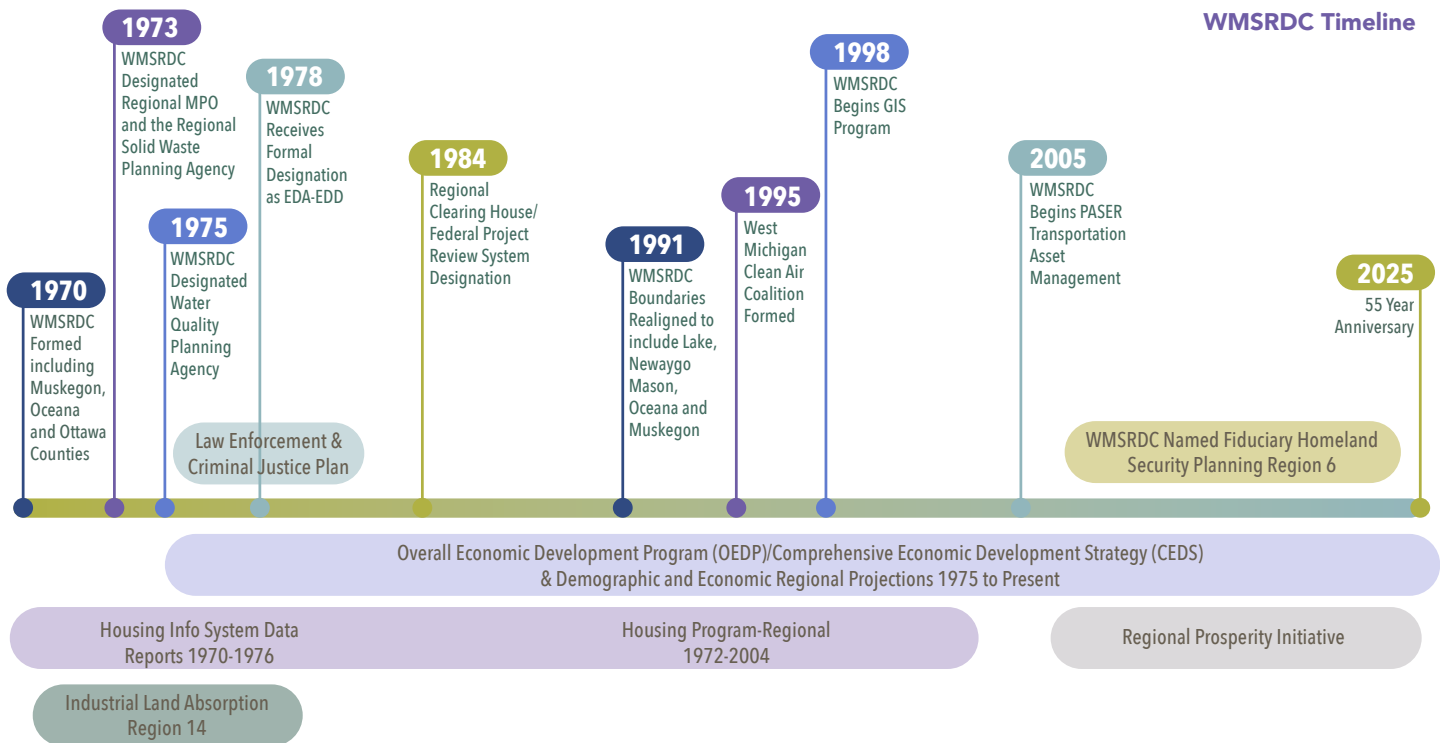


Commission Quarterly

WMSRDC Turns "55"



This year, WMSRDC turns 55. Or, as staff call it, "double nickels."

When WMSRDC turned 50, both staff and board had planned several activities throughout the year to celebrate the momentous occasion. However, a global pandemic curbed most of our plans, and we had to adjust. We decided to pause our planned activities to celebrate 55 instead. Since 1970, WMSRDC has served our community through our core programs of Transportation, Economic Development, Environmental Planning, and Local Government Services. Over

the years, countless staff and board members have been dedicated to serving the Commission's mission to "promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments and regional partners."

WMSRDC as a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serves 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties. WMSRDC also serves as the planning agency for the metropolitan

transportation planning (MPO) program for Muskegon and Northern Ottawa counties.

