

annual report

2024

## mission statement

*The Commission's mission is to "promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments and regional partners."*

### Why/How/What Statements

The following statements were developed by the Commission staff in the spring of 2020 as an organization-wide project to expand upon the Commission's mission statement.

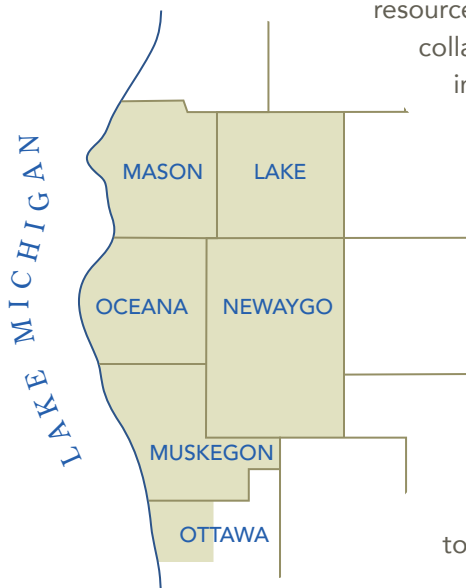
"We" in the statements refer to the Commission and its staff.

### WHY do we do what we do?

We believe that West Michigan is an amazing place with tremendous opportunity, and that regional planning improves the quality of life for all West Michigan residents. Therefore, we are passionate about helping the region reach its full potential and committed to do our part to make a difference in the place we call "home."

### HOW do we do it?

By leveraging the programs of the Commission and utilizing staff expertise to provide local resources through cross jurisdictional collaborative partnerships, involvement of diverse stakeholders, and empowerment of local decision makers.



### WHAT do we do?

Perform local, state, and federal planning functions through administering programs in transportation, economic development, environmental, and local government services that provides funding and project eligibility to our region.

## equity statement

The Commission defines equity as the intentional inclusion of everyone in society. Equity is achieved when systemic, institutional, and historical barriers based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and other identities and abilities are dismantled and no longer predict socioeconomic, education, and health outcomes.

The Commission recognizes structural racism and other forms of oppression have contributed to persistent disparities which the Commission seeks to dismantle within its region. The Commission strives to engage community members, especially those whose voices have traditionally been marginalized. The Commission works with local governments, residents, and public and private partners to provide resources, support, and opportunities that create prosperous and thriving communities for all citizens.

The Commission also strives to provide a work environment that recognizes individual differences, is free from discrimination, and is respectful of the rights and dignity of all individuals. The Commission has built its reputation on the foundations of excellence and integrity, and expects its employees to exhibit behaviors consistent with these standards.

Therefore, the Commission commits to leveraging our resources and assets to create more equitable communities through the programs it administers, as well as to develop racially conscious partnerships and processes that anticipate unintended outcomes to ensure the inclusion of all people in the region and organization.

# director's message

## 2024, a year of new adventures

During 2024, WMSRDC began new adventures in all our program areas including Economic Development, Transportation, Environmental, and Local Government Services. I find this exciting because we are discovering new ways to serve our 120 local governments in innovative ways.

Below is a brief overview of some of these projects that you can learn more about as you read through our annual report.

### Economic Development:

- In February, WMSRDC as a host agency welcomed Annika Gacnik, Economic Recovery Corps (ERC) Fellow to West Michigan. She is one of 62 Fellows placed around the country and is helping West Michigan advance the agriculture and food processing industries.
- In September, WMSRDC was awarded an EDA grant to conduct a West Michigan Agriculture Cluster Analysis. The study will provide valuable data and direction to the ERC Fellow, economic developers, and the private sector.

### Transportation:

- This year, the transportation program kicked off a Trails & Greenways Plan for the West Plan MPO region. The plan will focus on existing and planned trails; trail improvements, connections, and gaps; as well as an action plan.

### Environmental:

- During the spring of 2024, WMSRDC and project partners planted a Micro Forest in the City of Muskegon. The Micro Forest is the first of its kind in the State of Michigan and has very unique and specific environmental benefits to urban communities.
- WMSRDC, on behalf of the City of Muskegon, successfully secured a grant to conduct a tree inventory, create a database of existing trees, remove dangerous trees, plant new trees, as well as prepare a tree management and maintenance plan.

