

Michigan Media Report – February 27, 2006

TRIP worked with the Michigan **Infrastructure & Transportation Association (MITA)** to produce the report, *"Making the Grade in Michigan: An Analysis of the Ability of Michigan's Transportation System to Meet the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility."*

Released February 27, 2006, at news conferences in **Detroit, Lansing** and **Grand Rapids**, the report looks at pavement and bridge conditions, congestion and safety on Michigan's highway transportation system and assigns letter grades in each category. In addition to a state-wide report, separate "regional report cards" that assess the same categories, were produced for the Detroit, Lansing and Grand Rapids urban areas.

Local officials, including the mayor of Grand Rapids and Chamber of Commerce representatives, participated in the news conferences. And, while Lansing mayor Virg Bernero was unable to attend the Lansing news conference, he did issue a press statement and was quoted on the front page of *the Lansing State Journal*, saying,

"The TRIP report confirms what Lansing residents have known for a long time - our roads are in terrible shape, and it will require a major financial commitment to get them back on track."

News media coverage was extensive with front page stories in the *Detroit Free Press*, *The Detroit News*, the *Lansing State Journal* and *The Oakland Press* appearing the day of the release and statewide newspaper coverage with headlines such as, **"Detroit Regional Chamber Calls Michigan Road Report A Call to Action."**

Two days after the release, *The Detroit News* ran an editorial cartoon based on the TRIP report. And the *Lansing State Journal* published an editorial the same day headlined, **"Road grade: If we don't want roads to flunk, motorists must pay as they go."** The editorial called for a gas tax increase and cited the TRIP report.

Television coverage was also extensive, with Michigan network affiliates attending all three news conferences. Release of the report was the lead story on several stations, including, in Lansing, *WLNS News 6* and *WILX 10 (NBC)*, in Grand Rapids, *WZZM 13 News (ABC)* and in Detroit, *WDIV 4 (ABC)*. The report's release was also a basis for an interview with the area's *ABC Radio* "talk radio" station.

The Detroit News

February 27, 2006

Report gives Metro area an 'F' on roads

Tom Greenwood /

After nearly 10 years of construction and billions in investments, Michigan's roads are still in dire need of repair, according to a report card issued today by the Road Information Program, a transportation research group based in Washington.

In its annual report, TRIP — a nonprofit organization sponsored by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers and highway engineering, construction and finance companies as well as labor unions — gave poor grades to Michigan and the Metro area for the condition of roads and bridges, as well as for congestion and safety.

Based on data from 2004 — the latest year for which information was available — TRIP gave Michigan's roads an overall grade of "D" and rated 14 percent of the state's major roads and highways in poor condition, 24 percent in mediocre condition, 15 percent in fair condition and the remaining 47 percent in good condition.

This compares to 2000, when 15 percent of the state's roads were rated poor, 19 percent mediocre, 19 percent fair and 47 percent good. The condition of Michigan's bridges earned a "D" rating; congestion received a "C," as did the safety of the state's roads.

"Statistically, it's pretty much a wash between 2000 and 2004," said Frank Moretti, director of policy and research for TRIP.

"Roads conditions remain about the same, but we have seen (reductions) in the number of bridges that are structurally deficient; congestion continues to get worse, but the number of persons killed in traffic accidents in Michigan has gone down, which is good news."

In the Metro area, TRIP gave area roads an "F." Bridge conditions also rated an "F," while congested was rated at "D" and safety a "C."

"There was steady improvement to our system of roads during the 1990s, but that's flattened out," Moretti said.

"Federal funding in previous years was higher, but we're no longer seeing that. But in the meantime the wear on the transportation system continues, especially from increased trucking and congestion."

According to TRIP, the condition of Michigan's roads costs motorists an extra \$457 per year compared to a high of \$669 in St. Louis and a low of \$51 in Atlanta. Nationally, the average was \$400.

"The TRIP report only confirms what we've been saying for years," said Craig Bryson, spokesman for the Road Commission for Oakland County.