Above is a timeline of the major events over the past 55 years. Please stay tuned for opportunities throughout 2025 to help us celebrate our "double nickels."

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Environmental: Project Planning Update

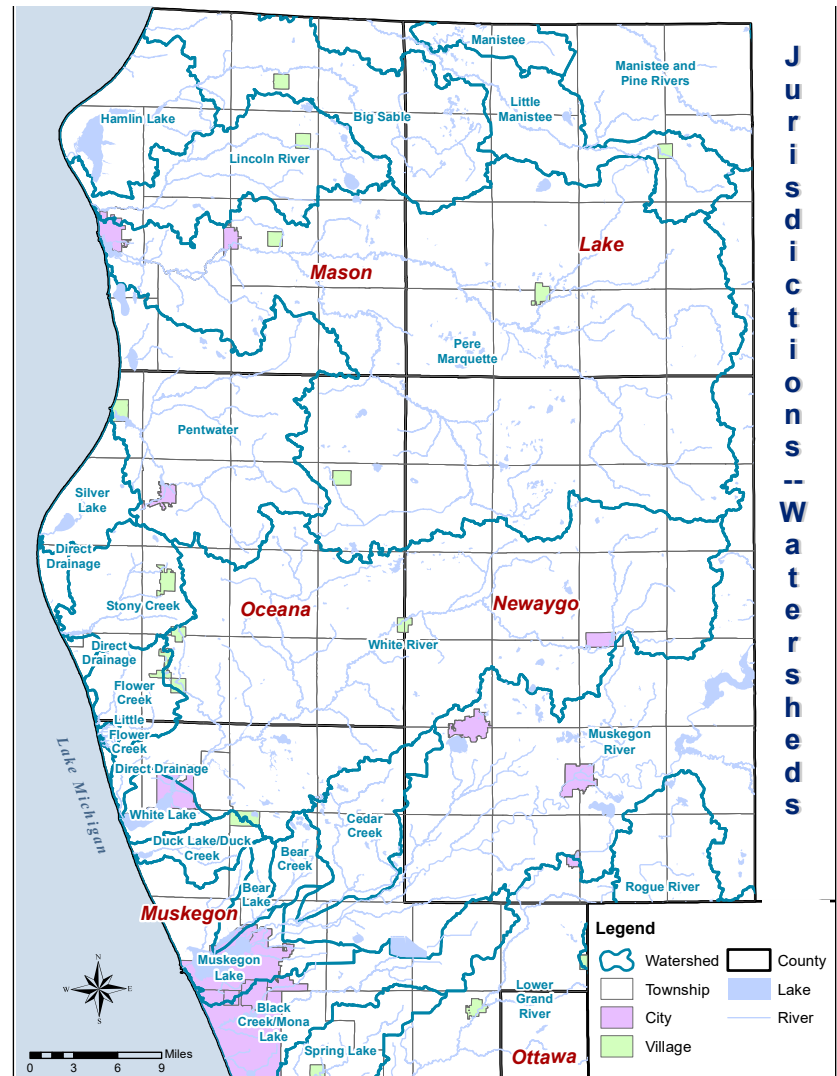
WMSRDC has kicked off the Resilience Planning in West Michigan project with the process of competitively securing an environmental consultant to aid in project development. With support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) National Coastal Resilience Fund (NCRF), WMSRDC will collaborate with community leaders, stakeholders, and the selected environmental consulting firm to develop a prioritized list of nature-based projects that benefit community resilience and fish and wildlife habitat along coastal Lake Michigan and its associated drowned river mouth systems in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties. WMSRDC will host West Michigan Watershed Partners' meetings and county level planning meetings to allow participants to provide input on locations in need of protection and the ideal outcomes and benefits from resiliency and restoration efforts. Depending on each project's scope and budget, two to four of the identified projects will be prepared to flow into the Site Assessment and Preliminary Design phase of the NCRF pipeline. The additional projects recognized in the plan will continue to work through development and community preparedness to be submitted under future years of the NCRF pipeline or through other funding programs.