### Local Government Services:

- WMSRDC staff is working with the five counties to prepare multi-county Materials Management Plans. Once completed and approved, these plans will replace the existing Solid Waste Management Plans.

These projects are all examples of how WMSRDC is using existing programs in new and unique ways to continue serving our region. I am always amazed at the creativity and ability of the WMSRDC staff to think outside the box and remain relevant in meeting the needs of the communities we serve. I am also thankful for the strong support of the WMSRDC Board in allowing us to take on these opportunities. I'm looking forward to what opportunities 2025 will bring!

**Erin Kuhn, Executive Director**



Montague bike path

## materials management planning

### Materials Management Planning

In 2024, WMSRDC began working with our five counties regarding state legislation requiring all counties in the State of Michigan to develop Materials Management Plans. This came about based on amendments to Part 115, Solid Waste Management, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451. Once approved, the MMP will replace the existing county solid waste plans. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) is implementing the law as well as providing guidance, resources, and funding to counties as they embark on the development of MMPs.

MMPs are to focus on comprehensive materials management, including recycling, composting, disposal, and other diversion activities. These plans will establish goals with measurable objectives to divert recyclables and organics from disposal while also increasing recycling access and education. Counties will have 36 months (three years) to complete the planning process. Per section 11587 of the amendment, a grant program has been established for the duration of the planning process to assist counties with the formation and initial implementation of the plan. Additional funding for ongoing implementation and maintenance of the plan will be available by request and approval through EGLE beyond the first three years.

EGLE initiated the planning process beginning January 8, 2024, through



a formal initiation letter to each county and regional planning agency in the state. Now that the process has begun, a series of activities are required to be completed. To date, the counties and WMSRDC have accomplished a number of tasks including the counties agreeing to serve as the County Approval Agency (CAA), identifying WMSRDC as their Designated Planning Agency (DPA), determining to prepare a multi-county plan, filing a Notice of Intent to EGLE, and establishing a Materials Management Planning Committee (MMPC).

On December 2, 2024, the newly minted MMPC for the WMSRDC region held its inaugural session at the WMSRDC office in Muskegon.

With a quorum in attendance, important steps were accomplished, such as approval of MMPC by-laws, election of committee officers, and establishment of a framework for regular meetings.

A significant amount of work by the counties and WMSRDC made these accomplishments happen. However, the real work is just beginning.

Preparation of the MMPs is a new and unique planning process being undertaken in the state. The shift away from Solid Waste Planning to a comprehensive Materials Management Planning process is a practice that has not been done in Michigan. WMSRDC is excited to be partnering with the five counties in our region in navigating this new process together.

# economic development

## West Michigan Agriculture Cluster Impact Analysis

When the regional economy, especially the greater Muskegon area, suffered a blow with the 2016 BC Cobb coal-fired power plant closure, studies identified agriculture and food processing as a potential source of economic recovery. This came as no surprise to those connected with the sector, as Michigan agriculture is second only to California in agricultural diversity. Since then, a meaningful stream of progress has taken place through a variety of public and private means. Still, it seems more could be done to align efforts and help West Michigan agriculture “level up.”

In September 2024, WMSRDC was awarded a grant from the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) to help bolster the region’s agriculture and food processing industries. The project, entitled West Michigan Agriculture Cluster Impact Analysis, is intended to inform and empower public officials, economic development organizations, and agriculture producers and processors to make strategic and sustainable investments towards increased efficiency, productivity, and long-term resilience and sustainability of the region’s agricultural economy. Through agriculture sector research and analysis, data mapping, and stakeholder engagement, the analysis will quantify existing assets, identify key economic and infrastructure gaps, and highlight opportunities to strategically grow and sustain the agricultural sector. It will help stakeholders pinpoint key growth areas and barriers within the local agricultural economy and address essential needs such as infrastructure improvements, workforce development, and facility expansion.

