



### **Regional Prosperity Alliance Continues to Work in West Michigan**

Grand Valley Metro Council continues to lead a group of dedicated individuals working together for our region. The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) represents the a wide variety of public, private and philanthropic organizations that work together in our 13 county region.

Region 4 of Governor Snyder's Regional Prosperity Initiative is the second largest geographic area behind Michigan's Upper Peninsula and has the second largest population behind the South East Michigan Region. Our Region 4 represents approximately 1.5 million residents and is roughly the size of New Jersey.

Recently a public meeting was held to award new grants for 2016-2017 and as reported in our last GVMC Weekly Update. More information on each of those projects will be detailed in future Weekly Updates.

This year, the Region 4 Steering Committee also awarded grants for continued implementation of three of the priority projects from the last funding cycle.

#### **Port of Muskegon**

The Port of Muskegon Regional Logistics Hub was identified as the number one priority project

by the WMPA in late 2014. The project received \$32,500 which helped leverage another \$32,500 of local funds and \$125,000 federal grant. A public/private steering committee was organized to lead the effort. A study was conducted to analyze transportation and infrastructure including water, road, rail, and air to assess current conditions and future capacity.

#### **West Michigan Watershed Collaborative**

With the support of the WMPA, a working group of staff from the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, GVMC, and the West Michigan Shoreline Development Commission initiated a dialogue with other West Michigan watershed groups. The result of this dialogue is that over 40 organizations are now working together and have created the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative. No other collaboration of this size exists in Michigan.

Analysis is being completed on the needs and goals of each organization and Public Sector Consultants has been retained to study potential sustainable funding strategies. The West Michigan Watershed Collaborative is working in all 13 counties to help protect vital our water resources.

#### **Connect Michigan**

For most of us, imagining our life, our work, and educating our children without broadband and internet capability is difficult. For many, that is their reality. In 2014, Connect Michigan was selected as a WMPA priority project. They were already working in Barry, Mecosta and Osceola Counties. WMPA funding expanded the program to all 13 counties in Region 4.

Since award of the initial grant the program has expanded and new Community Broadband Teams were formed in Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo and Oceana counties. Funding phase two will allow their work to continue.

This next phase continues the "Connected Community" work through 2017 at both the county and regional level to address local broadband and technology issues, accelerate broadband expansion to areas where it is not available and expand planning for all of West Michigan.

As a result, each county will have a completed Community Broadband Assessment, Technology Action Plan and local teams to address future broadband-related concerns.

A vibrant and prosperous West Michigan needs technology and broadband connectivity. All areas of Region 4 will benefit from this WMPA effort.