WMSRDC is also in the process of contracting with EGLE's Water Resources Division for a similar planning project focused on Lake Michigan coastal communities. This partnership will advance and build capacity within coastal communities for developing projects that prioritize coastal resilience through habitat restoration and conservation. Lead by the EGLE, WMSRDC will collaborate to

increase knowledge of the site-specific coastal hazards through training and technical assistance, followed by customized community engagements to identify priority areas for the development of detailed plans, engineering, and designs for nature-based solutions to mitigate hazards, targeted habitat restoration and land conservation, and then identification of funding streams for the projects.

All future designs will utilize soft engineering solutions influenced by fluctuating water levels seasonally and annually and

resilient to site hydrology to reduce any future coastal hazards, while ensuring all projects enhance habitat and benefit native wildlife, leading to improved habitat for native plants and animals, reduced shoreline erosion, improved fish passage, and increased tourism due to improved fishing, boating, wildlife watching, and aesthetics. Please feel free to reach out to Fallon Chabala at fchabala@wmsrdc.org with any project ideas and follow the WMSRDC Facebook page for updates on community meeting dates and details.



Watersheds within the five-county area.

Transportation: Air Quality

Since 1995, the West Michigan Clean Air Coalition (WMCAC) has been a partnership of businesses, academic institutions, government agencies, industry, and non-profit organizations in Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, and Kalamazoo counties working to achieve cleaner air in the region. This has been done through educational and promotional events that encourage voluntary emission reduction activities. WMSRDC continues to be a proud financial supporter and active member of the WMCAC.

(GVMC). January continued to be busy with calls between WMCAC partners, internal discussions, as well as meetings with the Clean Air Action campaign advertisers. A request for proposals (RFP) was sent out in December and responses trickled in; the WMCAC decided to advertise with television stations WZZM, WXMI, and Wood TV, with radio station WGHN, and stream with Townsquare and Spotify. WMSRDC looks forward to working with these advertisers for the Clean Air Action 2025 season, including a live interview during the summer months with WGHN.

Promotional and educational items have been sorted, and new items are being purchased. Look for new Air Quality “swag” at spring and summertime community events like STEAM Along the Lakeshore and Feet on the Street. Items will be accompanying the WMCAC informational display that will be traveling around Muskegon County once again this year. Check out the WMCAC Facebook and Instagram pages to follow the GVMC and WMSRDC’s display



The air quality station, located behind Laketon Township Hall, provides data that allows EGLE to monitor the quality of air in the Muskegon region.



Keep an eye out for “Do your share for cleaner air” pins at events this summer! Play games to win these and other prizes.

This year started off strongly with the first WMCAC steering committee meeting being held January 7, 2025, hosted by WMCAC partner Grand Valley Metropolitan Council

rotation. If there are any businesses, local units of government, libraries, or any other organization interested in hosting this summer, please email lblake@wmsrdc.org for more information!

WMCAC members are looking forward to this Clean Air Action season and what it may bring. Remember: Do your share for cleaner air!

