



GVMC Regional Transportation Demand Management Plan

September 2023

GVMC

Acknowledgments

The GVMC Regional TDM Plan was prepared under the leadership and guidance from the entire GVMC Transportation staff as well as guidance, feedback, and input from the TDM Technical Advisory Committee, stakeholders, and the public. It was supported by UrbanTrans North America in collaboration with Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates and AECOM.

The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council would like to express its appreciation to the Technical Advisory Committee Members:

- Casey Ries**, Gerald R. Ford International Airport
- Clinton Nemeth**, Gerald R. Ford International Airport
- Dave Bulkowski**, Disability Advocates of Kent County
- Dennis Kent**, Michigan Department of Transportation
- Erin Evenhouse**, City of Grand Rapids
- Josh Naramore**, City of Grand Rapids
- Kevin Judd**, Corewell Health
- Kevin Wisselink**, The Rapid
- Michael Williams**, Disability Advocates of Kent County
- Michelle Baker**, Gerald R. Ford International Airport
- Nick Monovios**, The Rapid
- Patrick Waterman**, City of Wyoming
- Scott Connors**, City of Walker
- Terry Schweitzer**, City of Kentwood
- Tyler Kent**, Michigan Department of Transportation

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
Transportation Department
678 Front Avenue NW, Suite 200
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
PHONE: 616-776-3876
FAX: 616-774-9292
<https://www.gvmc.org/transportation>

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	i
Executive Summary	1
Introduction.....	6
What is TDM?.....	7
The TDM Vision for the Grand Rapids Region	7
Why is TDM relevant for the region now?	8
Plan Development Process	9
Mobility in the Region Today: Existing Conditions.....	11
About Grand Rapids Region	11
Travel Behavior	16
Transportation Options and Services	17
What We Heard from the Community	25
Peer and Best Practice Region Profiles	27
Gap Analysis and Opportunities.....	30
Recommendations.....	33
Objectives and Key Results	33
Strategies	35
Future Initiatives.....	38
Timeline for Priority Recommendations.....	39
Implementation Action Plan	41
Foundational Recommendations.....	41
Year 1-5 Recommendations.....	52
Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement Summary	70
Discussion Group Summary	70
Public Workshop/Online Engagement Summary	73
Draft Plan Comment Summary	78

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Infill Population Growth, Greenfield Jobs Growth

The Grand Rapids Region is home to roughly 765,000 people and grew 10% in the last decade. Much of the region's population is concentrated in Grand Rapids, with higher densities in the south and eastern neighborhoods. Outside of downtown Grand Rapids, the city and region are much more spread out, with smaller pockets of density in Wyoming and Kentwood and on GVSU's main campus in Allendale. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) populations follow a similar pattern.

Employment centers are concentrated in downtown Grand Rapids—particularly along the Michigan Street Corridor—but also across the region in the City of Walker and Kentwood, Grandville, Hudsonville, and near the Gerald R. Ford International Airport. Several employment hubs are well-served by fixed-route transit; however, jobs growth is increasingly happening far beyond existing transit services in the region's east and southeast parts.

Meanwhile, the rising cost of living is increasingly forcing lower income residents to seek more affordable housing outside of the transit-rich core of Grand Rapids, with the result that their transportation costs go up as their dependence on personal-auto ownership increases. This has created a growing equitable economic-development gap, as those most likely to rely on transit to access jobs are finding their housing options and job opportunities moving farther away from the most reliable transit service.

A Regional TDM Program is Needed

The transportation challenges facing the Greater Grand Rapids region require a balance of different approaches and will not be able to be resolved by adding roadway capacity first. In fact, since 2004, GVMC has maintained a no-new roads policy in the greater Grand Rapids area to focus limited transportation funding on maintaining existing roads. The region must move more people with existing transportation infrastructure and services and improve equitable, affordable, and sustainable mobility options and access. Several other elements of the current context suggest the need for a Regional TDM Plan.

"Transportation demand management (TDM) is the use of strategies to inform and encourage travelers to maximize the efficiency of our transportation systems, leading to improved mobility, reduced congestion, and lower vehicle emissions."

– Association for Commuter Transportation

- **The region and several of its municipalities have set ambitious mode share goals and need actionable steps to achieve them.** GVMC's 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan calls for TDM to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips and create a more efficient transportation system. The City of Grand Rapids Vital Streets Plan aims to achieve a 20% transit mode share and reduce SOV trips from 95% to 45% by 2035.

- **As the region grows, there is a greater need to connect decision-making regarding land use, development, and transportation.** Greater Grand Rapids has increased in population by more than 10% in the last decade and economic growth is promising—especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic—however, employer sites and new developments are often located beyond existing public transportation networks and make it difficult for potential employees to get to work reliably. Approximately 90% of commute trips are drive-alone trips.
- **Despite recent investments in transit service improvements, ridership remains low.** New 15-minute frequencies on select Rapid bus routes and improved connections in major employment centers present higher ridership opportunities. Yet, post pandemic saw a decrease in transit ridership and today, too few people are aware of or encouraged to take transit in the region and some employment centers are outside the transit service area.
- **Funding for transportation options is limited, and collaboration is key to an efficient transportation network and responsible use of resources.** Proposed services, like express buses and tailored transit and on-demand transit to work, demonstrate an interest in creating more regionwide travel options, but funding sources are limited and variable. A coordinated approach can help secure resources to amplify efforts across the region.

GVMC's TDM Vision

The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) responsible for regional transportation planning activities for Kent and eastern Ottawa Counties. GVMC strives to ensure transportation investments enhance the movement of people and freight efficiently, effectively, and safely. This plan was commissioned to be a five-year plan that will complement regional infrastructure and transit service planning efforts and advance GVMC's TDM vision for the Grand Rapids region:

The Grand Rapids region supports transportation options that advance mobility for all people and all trips in an affordable, safe, and efficient manner. Regional partners are working together to advance and prioritize TDM strategies that impact travel behavior to mitigate severe congestion and air quality issues while supporting sustainable growth and economic prosperity.

GVMC's TDM Plan Partners

Local leaders formed a transportation advisory committee (TAC) representing local municipalities, transit providers, employers, GVMC staff, Disability Advocates of Kent County, and MDOT to guide the development of this plan. Targeted interviews and discussion groups, a public workshop, and an online engagement platform to engage a broader group of stakeholders informed the development of this plan.

TDM Plan Recommendations

Setting the Foundation

This plan recommends a series of foundational recommendations to form a unified, regional TDM program. These strategies are critical to the success of the remainder of the strategies.

- Step 1: Fund a dedicated regional TDM program manager at GVMC.
- Step 2: Create a regional TDM Working Group, including government, business, and nonprofit partners.
- Step 3: Develop a Comprehensive Communications and Outreach Plan for the Regional TDM Program
- Step 4: Optimize and expand the regional TDM program with a more advanced TDM technology platform.
- Step 5: Implement an Evaluation Strategy for the Regional TDM Program

Achieving Core Objectives

The Plan is also organized around a set of core objectives that informed the recommended strategies. Each of these is presented below, followed by actions for achieving them recommended for the first five years of the program.

Objective 1: Foster regional coordination to unify TDM messaging and programming.

- Expand staffing resources to implement the Regional TDM Program.
- Initiate an information library of TDM and transportation resources.
- Develop evaluation criteria for MPO-sponsored plans, projects, and programs starting in the 2026-2029 TIP to enable TDM impacts to be factored into funding decisions.

Objective 2: Help people who live and work in the region get around without a car.

- Identify locations/partners for new park-and-ride lots for both carpooling and transit.
- Provide funding for job access transportation (i.e., new vanpools, Wheels to Work, etc.) and explore ways to make vanpooling easier for participants to start or maintain.
- Explore an equity pass/mobility wallet that could combine a transit pass, bike- and e-scooter share, and Uber/Lyft/taxi credits, giving people many choices to get around.

Objective 3: Integrate TDM into infrastructure investments, land use policy, and parking decisions.

- Create policies, incentives, or requirements to coordinate outreach and messaging around large infrastructure construction projects or major transit enhancements with the regional TDM program.
- Develop and publish a TDM Toolkit for municipalities, developers, and funders with best policy practices.

- Develop a regional webinar TDM training program for municipalities and offer regular training during the next five years. Municipal training would focus on integrating TDM into land use and parking policy.

Objective 4: Build relationships with employer partners to maintain the trip reduction benefits of flexible work locations and hours.

- Create a Targeted Employer Outreach Program for Downtown Employers.

Putting the Plan into Action

While GVMC is well positioned to take on a leadership role for TDM in the region, the success of this plan relies on the active collaboration and involvement of GVMC members, transportation providers, community-based organizations, economic development organizations, and employers. The implementation action plan identifies partnerships and implementation roles, strategy elements and benefits, cost and staffing estimates, and action items. The action items contain key elements to ensure the strategies are designed inclusively, promoting equitable and effective transportation enhancements.

Introduction

Introduction

The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) represents the Grand Rapids region. They are the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), responsible for regional transportation planning activities for Kent and eastern Ottawa Counties. GVMC is working to ensure transportation investments enhance the movement of people and freight efficiently, effectively, and safely.

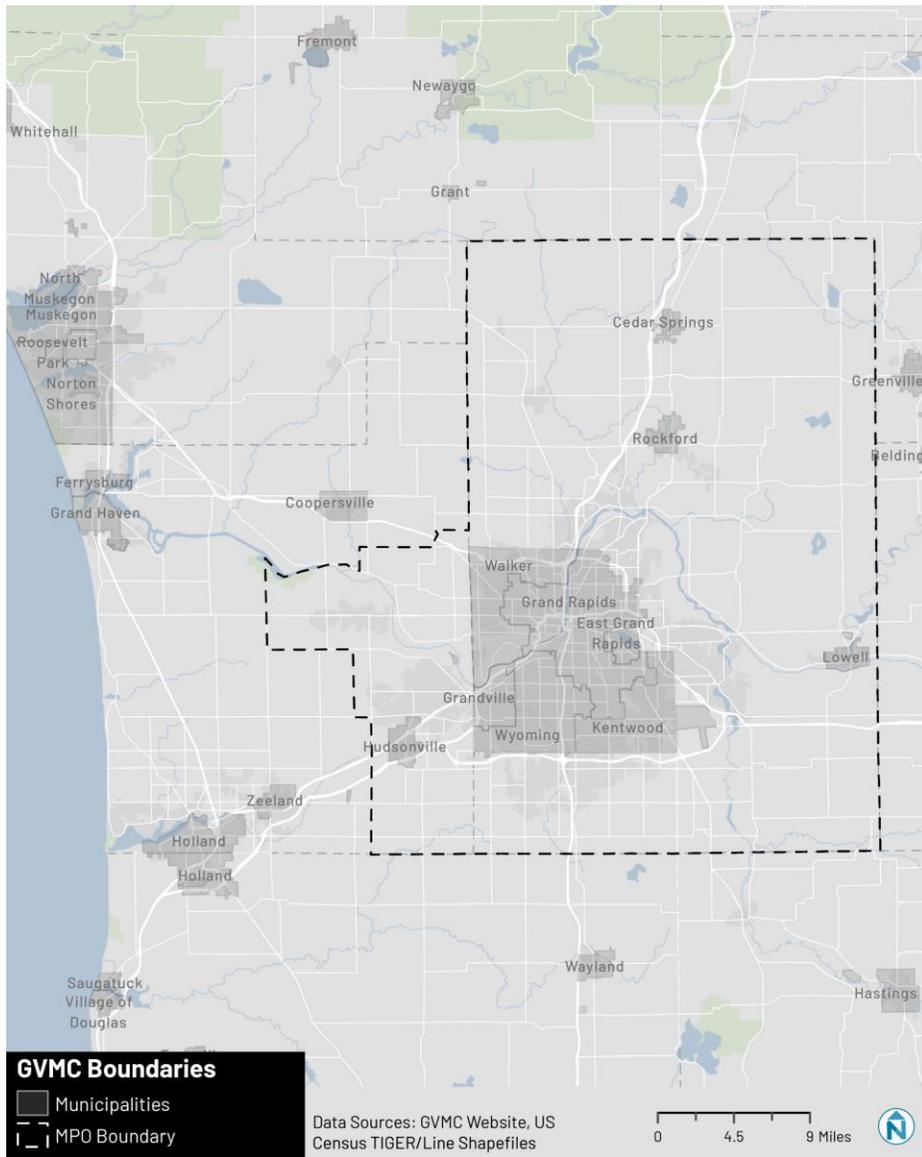


Figure 1: GVMC MPO Area

To help achieve this goal, in 2022, GVMC set out to develop its first regional transportation demand management (TDM) plan to guide TDM activities in the region for the next five years (2024 – 2029).