"Our roads are getting worse, and it will continue that way in the foreseeable future, and money is the basis of the problem. Road funding in Michigan has not kept up with the costs of maintaining the system, or with inflation, for that matter."

According to Bryson, Oakland County has invested more than \$1 billion in the county's road system over the past 10 years, but what it really needed was \$4 billion or \$5 billion to do the job right.

Detroit area fails on roads, bridges

Report: Most are poor or mediocre

BY STAN DONALDSON
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

It has been a long, bumpy road for state officials when it comes to finding ways and means to fix and improve Michigan's roads and bridges, but not as bumpy as it's been for motorists like Chris King of Detroit.

King, 32, often travels Michigan Avenue between Rosa Parks and Livernois on the way to his job as a laborer for a Detroit construction company. That stretch is one of 10 in the Detroit area that qualifies as heavily traveled and in desperate need of repair, according to a report due out today.

"They need to do something out here because these roads are really terrible," King said Sunday while getting gasoline at a Marathon station on that stretch of Michigan.

The study, done in parts of 2004 and 2005, says more than two-thirds of the major roads in the Detroit area were in poor or mediocre condition, as measured by things like potholes and road vibration data provided by federal and state agencies. The indexes in Detroit were above 170; 95 or below is considered good.

The study was done by The Road Information Program, a Washington, D.C.-based research group that used the agencies' data and did not itself inspect the roads.

The study also found more than 40% of the bridges 20 feet or longer were structurally deficient, showing significant deterioration to decks and other major components, or were functionally obsolete, meaning they did not meet modern design standards or were no longer adequate for the volume of traffic they carried.

The study's release comes in the wake of at least two accidents in the Detroit area this year that happened when concrete chunks

from bridge overpasses fell away and smashed into vehicles, injuring the drivers.

The results come as no surprise to some road and government officials who say that something has to be done to improve state funding for road projects. The Michigan Department of Transportation spends more than \$900 million each year in projects that include resurfacing, expansion and repair.

"Road maintenance is underfunded and not comparable to how other states fund road projects," said Craig Bryson, spokesman for the Road Commission for Oakland County.

State Rep. David Law, R-Commerce Township, said he thinks the report will be fodder for discussion at Tuesday's meeting of the House Transportation Committee, on which he serves.

"I am not surprised with the grades," Law said. "I drive on a daily basis to Lansing on M-5, I-696 and I-96 and see all of the congestion and potholes on the roads."

He said state money spent on roads in southeastern Michigan must be reallocated to places of growth and population increases. With more people working and living in communities north of Detroit, the funding must change to reflect congestion and wearing down of roads and bridges in those areas, he said.

At the same time, Law said, the state must find a way to spend money to fix roads in Detroit.

"We can't just let those crumble," Law said. "We have to make sure we find ways to keep our bridges and overpasses safe."

King lives on Detroit's west side and said he has given up trying to dodge potholes because the roads have so many of them. He said to fix the problems, the state needs to strip the roads completely and repave them, instead of just patching holes.

Frank Moretti, TRIP's director of policy and research, said poor road conditions increase the risks for motorists and contribute to vehicles' deterioration.

"The poorer the road conditions, the more likely drivers are to end up back in the showroom," Moretti said.

The report is titled "Making the Grade in Michigan: An Analysis of the Ability of Michigan's Transportation System to Meet the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility."

Moretti said the report used data from the Federal Highway Administration, National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration and MDOT.

Moretti said architectural, construction and transportation groups sponsored the nonprofit agency's report.

The bridge dangers are also evident. On Wednesday, a concrete chunk fell from the Cass Avenue bridge on I-75 and smashed through Rob Moser's windshield. Shannon McCarthy was in a similar accident on New Year's Day as she traveled north on the Lodge Freeway near Wayne State University. Both drivers suffered broken bones.

The study did not review roads and bridges in cities comparable in size with Detroit, but Moretti said Atlanta and Phoenix are examples of cities with highly rated bridges and roads.