To conduct various aspects of the analysis, WMSRDC teamed up with the Michigan State University Product Center, MSU RS&GIS, and Highland Economics, a firm based in the Pacific Northwest. In addition, the analysis will support the ongoing work of Annika Gacnik, the Economic Recovery Corps Fellow placed at WMSRDC for three years through June 2026. Her role is to be a catalyst for positive change by fostering triple bottom-line benefits and addressing priority needs in economic development, education, logistics, entrepreneurship, and sustainability. The analysis will equip Annika with current data, verified opportunities, and stakeholder-supported priorities that will help maximize her placement in West Michigan.

Regional support shown for the West Michigan Agriculture Cluster Impact Analysis has been strong, from initial conception of the project through the kickoff in October 2024. For example, by the end of the calendar year, WMSRDC was awarded funds to lessen the local match burden of the EDA grant from the Fremont Area Community Foundation and the Community Foundation for Muskegon County. The Making It In Michigan Competitiveness Fund, a federal grant matching program sponsored by the Michigan Infrastructure Office, also provided substantial match funding. The analysis, along with a report and interactive asset map, is expected to be complete and available to the public by September 2025.



Farmland in Newaygo County

# economic development

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The five-year update of the WMSRDC region’s economic development plan, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), was completed in March 2024. The process, which took about 14 months to complete, began with a regional SWOT analysis consisting of focus groups in each of the district’s five member counties.

The updated CEDS follows guidelines issued by the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) in April 2023. Notable revisions of this edition include updated demographics, incorporation of the WMSRDC Pandemic Response and Recovery Plan, and an overhauled action plan chapter. Per EDA guidance, there is also an increased emphasis on climate resilience, equity, workforce development, and broadband.

The CEDS is a strategy-driven plan

for regional economic development and is the result of a regionally owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of a region. Development of the CEDS is led by WMSRDC, overseen by the CEDS Strategy Committee, and approved by the WMSRDC Board. The CEDS Strategy Committee meets quarterly and includes representatives from throughout the WMSRDC region.

The CEDS is required to maintain the region’s designation as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the EDA. This designation enables communities and other eligible entities within the district to remain eligible for EDA assistance.

In 2024, there were seven different EDA grants active within the region at different stages of implementation, totaling over \$6.4 million in federal investment. These projects included: City of Hart Wastewater System Upgrades (awarded 2022), Lake County Economic Diversification and Capacity Building (2023), Muskegon County Broadband Gap Analysis (2022), Muskegon Heights Industrial Parks Master Plan (2021), Oceana County Workforce and Economic Diversification Study (2022), and the West Michigan Agriculture Cluster Impact Analysis (2024).



## Economic Recovery Corps

### Fellow Update from Annika Gacnik

Nearly one year after packing up my belongings in a U-Haul and hightailing it from Oklahoma to Michigan ahead of a blizzard, I am admiring a peaceful snowfall from my apartment as I prepare to enjoy my first Christmas in the Mitten State. Reflecting on this past year, I can’t help but marvel at the changes a year can bring.

Working with WMSRDC as my Economic Recovery Corps host has given me the opportunity to dig deep into the beauty of West Michigan’s agricultural heritage. From Mycopia’s mouth-watering mushrooms in Scottville to Swanson Pickle’s delightfully briny cucumbers

in Ravenna, the region is brimming with delicious food that contributes to the health of not only us on the Fresh Coast, but to the health of families across the country and the world.

Though the agricultural industry faces its fair share of challenges, I have been amazed by the passion and perseverance of individuals and organizations who are committed to solving these challenges. To protect the region’s fresh fruit and vegetable economy, the Protect Our Produce Coalition is fighting for sustainable labor costs for Michigan’s specialty crop farmers. On the consumer side, the nonprofit grocery store Lakeshore Food Club provides dignified access to locally grown produce and other nutritious food. With a goal to create

a vibrant and inclusive food system, Lakeshore Flavor provides bilingual training and business development services to ensure all food entrepreneurs have access to the resources they need.

Looking to the year ahead, I am excited to further support West Michigan’s promise of agricultural innovation, equity, and accessibility for all. The sky’s the limit for what this region can accomplish, from prioritizing circular economy principles like utilizing agricultural waste for bioenergy production, to championing regenerative business practices that improve the community and protect natural assets. This beautiful, complex, and historic agricultural powerhouse deserves to be celebrated. In 2025, I am proud to call it home..