The planning process sought to bring together regional leadership to determine the appropriate vision and actionable steps for TDM for the Grand Rapids region.

What is TDM?

"Transportation demand management (TDM) is the use of strategies to inform and encourage travelers to maximize the efficiency of our transportation systems, leading to improved mobility, reduced congestion, and lower vehicle emissions."

– Association for Commuter Transportation

TDM strives to reduce the demand for roadway systems while increasing mobility by reducing the demand for travel, moving travel to different modes, or shifting travel to different times or routes. But first, it requires identifying the problems that travelers are struggling with in the region and the travel decisions they are making: what modes, times of day of travel, whether to travel at all, route choices, and home location. Transportation choice is a function of availability, awareness of options, cost, convenience, and habit and addresses one or several factors influencing behavior change. TDM strategies strive to influence travel behavior and decision-making in several ways: by employing financial incentives or disincentives, by removing barriers to using non-drive alone modes, by expanding transportation options, and finally by providing information about all options. Strategies can be implemented at different scales, from site-specific interventions to regional or statewide campaigns, spanning the public and private sectors. At the regional level, TDM tends to lean heavily on policy setting, resource provision, regional coordination, and capacity building.

The TDM Vision for the Grand Rapids Region

This TDM plan was developed to complement regional infrastructure and service planning efforts that are currently underway or upcoming, including GVMC's 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and The Rapid's Transit Master Plan (both currently under development), GVMC's upcoming Regional Safety Action Plan, and the upcoming Kent County Area Mobility Study. As part of the planning process, the following vision crystalized and guided the development of this plan:

The Grand Rapids region supports transportation options that advance mobility for all people and all trips in an affordable, safe, and efficient manner. Regional partners are working together to advance and prioritize TDM strategies that impact travel behavior to mitigate severe congestion and air quality issues while supporting sustainable growth and economic prosperity.

Why is TDM relevant for the region now?

The transportation challenges facing the Greater Grand Rapids region require a balance of different approaches and will not be able to be resolved by adding roadway capacity first. In fact, since 2004, GVMC has maintained a no-new roads policy in the greater Grand Rapids area to focus limited transportation funding on maintaining existing roads. The region must move more people with existing transportation infrastructure and services and improve equitable, affordable, and sustainable mobility options and access. A collaborative approach is needed to ensure a reliable and sustainable transportation system that offers choices to the region's residents, workers, and visitors.

- **The region and several of its municipalities have set ambitious mode share goals and need actionable steps to achieve them.** GVMC's 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan calls for TDM to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips and create a more efficient transportation system. The City of Grand Rapids Vital Streets Plan aims to achieve a 20% transit mode share and reduce SOV trips from 95% to 45% by 2035.
- **As the region grows, there is a greater need to connect decision-making regarding land use, development, and transportation.** Greater Grand Rapids has increased in population by more than 10% in the last decade and economic growth is promising—especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic—however, employer sites and new developments are often located beyond existing public transportation networks and make it difficult for potential employees to get to work reliably. Approximately 90% of commute trips are drive-alone trips. TDM can make it easier for more trips to be walking, biking, transit, or carpool trips. As more people choose Greater Grand Rapids as their home, workplace, or place of education, it is increasingly important to connect transportation and land use decisions to make essential community destinations accessible.
- **Despite recent investments in transit service improvements, ridership remains low.** New 15-minute frequencies on select Rapid bus routes and improved connections in major employment centers present higher ridership opportunities. Yet, post pandemic saw a decrease in transit ridership and today, too few people are aware of or encouraged to take transit in the region and some employment centers are outside the transit service area.
- **Funding for transportation options is limited, and collaboration is key to an efficient transportation network and responsible use of resources.** Proposed services, like express buses tailored transit, and on-demand transit to work, demonstrate an interest in creating more regionwide travel options, but funding sources are limited and variable. A coordinated approach can help secure resources to amplify efforts across the region.

Plan Development Process

Local leaders formed a transportation advisory committee (TAC) representing local municipalities, transit providers, employers, GVMC staff, Disability Advocates of Kent County, and MDOT to guide the development of this plan. Targeted interviews and discussion groups, a public workshop, and an online engagement platform to engage a broader group of stakeholders informed the development of this plan.

Consultants also reviewed similar, inspirational peer TDM programs and did an in-depth existing conditions analysis to inform the final strategies and action plan.



Figure 2: Plan Development Process

Mobility in the Region Today: Existing Conditions

Mobility in the Region Today: Existing Conditions

The following section reviews the demographics, the infrastructure, and supporting programs that TDM strategies can build upon and support. It also summarizes the community comments and a peer review of best practices from other regions. The result of this analysis was an identification of key gaps and opportunities defined in the following section.

Note: two accompanying documents provide more in-depth detail that Informed these sections. You can find them at www.gvmc.org/tdm or linked below:

- [GVMC Regional TDM Plan Existing Conditions Report](#)
- [GVMC Regional TDM Plan Peer Review Memo](#)

About the Grand Rapids Region

The Grand Rapids Region is home to roughly 765,000 people and grew 10% in the last decade. Much of the region's population is concentrated in Grand Rapids, with higher densities in the south and eastern neighborhoods. Outside of downtown Grand Rapids, the city and region are much more spread out, with smaller pockets of density in Wyoming and Kentwood and on GVSU's main campus in Allendale. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) populations follow a similar pattern.

Employment centers are concentrated in downtown Grand Rapids—particularly along the Michigan Street Corridor—but also across the region in the Walker, Kentwood, Grandville, Hudsonville, and near the Gerald R. Ford International Airport. Several employment hubs are well-served by fixed-route transit; however, many are located far beyond existing transit services in the region's east and southeast parts.

There continues to be development and employer growth in areas inaccessible by transit. Meanwhile, population growth in the region is largely among higher earners and high-income households, such that people with lower incomes are following more affordable housing and jobs outside of the transit-rich core of Grand Rapids towards more vehicle-centric areas.

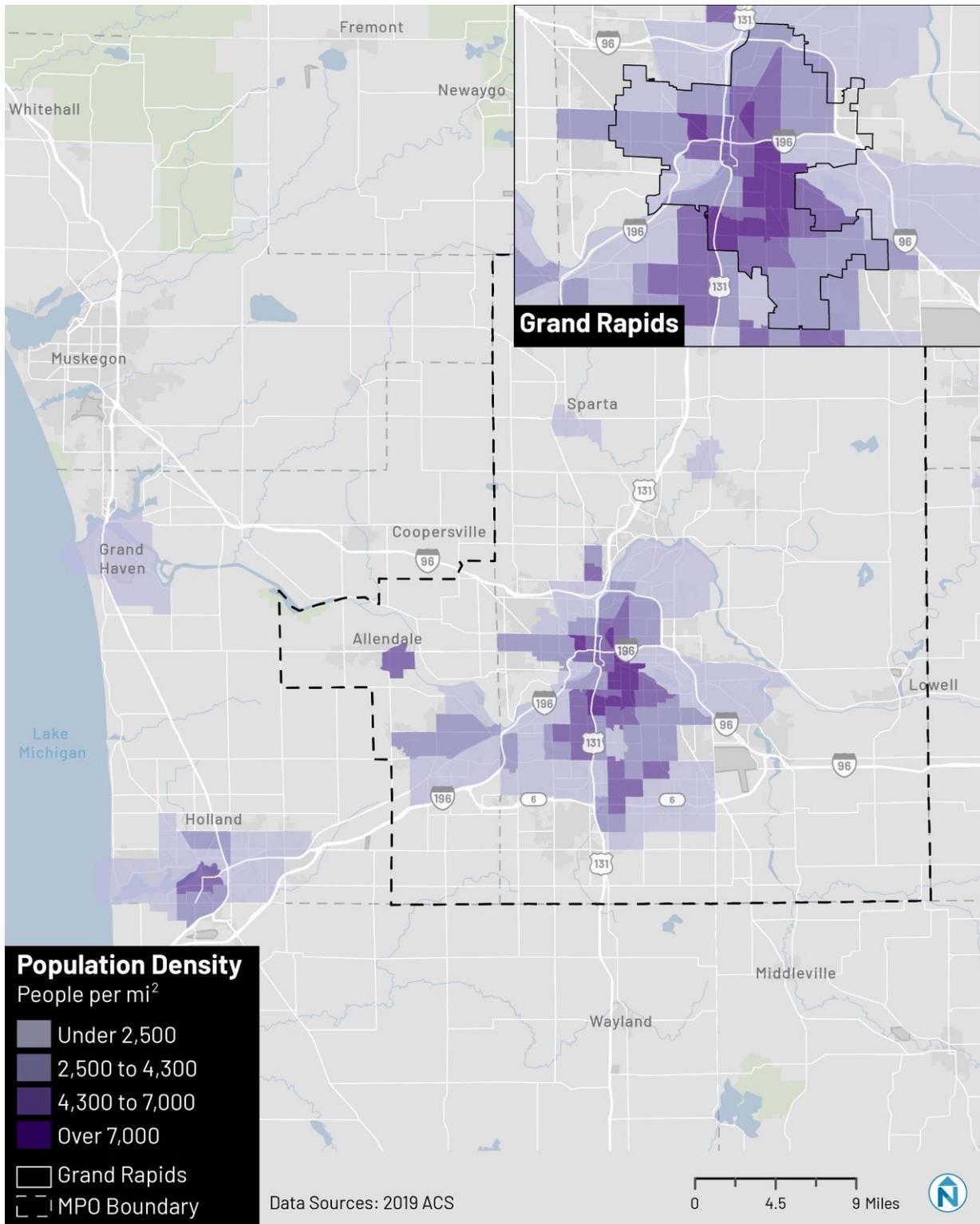


Figure 3: Population Density of the Greater Grand Rapids Area (2019)