Officials: Congestion worst in county, but no fixes in sight

By HANK SCHALLER
Of The Oakland Press

Oakland County has the worst traffic congestion problems in Michigan, but until the economy turns around, there's not much that can be done about it, according to a report being released today.

Although the report on Michigan's roads by The Road Information Program - a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit research organization - gives roads in Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties a letter grade of D in terms of rush-hour delays, Road Commission for Oakland County spokesman Craig Bryson said congestion problems in Oakland County are even worse.

Founded in 1971, TRIP promotes transportation policies that relieve traffic congestion, improve air quality, make highway travel safer and enhance economic productivity.

"In terms of traffic congestion, Oakland County probably has the worst traffic congestion problems in the state and would likely get a letter grade of E or F," Bryson said.

In grading roads, TRIP officials say a road or freeway receives a grade of A if there is a free flow of traffic. B is the grade if there is a stable flow of traffic with a slight decline in freedom to maneuver. C is given if there is a stable flow but traffic is significantly affected by other vehicles.

A road earns a D if it's crowded and there is some decline in speed. A road gets an E if it has slow speeds with no gaps in traffic. A road receives a failing F if it has stop-and-go traffic and poor maneuverability.

To say Oakland County has even worse congestion problems than the Detroit area is a serious matter because the TRIP report found that 54 percent of major roads in the three counties are considered congested and the typical rush-hour trip in the three counties takes 38 percent longer to complete than a non rush-hour trip.

However, Bryson said road commission officials realize that with the poor economy, now is not the time to push for tax or fee increases.

"We realize that, with the local economy as poor as it is, there's literally no chance of getting a local and state gas increase passed, and the same is the case for any fee increases," Bryson said. "So, short-term there is no answer to the traffic congestion problem."

That view was shared by Jim Page, a corporate executive for Haley Ellis Devereaux, a Southfield architectural and engineering firm and vice chairman of the Transportation Committee of the Oakland County Business Roundtable. He is involved with a group of about 30 representatives of county businesses. The group is developing a long-term strategy for dealing with traffic congestion problems in Oakland County.

The group is considering the following methods to raise money locally to deal with traffic congestion:

- A 4-cent-a-gallon countywide gas and diesel tax increase that would raise about \$28 million a year.
- A half-mill countywide property tax increase that would generate \$23 million annually.
- A half-percent local sales tax generating \$80 million a year.
- A 20 percent vehicle registration fee increase, raising \$9.6 million annually.
- A \$25 flat-rate driver's license fee that would raise \$14 million a year.

Some of these measures would have to be approved by state legislators and others by county voters.

"We hired Mitchell Research to do a poll of 600 voters in Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties, and 70 percent said the biggest issue now is jobs and the economy, 6 percent said it was schools, 5 percent said it was crime and drugs, 2 percent said it was traffic congestion and 1 percent said it was the lack of new businesses," Page said.

"What that poll told us is at this time there is not a lot of support for raising taxes or fees to deal with traffic congestion," he said. "Forty-one percent of people said they would support raising taxes or fees to deal with traffic

congestion, 55 percent said they would not support a tax or fee increase and 5 percent had no opinion.

"Those findings were interesting because 81 percent of the people questioned in the poll said traffic congestion is either a somewhat serious or very serious problem in the Detroit area," Page said.

The TRIP report documented how serious the traffic congestion problem is in Oakland County. It found that 10 of the 13 major roads and freeways in Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties with the greatest levels of congestion are at least partly in Oakland County.

Those freeways and state highways include:

