It provides data that will allow transportation officials to monitor, plan, and strategically improve the road network.

Each year, WMSRDC staff, along with MDOT and a county road commission employee, collect this data for at least half of all the federal aid roads within Region 14. The data collection effort required the collection of three items: road condition rating, surface type, and the number of lanes. The road rating assessment rates the road surface condition for a given segment on a scale

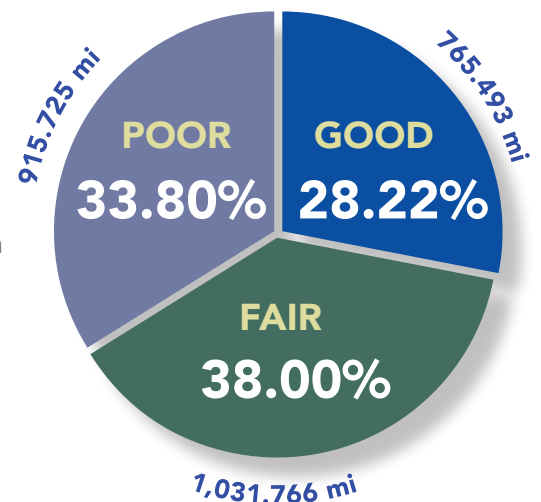
of 1-10. WMSRDC has been collecting this data for twenty years, starting in 2003. In addition to rating the federal aid roads, WMSRDC staff will also rate a municipality's local roads on occasion. During 2023, staff rated local roads for the City of Muskegon.

During 2023, staff was able to rate 100% of the federal aid eligible roads within the five-county region, as well as northern Ottawa County. The overall condition of the roads as shown at right.

Four staff members attended the Transportation Asset Management Conference (TAMC) Fall Conference which was held in Grand Rapids on September 26. Highlights included presentations on asset management best practices as well as discussions on levels of service and infrastructure coordination. In addition, WMSRDC Executive

Director, Erin Kuhn, was a presenter at the conference. Erin gave an update on the activities of the Michigan Infrastructure Council (MIC) including the Asset Management Champions Program, Project Portal, and 30-Year Integrated Infrastructure Strategy. Erin currently serves as Vice-Chair of the MIC.

Overall Road Conditions



Road Construction in Mason County

Table of Contents

Commission Operations	2
Economic Development	2
Environmental	3
Local Government Services	4 & 5
Special Projects	5
GIS Mapping	6
Transportation	6 & 7

Commission Operations: FY23 Single and Financial Audits

During the week of November 27th, staff from Brickley DeLong were on site at WMSRDC offices to conduct the annual single and financial audits. Audit fieldwork was concluded after four successful and efficient days of testing. WMSRDC administration looks forward to presenting the audit to the Board of Directors for approval during the January 2024 board meeting.

Commission Operations: 1st Annual Employee Benefits Education Day

On November 7th, WMSRDC held its first ever “Employee Benefits Education Day.” November is benefit open enrollment for staff, and WMSRDC administration seized the opportunity to conduct a review of all benefits available. Representatives from Shoreline Insurance Agency, Flex Administrators, AFLAC, and Municipal Employees’ Retirement System of Michigan joined staff to review benefit plans, upcoming changes, provide guidance, and answer questions. Staff made the day more enjoyable by having an all-day potluck filled with amazing homemade food. Thank you to all the representatives from the benefit providers for spending time with staff!

Economic Development: EDA Projects in the Region

The WMSRDC economic development program exists to promote and foster regional economic prosperity and resilience primarily through the preparation, maintenance, and implementation of the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). With a CEDS in place, local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations are

eligible to apply for economic development assistance and funding programs offered by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA).

WMSRDC is available to provide applicants with information, review potential projects, and provide technical assistance throughout a grant process. EDA offers a wide

range of funding opportunities, many of which have an open ended grant cycle, meaning there is no application deadline. It’s best to contact WMSRDC early in the development of an economic development project to evaluate its merit and competitiveness for EDA assistance. As of December 2023, there were six EDA grants in action across the WMSRDC region:

LOCATION	APPLICANT	DESCRIPTION
WMSRDC Region	WMSRDC	3-year planning grant to maintain and implement the CEDS and provide technical assistance and support to economic development stakeholders within the region.
City of Muskegon Heights	Greater Muskegon Economic Development	Create a master plan for Muskegon Heights industrial parks.
Muskegon County	Greater Muskegon Economic Development	Identify internet service gaps and strategies needed to deploy high speed internet throughout Muskegon County.
Oceana County	Oceana County	Assess workforce development needs, identify opportunities for economic diversification, and strategy for implementation.
City of Hart	City of Hart	Wastewater system upgrades to support the local economy, especially food processing and agriculture.
Lake County	Lake County	Economic diversification planning process and increased staffing capacity for three years to facilitate strategy implementation.

