

# **I-94: Future Reconstruction and Widening in Kalamazoo and Portage**

## **Context**

This urban section of I-94 passes through the cities of Kalamazoo and Portage. The roadway is a 4-lane facility with merge/weave lanes and currently carries more vehicles per day than any other 4-lane freeway in Michigan.

## **Purpose and Description**

This section of I-94 was built in the mid to late 1950s. The need for replacing this section of roadway is based on inadequate roadway capacity, existing geometric deficiencies, and deteriorated condition of the pavement and bridges. Proposed improvements include reconstruction of the existing roadway, addition of one lane in each direction within the project limits, reconfiguration of 4 interchanges, and replacement of 17 bridges.



## **Challenges**

The project presents several challenges to the social environment including minimizing impacts to commuter, commercial, and tourist traffic as well as related economic impacts. Other challenges include minimizing noise impacts related to the additional freeway capacity and closer proximity of the freeway to adjacent residential development.

## **Public Engagement**

During the early stages of design, city officials were invited to review conceptual design alternatives and maintenance of traffic concepts. As plan development continued, a stakeholder group consisting of local business, university, school district, and government leaders was established. The stakeholders met with MDOT and consultant design staff multiple times to determine appropriate corridor aesthetic treatments compatible with the community. The stakeholder involvement process culminated in a public hearing, where the design concepts and aesthetic treatments were presented to the public. After the public hearing, aesthetic treatments were selected by MDOT and design development completed.

## **Context Sensitive Solutions Approach**

Taking a CSS approach helped address aesthetic opportunities as well as challenges to preserve the historic aspect of the corridor. Kalamazoo County was identified as having more Frank Lloyd Wright designed “Usonian” homes than any other county in the United States. This “Usonian” theme was included in the retaining wall and sound abatement wall aesthetic treatments. Pilaster and abutment treatments were also included on bridges that will separate this portion of the I-94 corridor as a gateway to the Kalamazoo County community.

## **Outcome**

Project design is complete. The first phase of construction, replacement of the Lovers Lane Bridge, will begin in 2006. Construction on remaining phases has not been scheduled, pending identification of funding sources.

## **Funding**

The total project cost is estimated at \$230 million dollars.

**Contact: Kitty Rothwell, Assoc. Region Engineer for Development, Southwest Region,  
269-337-3977**