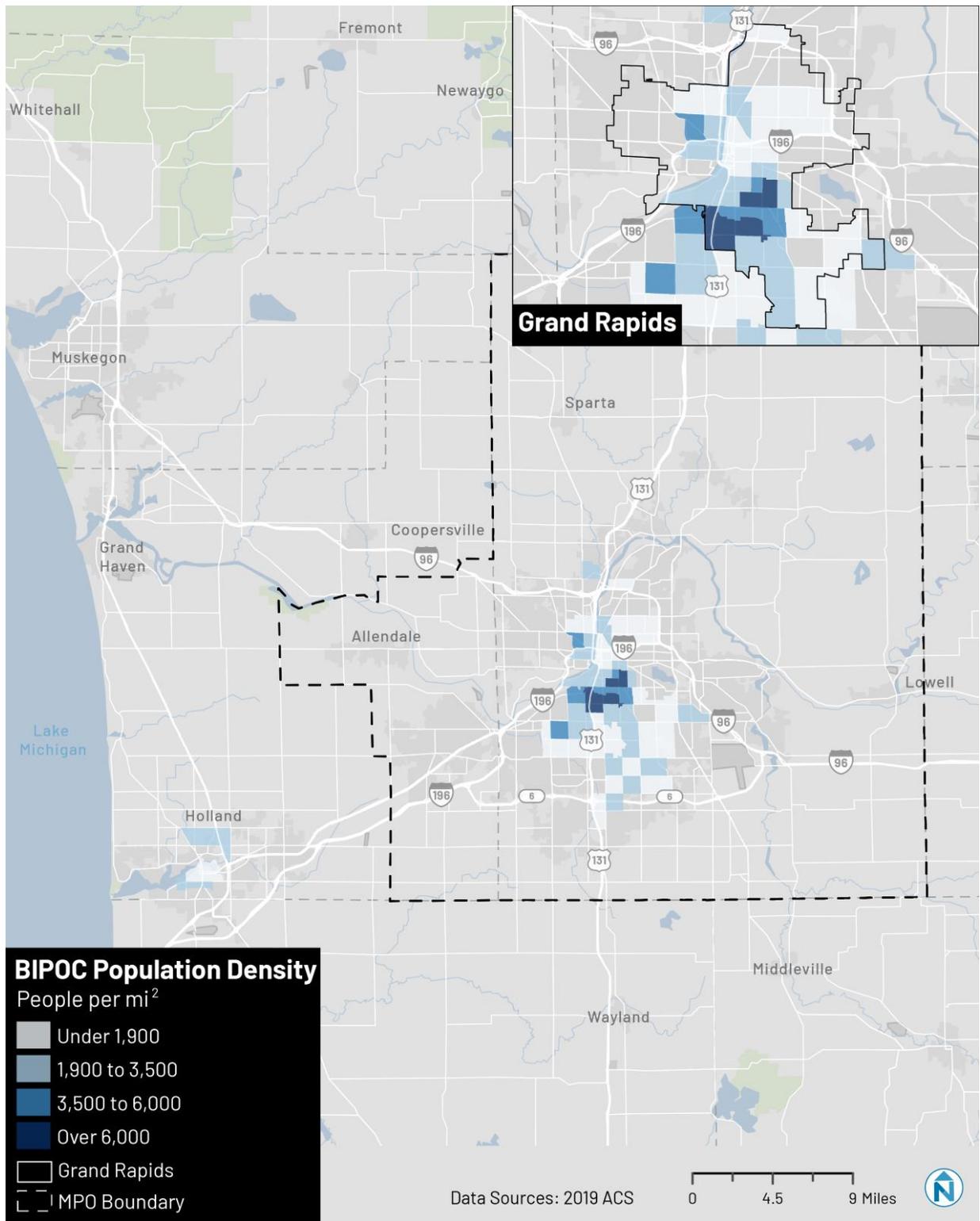


Figure 4: BIPOC Population Densities in the Area

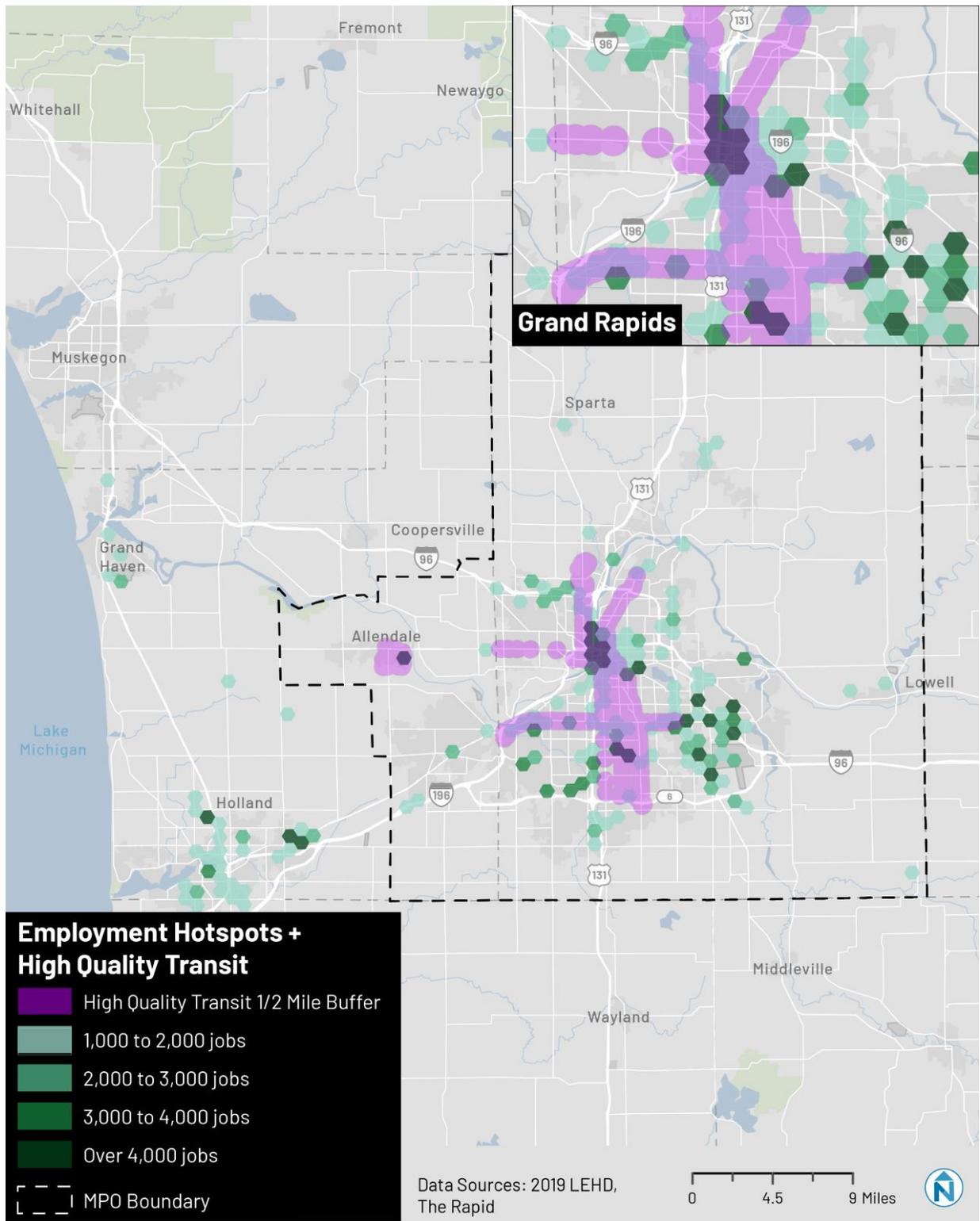


Figure 5: Employment Hotspots and High-Quality Transit in the Greater Grand Rapids Area

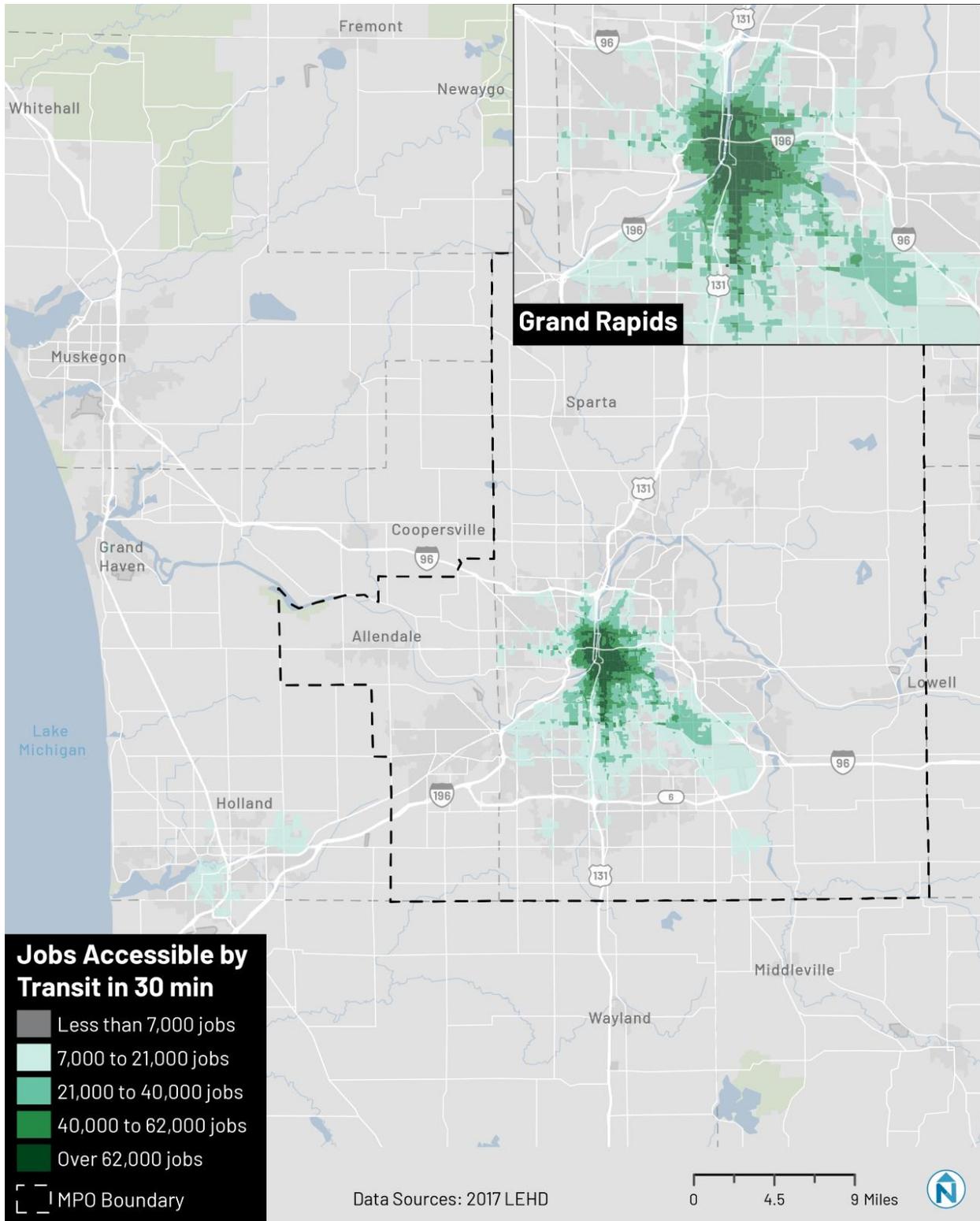


Figure 6: Job Access to Transit

Travel Behavior

Using aggregated data for all trips in the GVMC boundary in 2019, most trips are single-occupancy vehicle trips (over 68%). Only about 14% of trips are non-driving, such as transit, walking, or biking. There are some differences in mode share based on age in that younger people walk or bike more than older people in the region, but mode share is relatively similar across income levels. Even the lowest-income households take transit at low rates (1.3%).

The most notable differences in mode share are related to race/ethnicity and vehicle ownership. Hispanic people and those who identify as more than one race are much more likely to walk and/or share rides versus taking drive-alone trips. People in zero-vehicle households are likelier to walk, share a ride, or access a private automobile than take transit.

