

Chapter 1. Introduction

This *Corridors and International Borders Report* provides supporting documentation and analysis for *MI Transportation Plan*. Unlike the technical reports prepared as part of the plan that focus on a single issue or mode, this report provides a unique perspective. It presents an integrated, multi-modal analysis of the journey of people and the supply chain movements of goods along 19 Corridors of Highest Significance. This report defines these corridors and their value to Michigan. It evaluates the travel conditions and needs on each corridor by identifying opportunities and barriers to movement such as gaps or missing or defective links that hinder economic growth. It describes objectives for each corridor as were discussed in the many public meetings during the development of *MI Transportation Plan*. It suggests broad, policy-based strategies that may take advantage of economic opportunities or address transportation barriers and gaps on the corridors. This report also describes Michigan's International Border Crossings and the issues that may impact international travel and the global competitiveness of Michigan.

This report is based on the Michigan Department of Transportation's (MDOT) recognition that passengers and freight travel along geographic corridors on multiple modes between locations or activity centers both within and outside Michigan. While all travel routes and modes are important to MDOT, certain corridors carry the highest value and volumes of goods, services, and people, and provide a higher level of support for the economy or specific economic sectors. These travel routes and modes are the *MI Transportation Plan's* 19 Corridors of Highest Significance described in this report.

The decision to conduct a corridor-based analysis is grounded in the belief that specific corridors serve and support specific economic sectors. By improving specific corridors the businesses and industries dependent on these corridors will be strengthened as will be Michigan's economic competitiveness.

1.1 Overview of this Report

This report includes six chapters and four appendices. It also includes two executive summaries; one entitled *MI Corridors of Highest Significance Profile Summary - Executive Summary I* which provides a detailed corridor profile for each of the 19 Corridors of Highest Significance. This corridor profile document also presents a summary of opportunities and missing or deficient links in existing and future multi-modal systems that hinder the movement of goods and services traveling in or through each of the 19 corridors. The second executive summary is organized by the *MI Transportation Plan's* 17 Economic Regions. The *Economic Regions Corridor Summary - Executive Summary II* document presents brief economic region and corridor profiles and key strategies for the Corridors of Highest Significance within each of the *MI Transportation Plan* Economic Regions.

Chapter 1 explains why a corridor approach is used. **Chapter 2** defines the Corridors of Highest Significance and explains MDOT's process to identify the corridors. **Appendix B** presents the details of the technical approach. **Appendix C** presents the detail of each activity center, their

modal facilities and other characteristics. **Chapter 3** discusses the policy-based significance of these corridor designations. **Appendix D** details broad policy-based strategies and programs that can be used to advance each corridor strategy. **Chapter 4** identifies performance measures that maybe used to evaluate the corridors and international borders during the implementation phase of *MI Transportation Plan*. **Chapter 5** summarizes existing and future international border crossing issues and initiatives. **Chapter 6** presents recommendations that the department will move forward with during the implementation phase of *MI Transportation Plan*.

1.2 MDOT's Role in Michigan's Economic Growth and Competitiveness

MDOT is responsible for a large and diverse number of transportation facilities. These facilities, which support passenger and freight movements, are vital assets to the people and businesses in Michigan, its sub-state economic regions, and the nation. MDOT recognizes that quality transportation is critical to creating, expanding, and keeping jobs in Michigan. Comments and conclusions from the Economic Advisory Group (EAG) and other stakeholder participation activities held for the development of *MI Transportation Plan* demonstrate that Michigan's leadership and public recognize the connection between a quality transportation system, jobs, and Michigan's economy.

The preferred public vision has been developed as part of the plan development process for *MI Transportation Plan*, and can be summarized as follows:

“Michigan’s 2030 integrated transportation system will be the foundation of the state’s economic vitality and will sustain quality of life for its residents. Transportation providers throughout the state will work together to address the system’s needs holistically. The entire system (all modes) will be maintained, preserved, and protected as one of the state’s most important physical assets. The transportation system in 2030 will be responsive to the public’s demand for more transit and non-motorized choices.”

The public desires a mobile transportation system which is innovative, holistic, safe, sustainable, environmentally sound, energy-efficient, and which recognizes that transportation is fundamental to economic development and quality of life in Michigan.