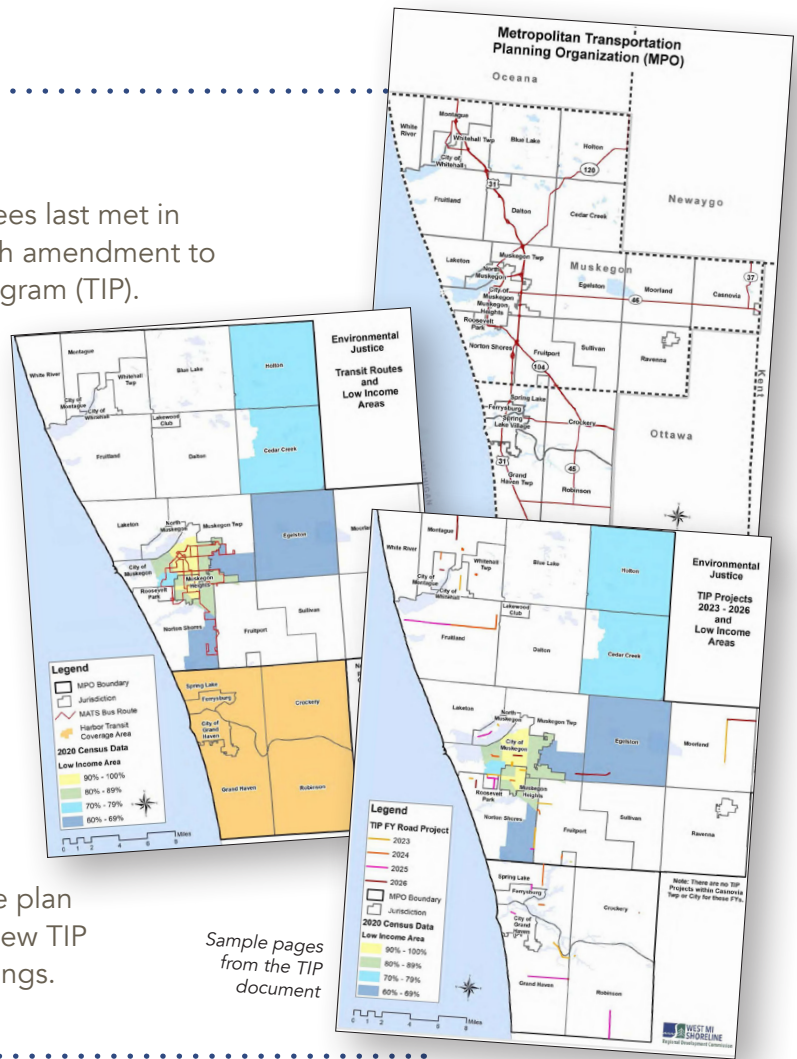
Transportation: Pre-Unified Work Program Meeting

In March, WMSRDC staff participated in the annual Pre-Unified Work Program (UWP) meeting to review progress with the current UWP and plan for the upcoming FY2026 UWP. The meeting was attended by representatives from Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), as well as staff from the Muskegon Area Transit System (MATS) and Harbor Transit. The new UWP will be developed by staff and presented for approval by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Committee in the coming months. The UWP serves as a roadmap for the MPO’s planning activities and budget expenditures for the fiscal year. MDOT provides revenue estimates, which the MPO uses to develop programs and projects for the next fiscal year. Once approved, the FY2026 UWP will be posted on the WMSRDC website for public access.

Transportation: FY2023-2026 TIP Update

The WestPlan MPO Technical and Policy Committees last met in March where they reviewed and discussed the 24th amendment to the FY2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The MPO committees took action to approve the amendment. The addition of new projects, or changes that impact the cost or scope of existing projects require an amendment and must follow the MPO public involvement procedures. Any changes to the TIP document are discussed at the monthly MPO committee meetings. Details of WestPlan MPO TIP amendments and other MPO related information can be found by visiting the website at www.wmsrdc.org.

As amendments continue with the current TIP, staff have been concurrently working to develop the FY2026-2029 TIP document. The project list was developed and approved at the January 2025 MPO meetings. Staff will map out and analyze the projects and develop the individual chapters in the plan based on that information. A draft version of the new TIP is expected to be acted on at the May MPO meetings.



Transportation: FY2025 Safety Performance Measure Targets

The WestPlan MPO has supported the state Safety Performance Measure Targets that were established by the Michigan Department of Transportation 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 agreeing with the state targets, the MPO agrees to contribute to the accomplishment of the state targets rather than develop separate targets. The MPO will

Safety Performance Measure (5-year rolling average)	Baseline Condition	2025 State Safety Target
Fatalities	1,085.2	1,098.0
Fatality Rate Per 100 million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)	1.137	1.113
Serious Injuries	5,727.8	5,770.1
Serious Injury Rate per 100 million VMT	5.988	5.850
Nonmotorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries	743.0	728.3

State Safety Targets for Calendar Year 2025

work with MDOT and local road agencies to plan projects that will contribute to the goals. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Long-Range Plan will be amended to

address the targets and the proposed process that will be used to work toward the targets. The following table shows the state defined target for each of the five categories.

Economic Development: CEDS Adjustment

WMSRDC convened the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee for its quarterly meeting in January. During the meeting, goals and objectives for the CEDS "Infrastructure" priority were reviewed. Three notable adjustments resulted from this engaging and productive discussion:

1. The CEDS should distinguish between physical (hard) infrastructure and social (soft) infrastructure, both of which are necessary for prosperous communities.
2. Replace the term "waterborne commerce" with "Blue Economy" to promote freshwater resources in the region and expand the geographic applicability of the sentiment.
3. Incorporate a new objective to acknowledge and support "housing" as a regional priority for economic development.