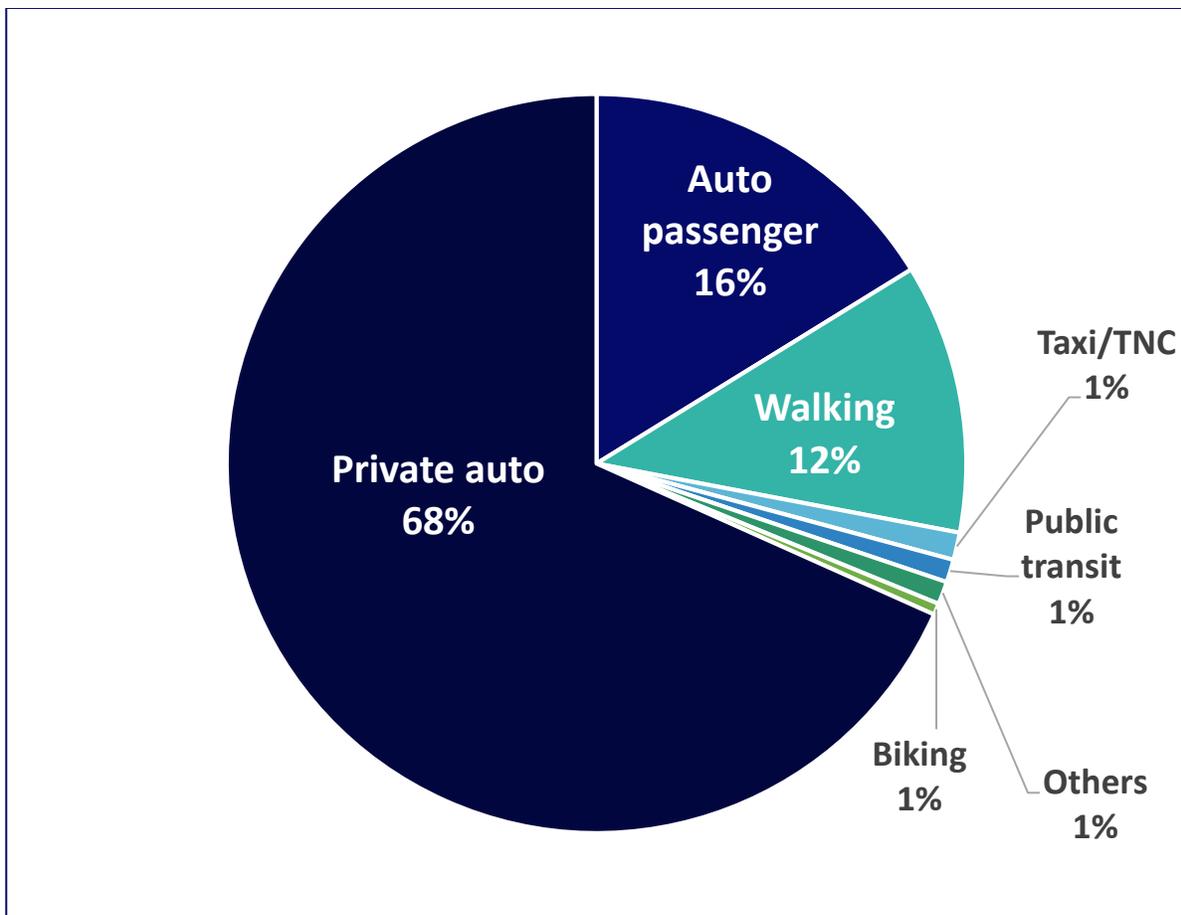


Figure 7. Mode Share, All Trips (Replica 2019, Mode Share of All Trips within GVMC Boundary)

Transportation Options and Services

Municipalities, transportation services providers, employers, and nonprofits in the Greater Grand Rapids region all play a role in providing transportation options today. As the first step toward identifying opportunities to build a comprehensive and coordinated regional TDM Plan, this study assessed many of the services, programs, plans, and policies these stakeholders maintain.

Transit

The primary public transportation provider in the region is The Rapid, which provides fixed route and microtransit services in the urban core and surrounding suburbs. A planning effort to provide express transit service between the City of Holland and the City of Grand Rapids, West Michigan Express, was impacted by changing commuter needs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project is currently being evaluated as part of The Rapid’s ongoing [transit master planning effort](#). The City of Grand Rapids operates the Downtown Area Shuttle (DASH), a fare-free downtown bus circulator. Statewide and inter-city transit services include Greyhound, Amtrak, and Indian Trails.

Human services transportation providers, including Hope Network, Senior Neighbors, Georgetown Seniors, United Methodist Community House, and Kent County Community Action, provide specialized services transportation across the region.

Wheels to Work, operated by Hope Network, provides a supplemental ride-to-work transit program connecting workers to jobs. The program currently operates in seven counties: Kent, Muskegon, Ionia, Newaygo, Allegan, and Ottawa. Riders enroll through a participating employer and the cost is shared as determined by the employer between the rider and the employer.



Figure 8: Wheels to Work Van

The Rapid promotes vanpooling (a shared ride with a volunteer driver for six or more) through Commute with Enterprise. MDOT runs a subsidized vanpool program, MichiVan, supplying fully insured passenger vans to commuter groups.

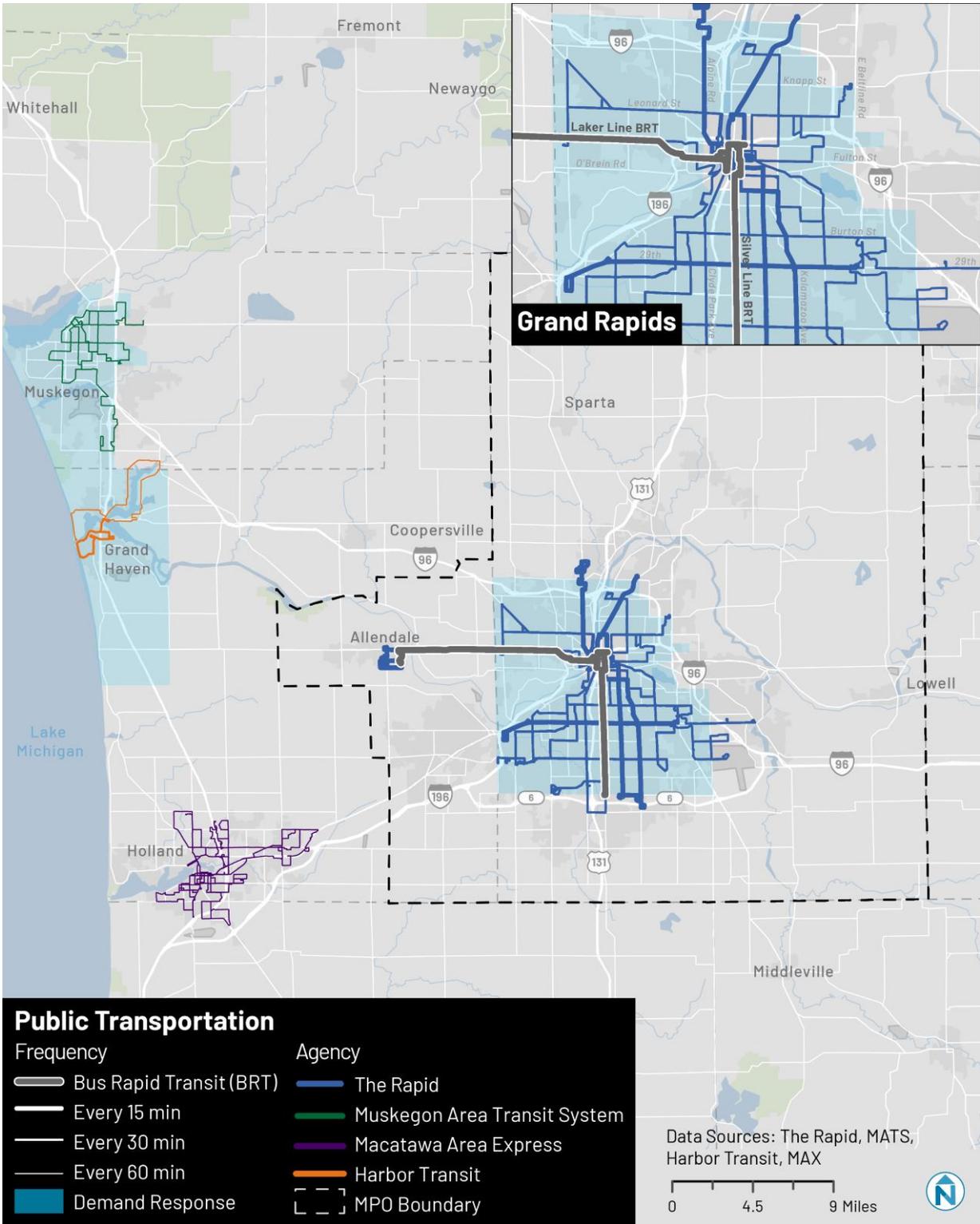


Figure 9: Public Transportation around Grand Rapids

Active Transportation and Micromobility

Greater Grand Rapids has an extensive network of recreational trails, though on-street infrastructure is much more varied and fragmented. The city of Grand Rapids has bicycle routes focused in the central business district and commercial areas. Most are unprotected bike lanes, shared lane markings, or paved shoulders. Other supportive infrastructure like bike parking, repair stations, and bike shops are focused in Grand Rapids (e.g., 200 bike parking locations with capacity for over 2,000 bikes).

Within the GVMC region, Grand Rapids is the only community with micromobility options. The city approved Lime to operate their e-bike and e-scooter share programs in a 12-mile area. Their fleets include about 800 scooters and 800 bikes. Lime offers a 30% discount on all rides that start in designated Equity Zones, concentrated in Grand Rapids Neighborhoods of Focus. There are designated parking zones for micromobility in select commercial districts.



Figure 10: two-way protected bike lane along Riverside Park in North Grand Rapids



Figure 11: Unprotected bike lane along Mt. Vernon Ave NW in Downtown Grand Rapids

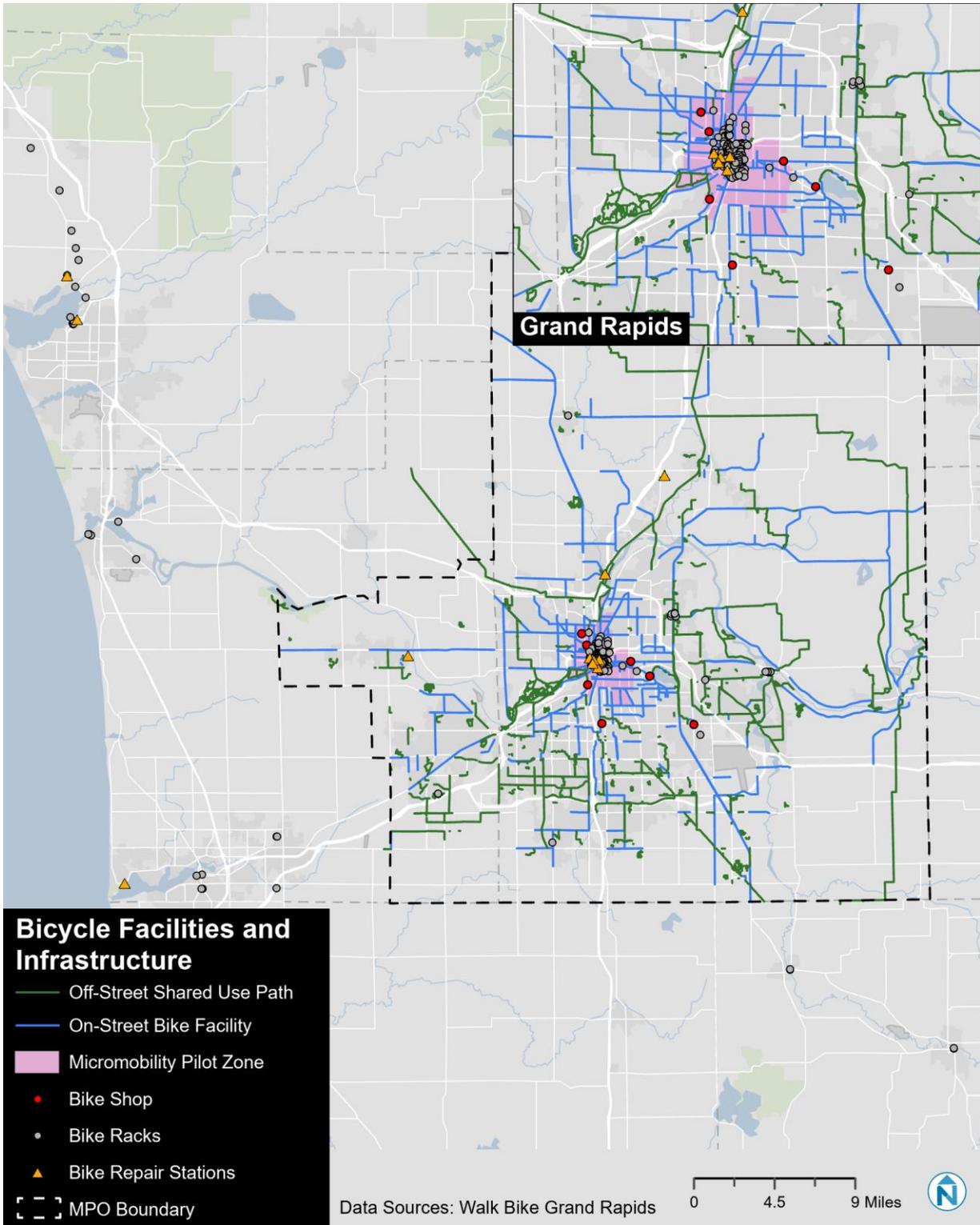


Figure 12: Bicycle Facilities and Infrastructure

Park-and-Ride

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) operates 243 MDOT-owned carpool parking lots and an additional 17 locations at Meijer stores across Michigan. More than a dozen lots are in the GVMC transportation management area. The MDOT-managed lots are in addition to seven park-and-ride lots managed by The Rapid and City of Grand Rapids.

