

Report: Transportation Key to Michigan's Future 50 projects to turn Michigan around

Pressing ahead on 50 proposed transportation projects around the state could help to propel Michigan's economic turnaround, said a recently released report. Heading the "Top 50 Surface Transportation Projects to Stimulate Michigan's Economic Recovery" list is a new bridge connecting Detroit and Windsor. The report was put together by TRIP, a nonprofit organization located in Washington, D.C., that promotes transportation policies to improve safety, protect the environment and enhance economic productivity.

Projects on the list cover everything from freight trains and bridges to roads and rapid transit systems and come with a combined price tag of nearly \$12 billion. They are spread across the state in 21 counties.

"The physical condition of Michigan's transportation system will play a significant role in determining how successfully the state's economy will perform in future years," said Frank Moretti, TRIP's director of policy and research. "Investments in transportation today would represent a critically important down payment for a stronger Michigan economy in the years to come."

The report – a blueprint for reversing Michigan's economic slide – points out that much of Michigan's success in the 20th century came as a result of its top-notch transportation system. But years of neglect and the failure to make needed improvements and expansions have taken their toll. Unless Michigan takes quick action to meet its transportation needs, it faces the very real possibility of becoming a secondary player in the global economy, said the report.

TRIP ranked the projects based on a scale that provided points for a number of categories, including short-term economic benefits, such as job creation; improvement in the condition of transportation facilities, including safety improvements; improved access and mobility; and long-term improvement in regional or state economic performance and competitiveness.

The need for these projects has been identified by local and state transportation agencies and these projects are in various phases of planning and their funding status ranges from being unfunded, partially funded to fully funded. Additional

information on the status of each project can be found in the appendix of the report. Below are the transportation projects judged to be the "Top 10" most needed to launch a Michigan economic revival. Where available, the cost of the project and potential job creation are included:

- Build an international bridge connecting I-75 in Detroit to Highway 401 in Windsor. A quarter of all trade between the U.S. and Canada – about \$44 billion annually – passes through the Detroit-Windsor crossing. Cost: \$1.8 billion. Jobs: up to 25,000 jobs in Michigan and up to 97,000 jobs in the U.S. preserved or created.
- Widen from six to eight lanes a 6.7 mile stretch of I-94 in Detroit, from I-96 to Connor Ave. Cost: \$1.4 billion. Jobs: 15,200 over the multi-year construction.
- Add two HOV ("High Occupancy Vehicle") lanes on 18 miles of I-75 from Eight Mile Road to M-59 in Oakland County. The HOV lanes could only be used during peak hours by vehicles carrying multiple passengers. During slower periods, they would be general purpose lanes for use by any vehicle. Cost: \$663 million. Jobs: 7,200 over the multi-year construction.
- Construct a 13-mile light rail service along Woodward from downtown Detroit to Eight Mile Road. Cost: \$614 million.
- Widen from four to six lanes an eight-mile stretch of I-94 from M-60 to Sargent Road in the metro Jackson area. Cost: \$473 million. Jobs: 5,150 jobs over the multi-year construction project.
- Reconstruct and widen from four to six lanes a 7.5 mile section of I-196, from US 131 easterly to I-96. Cost: \$426 million. Jobs: 4,630 over the multi-year construction.
- Construct a Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal and make improvements to both train tracks and local roads. It would provide a more efficient transfer of freight from rail to truck, which would attract additional business and industry shipping. Cost: \$1 billion. Jobs: 4,500

permanent new jobs in Michigan upon completion, including 2,300 in Detroit.

- Upgrade facilities at the Blue Water Bridge, which links Port Huron to Sarnia, Ontario. The project would provide additional inspection booths and docks to unload cargo. Improvements would be made to connecting roadways to lessen congestion and delays at the fourth busiest U.S./Canada crossing. Cost: \$583 million. Jobs: 6,350 construction jobs.
- Design and construct a new deck system on 1.4 miles of the suspended portion of the Mackinac Bridge, from pier 18 to pier 21. The project would increase safety standards and provide a long-lasting road surface that would require minimal maintenance. Cost: \$150 million. Jobs: 1,630 construction jobs.
- Widen U.S. 23 from four to six lanes between M-14 near Ann Arbor and I-96 in Brighton. The project would also replace several obsolete/deteriorated interchanges and structures over the freeway. Jobs: 4,400 construction jobs.

Founded in 1971, TRIP of Washington, D.C., is a nonprofit organization that researches, evaluates and distributes economic and technical data on surface transportation issues. TRIP is sponsored by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, distributors and suppliers; businesses involved in highway and transit engineering and construction; labor unions; and organizations concerned with providing an efficient and safe surface transportation network. For more information, visit www.tripnet.org.

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