- The 5.3-mile stretch from where Interstate 96 and I-275 meet in Farmington Hills, down I-696 to where the freeways separate in Plymouth Township and I-96 heads east and I-275 heads south. The eight- to 10-lane freeway is used by up to 96,709 vehicles a day and got a grade of E or F for its congestion problems.
- The 9.4-mile stretch of I-696 from the Lodge Freeway in Southfield to I-75 where it meets Hazel Park, Ferndale, Royal Oak and Madison Heights. This six- to eight-lane freeway is used by up to 89,727 vehicles a day and got a grade of D, E or F for its congestion problems.
- The 10.7-mile stretch of I-75 from I-696 in Hazel Park, Ferndale, Madison Heights and Royal Oak to I-94 on the border between Roseville and St. Clair Shores in Macomb County. This six- to 10-lane freeway is used by up to 83,425 motorists a day and got a grade of D, E or F for its congestion problems.
- The 9.2-mile stretch of the Southfield Freeway from Ford Road in Dearborn to the Lodge Freeway in Southfield. This sixlane freeway is used by up to 76,101 vehicles a day and got a grade of D, E or F.
- The 8.6-mile stretch of I-696 from I-96 in Farmington Hills to the Lodge Freeway in Southfield. This four- to eightlane freeway is used by up to 76,032 vehicles a day and got a grade of D, E or F.
- The 7.7-mile stretch of the Lodge Freeway from Clairmount in Detroit to I-696 in Southfield. This six- to eight-lane freeway is used by up to 72,488 vehicles a day and got a grade of D, E or F.
- The 12.7-mile stretch of I-96 from I-696 in Farmington Hills to Milford Road in Lyon Township. This four- to eight-lane freeway is used by up to 66,367 vehicles a day and got a grade of D, E or F.
- The 4.8-mile stretch of M-59 from Crooks Road in Rochester Hills to Ryan Road in Sterling Heights in Macomb County. This four-lane freeway is used by 42,864 vehicles a day and got a grade of E.

- The 6.4-mile stretch of Telegraph Road from I-696 in Southfield to Long Lake Road in Bloomfield Township. This six- to eightlane state highway is used by 40,304 vehicles a day and got a grade of D, E or F.
- The 4.8-mile stretch of Northwestern Highway from Telegraph Road in Southfield to Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield Township. This four- to six-lane state highway is used by 33,381 vehicles a day and got a grade of D or F.

Other TRIP findings about roads, bridges and freeways in the Detroit area were:

- In 2004 (the latest year for which data are available), 36 percent of major roads in the Detroit area were rated in poor condition, and an additional 37 percent were in mediocre condition, giving them a grade of F.
- More than half, or 54 percent, of urban roads in the Detroit area are considered congested because they often experience rush-hour delays, which earned them a grade of D.
- The Detroit area has a traffic fatality rate of 8.9 fatalities per 100,000 people, lower than the statewide average of 12.8 fatalities per 100,000 population and the national rate of 14.5 fatalities per 100,000 population, earning it a grade of C for safety. Bryson said the traffic fatality rate is even more impressive in Oakland County.

"That's the bright spot since the traffic fatality rate in Oakland County and neighboring Macomb County are among the lowest in the world," Bryson said.

- Thirty-six percent of the Detroit area's major roads are rated in poor condition, and an additional 37 percent are in mediocre condition. Roads in poor condition are rutted and have potholes or other signs of serious deterioration. Roads in mediocre condition can be repaired by resurfacing but may need more extensive reconstruction to be brought up to good condition.
- Only 21 percent of roads in Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties are in good condition, and the statewide goal is to keep 75 percent of major roads in good condition.
- 41 percent of bridges in the Detroit metropolitan area are in substandard condition.
- 18 percent of bridges in the three counties are rated as structurally deficient, showing significant deterioration to bridge decks and other major components.
- 23 percent of bridges in the Detroit area are functionally obsolete. These bridges no longer meet modern design standards for safety features, such as lane widths or alignment with connecting roads, or are no longer adequate for the volume of traffic being carried.

Lansing State Journal

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

21%

of Lansing's major roads are rated in poor condition

35%

of Lansing's major roads air in good condition. A desirable goal for state and local organizations responsible for road maintenance is 75 percent

15%

of bridges in the Lansing area are rated structurally deficient, showing significant deterioration to decks and other major components.

18%

of bridges in the area are functionally obsolete. These bridges no longer meet design standards for safety features.