Environmental: Contracts in Place for 2024 Restoration

Contracts are signed, and the WMSRDC environmental program is already looking forward to spring construction! This fall, WMSRDC and project partners went out to bid for multiple components under Lake Michigan Rivers and Coastal Wetlands Regional Partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Under the Stony Creek project, the Oceana County Road Commission has awarded JE Kloote Contracting with the removal of the current triple culvert crossing and replacement with an open span timber bridge. Although bid, reviewed, and awarded separately, WMSRDC has contracted with Catskills Remedial Contracting Services for the habitat restoration at both Stony Creek and White River. Between the two projects, Catskill will be restoring 3,580 feet of instream habitat and removing the remaining Marshville Dam structure.

Project partners for the two projects include Oceana County Road Commission, Scott Civil Engineering, Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute, Conservation Resource Alliance, Oceana County Parks, GEI Consultants, watershed groups, private landowners, and now Catskill Remedial and JE Kloote Contracting.



Contractors learning about the White River restoration designs during the pre-bid meeting.

Environmental: White River Culvert Replacement

Swinton Creek and Cushman Creek are high quality, cold-water tributaries to the White River, a designated Country Scenic River under Michigan's Natural River Act. The watershed supports excellent populations of self-sustaining brown trout, brook trout, steelhead, Coho salmon, and Chinook salmon. In 2019, four undersized, damaged, and perched road stream crossings were proposed to be replaced.

Under funding from NOAA, WMSRDC is pleased to announce construction to replace two road stream crossings on Swinton Creek has been finalized by the Oceana County Road Commission. Project partners anticipate the completion of the remaining two crossings and habitat work, within the White River Watershed, by the summer of 2024. Once complete, 7.24 miles of cold-water stream and 7.6 acres of wetland habitat will be reconnected with the White River system, providing fish passage, reduced erosion, improved water quality, and enhanced stream habitat.



The 144th and Swinton Creek crossing after culvert replacement and final road construction.



Local Government Services: Oceana County Master Plan Review

At its regular meeting on December 7, 2023, the Oceana County Board of Commissioners approved the proposed Oceana County Master Plan update for public review and distribution. The plan will be available on the county's website <https://oceana.mi.us/>, or in person at the county clerk's office during regular business hours from January 4 through March 6, 2024. The Oceana County Planning Commission will host a public hearing to receive comments regarding plan content during its regular meeting on March 7 at 1:00 PM in the boardroom of the Oceana County Building located at 100 S. State Street in Hart. Written comments may also be sent to scarlson@wmsrdc.org no later than March 6, 2024. Additionally, in October 2022, WMSRDC began working with Oceana County to concurrently update the county's master plan and recreation plan. Both plans are expected to be complete in Spring of 2024.



Oceana County Building in Hart

Local Government Services: Spark Technical Assistance

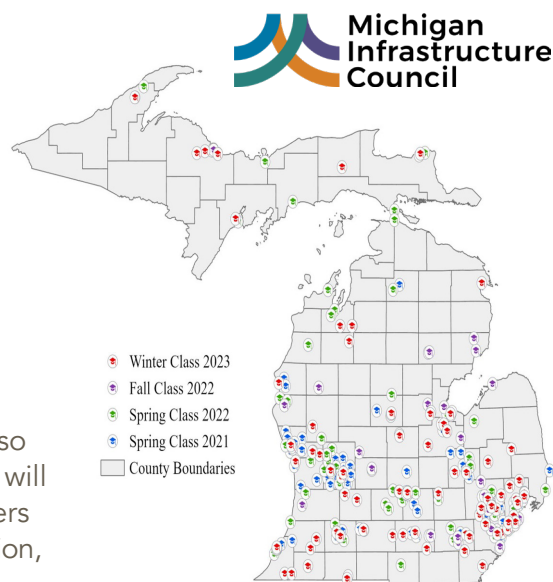


City of Muskegon Splash Pad previously funded with Spark Grant funds

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) recently entered into an agreement with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The agreement is for WMSRDC to provide technical assistance to qualified communities within our five-county region interested in applying for the third round of MDNR Spark Grants. Technical assistance for the qualifying communities includes assistance with grant applications, procurement/Request for Proposals, grant reporting, project administration, and any other support throughout the grant cycle. For more information regarding the spark grant technical assistance, please contact the WMSRDC office at 231-722-7878.