# local government services

## Blue Lake Township Planning Assistance

About twenty years ago, Blue Lake Township in Muskegon County faced a daunting possibility. A privately owned and operated camp, covering over 4,000 acres, was for sale and being marketed as a development opportunity. This possibility elicited strong emotions from residents in the small community of about 2,000 residents. Questions circulated, such as “What type and density of development could the undeveloped land handle?” and “What financial burdens would be required to ensure proper public safety, services, and utilities to a large development?”

For many residents and community leaders, this was a nightmare scenario. To over-simplify the sequence of events: Blue Lake Township denied a request to re-zone the camp property, the

property owner sued, Blue Lake’s denial was upheld in a local court, and the property owner halted designs of selling. The community’s decision prevailed for many reasons, including the fact that the proposed zoning change was not supported by the township’s master plan, the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan.

Master plans are rooted in the synthesis of many components, including the needs and desires of the citizenry as well as the physical and social characteristics of the area. In addition, master plans provide the legal rationale for a community to practice and enforce local zoning.

WMSRDC helped develop the Blue Lake Comprehensive Development Plan, which was adopted in 2006, and assisted the township with an update in 2019. In 2024, WMSRDC

returned to Blue Lake Township to lead the process to update the community’s master plan and recreation plan, both of which are required to be updated every five years.

The mission of the WMSRDC Local Government Services program is to support local communities by providing technical assistance to communities that do not have planning expertise in-house, or the resources necessary to hire a private consultant. The experience of Blue Lake Township 20 years past provides a lasting example of the potential impact of this work, and provides motivation for WMSRDC to continue this mission to support local governments in the region.



View of Blue Lake from Blue Lake County Park

## environmental

### Lake Michigan Rivers and Coastal Wetlands Regional Partnership

In 2020, WMSRDC entered the Lake Michigan Rivers and Coastal Wetlands Regional Partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). This partnership offers up to \$14 million for fish passage and stream habitat restoration projects through 2025. In 2021, three projects were selected for funding. 2024 saw the completion of all construction and habitat restoration efforts under NOAA funding and the beginning post-restoration monitoring.

At Marshville Dam Road and Stony Creek, Oceana County Road Commission and Scott Civil Engineering supervised JE Kloote Contracting as they tore down two old foot bridges, removed the three inadequate culverts, and installed a beautiful open span timber bridge along Marsh-

ville Dam Road. Catskill Remedial and Kanouse Outdoor Restoration then implemented the designs by GEI Consultants to remove the old dam and install 500 feet of instream habitat. Thanks to additional funding secured by Conservation Resource Alliance, Stony Creek saw an additional 2,000 feet of instream habitat upstream of the WMSRDC project footprint, and in 2025 a recreational access platform will be constructed. WMSRDC would also like to thank Oceana County Parks and private landowners, who have not only allowed the project and utilization of resources on their land but have also been instrumental in communicating the progress and success of the project to the community.

In the White River Watershed, Oceana County Road Commission

and their subcontractors replaced inadequate road stream crossings at Swinton Creek and Buchanan Road as well as Cushman Creek and Roosevelt Road with open span timber bridges. Catskill Remedial and Kanouse Outdoor Restoration also constructed the designs by GEI Consultants to provide 1,000 feet of instream habitat restoration in Swinton Creek.

Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute (GVSU) conducted post-restoration monitoring at the project sites that were completed prior to 2024. These sites include two road stream crossings on Little Cedar Creek in Muskegon County, and two road stream crossings in Swinton Creek. In 2025, GVSU will conduct post-restoration monitoring at the sites completed in 2024.



*Viewpoint of the Stony Creek habitat restoration from the new timber bridge. The open area past the rock will be the location of the access pier.*



*Swinton Creek x Buchanan Road completed.*



# environmental

*BnG Club: The restored Muskegon Lake shoreline at the Boys and Girls Club.*



AOC-Wetland Habitat



## **Muskegon Lake Area of Concern**

By the end of 2024, all Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) were delisted for the Muskegon Lake Area of Concern (AOC). Other actions in 2024 included education signage installed at the Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve, long-term monitoring of previous restoration efforts at the former Amoco site along the Lakeshore Trail, and implementation of approximately 500 feet of shoreline restoration at the Boys and Girls Club.