Source: The Road Information Program

Lansing-area roads get failing grades Report cites crumbling pavement, aging bridges



(ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal)
Popular byway: Traffic moves Monday on Hagadorn Road over the Red Cedar River in East Lansing. Some 27,600 vehicles per day pass over this bridge, which is rated one of the most structurally deficient in the Lansing area. The bridge was built in 1930.

By Chris Andrews
Lansing State Journal

The Lansing area is in a rut when it comes to its roads.

The region's highways and byways scored a big fat F in a study released Monday by The Road Information Project (TRIP), a Washington-based nonprofit organization that studies the nation's roads.

Here's why Lansing flunked: too many cracks and potholes along Interstate 496, Saginaw Highway and other streets that rattle teeth, pop tires and ruin alignments.

Thomas Smith of Lansing doesn't need a fancy study to tell him about the rocky roads, which he says are atrocious. The General Motors Corp. retiree has found navigating Lake Lansing Road to his dentist's office to be a jarring experience.

"The road is so bad, I could almost feel it in my teeth every time we hit some crack," said Smith, 78. "I'm going to have to find another way to the dentist."

According to the TRIP study, 21 percent of the major roads in the Lansing area are in poor condition, and another 28 percent were rated mediocre.

In comparison, 14 percent of Michigan's roads were in poor condition and 24 percent rated average. TRIP graded the state roads a D. In Detroit, both roads and bridges received F grades; Grand Rapids' roads were rated F while the city's bridges received a grade of C.

Bridges are substandard

Frank Moretti, TRIP's director of policy and research, said the state is doing a good job with the resources it has but doesn't have enough money to get the roads to where they need to be. The state spends about \$1.4 billion annually for road and bridge repair on its major trunklines.

Residents end up paying more for not fixing roads because they damage their cars and need to replace them sooner, Moretti said.

"The worse shape your roads are, the more quickly your car will deteriorate," he said.

The area's bridges were rated a D minus. Fifteen percent were rated structurally deficient, meaning they showed significant deterioration. Another 18 percent were deemed functionally obsolete, meaning they no longer meet modern design standards for safety.

Traffic jams not so bad

Bad roads are costly news for businesses that depend on moving their products, said Bill Sepic, executive director of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"We can't tolerate or continue a Band-Aid approach to road repair," he said.

The TRIP report wasn't all gloom and doom for mid-Michigan.

The Lansing area rated a B for congestion, with about 11 percent of urban arterial roads congested during rush hour. Still, the report warns, that's likely to get worse with a projected 25 percent increase in vehicle travel by 2020.

Area report card

TRIP has assigned the following letter grades to components of the mid-Michigan highways and byways.

Roads: Grade F

► In 2004 — the latest year for which data is available — 21 percent of major roads in the Lansing area were rated in poor condition and an additional 28 percent were deemed mediocre.

Bridges: Grade D-

► One-third of bridges 20 feet or longer in the Lansing area are in substandard condition. Fifteen percent are rated as structurally deficient, and 18 percent are functionally obsolete.

Congestion: Grade B

► About 11 percent of urban arterial roads are considered congested because they often experience rush-hour delays. With a 25 percent increase in vehicle travel anticipated in the state by 2020, traffic congestion will likely worsen unless the state does something.

Road evaluation gives Michigan bad marks

By KEN OSBORNE

Lansing-area road conditions received an "F" in a report released Monday by the nonprofit organization The Road Information Program, or TRIP.

The region received a "B" in the traffic congestion portion of the report, a "D-" in bridge conditions and a "C" in safety.

TRIP also released a report on the condition of Michigan's transportation system. The state received a "D" in road condition, a "D" for its bridges, a "C" in congestion and a "C-" in safety.

Poor road conditions can directly impact the businesses that have to deal with them, said Bill Sepic, president of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"If we are going to be competitive at all and grow new businesses, job creation, revenue or even tourism, then we have to improve our roadways," Sepic said. "This is unacceptable."

The study is based on data collected in 2004, which is the most recent data available.

About 21 percent of major roads in the Lansing region were in poor condition, and another 28 percent were in mediocre condition, according to the report.