Local Government Services: Michigan Infrastructure Council Update

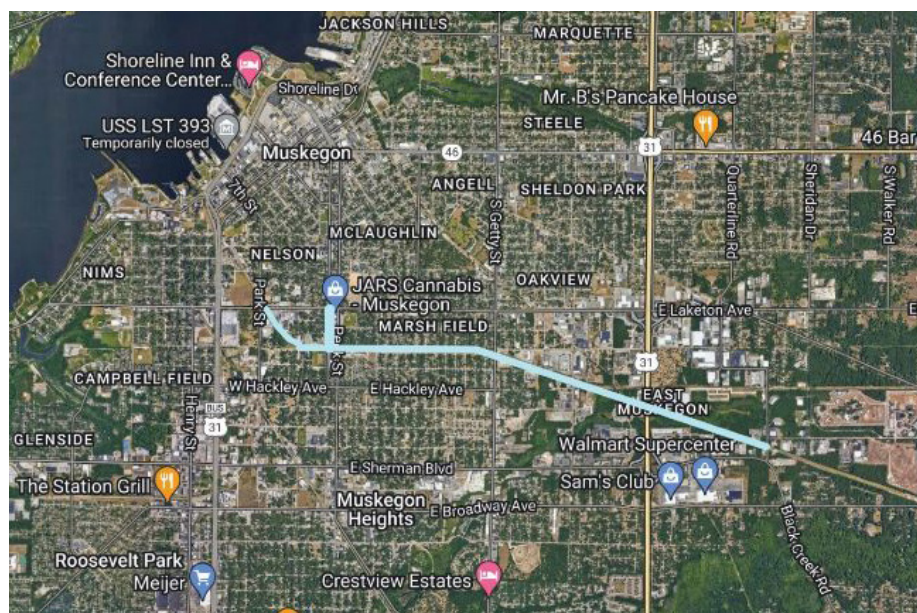
Erin Kuhn, WMSRDC Executive Director, continues to serve as a governor appointee and Vice-Chairperson of the Michigan Infrastructure Council (MIC). This fall, the (MIC) graduated its fifth class of Asset Management (AM) Champions. With this class, there are now more than 400 AM Champions across the state. The next AM Champions class will begin at the end of January 2024 with nearly 100 registrants. The MIC is also nearing completion of the state's first 30-Year Integrated Infrastructure Strategy. The goal of the Strategy is to provide a blueprint for building a better Michigan by addressing the critical needs of our infrastructure systems and ensuring their reliability, resilience, and sustainability for generations to come. This spring, the MIC will also be unveiling a new Dig Once Project Portal. The enhanced portal will serve as a digital capital improvement plan for infrastructure owners across the state to identify opportunities for collaboration, coordination, and cost savings across assets and infrastructure projects.



Location of MIC graduated AM Champions as of Summer 2023

Special Projects: Muskegon Heights Trail Connection

WMSRDC staff is working closely with a Livability Lab team to complete a 100-Day Challenge related to walkability. The Livability Lab 100-Day Challenge is a "model for community change that seeks to inspire collective action towards a common vision." This group aims to improve the life of Muskegon County residents with achieving small wins to bring positive change. The Muskegon Heights Trail Connection team has a goal to create a group of individuals within the Muskegon Heights community to work toward a new non-motorized trail within the city. The proposed trail area would be along the old train tracks leading out of Black Creek Road, continuing through Muskegon Heights, and ending at Laketon Avenue and Park Street.



Map of Possible Trail in Muskegon Heights

This section would connect the existing Musketawa Laketon Trails, fill in missing non-motorized links, and connecting a community often disconnected from recreational opportunities. The Livability Lab team conducted a

survey with residents resulting in numerous responses. Those responses will be considered when planning the creation of the trail. WMSRDC staff will continue to work with local officials, citizens, and other interested parties as facilitators.