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 an area. The CEDS document is updated every five years through a process that is led by WMSRDC and guided by the CEDS Strategy Committee. Going forward, quarterly CEDS meetings will continue to feature review and discussion of a different CEDS topic in a proactive effort to reflect economic development priorities of the region.



*Shelby Acres housing development
in the Village of Shelby, Oceana County*

Economic Development: Ag Week

The West Michigan Agriculture Cluster Impact Analysis is kicking engagement efforts into high gear to connect with agriculture stakeholders in the region. This portion of the project is essential to laying a foundation for common understanding of the local agriculture economy, which will cascade into discussions about agricultural obstacles, opportunities, and priorities. Informally we have referred to the week of March 24 as "Ag Week." The timing is significant, as project partners will be seeking invaluable perspectives from agriculture growers and processors before

their growing and production seasons begin. The week will feature presentations, focus groups, interviews, and tours of the West Michigan agriculture scene.

Please note:

Because this article was written prior to Ag Week, we recognize that it may not be distributed or consumed before then. If you missed it, but would like to participate in the Analysis, please contact Stephen Carlson at scarlson@wmsrdc.org.



Farm near White Cloud, Newaygo County

Special Projects: Rural Readiness Grant

In February, three projects within the WMSRDC region were selected for the Rural Readiness Grant Program sponsored by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO), Office of Rural

Prosperity. These projects include the following:

West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission –

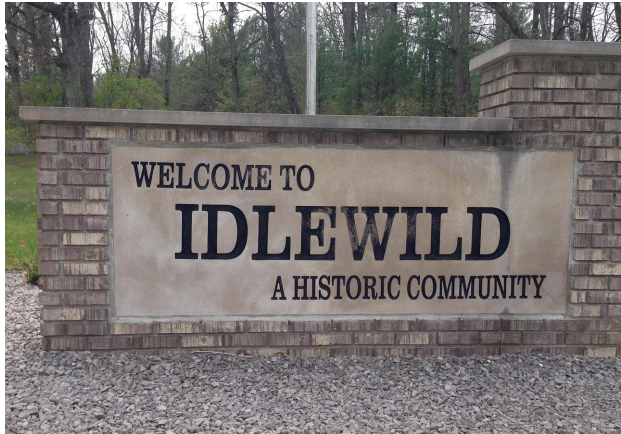
Currently, WMSRDC is implementing a grant from the US Economic Development Administration to conduct the West Michigan Agriculture Cluster Impact Analysis and is also serving as a host agency for an Economic Recover Corps fellowship which is adding planning capacity to the region's agriculture and food systems. The Rural Readiness Grant will be leveraged to support these activities and develop a strategy for sustaining public/private partnerships in agricultural sectors.

Idlewild Community Alliance – Advances revitalization of Idlewild (Lake County) by strengthening local governance, fostering leadership development, supporting small business growth and conducting a housing needs assessment to drive sustainable development.

Chamber Alliance of Mason County – Supports implementation of a five-year housing strategic plan and develops a strategy for soliciting developers to build on identified sites.

The Rural Readiness Grant Program is designed to help rural communities build capacity, drive economic development, and improve quality of life for residents through grants to support collaborative planning and capacity initiatives. These competitive, reimbursement grants support and invest in underserved areas and populations by providing reimbursement grant funding for capacity building activities, development readiness initiatives, partnership and plan formation, and cross sector collaboration.

WMSRDC staff are excited to be selected for this grant award and would like to thank the Office of Rural Prosperity for supporting advancement of agriculture in West Michigan!

