



1726 M St., NW, Suite 401 • Washington, DC 20036 • (202) 466-6706 • Fax: (202) 785-4722 • www.tripnet.org • trip@tripnet.org

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Report available at: www.tripnet.org

Contact: Frank Moretti, 202-262-0714 (cell)

Carolyn Bonifas, 202-466-6706 (TRIP Office)

GRAND RAPIDS ROAD CONDITIONS RECEIVE FAILING GRADE IN NEW REPORT, TRAFFIC SAFETY EARNS GRADE OF 'C-', BRIDGES AND CONGESTION 'C'; DETERIORATED ROADS AND BRIDGES MAY HAMPER MOBILITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN GRAND RAPIDS

ADDITIONAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING NEEDED TO IMPROVE ROAD AND BRIDGE CONDITIONS, RELIEVE TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND IMPROVE SAFETY

EDS.: LISTS CONTAINING DETERIORATED SECTIONS OF ROAD, STRUCTURALLY DEFICIENT BRIDGES AND SIGNIFICANTLY CONGESTED ROADWAYS IN THE GRAND RAPIDS AREA ARE INCLUDED IN THE REPORT.

GRAND RAPIDS, February 27, 2006 – More than a quarter of major roads in the Grand Rapids metro area are in poor condition and more than a hundred people are killed annually in traffic crashes in the area, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research group. The report also evaluates and assigns grades to traffic congestion and bridge conditions in the Grand Rapids metro area.

The report, entitled “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,” finds that 28 percent of major roads in the Grand Rapids urban area are rated in poor condition, earning the area a failing grade of ‘F’ for its road conditions. The Grand Rapids area receives a grade of ‘C-’ for traffic safety, with an average of 102 traffic fatalities occurring per year in the area. The TRIP report also assigns a grade of ‘C’ to bridge conditions in Grand Rapids, noting that 23 percent of the area’s bridges are rated as structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Congestion levels in Grand Rapids earn the area a grade of ‘C’, with 32 percent of major urban roads congested during peak travel times.

“Michigan’s economy is literally riding on its highway transportation system. The TRIP report highlights the benefits of creating an efficient, well-maintained and adequately funded transportation system,” said Jeanne Englehart, President of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce. “Good roads help foster economic development and improve the quality of life for the West Michigan Region.”

According to the TRIP report, 28 percent of major roads in the Grand Rapids metro area are rated in poor condition and an additional 26 percent are in mediocre condition. Nine percent of bridges in the Grand Rapids area are rated as structurally deficient, showing significant deterioration to decks and other major components. An additional 14 percent of the region’s bridges are functionally obsolete. These bridges do not meet modern design standards or are no longer adequate for the volume of traffic that they carry.

“Without an increase in transportation investment, Michigan will not be able to move forward with numerous projects that would enhance safety, improve road and bridge conditions, relieve congestion and attract economic development,” said William M. Wilkins, TRIP’s executive director.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- Thirty-four percent of Grand Rapids’ major roads are in good condition. A desirable goal for state and local organizations that are responsible for road maintenance is to keep 75 percent of major roads in good condition.
- An average of 1,286 people were killed each year in motor vehicle accidents in Michigan over the last five years.
- Vehicle travel in Michigan increased by 27 percent from 1990 to 2004, and is expected to increase another 25 percent by the year 2020.
- Michigan’s extensive network of roads and bridges is maintained by a combination of state, local and municipal governments.
- The deficiencies cited in this report are not a reflection of the effectiveness of state and local transportation agencies, but of a lack of adequate funding.