Statewide, about 38 percent of major roads had pavement in poor or mediocre condition.

Poor roads are defined as "badly cracked or broken," whereas roads considered in mediocre condition "may show signs of significant wear."

Bridges in the Lansing area are in need of improvement as well. The study found that 15 percent of bridges in the area are rated "structurally deficient." Another 18 percent are considered "functionally obsolete." The report considers bridges 20 feet or longer. There are 244 such bridges in the Lansing area.

These ratings do not show the bridges are in danger of collapsing, said Frank Moretti, the director of policy and research for TRIP. They mean bridges are in need of repair and will not last as long, he said.

Safety is partially based on traffic fatalities. Michigan is below the national average for traffic fatalities, and the area is better than the state's rate, with about 10 traffic fatalities per 100,000 people in the Lansing area and about 12.8 per 100,000 people in Michigan. The national average is 14.5 fatalities per 100,000 people. Road conditions with some deficiency factor in about one-third of traffic deaths yearly, Moretti said.

"State and local governments across the country are finding that if they can systematically invest in the most cost-effective safety strategies in that region, over time there are long-term benefits in saving lives and preventing injuries," Moretti said.

During the last five years, the state has made some strides in bridge repairs. However, road conditions have remained about the same and traffic congestion has increased, Moretti said.

In addition, TRIP believes congestion will continue to increase throughout the state as vehicle travel increases.

Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero was scheduled to attend the conference as well but was unable to attend.

The mayor did however issue a press release on the report.

"The TRIP report confirms what Lansing residents have known for a long time — our roads are in terrible shape, and it will require a major financial commitment to get them back on track," Bernero said in the statement.



Detroit Regional Chamber Calls Michigan Road Report A Call to Action

DETROIT, Feb. 27, 2006 -- An annual report by The Road Information Program (TRIP) giving Michigan's road system low grades should serve as a wake-up call for Southeast Michigan, the Detroit Regional Chamber said Monday.

"For residents and businesses across Southeast Michigan, it is not news that our roads and bridges are in need of repair. What is news, however, is that the Detroit Region scored lower than the state of Michigan overall -- in every category reported -- from roads to congestion to safety," said Claudia R. Berry, the Chamber's senior director of transportation policy.

Because our transportation infrastructure is critical to the continued economic development and quality of life of our region, the Detroit Regional Chamber has long advocated for a system of roads and bridges that is well planned and coordinated, meets the highest standards for construction and is well maintained. In support of these objectives, maintaining a seamless, coordinated and efficient regional transportation system has been a top priority for this Chamber since the early 1970s.

"The TRIP report shows how far we have to go to meet those standards," Berry said.

TRIP, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit research organization, released "Making the Grade in Michigan: An Analysis of the Ability of Michigan's Transportation System to Meet the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility" on Monday. It included a statewide report plus three local "report cards" for Detroit, Lansing and Grand Rapids.

The Chamber commended TRIP for conducting this important research and for TRIP's continued efforts to build awareness of the critical needs in Michigan to build and maintain our system of roads and bridges.

With more than 22,000 members, the Detroit Regional Chamber is the largest chamber of commerce in the country. The Chamber's mission is carried out through business attraction efforts, public policy advocacy, strategic partnerships and quality products and services for members.



Industry Group Gives Michigan Roads Failing Grades

Monday, February 27, 2006

A highway think-tank and a coalition of road-builders are launching a new effort to increase funding for roads and bridges. A study by a non-profit research organization gives Michigan and the Detroit-area failing grades on road congestion and deterioration, and it blames chronic under funding.

Mike Nystrom with the Michigan Infrastructure and Transportation Association believes good roads can lead to more jobs. "There is no way that a business that is looking to relocate is going to drive into Michigan and see our roads as a positive," explains Nystrom.

According to the study, only 47-percent of Michigan's main roads are in good condition. Nystrom says new ways are needed to raise money to fix the roads.

"At the state level, we just aren't funding our roads adequately... I think it's going to take a number of different creative ideas coming together in a package to create enough increase in investment to fix this problem," Nystrom explains. He adds that looking solely to the gas tax for road funding is not good enough.