The Muskegon Lake Boys and Girls Club shoreline restoration project was the final project under a Great Lakes Commission (GLC) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Regional Partnership funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). Taplin Enterprises implemented designs by GEI Consultants to remove unnatural fill and protect the shoreline from erosive forces.

Although environmental work will continue within the Muskegon Lake Watershed, the final official AOC act will be complete delisting in 2025.

## environmental

### Reforestation for Restoration, Resilience, and Recreation

Developed in partnership with the City of Muskegon, Muskegon Rotary Club, United Way of the Lakeshore, and WMSRDC, Muskegon has its first micro forest! Located in the Marquette neighborhood west of US-31, this multi-species forest was designed and planted to grow quickly and provide environmental benefits such as reduction of noise pollution, storm water runoff, and access to public greenspace.

The Marquette Micro Forest was generously funded by the Marquette Neighborhood Association, the Muskegon Rotary Club, and the Community Foundation for Muskegon County. Long-term maintenance is being provided by the City of Muskegon, the Muskegon Rotary Club, and other dedicated community members. Additional support and partnerships included Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership, Muskegon Conservation District, Subaru of Muskegon, Reeths-Puffer Central Elementary, and local greenhouses and nurseries.



*Ready to plant*



*Micro-forest: Volunteers planting trees during one of the many micro forest's volunteer events.*

## Rural and Regional Transportation

### Asset Management

Each year, WMSRDC staff, in collaboration with MDOT and county road commission representatives, gather data on the condition of federal aid roads within the region as well as those in northern Ottawa County. This data collection includes three main criteria: road condition ratings, surface type, and the number of lanes. In 2024, WMSRDC successfully completed ratings for 100% of the federal aid-eligible roads across Lake, Mason, Oceana, Newaygo, Muskegon, and northern Ottawa counties. Additionally, WMSRDC received extra funding to rate local roads. Muskegon and Ottawa counties handled their own local road ratings while WMSRDC contracted with an external consultant to rate Newaygo County's roads.

WMSRDC staff also participated in asset management training courses throughout the year, including attendance at the Integrated Infrastructure Conference held in Grand Rapids on August 13 and 14.

### Rural Task Force and Small Urban Program Update

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) plays a key role in managing the Rural Transportation Task Force (RTF) for Muskegon, Oceana, Newaygo, Lake, and Mason counties. The full five-county rural task force committee convened twice in 2024: once in April and again in December. In the fall, the individual county task forces met to select projects for the FY2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). After these local meetings, the full committee gathered in December to finalize the list of approved projects. These projects typically involve road construction, road maintenance, and the purchase of transit capital equipment. Staff participated in the monthly Statewide Rural Transportation Fund (RTF) meetings and, in 2024, supported the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) by providing in-person training sessions in Saginaw, Lansing, and Kalamazoo.

In January 2024, the Fremont Small Urban Area restructured its committee after being redesignated following the 2020 Census. This updated Fremont Small Urban Area, along with the Small Urban Areas in Ludington and Whitehall, will choose projects for upcoming years in the fall of 2025. Each of these Small Urban Areas is allocated \$385,000 every two years. Local road agencies and transit providers make project selections through a committee process.