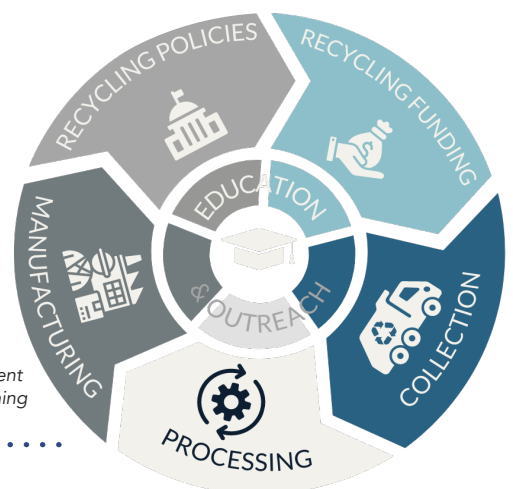


Idlewild sign in Yates Township, Lake County

Materials Management Planning

The March meeting of the Materials Management Planning Committee (MMPC) was cancelled, as the committee awaited approval of its Work Plan by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). An approved Work Plan is required for the counties to be reimbursed for costs associated with development of a Materials Management Plan (MMP).

The MMPC is composed of individuals representing various sectors in materials management and hailing from the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana. WMSRDC is the Designated Planning Agency (DPA) for these counties for the purpose of creating a regional MMP. In this role, WMSRDC will serve as staff for the MMPC, help the five counties meet the planning requirements, and provide information to inform and facilitate development of the multi-county MMP. For more information, see the WMSRDC Materials Management Planning page at wmsrdc.org.



Recycling is a major component of materials management planning

Local Government Services: Blue Lake Township Planning Update

Blue Lake Township, with assistance from WMSRDC, successfully updated the community's recreation plan, which was adopted by the township board in January 2025 and approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in February. The township is now eligible to apply for recreation grants through the state for the next five years.

In addition, a proposed draft of the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan has been completed and is available for public review through May 13. The plan can be viewed on the Blue Lake Township website and at the township hall during normal business hours. The review period will be followed by a public hearing during the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission meeting on May 14 at 6:30 PM.



Sunset over Big Blue Lake,
Blue Lake Township, Muskegon County

Commission Operations

Staff Spotlight: Brian Mulnix is the Program Manager for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) at WMSRDC, where he has been a key contributor since joining the agency in 1998 as a



Brian Mulnix, Transportation
Program Manager

Transportation Planner and GIS Technician. Over the years, Brian has played an

integral role in the development and execution of numerous transportation and planning initiatives, including Metropolitan Planning, Transit Planning, Rural, and Regional Planning, Asset Management, Non-Motorized Planning, Traffic Counting, GIS, and transportation studies. In his current role, Brian oversees the planning and project selection for approximately \$20 million in annual federal highway and transit funding, working closely with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as multiple transit organizations. His

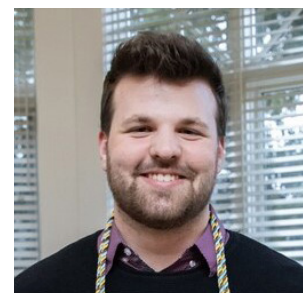
expertise in short- and long-range transportation planning ensures the continuous improvement and development of West Michigan's transportation infrastructure.

A Whitehall, Michigan native, Brian earned his bachelor's degree in environmental policy and land use planning from Central Michigan University before completing his master's degree in public administration at Grand Valley State University. Beyond his professional work, Brian is deeply involved in his local community. He has served on the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), White River Zoning Board, and has completed the Michigan Infrastructure Council's Asset Management Champion Program. He is also an active organizer of local events and fundraisers, demonstrating his commitment to community development and engagement.

Welcome, Jack! In January, WMSRDC welcomed Jack Grice as a Transportation Planner and GIS Technician. Originally from Wadsworth, Ohio, Jack relocated to West Michigan to attend Grand

Valley State University. He graduated from GVSU in 2024 with a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources Management, complemented by minors in Biology and Geospatial Technologies. He holds certifications in Geographic Information Systems, Applied GIS in Natural Resources, and RX-310 Prescribed Burns. In his free time, Jack enjoys hiking along the lake-shore, engaging in pickleball and disc golf, and watching sports.

As a Planner, Jack is involved in the annual PASER road ratings, assists in coordinating the maintenance of the Highway Performance Monitoring System database within the region, and contributes to the Small Urban, Regional, and Traffic Count Programs. As the GIS Technician, Jack is responsible for administering WMSRDC GIS datasets and assisting all WMSRDC programs, as needed, for spatial analysis and reporting.



Jack Grice, Transportation
Planner and GIS Technician



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