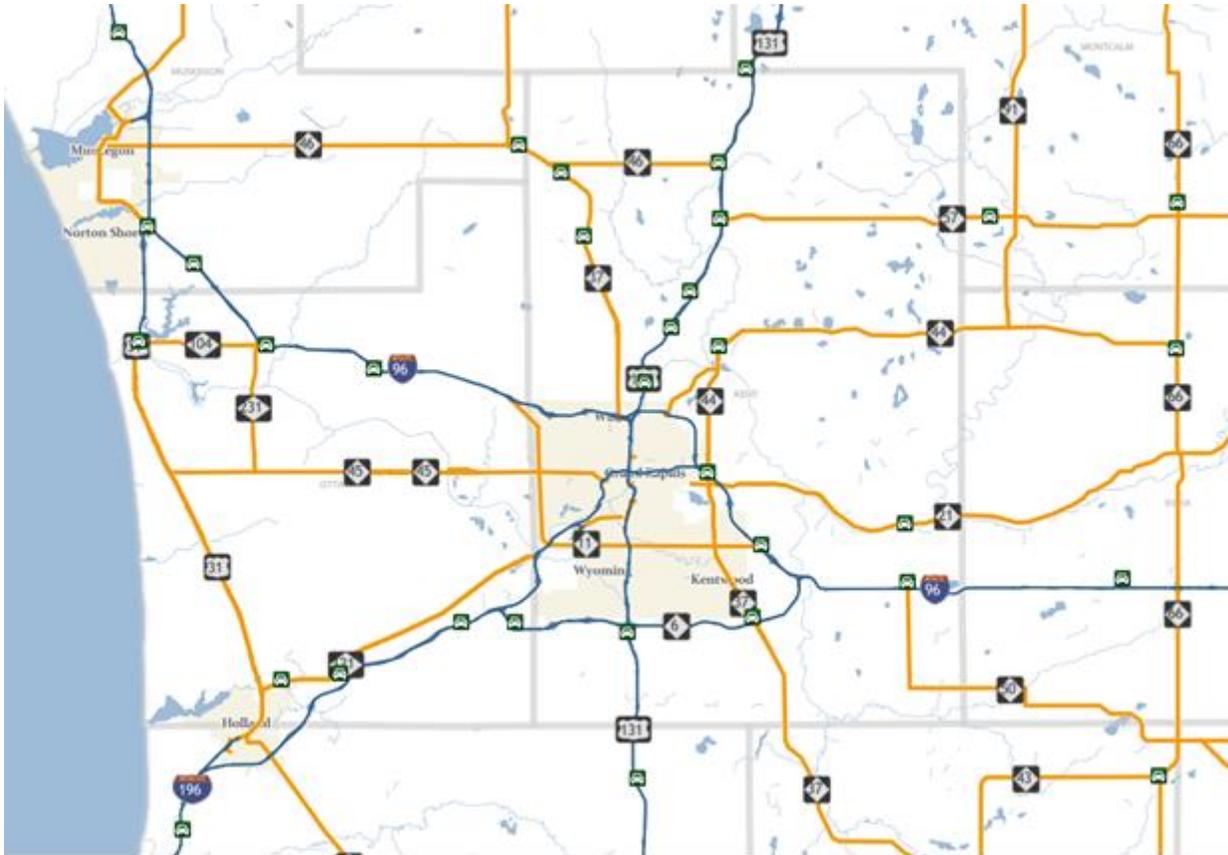


Figure 13: MDOT Park-and-Ride Lots

TDM Programs and Services

TDM is not new to the GVMC region. TDM programs and services are at the state, regional, and local levels. However, there is significant potential for enhanced coordination and expansion of services. Some key organizations and/or notable programs include:

- **Safe Routes to School:** The Michigan Department of Transportation manages the Michigan Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in the Grand Rapids region with support from the Michigan Fitness Foundation (MFF). MFF provides training for SRTS activities (e.g., walk audits) and technical assistance for grants and programs.
- **West Michigan Rideshare:** Operated by The Rapid, West Michigan offers customizable programs for employers. Programs are focused on using a web-based software platform that matches registrants into carpools and offers Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH). GRH is a free program for commuters who use an alternative to driving alone at least once a week.
- West Michigan Rideshare also organizes Active Commute Week each June to encourage non-driving options and friendly competition among employers and their employees.
- **Mobile GR.** Mobile GR is the transportation planning department of the City of Grand Rapids. It runs the city's DASH program, micromobility, safety programming, and parking. They also conduct a transportation census every few years to gather data on transportation behaviors, attitudes, and awareness of services among residents within a 100-mile radius of the Grand Rapids region.
- Mobile GR is in the process of planning an electric vehicle carshare program.
- **West Michigan Clean Air Coalition:** GVMC is part of a coalition of government agencies, businesses, institutions, and nonprofit organizations in Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, and Kalamazoo Counties. The coalition aims to educate the public about air quality and promote emission reduction. One example of programming is a partnership with The Rapid, which contributes fare-free transit on Clean Air Action Days.
- **Greater Grand Rapids Bicycle Coalition:** This nonprofit promotes cycling through education, advocacy, and community-building initiatives and events. After a pause in programming, the nonprofit re-launched campaigns and events in 2023, including bike valet at Food Truck Fridays, happy hours, and promoting public engagement opportunities with the local planning processes.
- **Employer-provided programs:** Several major regional employers in the Grand Rapids region provide TDM programs, including unlimited transit service to their affiliates, private shuttle services, carpool matching, and other mobility options and amenities. Corewell Health (formerly Spectrum Health), Grand Valley State University, and Grand Rapids Community College have a contract with West Michigan Rideshare and promote other transportation options with a mix of information and campus amenities, priced parking permits, and/or parking cash outs.

TDM in Plans and Policies

This plan is driven by the goals in the 2040 and 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plans and supported by other state, regional, and local goals. As part of the Accessibility, Mobility, Inter-modalism, and Efficiency Goal, the GVMC 2040 MTP and GVMC 2045 MTP seek to implement TDM strategies for system efficiency. The MTP's land use section also calls for TDM to be considered a tool to mitigate new development impacts.

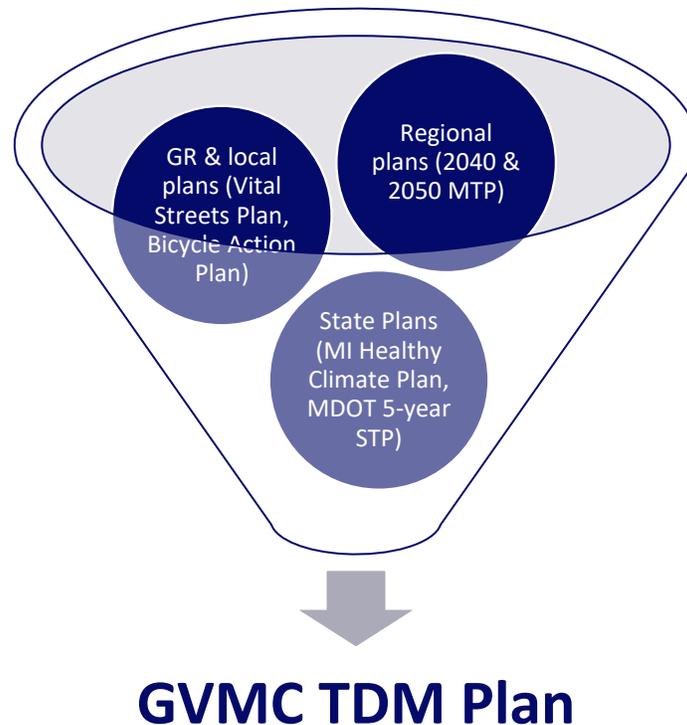


Figure 14: TDM in Plans

Several other state, GVMC, and City of Grand Rapids plans include goals and strategies that support TDM:

- **MI Healthy Climate Plan:** Recommends actions to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, including TDM incentives for transit and electric or active transportation options.
- **MDOT 2022-2026 Five-Year Transportation Program:** Calls for Complete Streets and technology tools to simplify transit, such as contactless fare systems.
- **GVMC Congestion Management Plan:** TDM measures are identified as one of seven strategies to help manage congestion through the development process.

- **City of Grand Rapids Bicycle Action Plan:** Recommends incorporating bike-related information in the Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan and includes bicycling incentives in commuter tracking platforms.
- **City of Grand Rapids Vital Streets Plan:** The framework plan includes mode share, equity, and transportation-related emissions reduction goals.
- **City of Grand Rapids Equitable Economic Development & Mobility Strategic Plan:** One of eleven Priority Near-Term Strategies is a pilot of expanded TDM incentive programs.

The City of Grand Rapids also has some TDM-supportive policies, including eliminating standard minimum parking requirements and developer requirements to provide pedestrian connections to existing sidewalks and paved walkways through off-street lots.

What We Heard from the Community

The project team sought input on the region's transportation challenges and opportunities through interviews, small group discussions, and public workshops.

Stakeholder engagement by the numbers:

7 stakeholder interviews Spring-Summer 2022	The Rapid, West Michigan Rideshare, Spectrum Health, Grand Valley State University, Mobile GR, West Michigan Express Task Force, Hope Network: Wheels to Work
4 discussion groups >16 attendees Summer-Fall 2022	Business District Representatives, Employers without TDM programs, the Essential Needs Task Force, and The Rapid Citizen's Advisory Committee
1 workshop/parallel online engagement 42 attendees/13 individuals Winter 2023	Representatives from regional municipalities, townships, real estate developers, disability advocates, local universities and colleges, social service and community development organizations, transit agencies, and the public

What we heard in interviews:

Challenges

- Greater Grand Rapids has a very car-centric environment.
- Transit operating costs are increasing, making it difficult to expand service.
- Stigma exists towards public transit.
- Sprawling development and land use patterns make driving the default.
- There is no unified vision for mode shift across the region.

Opportunities

- Create a regional park-and-ride initiative to formalize the process.
- Coordinate travel options marketing and promotions to limit duplicative efforts.
- Leverage the West MI Rideshare Platform to increase employer engagement.
- Look at West Michigan Express as a potential model for regional collaboration efforts that include partnerships with employers.

What we heard in discussion groups:

Challenges

- Stigma exists around public transit, and walking, biking, and carpooling are not typically considered viable options.
- There are transportation service and policy gaps, especially in outlying areas.
- Safer walking environments are needed to encourage mode shift.

Opportunities

- Parking resources could be managed more effectively.
- Incentives and rewards could encourage people to make sustainable travel choices.
- More targeted promotion and information is needed about existing programs.

What we heard from the public:

Challenges

- Safety for people walking and biking is a deterrent to choosing those travel options.
- Parking requirements perpetuate the need for cars and setbacks.
- The region does not have quality data to understand travel activity by mode.

Opportunities

- Explore new avenues for travel options, marketing, and promotions (e.g., schools, libraries).
- Incentives, or "carrots," can encourage commuter behavior change.
- Employers are essential stakeholders and need help to develop TDM programs.
- Students, in particular low-income students, could benefit from free or more subsidized transit.