Roads in need of repair



Roads in downtown White Cloud

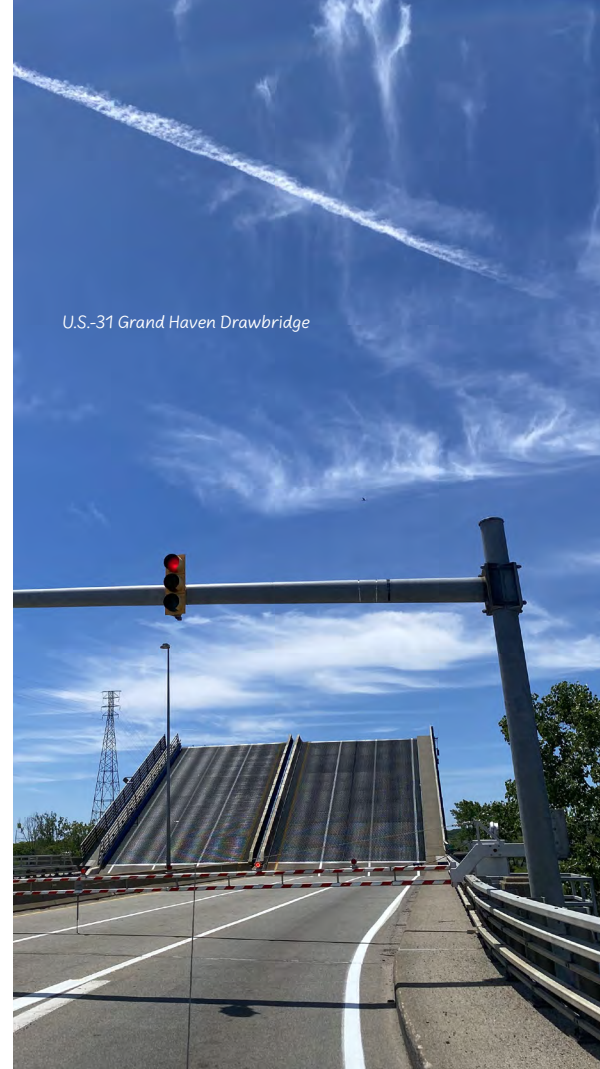
## metropolitan planning organization

### 2024 Metropolitan Planning Organization Annual Report

The West Michigan Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (WestPlan) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Muskegon County and parts of Northern Ottawa County. The MPO is responsible for the planning and programming of projects and studies throughout the MPO area and administers a comprehensive transportation planning program to assist in planning for state and federal transportation funding for road and transit improvements. Formed under federal legislation in 1973, the MPO continues to exist under ever changing federal transportation bills. Member road and transit agencies are represented through the MPO

Technical and Policy Committees, which make up the structure of the MPO while WMSRDC serves as staff to these committees. Through these committees, along with valuable input from the public, the MPO develops long- and short-range planning documents that help to guide the transportation network investment in the region and beyond to neighboring MPO's. These plans are crucial for allocating federal transportation dollars into projects. MPO meetings are open to the public and are attended by representatives from all road and transit agencies in the MPO area. State and federal agencies also have seats on the committees and participate in the development of all documents.

U.S.-31 Grand Haven Drawbridge



Pere Marquette #1221 Steam Locomotive in Grand Haven, Michigan



### 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program

In FY2024, the MPO continued to use the FY2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as a guide for planning state, local, and transit projects. The TIP is used to identify programs and projects to be funded with federal aid, in accordance with federal law and the regulations of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) during a four-year period.

An estimated investment of \$23,696,230 was programmed for highway, transit, planning, and non-motorized projects in the MPO area in FY2024. Throughout the process, changes and modifications are sometimes needed, and these changes are handled in the form of TIP amendments. The MPO committees review the amendment requests and act on them at their monthly meetings. The MPO committees amended the TIP nine times in FY2024. The most common need for amendments is cost increases and changes to the scope of the project. Over the four-year span of the FY2023-2026 TIP, it is estimated that over \$146,000,000 will be invested in the Muskegon/Northern Ottawa area for federally funded transit, highway, and non-motorized projects. Projects identified in the TIP are primarily road construction type projects, which are generally either reconstruction or resurface projects. There are also transit, planning, and marketing projects, as well as non-motorized and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) projects that include signal projects, bus purchases, and trail projects.

# metropolitan planning organization

P.J. Hoffmaster State Park off  
of Lake Harbor Drive



## 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The 2050 MPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) was officially adopted by the MPO in FY2024. The MTP is a federally required document that provides a long term, multi-jurisdictional look at the Muskegon and Northern Ottawa area and the future transportation system. Used as a guide for investment of public funds, the document plans for 20+ years of strategy and capital improvements to the transportation system within the MPO area. The next update to the MTP is expected to begin in FY2026.