MDOT recognizes that high-quality transportation alone can not generate permanent jobs or long-term economic growth. Economic growth requires providing a balance of conditions and services including:

- A quality environment such as location appearance, quality educational and health care systems, and other quality of life factors;
- Well-functioning infrastructure such as sewer, water, utilities, and transportation systems;
- Resources such as a skilled, available work force, available land, and access to raw materials; and

- Access to these resources and markets.

Michigan’s many businesses and governmental agencies are working to create these conditions for each of Michigan’s sub-state economic regions as well as the state as a whole.

MDOT’s role in economic development is to leverage the performance of the transportation system to support optimal economic conditions for the state and each of its sub-state economic regions. MDOT is also responsible for addressing gaps and missing or defective links in the transportation system, for removing transportation barriers to economic vitality, and ensuring its transportation strategies help existing businesses grow and attract new businesses and jobs. Identifying the needs on Michigan’s multi-modal Corridors of Highest Significance and developing strategies for improvements at the corridor level allows MDOT to focus on what is most critical to supporting the economy of Michigan.

1.3 Integrating the Corridor Approach with MI Transportation Plan

This report identifies Michigan’s most used and most valuable corridors and the areas with a large amount of activity (including International Border Crossings) that are origins and destinations for travel. This report also evaluates the conditions and needs of the diverse multi-modal transportation facilities as they relate to the journey.

MDOT chose to apply a corridor approach to its long-range transportation planning process because it provides a method to integrate all modes of transportation with the specific and unique needs, the economic condition, and goals of each sub-state region. Specifically, this corridor approach:

- Focuses on identifying an integrated multi-modal system of highly significant corridors within Michigan;
- Focuses on evaluating and maximizing the mobility and connectivity among these corridors;
- Facilitates evaluating and making focused, multi-modal strategic recommendations targeted to the unique conditions and transportation needs of each corridor, economic sector, and sub-state region (specific strategies and recommendations can be developed and applied to regional priorities, or economic sectors);
- Facilitates coordination with MPOs, economic regions, and MDOT regions;
- Presents recommendations that can comprehensively address multiple needs at a single location;
- Provides consistency between transportation improvements and planned state and local growth and economic development patterns;
- Sets the direction for modal policies to ensure integration;

- Produces corridor specific strategies that: Can include capital, operational, and management investment procedures; and bridge the gap between policy and strategy and lead to implementation.

Both the EAG and public believe MDOT must develop and support a multi-modal transportation system that provides a balance between urban/rural, passenger/freight, residents/tourists, technology/agriculture, transit/highway, community decision-making/need and to maximize the use of non-motorized transportation opportunities. Corridor-focused analyses can lead to strategies that achieve this balance.

Chapter 2. Process to Identify Corridors and Activity Centers

Selection and agreement on the MDOT Corridors of Highest Significance involved a data rich, analytical process that included considerable review and discussion by a *MI Transportation Plan* corridor subcommittee comprised of individuals from throughout the department. This chapter defines the term corridors of significance; explains the key concepts used to identify the corridors; and summarizes the decision-making process and conclusions followed to agree on the corridors. **Appendix B** details the research conducted, technical approach, and analytical process used to identify the final Corridors of Highest Significance.

2.1 Definitions

This section defines *MI Transportation Plan* Corridors of Highest Significance. Corridors serving sub-state regional economic areas are also defined but are not profiled in this report.

2.1.1 Activity Centers

MI Transportation Plan's activity centers, as shown in **Figure 1**, are defined as:

Geographic locations with concentrations of people, jobs, educational and health service facilities, tourist attractions, or other similar economic-based facilities or services. International border crossings are included within some activity centers.

MDOT identified these multi-modal corridors and activity centers based on quantitative criteria and an analytical process as explained later in this chapter and **Appendix B**. Details on criteria and thresholds used to identify activity centers are presented in **Table 1**.

2.1.2 Corridors of Highest Significance

MI Transportation Plan's Corridors of Highest Significance, as shown in **Figure 2**, are defined as:

An integrated, multi-modal system of transportation infrastructure along geographic corridors that provide a high level of support for the international, national, and state economies. These corridors connect activity centers within and outside Michigan and serve the movements of people, services, and goods vital to the economic prosperity of the state.