Engagement activities are further detailed in [Appendix A](#).

Peer and Best Practice Region Profiles

The project team interviewed five other regional metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) of similar size and characteristics to the GVMC area. Below is a brief description of each peer agency and their most relevant TDM efforts in the Greater Grand Rapids area.

San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (San Luis Obispo, CA)

San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) is the regional transportation planning agency, metropolitan planning organization, regional census data affiliate, and service authority for freeways and expressways across San Luis Obispo County. Its mission is to maintain and improve mobility connections within the County. SLOCOG manages several TDM programs.

TDM Program Highlight

SLOCOG manages the Commuter Club (formerly Back N' Forth Club), a commuter benefits program to assist employers and commuters. They provide education and empowerment tools to alleviate traffic congestion, help commuters save gas money, and make getting to work easier. The program offers employers several tiers of participation ranging from marketing sustainable commute options to employees to providing paid incentives and/or pre-tax benefits. Each participating employer appoints a liaison (or Commute Coordinator) between the company and SLO Regional Rideshare staff to grant access to resources like trip reduction plans, marketing and promotional materials, and quarterly webinars. Employees receive personalized commute recommendations, vanpool coordination, and subsidized Try Transit passes for commuters new to riding the bus, access to the Guaranteed Ride Home program, participation in Rideshare challenges like Bike Month and Rideshare Week, and free access to bike lockers at regional Park & Ride locations.

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (Columbus, OH)

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) serves 15 counties. MORPC focuses on transportation, sustainability, data and mapping, government affairs, and broadly improving the quality of life for central Ohio residents.

TDM Program Highlight

One of MORPC's key programs to help build out TDM programs for companies in the region is the Commute Action Fund. The fund empowers Central Ohio companies with over 250 employees to create more sustainable commuter options for their workplace by applying for matching grants of up to \$5,000 to develop TDM initiatives. Employers with fewer than 250 employees are eligible for a matching grant of up to \$2,500.

Metro (Portland, OR)

Metro is the federally mandated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) designated by the governor to develop an overall transportation plan and to program federal funds. Part of Metro's mission as the Metropolitan Planning Organization is to develop and implement TDM, its primary role being a funder, coordinator, and convener.

TDM Program Highlight

Metro administers the Regional Travel Options (RTO) program to make communities safer and more livable by offering a wide range of transportation options. Each core partner agency commits to dedicating 0.5 FTE for RTO program support. The program components include:

- Grants to government agencies, colleges, universities, public school districts or schools (K-8), and nonprofit organizations to develop and institute TDM programs.
- Public education, employer outreach, regional rideshare, dedicated funding for bicycle infrastructure installation and improvement, and public engagement pilot projects.
- Convening the RTO Collaborative Group, an informal assembly of local governments, agencies, nonprofits, and transit providers, exchanges lessons learned regarding SOV trip reduction strategies and promotions of travel options.

Triangle J Council of Governments (Raleigh-Durham, NC)

The Triangle J Council of Governments (TJCOG) was established by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1969 as the regional authority responsible for planning administration for Moore, Lee, Chatham, Orange, Durham, Wake, and Johnston Counties.

TDM Program Highlight

TJCOG leads the Commute Friendly NC program, a statewide recognition program for employers who actively maintain benefits, policies, and programs incentivizing their employees to take advantage of alternative commuting opportunities. The program started in response to the Best Workplaces for Commuters (BWC) program application fee becoming a financial burden for many small businesses, deterring them from participating in TDM programs. Commute Friendly NC is funded by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and requires no participation fee. The program recognizes employers at the bronze, silver, or gold level depending on the number of transportation benefits offered, promotional campaigns, and employee participation.

Gap Analysis and Opportunities

Gap Analysis and Opportunities

Community engagement and existing conditions research helped identify important gaps in providing transportation options in the Greater Grand Rapids region. Peer review and community engagement helped identify primary opportunities that led to strategy development.

The following summarizes the primary gaps identified with opportunities, which informed the development of objectives and recommendations.

<p>Geographic Gaps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit service to significant employment centers in the southeastern and southwestern parts of the region • Last-mile options to reach employers at suburban commercial centers
	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote new, flexible transit products that serve to connect more workers to jobs • Promote ridesharing where there are transit gaps • Provide technical assistance to municipalities to adapt code and policies to support development that encourages multimodal access • West Michigan Express provides a model for regional collaboration efforts that include partnerships with employers
<p>Coordination Gaps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park-and-ride lot coordination and promotion • Multiple transportation options branding and promotion • Land use/transportation planning • Between service providers (The Rapid, RideLink, Hope Network, etc.)
	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and maintain a database and map of available park-and-ride lots that can serve as a first-mile/last-mile solution • Centralize branding and development of resources • Adopt a regular cycle of surveys that incorporate needs from several transportation providers
<p>Information Gaps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness around all existing transportation options and services • Limited channels for information (e.g., websites to offer commute counseling, employer programs, services overview)

	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and consolidate guides and resources in one location • Modernize and expand the online commute platform/trip planning tool • Identify resources to share information on employer outreach and interest between organizations
Perception Gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit as a viable commute mode • Parking needs • Safety/security of alternative modes (physical, health, etc.) • Value of commute/TDM programs coming out of COVID
	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create improved tools and resources for commute options • Showcase through case studies and in person outreach that TDM programming is valuable • Create a unified park-and-ride resource that includes MDOT and The Rapid lots
Audience Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees working non-traditional hours • Industrial and retail employees • Residents outside of The Rapid service area • High-school students • Non-commute trips (food deserts, etc.)
	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek solutions for employees at non-traditional workplaces. • Launch an improved online platform and resources in multiple languages
Funding Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentive programs or pilot programs • More transit service
	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a grant program that provides funding for additional TDM initiatives at the local level—for both programming and marketing, services, and capital improvements.

Each gap presents an opportunity for this plan and directly informs the recommended strategies and an implementation framework.

Recommendations

Recommendations

Early on, the TAC identified the desire to create an implementation-ready plan. This desired outcome led to a goal-setting framework and strategies that support a measurable, sustainable TDM program.

Overseeing all elements of the recommendations was the vision:

The Grand Rapids region supports transportation options that advance mobility for all people and all trips in an affordable, safe, and efficient manner. Regional partners are working together to advance and prioritize TDM strategies that impact travel behavior to mitigate severe congestion and air quality issues while supporting sustainable growth and economic prosperity.

The following section outlines the plan objectives, evaluation strategy, strategies, and timeline.

Objectives and Key Results

The gaps and opportunities were instrumental in developing the plan objectives. The selected goal-setting framework integrates clear objectives with measurable key results, facilitating the ongoing tracking of outcomes and enabling timely adjustments to strategies based on their success.

Consistent with the intention of this framework, the identified objectives and key results for this plan are specific, measurable, and aspirational. They are outlined below:

Objective 1: Foster regional coordination to unify TDM messaging and programming.		
Key Results		
1.1: The TDM regional coordination group meets quarterly.	1.2: 100% of the regional coordination group and their respective agencies successfully use regional TDM materials.	1.3: 30% of regional survey respondents can associate the unified regional TDM messaging with core TDM services.

**Objective 2: Help people who live and work in the region get around without a car.
Sub Objective: Use TDM programming to increase transit and vanpool ridership**

Key Results

2.1: More than 50% of regional survey respondents know alternative travel options.	2.2: 15 employers representing at least 3,000 employees are engaged with the regional TDM program.	2.3: TDM programs and promotions attracted 300 new transit or vanpool riders.	2.4: Participation in The Rapid's bulk purchase programs is 20% higher than the pre-pandemic baseline.
--	--	---	--

**Objective 3. Integrate TDM into infrastructure investments, land use policy, and parking decision
Sub Objective: Educate key decision-makers on the benefits of TDM
(government, large employers, funders, etc.)**

Key Results

3.1: An infrastructure construction project or major transit enhancement becomes a best practice for coordinating with the regional TDM program on outreach and messaging.	3.2: 90 percent of municipalities have attended a regional education and training on how TDM relates to infrastructure investment, land use policy and parking.
--	---

Objective 4. Build relationships with employer partners to maintain the trip reduction benefits of flexible work locations and hours

Key Results

4.1: 90% of employers continue to have eligible employees in hybrid and flexible work arrangements.	4.2: The work-from-home mode share in the region remains above 10%.	4.3: 20 employers with over 200 employees actively participated in the regional program (downtown TDM initiative, regional working group, W. Michigan Rideshare).
---	---	---

Strategies

Strategies were selected based on their ability to achieve the objective and key results within five years from fiscal year 2024 to 2028. The final strategies were refined in close collaboration with the TAC and informed by feedback at a public workshop and via Social Pinpoint, an online engagement tool.

The final strategies are divided into two groups. The first group is considered foundational to launching a successful regional TDM program. The remaining strategies were prioritized based on their ability to meet the objectives and key results and their feasibility to be implemented in the planning timeframe.

These are summarized below and explained in detail in the next section: Implementation Action Plan.

Strategy	Description	Level of Impact	Level of Effort	Level of Cost
Foundational Recommendations				
Regional TDM Program Manager	Fund a dedicated regional TDM program manager at GVMC	High	Low	High
Regional TDM Working Group	Create a regional TDM working group under GVMC, including government, business, and nonprofit partners, and require the annual TDM work program to be reviewed by regional working group.	Medium	Medium	Low
Comprehensive TDM Communications and Outreach Plan	Develop a comprehensive communications and outreach plan that includes strategies to build strong awareness of TDM in the region and to unify the region's TDM educational and outreach initiatives.	Medium	Medium	Low/ Medium
Optimized Regional TDM Program Platform	Optimize and expand the regional TDM program tools with a better technology platform that incorporates transit services and pass programs.	High	High	High
Evaluation	Implement an Evaluation Strategy for the Regional TDM Program, including conducting a regional commute survey every two years in coordination with Mobile GR to inform TDM programs and measure key results.	Medium	Medium	Low

Objective 1: Foster regional coordination to unify TDM messaging and programming.

Expanded Staffing to Implement TDM Outreach	Dedicate staffing resources to expanding employer and community outreach and campaign promotion to implement the programs prioritized in this plan and maintain and build on West Michigan Rideshare programs, such as guaranteed ride home.	High	Medium	Medium
TDM Information Library	Create an information library of TDM resources featured on a dedicated regional TDM website.	Medium	Medium	Low
TDM Criteria Integrated into MPO Sponsored Plans and Products	Develop TDM evaluation criteria for MPO-sponsored plans, projects, and programs starting in the 2026-2029 TIP to enable TDM impacts (positive or negative) to be factored into funding decisions.	High	High	Low

Objective 2: Help people who live and work in the region get around without a car.

Sub Objective: Use TDM programming to increase transit and vanpool ridership

Park-and-ride Lot Strategy for Carpooling and Transit	Identify locations/partners for new park-and-ride lots for both carpooling and transit	Medium	Medium	Low
Access to Jobs Strategy	Provide start-up funding for job access transportation (i.e., new vanpools, Wheels to Work, etc.) and explore ways to make vanpooling easier for participants to start or maintain.	Low	Medium	Medium
Equity Pass/Mobility Wallet	Explore integration of an Equity Pass/Mobility Wallet that could combine a transit pass, bike and e-scooter share, and Uber/Lyft/taxi credits giving people many choices to get around.	High	Medium	Medium

Objective 3: Integrate TDM into infrastructure investments, land use policy, and parking decisions.

Sub Objective: Educate key decision-makers on the benefits of TDM (government, large employers funders, etc.)