Transportation: 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The West Michigan Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (WestPlan) continues work on developing the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), formerly known as the Long-Range Transportation Plan, for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area. Staff have been working with the MPO Technical and Policy Committees as well as Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to develop base and future Socio-Economic Data for modeling purposes. A project list was presented to, and approved by, both the Technical and Policy Committees at their August 2023 meeting. Staff will analyze the potential impacts of those projects. Most recently, the Technical and Policy Committees approved the MTP Goals and Objectives chapter at their December meetings. These transportation goals and objectives guide transportation plans and projects. In addition, staff have

been participating in MTP training sponsored by MDOT throughout 2023.

The 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan is a federally mandated document that provides for a multi-jurisdictional, multi-year look at the Muskegon and Northern Ottawa area's future transportation network. The plan is used as a guide for investment of public funds that includes capital improvements to the highway and transit transportation system within the MPO area. Technical modeling and analysis of the current system provides a guide to plan for future deficiencies on the network. One of the goals of the plan is to address these deficiencies with projects that will allow the network to run more efficiently. The plan must be financially



New street and curb in downtown Grand Haven

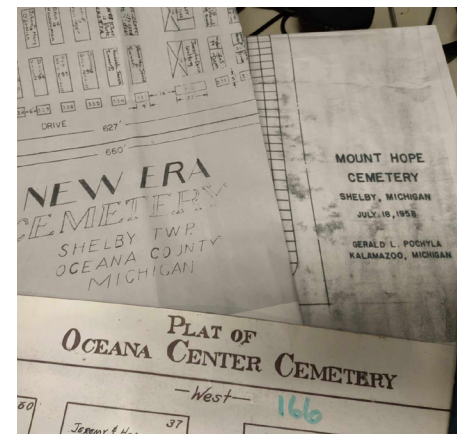
constrained and must adhere to other federal based requirements such as Performance Based Planning, Air Quality Conformity, Environmental Mitigation, Environmental Justice, and Public Involvement.

Throughout the process, input will be gathered from the citizens of Muskegon and northern Ottawa County, local elected officials, municipal and road agency staff, affected land management and environmental groups, as well as state and federal agencies. The updated plan will be completed in 2024.

GIS Mapping: MPO Update

WMSRDC's GIS Program has contracted with Shelby Township to map three of their local cemeteries. Mt. Hope, Oceana Center, and New Era cemeteries are currently being mapped to show each cemetery's boundaries, sections, lots, and graves. The data for the cemeteries will be digitized, including burial and occupant data, grave locations and lot status, and verification of grave locations within each cemetery. Mt. Hope Cemetery is the largest cemetery covering 19 acres with roughly 6,700 graves. New Era is the second largest cemetery at just over 4 acres

with about 1,700 graves. Lastly, Oceana Center is the smallest cemetery at just under an acre containing only 360 graves. Once these cemeteries have been mapped according to township records, groundwork will begin to verify burial information and locations. Groundwork will begin in the spring of 2024. Shelby Township will receive new paper and digital maps and records, as well as reformatted and corrected grave information. An interactive, online map will be created for use by township officials and the public for all cemeteries. This project should be completed



Historical maps of the Shelby Township Cemeteries

by fall of 2024. Contact WMSRDC to find out more about the Commission's cemetery mapping projects.

Transportation: Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Update

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The WestPlan MPO Technical and Policy Committees acted at their December Technical and Policy Committee meetings to amend the FY2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Amendment 12 was approved by the committees and is being reviewed by MDOT and FHWA.

Projects in the latest amendment include a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) project for the Muskegon County Road Commission on Holton Duck Lake Road, and additional funding for the City of Muskegon Heights to use towards their FY2024 Broadway Avenue project. There were also

several projects added for Pioneer Resources for Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) operating funds. Details of WestPlan MPO TIP amendments can be found by visiting the website at www.wmsrdc.org



Construction on BR-31 in Muskegon County

Transit Update

Community leaders are moving forward with the concept of creating a transit authority to govern the Muskegon Area Transit System which serves important transit needs in Muskegon County. Following recommendations from the West Michigan Regional Transit Systems Governance & Organizational Transition Study, representatives from the study group continue to meet and strategize about ways to move the concept forward. Committee members including Muskegon County and WMSRDC staff have been attending board and council meetings to discuss the authority with the local elected officials and to answer any questions they may have. The goal is to get resolution support from the local agencies which will be one step closer to moving forward with the authority idea. Once the support is obtained, the group can begin to look at structure and organizational details.



Muskegon Area Transit System buses



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