The study says while roads have worsened, vehicle travel in Michigan has increased 27-percent since 1990.

By Dick Haefner
WJR News



M-DOT Set to Repair Bad Roads

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Grand Rapids

Now that March is here, the next season can't be far away. That would be road construction season.

Earlier this week, the National Transportation Research Group, TRIP, released rankings that gave roads around Grand Rapids an F grade. The study found that 28% of major roads in the area are in poor condition.

Traveling around the Grand Rapids area can be a bumpy ride at times. TRIP compiled a list of some of the most severely deteriorated major roads, including I-96, I-196, and US 131.

Those in charge of fixing the roads, the Michigan Department of Transportation, don't necessarily disagree. In fact, all of those roads are on M-DOT's list for repair. M-DOT Grand Region Transportation Planner Dennis Kent says, "We look at the condition of the road, the amount of money that we have. We try to make the best investment decision based on the conditions and statewide priorities and the funding that we have."

During the summer of 2006, that means you'll see workers on I-96 between Marne and Alpine Avenue. M-DOT Transportation Service Center Development Manager Art Green says, "Doing a concrete overlay fix to that roadway. As well as replacing the Walker Avenue over I-96 bridge. Widening that from a 2 lane to a 6 lane structure."

I-196 in Grand Rapids is one example of how all these projects fit together. The bridge work that M-DOT does here this summer will pave the way for future work that could expand the highway, probably in 2010. Green explains, "We're hoping by 2010 we'll have our expander, widening money available. So we can put out there the 3 lanes in each direction that we're going to be setting up for in the replacement of the concrete fix."

Also, if you remember the construction on US 131 southbound last summer, you'll see a very similar project northbound on US 131 in the summer of 2007.

TRIP also found 23% of bridges around Grand Rapids are in substandard condition. Within the next five years, M-DOT plans to replace the 44th street bridge over us 131. Other bridges over US 131 are on a maintenance schedule. Green says, "We're looking at those. Maintaining our schedule with those projects, moving up the things that need to be moved up in those cycles, to make sure those bridges stay in good repair and functioning."

March 1, 2006

The Detroit News

A. Payne



This editorial cartoon appeared as commentary on TRIP's "Michigan Report Card" report, released in Detroit, Grand Rapids and Lansing, on February 27, 2006.

Lansing State Journal



March 1, 2006

Road grade: If we don't want roads to flunk, motorists must pay as they go

A Lansing State Journal editorial

Taxpayers don't like to hear it, but it's usually true: We get the roads we pay for. That may be the case for Michigan.

Certainly in the Lansing area's case, roads are being pounded to rubble because road funds aren't keeping pace with the wear and tear.

One unhappy result is that an outside study gives our roads a failing grade. Lansing-area roads got an F in a recent report by a nonprofit, The Road Information Project. The Washington-based organization says that 21 percent of mid-Michigan roads were in poor condition as of 2004, and 28 percent were considered mediocre. Area bridges did only slightly better, getting a dismal D-.

This is one of those problems that, generally speaking, most folks already know the solution to. Building and maintaining roads is expensive. The more vehicles on the roads, the faster roads deteriorate, and the more it takes to fix or replace them.

When road funds are debated, all eyes turn to Washington. True, Michigan can cajole Congress for more highway money, and there's justification for doing so. Michigan is one of the so-called "donor states" that sends more federal gas tax dollars to Washington than are returned in transportation funding. Yes, Michigan ought to get a fairer share.

But if we're waiting for Washington to save our roads, we'll all be driving on pulverized concrete.

TRIP says Michigan uses road money wisely - it just doesn't have enough to bring roads up to snuff, despite spending \$1.4 billion a year.

More than an annoyance or safety risk, bad roads are an economic deterrent. They can dissuade businesses from locating in a state or community.

The answer, as noted above: You get the roads you pay for. If Michigan really hopes to have better roads and bridges, Michigan motorists will have to pay for them with higher gas taxes.