Construction Project TDM Policy and Communications Plan	Create policies, incentives, or requirements to coordinate outreach and messaging around large infrastructure construction projects or major transit enhancements with the regional TDM program.	High	High	Medium
TDM Toolkit for Municipalities	Develop and publish a TDM Toolkit for municipalities, developers, and funders with best policy practices. This would be made part of an information clearinghouse and provide content for regional webinars.	Medium	Low	Low
TDM Training for Municipalities	Develop a regional webinar TDM training program for municipalities and offer regular trainings during the next five years. Training for municipalities would focus on integrating TDM into land use and parking policy.	Medium	Medium	Medium
Objective 4. Build relationships with employer partners to maintain the trip reduction benefits of flexible work locations and hours				
Downtown Employer Outreach Strategy	Engage downtown, institutional employers in a TDM program initially focused on maintaining hybrid options while increasing transit ridership and participation in the group purchase pass programs for in-office days.	High	Low	Low

Future Initiatives

The project team identified additional initiatives to be considered for further evaluation and possible implementation beyond the plan's five-year planning horizon. The initiatives include:

- Develop a competitive grant program to fund local TDM initiatives that advance regional program goals.
- Pilot a year-long resident-focused Try Transit program in select low- and moderate-income neighborhoods near transit lines.
- Pilot programming for airport industrial district worker TDM focuses on carpool ridematching or transit promotion.
- Pilot a walk-to-school program focusing on students who are not eligible to ride the school bus because they live too close to school.
- Pilot a visitor TDM program with one large visitor attraction to promote transit and other alternative modes.
- Develop a regional webinar TDM program for employers and offer regular training during the next five years.

Timeline for Priority Recommendations

	Strategies	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	Longer-Term (6-10 year)							
Foundational	Regional TDM Program Manager	Planning	Implementation											
	Regional TDM Working Group	Planning	Implementation											
	Comprehensive TDM Communications Plan		Planning	Implementation										
	Optimized Regional TDM Program Platform	Planning		Implementation										
	Evaluation		Planning	Impl.		Planning	Impl.		Planning	Impl.	Planning	Impl.	Planning	Impl.
Objective 1	Expanded Staffing to Implement TDM Outreach	Planning		Implementation										
	TDM Information Library		Planning	Implementation										
	TDM Criteria Integrated into MPO Sponsored Plans and Products		Planning		Implementation									
Objective 2	Park and Ride Lot Strategy for Carpooling and Transit	Planning		Implementation										
	Access to Jobs Strategy		Planning	Implementation										
	Equity Pass / Mobility Wallet	Planning - Pilot Phase		Implementation			Planning - Next Phase		Implementation					
Objective 3	Construction Project TDM Policy & Communications Plan				Planning		Implementation							
	TDM Toolkit for Municipalities				Planning		Implementation							
	TDM Training for Municipalities				Planning		Implementation							
Objective 4	Downtown Employer Outreach Program		Planning		Implementation									

Implementation Action Plan

Implementation Action Plan

While GVMC is well positioned to take on a leadership role for TDM in the region, the success of this plan relies on the active collaboration and involvement of GVMC members, transportation providers, community-based organizations, economic development organizations, and employers.

This section is divided into foundational recommendations followed by the remainder of year 1-5 strategies, organized by objectives. The implementation action plan identifies strategy elements and benefits, implementation roles, cost and staffing estimates, and action items. The action items contain key elements to ensure the strategies are designed inclusively, promoting equitable and effective transportation enhancements.

Foundational Recommendations

While The Rapid's West Michigan Rideshare program currently offers a regional TDM program framework, the existing conditions analysis and public input showcased critical gaps in the service delivery and/or knowledge of available transportation options. This plan recommends a series of foundational recommendations to begin the formation of a unified, regional TDM program. These strategies are critical to the success of the remainder of the strategies.

Step 1: Fund a dedicated regional TDM program manager at GVMC.

Oversight of the implementation of this plan and a resulting regional TDM program will require a dedicated program manager. This role will also serve as an advocate for TDM and TDM supportive strategies (active transportation, transit, etc.) in the region. The program manager will keep track of TDM activities in the region, elevate TDM as a mechanism to improve mobility, maximize the use of existing infrastructure, and help ensure alignment of activities across jurisdictions.

In the short term, the TDM program manager will coordinate a TDM regional working group and lead the rebranding and communications strategy for the Regional TDM program in close coordination with West Michigan Rideshare.

The TDM program manager will work with West Michigan Rideshare and the TDM working group to develop an annual work program and share evaluation results.

Implementation Action Items

- Identify position funding and associated requirements.
- Develop a job description and advertise the position.
- Hire/designate a TDM program manager.

Key equity considerations: As the regional TDM program is further detailed in annual work programs, the TDM manager should ensure that services are available throughout the entire study area, consider and support people traveling at all times of day to include people who commute during off-peak hours, and facilitate the viewpoints and consider the needs of historically underrepresented populations in addition to those that may be more visible through traditional employer partnerships.

Benefits

A dedicated staff person will ensure that the recommendations in this plan will be carried out and serve to advance mobility options in the region.

Implementation Roles

Lead: GVMC
Support: West Michigan Rideshare

Cost

1 FTE

Timeline

Planning: early 2024
Implementation: early 2024

Resources

The [National Network for the Transportation Workforce](#) has developed several sustainable transportation job descriptions, including for a general TDM manager and a transportation mobility coordinator.

Step 2: Create a regional TDM Working Group, including government, business, and nonprofit partners.

The regional TDM Working Group would oversee and help coordinate the recommendations from this plan and all regional TDM activities, including reviewing the annual TDM work program. Expanding from the existing TAC group, additional members can be selected to ensure representation from outlying areas of the region, disability advocacy groups, employers, and related disciplines, such as housing. This will result in diverse members working together to advance TDM and multimodal planning and implementation. The regional working group would act as a subcommittee to the Technical and Policy Committees and provide feedback and recommendations related to TDM.

GVMC would coordinate the working group's quarterly meetings.

Implementation Action Items

- Develop a working group charter that details the working group’s purpose, responsibility, and composition. Ensure both plan key results and equity considerations are taken into account and that expectations for committee members are clearly identified.
- Identify and recruit potential working group members.
- Host a kick-off meeting to approve group charter and set quarterly meeting schedule.

Benefits

Ensures regional representation and collaboration, which is essential to implementing this plan.

Provides a forum for sharing ideas and initiatives and sets the stage for increased collaboration.

Establishes a coordinated group of influential organizations that will elevate the status of TDM in the region.

Cost

Staff time

Timeline

Planning: early 2024

Implementation: mid-2024

Step 3: Develop a Comprehensive Communications and Outreach Plan for the Regional TDM Program.

A core objective of this plan is to foster regional coordination to align TDM messaging and programming. To achieve this, a key step will be the development of a comprehensive Communications and Outreach Plan aimed at cultivating regional awareness of and use of TDM solutions.

GVMC and the TDM working group will oversee this process; however, this approach must involve close collaboration with West Michigan Rideshare, as the existing TDM service provider.

The Communications and Outreach plan should complement this Regional TDM plan, covering strategic actions that can be implemented over a five-year span. Central to this plan is establishing a unified regional TDM brand that uses language the public will understand (such as transportation options), encompasses focused messaging and a visual framework for the TDM program's identity, as well as regional campaigns and promotions. It will also provide the bones for what will be the digital clearinghouse outlined as a separate strategy.

Additional activities should include:

- Coordinating and amplifying existing transportation options communications campaigns with entities like the City of Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc., West Michigan Rideshare, The Rapid, and other community, governmental, and agency partners.
- Conducting an audit of the region's TDM campaigns and communications, with key equity considerations given to:
 - Language variances
 - Representation of varying abilities (e.g., messaging that addresses wheelchairs and visually impaired)
 - Communications methods (e.g., non-digital materials vs. digital materials; email vs. SMS; etc.)
- Conducting market research, including focus groups, as a basis for engaging audiences with behavior change campaigns.

Benefits

A unified brand will improve TDM's visibility in the region and cultivate strong regional awareness and demand for TDM solutions.

Enhanced regional coordination and alignment of TDM messaging and programming will maximize the impact of TDM solutions and serve as a streamlined, collaborative framework for all partners.

Implementation Roles

Lead: GVMC and Regional TDM working group
Supporting Organizations: West Michigan Rideshare

Cost

~\$45,000

Timeline

Planning: mid-2024
Implementation: mid-2025

- Identifying and developing pathways to reaching and engaging varying audiences and to support outreach goals, including a mix of traditional and digital marketing and communications methods. Central to this will be the development of a dedicated regional TDM program website and supporting communication channels (e.g., social media, email marketing, etc.).
- Establishing key regional TDM campaigns and initiatives for the region’s commuters and employers, including an ongoing recognition initiative that promotes the region’s commitment to TDM.
- Developing an ongoing communication strategy that showcases the demonstrated successes of TDM initiatives within the region.

Implementation Action Items

- Develop a scope for the Communications and Outreach Plan; key tasks would include:
 1. Review and Develop Background and Best Practices
 - Background Review
 - Best Practices
 - TDM Communications and Campaigns Audit
 2. Prepare Communications Plan and Marketing Campaign Plan
 - Define Target Audiences
 - Prepare Key Messages
 - Develop Tactics and Communication Plan
 - Identify TDM Program Campaigns, Promotions & Initiatives
 3. Develop Evaluation Methodology
- Review scope with the TDM working group.
- Consider if a consultant or third party is needed to develop the communications plan.
- Develop communications plan and create initial program materials.

Step 4: Optimize and expand the regional TDM program with a more advanced TDM technology platform.

Today's TDM programs rely on technology, which is vital in simplifying complex commuter choices, providing unique mode-specific functionality, administering key TDM programs, and aggregating data. Currently, West Michigan Rideshare manages the service delivery of the regional TDM program, and it will be imperative to have a technology solution that supports more functionality than simply ridematching. The new TDM technology will leverage software as a service (SaaS) and offer platforms that upgrade as technology advances, keeping the TDM program relevant and customer-centric over longer periods.

At a minimum, the new technology platform would include a commuter-facing tool consisting of easy-to-use resources for commuters to navigate travel options and resources for organizations to offer transportation benefits to their employees/members.

There are many regional TDM technology tool vendors and recent RFPs that The Rapid and GVMC can adapt for their uses to procure an updated tool. Baseline tool features should include the following:

- Mobile and web-based SaaS
- Ridematching
- Trip planning
- Campaign implementation
- Incentive management
- Guaranteed Ride Home administration
- Gamification
- Automated trip tracking
- Privacy and data integrity protocols

Implementation Action Items

- Conduct a needs assessment with the regional working group to determine the must-have priorities for the TDM technology that specifically consider these categories:
 - Target audiences

Benefits

Simplifies the choice architecture for sustainable travel modes.

Helps administer existing key services such as the Rapid's group purchase program; Provides vital functionality to form and manage carpools.

Equips program stakeholders and employer partners with customizable levels of access, functionality, and data management.

Facilitates communication and engagement with the target audience.

Helps track metrics key to measuring program impact.

Implementation Roles

Lead: The Rapid / West Michigan Rideshare

Partner: GVMC; Regional working group

Cost

Staff time

TDM platform annual cost: \$25,000 - \$40,000

Timeline

Planning: early 2024

Implementation: early 2025

- Key functionality
- Equity needs
- Privacy/data integrity
- SaaS needs
- Conduct a scan of relevant vendors that match the needs assessment. Conduct demos with top vendors to ensure latest SaaS concepts are leveraged in future scoping.
- Develop an RFP for a new TDM platform, using the previous research to inform the scope of services.
- RFP advertisement, interviews/demos, and procurement
- New platform set-up and existing platform data-merge
- Implement communications and marketing tactics from other steps in this plan with a specific focus to transition existing users, create awareness of new features, generate new users, and maintain healthy engagement with the technology.

Step 5: Implement an Evaluation Strategy for the Regional TDM Program

A foundational strategy is to begin tracking and measuring the key results. Using the key results evaluation framework serves as a roadmap for understanding the impacts associated with implementing the regional TDM efforts and tracking progress toward meeting established goals. It ensures the evaluation process is well-defined, consistent, and focused on measuring key results.