## 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program

WMSRDC staff started the process of developing the next TIP document for the MPO program. The FY2026-2029 TIP will be adopted by the MPO committees in April and sent to MDOT and FHWA for approval in June of 2025. Working with the road and transit agency MPO members, a prioritized project list was developed that identifies where federally funded investments will happen in the next four years. The committees were able to identify and select 116 projects to be funded and implemented during the FY2026-2029 TIP cycle. It is expected that this list will increase as new funding is identified and other statewide competitive funding is secured. The approved project list will be analyzed for Air Quality implications as well as an Environmental Justice and Mitigation analysis to ensure there are no adverse impacts to areas of minority or low-income populations. The approved document will be available for viewing on the WMSRDC website.

Construction begins in 2024 on  
Broadway Avenue in the  
City of Muskegon Heights



## air quality

### Clean Air Action

WMSRDC continued to be an active partner of the West Michigan Clean Air Coalition (WMCAC). The WMCAC was formed over 25 years ago and remains a strong partnership of government agencies, academic institutions, businesses, and non-profit organizations in Muskegon, Kent, and Ottawa counties. These partners work together to achieve and maintain cleaner air quality in the region through educational materials and promotional items on voluntary emission reduction activities. Among other outreach activities, an extensive radio and television public education campaign continued in 2024 bringing attention to the goals of the WMCAC and announcing Clean Air Action days. During the 2024 season, a new PSA commercial was filmed with WZZM TV 13, featuring original and new cast members of all ages, including members of the WMCAC. The updated PSA will air on local news stations, streaming television, social media, and other information outlets during the 2025 season to promote actions that should be taken during Clean Air Action days.

The annual Clean Air Action kick-off picnic was held at Johnson Park in Grand Rapids on May 9, featuring an opening welcome from chairperson Kathryn Ross, presentations from EGLE on wildfire smoke and PM2.5s, and Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC) and Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC)'s presentation on the 2023 season. Additionally, staff at WMSRDC continued active participation in the planning of WMCAC Steering Committee meetings and activities. These activities included informational display rotations throughout the Muskegon and Northern Ottawa area, attending public concerts in various parks, and participating in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) Along the Lakeshore.

During the summer of 2024, there were five Clean Air Action days called, spread throughout the season. Without the Canadian wildfires, the region saw a drastic decrease in action days. With this in mind, the WMCAC submitted a letter of support to EGLE to consider the fires an exceptional event to remove the data from consideration when determining attainment status in West Michigan.

## GIS

### Cemetery Projects

WMSRDC's GIS department undertook large cemetery mapping projects within Shelby and Leavitt townships, both located in Oceana County.

Shelby Township has three cemeteries under its care: Oceana Center, New Era, and Mt. Hope Cemeteries. Combined, the three cemeteries contain roughly 8,760 graves within 24 acres.

Leavitt Township also has three cemeteries: Abson, Carpenter, and Goodrich Cemeteries. All three cemeteries are located within seven miles of one another. These cemeteries have graves dating back to the early 1800s. At project kick-off, the cemeteries only had paper registers and death certificates.

For both projects, electronic databases of the cemetery were created. A master database was provided to the townships for their use. Additionally, online maps were created and hosted on WMSRDC's website, fully accessible to the public. The maps are searchable by the name of the deceased and will show the location of individual graves, birth and death dates, military history, and family relations. For Leavitt Township, pictures of the headstones are also attached.

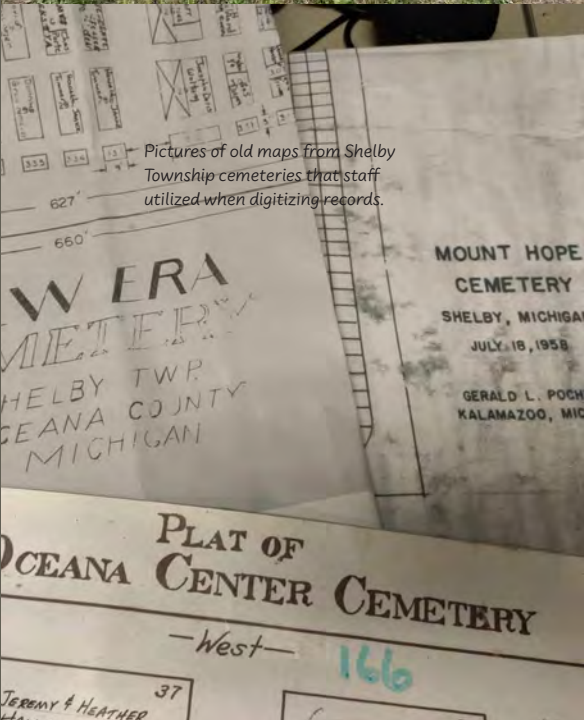
Electronic databases and digital maps along with online, searchable maps will preserve irreplaceable historical records and help the public and township officials more easily maintain records going forward. Cemeteries are important pieces of history, and WMSRDC is proud to assist in preserving the information for many years to come.

Additionally, the GIS department continued to support all WMSRDC's programs. Maps and analytical information were provided to support grant applications, reports, and presentations. WMSRDC's GIS staff are a great resource to its region and are excited to expand the program in future years.



WMCAC presenting to a crowd of nearly 50 people, including WMSRDC staff, on the Clean Air Action program and recapping the 2023 season.

Military Monument in Carpenter Cemetery in Leavitt Township



Pictures of old maps from Shelby Township cemeteries that staff utilized when digitizing records.

## financials

REVENUES	2023	2024
<b>Intergovernmental revenues</b>		
Federal	1,831,789	3,177,425
State	178,596	167,702
Local	345,871	333,892
<b>Investment Earnings</b>	-	7,467
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>2,356,256</b>	<b>3,686,486</b>

## EXPENDITURES

<b>Current</b>		
Land use planning	143,927	83,936
Regional initiatives	8,108	67,333
Economic development	129,876	82,033
Transportation planning	786,439	780,768
Environmental clean-up	1,165,345	2,576,573
Administration	15,719	8,960
<b>Capital outlay</b>	29,931	-
<b>Debit service</b>		
Principal	39,389	42,983
Interest and fees	10,711	8,455
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>2,329,445</b>	<b>3,651,041</b>

Net change in fund balance	26,811	35,445
Fund balance at beginning of year	413,305	440,116
Fund balance at end of year	<b>440,116</b>	<b>475,561</b>

## 2024 regional commission board

**Jennifer Hodges**, Muskegon Charter Township Supervisor – *Chairperson*

**Kathy Winczewski**, City of Ludington Councilperson – *Vice Chairperson*

**James Rynberg**, City of Fremont Mayor *Secretary*

**Tim Beggs**, Oceana County Commissioner

**Kim Cyr**, Muskegon County Commissioner

**Rachel Gorman**, City of Muskegon At Large Commissioner

**Michelle Hazekamp**, Muskegon County Commissioner

**Marcia Hovey Wright**, Muskegon County Commissioner

**Les Johnson**, Mason County Commissioner

**James Kelly**, MSU Extension, WMSRDC Appointee

**Mark Kinney**, West Shore Community College, Vice President of Academics & Student Services

**Bryan Kolk**, Newaygo County Commissioner

**Andrea Large**, Community Foundation for Mason County, WMSRDC Appointee

**Joel McCormick**, Oceana County Commissioner

**Bonnie McGlothlin**, City of Muskegon Heights Mayor

**Paul Mellema**, Newaygo County Commissioner

**Roger Morgenstern**, City of Norton Shores Councilperson

**Beth Dick**, Muskegon Community College, Vice President of Finance & CFO

**Lewis Squires**, Mason County Commissioner

**Clyde Welford**, Lake County Commissioner

**Jonathan Wilson**, DTE, WMSRDC Appointee

## WMSRDC Staff

Erin Kuhn, Executive Director  
Amanda Snyder, Finance Manager  
Syndi Copeland, Office Manager

**Economic Development,  
Community Development,  
and Local Government Services**  
Stephen Carlson, Program Manager

**Environmental Planning**  
Fallon Chabala, Program Manager

**Transportation Planning**  
Joel Fitzpatrick, Planning Director  
Brian Mulnix, Program Manager  
Laurn Blake, Planner  
Jamie Way, GIS Specialist



*Cushman Creek x Roosevelt Road  
almost complete*

 **WEST MI  
SHORELINE**  
Regional Development Commission

316 Morris Avenue, Suite 340  
Muskegon, MI 49440

231-722-7878  
WMSRDC.org