Suggested metrics to assess the TDM Plan's key results are identified in Table 1 along with recommendations on how to obtain data and monitoring frequency. Collecting this data will require coordination across agencies. Specific data collection efforts include:

- **Conduct a regional commute survey.** A regional commute survey is a reliable way to measure program impacts and progress toward objectives and key results. When conducted in regular intervals, longitudinal progress can be measured and clearly described, providing vital information for adapting and refining TDM programs. A regional survey can also provide an opportunity to understand travel needs, gauge attitudes toward different travel modes, and test ideas for program enhancements or additions. To find efficiencies in combining survey efforts where possible, the survey should expand upon and coordinate with the City of Grand Rapids' Transportation Census.
- **Collect data from transit agencies and vanpool operators.** To evaluate the progress towards the objectives and key results of the TDM plan, it's essential to collect transit ridership statistics, transit pass and ticket sales, and participation in vanpools.

Implementation Action Items

- Review the evaluation framework with new TDM manager and West Michigan rideshare to determine appropriate tools to share information.
- Coordinate with regional partners to begin gathering and tracking data.

Benefits

Implementing the evaluation strategy will yield data to track progress toward this plan's objectives and key results and provide a foundation for future planning and decision-making.

Ongoing evaluation allows for the TDM plan to be dynamic. As conditions change or new challenges emerge, strategies can be adjusted accordingly.

Tracking data over time can reveal trends in transportation behaviors, informing future TDM strategies and anticipating upcoming challenges or needs.

Collecting data at a regional level provides a macroscopic perspective, allowing for a holistic assessment of the Plan's objectives and for the identification of best practices that can be scaled or replicated in other parts of the metro area.

Sharing data and progress with stakeholders across the region can foster a sense of ownership, accountability, and support for TDM initiatives.

It can also attract potential partners and funding opportunities.

Implementation Roles

- Explore if expanding the City of Grand Rapids' Transportation Census is an option for the regional survey. Develop survey questions. Ensure the survey platform is accessible to individuals with disabilities and provides accommodations for those without access to computers or smartphones and non-English speakers.
- Develop a memorandum of understanding between GVMC and its partners to formalize the partnership and commitment to collaborating on the regional survey and data collections.
- Develop a comprehensive survey strategy for the regional commute survey encompassing an outreach plan, defined response goals, strategies for ensuring adequate representation of historically underserved populations, and mechanisms to ensure the sample remains representative of the broader population.
- Analyze and report on evaluation results. Share the results with the Technical and Policy Committees.

Lead: GVMC, Mobile GR, The Rapid / West Michigan Rideshare
Partner: Regional working group

Cost
Staff time

Timeline
Planning: early 2024
Implementation: early 2025

Table 1 GVMC TDM Program Key Results Evaluation Framework

Objective	Key Result	Data Source	How to Obtain Data	Monitoring Frequency	Long-Term Goal
Objective 1: Foster Regional Coordination	1.2: Usage of Regional TDM Materials	Survey of Regional Coordination Group	Annually survey group members to assess the successful use of regional TDM materials	Annually	100% adoption rates across agencies
Objective 1: Foster Regional Coordination	1.3: Association of Messaging	Regional Survey	Include questions in the regional survey to assess respondents' ability to associate unified messaging with core TDM services	Biennially	30%+ respondents associate messaging with core TDM
Objective 2: Increase Alternative Travel Options	2.1: Awareness of Travel Options	Regional Survey	Include questions in the regional survey to measure awareness of alternative travel options	Biennially	More than 50%+ respondents aware of options
Objective 2: Increase Alternative Travel Options	2.2: Employer Engagement	Reporting in a unified engagement tool	Maintain records of engaged employers and their employee counts	Quarterly	15 employers representing a total of at least 3,000 employees are engaged with the regional TDM program
Objective 2: Increase Alternative Travel Options	2.3: Transit/Vanpool Ridership	Transit Agencies and Vanpool Operator Ridership Data	Collaborate with transit agencies and vanpool operators to obtain ridership data	Before and after TDM promotions or annually	300 new transit or vanpool riders
Objective 2: Increase Alternative Travel Options	2.4: Bulk Purchase Participation	The Rapid's Bulk Sales Data	Obtain sales from The Rapid's bulk purchase programs	Annually	20%+ increase from pre-pandemic baseline
Objective 3: Integrate TDM into Infrastructure	3.1: Infrastructure Best Practices	GVMC awarded projects	Collect case studies showcasing successful infrastructure projects	Biennially	Identify 2 examples of successful integration that can be used for outreach and messaging

			coordinated with the regional TDM program		
Objective 3: Integrate TDM into Infrastructure	3.2: Municipal Education Attendance	Regional Coordination Group Meeting Minutes with Attendance Records	Maintain records of municipal attendance at education and training sessions	Annually	90% attendance at training sessions
Objective 4: Build Employer Partnerships	4.1: Flexible Work Arrangements	Reporting in a unified engagement tool	Maintain records of employers' participation and flexible work arrangements	Quarterly	90%+ employers maintain arrangements
Objective 4: Build Employer Partnerships	4.2: Work-From-Home Mode Share	Regional Survey	Include questions in the regional survey to measure work-from-home mode share	Annually	Regional work-from-home mode share is >10%
Objective 4: Build Employer Partnerships	4.3: Employer Participation	Reporting in a unified engagement tool	Maintain records of employer participation in programs	Quarterly	20 employers with over 200 employees actively participate in the regional program

Year 1-5 Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to be initiated after foundational recommendations and are organized by objective.

Objective: Foster regional coordination to unify TDM messaging and programming.

Expand staffing resources to implement the Regional TDM Program.

The Rapid's West Michigan Rideshare program provides a good foundation that can be used to expand staffing and other resources to administer the regional TDM program.

There are three types of staff expertise required:

1. Administrative personnel to manage technology database, Guaranteed Ride Home, and incentive programming.
2. Employer and community outreach personnel that can support existing and expanded programming to target audiences, including employers, commuters, and residents.
3. Marketing personnel who are experts in behavior change marketing and can implement strategies in the communications and outreach plan, including developing program materials, campaigns, and implementing automated program delivery.

Implementation Action Items

- Implement communications and outreach plan for employer and commuter support.
 - Administer the Guaranteed Ride Home program and any incentive programs.
 - Create and implement regional marketing campaigns.
 - Monitor program impacts.

Benefits

Expands the capacity and capabilities of the existing rideshare program to reach employers and commuters.

Allows GVMC to ensure alignment of the program with the objectives and key results identified in this plan.

Implementation Roles

Lead: The Rapid/West Michigan Rideshare/GVMC

Support: Regional Working Group

Cost

\$150,000-\$250,000

Timeline

Planning: mid-2024

Implementation: late 2024

Initiate an information library of TDM and transportation resources.

The Grand Valley region’s residents, employees, and organizations currently have access to fragmented information about available travel infrastructure and options. There are also significant gaps regarding key transportation options resources, leaving essential information about the region's transportation network and travel options conspicuously absent. The creation of a resource library on the regional program website will bridge these two critical informational disparities. The library will serve as a pivotal tool for consolidating existing data and developing key resources, including maps, marketing documents, transit pass program information, how-to guides, and other important resources. Initial materials will be comprised of the following:

- A map of all available park-and-ride facilities within the region, complemented by supporting resources.
- Targeted transit guides, offering information tailored to distinct transit audience groups (e.g., senior citizens, students, non-English speakers, etc.).
- A telework guide for employers, allowing them to uphold remote work arrangements and the resulting trip reduction benefits experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a central component of the Communications and Outreach Plan, the regional TDM program's website will be the best platform to house these resources, effectively addressing the information gaps and ensuring accessible and informed decision-making for all stakeholders.

The library should offer a comprehensive and cohesive view of transportation choices within the region, which will require ongoing and consistent development to account for changes in programs and services. Staff time should therefore be allocated to inventory all available TDM services and programs and to establish a process for developing and integrating updated and new information into the library.

Benefits

Establishing the resource library will provide a one-stop shop that fills the information gaps that support travel choice and access.

Providing ready-made resources for employers and implementation partners will reduce duplicative efforts and refocus their time and effort to important TDM strategies.

Implementation Roles

Lead:

GVMC and West

Michigan Rideshare

Cost

Resource development: \$40,000

Website Development: \$50,000

Timeline

Planning: early 2025

Implementation: mid 2025

Implementation Action Items

- Identify, gather, and organize existing and planned data and resources to ensure a comprehensive resource catalog. This should be completed in collaboration with local stakeholders, service providers, and implementation partners to gather accurate and up-to-date information.
- Develop new resources as needed and where gaps have been identified.
- Establish a process for ongoing maintenance and updates to the library to reflect changes in programs, services, and transportation options.
- Determine a user-friendly way to organize and store resources for ease of searchability and usage by audiences. The online library should meet the latest online and digital accessibility guidelines.
- Develop and implement a launch plan that include strategies to promote the resource library among commuters, employers, and other audiences and to promote resources in tandem with implementation partners. This should be aligned with the broader Communication and Outreach plan (see foundation strategy: Step 3).

Develop evaluation criteria for MPO-sponsored plans, projects, and programs starting in the 2026-2029 TIP to enable TDM impacts to be factored into funding decisions.

Integrating TDM strategies more directly into major transportation planning processes, including highway and roadway planning, can help elevate the status of TDM. GVMC should develop evaluation criteria highlighting projects or applicants that include TDM strategies in their funding applications and future planning processes. Adding TDM criteria to the current set of evaluation criteria recognizes the need for maximizing infrastructure investments.

Implementation Action Items

- Analyze the current capital project approval process to identify how TDM can be integrated into project evaluation.
- Develop TDM evaluation criteria with feedback from the TDM regional working group, GVMC committees and subcommittees, and MDOT, putting past projects through the evaluation matrix to determine impact. Evaluation criteria should include the following equity considerations:
 - Distribution of proposed projects and their potential impact on underserved or transit-deficient areas.
 - Positive impact on a variety of work schedules, accommodating commuters with non-traditional hours.
 - Integration of TDM strategies that reduce low-income individuals' transportation costs, highlighting projects offering affordable transportation options and enhanced accessibility for individuals with disabilities, rewarding improvements to infrastructure and services.
 - Demonstrate community engagement and collaboration in developing TDM strategies, ensuring local voices are heard.
- Ask the regional working group to recommend revised criteria for MPO-sponsored projects to the GVMC Policy Committee.

Benefits

Formalizes the integration of TDM into the transportation funding process.

Brings attention to TDM as an inexpensive way to maximize the impact of new infrastructure.

Implementation Roles

Lead: GVMC

Supporting Organizations:

GVMC committees and subcommittees

MDOT

Regional working group

Cost

Staff time

Timeline

Planning: 2024

Implementation: 2025

Resources

Brevard MPO (FL) considered the following criteria when evaluating transportation and land use strategies for its 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan:

- Does the project include strategies to reduce the need for trip-making?
- Does the project shift trips to non-automobile modes?
- Does the project encourage the use of HOV lanes?

- Roll out the new TDM evaluation criteria in the 2026-2029 TIP.

- Does the project optimize the roadway network's operation for all trips using highway facilities/modes?
- Does the project increase capacity for SOV trips by adding general-purpose lanes?

Objective: Help people who live and work in the region get around without a car.

Identify locations/partners for new park-and-ride lots for both carpooling and transit.

Park-and-rides provide a meeting point where travelers can connect from one mode to another. Statewide, park-and-ride lots primarily serve carpooling, while in The Rapid service area, park-and-ride lots cater to transit riders. This strategy seeks to identify strategic locations/partners for new park-and-ride lots that enhance connecting transit service and provide new opportunities for carpooling and vanpooling. While new park-and-ride lots are expensive to build, there is precedent in the region for forming partnerships with existing parking lots to serve commuters. MDOT currently has agreements with 21 Meijer stores across the state to supplement its state-owned and operated lots. In addition to identifying park-and-ride lots, this study should review opportunities to include electric vehicle (EV) charging.

Implementation Action Items

- Identify locations where park-and-ride demand is unmet, or opportunities exist to increase transit ridership and carpooling/vanpooling. Prioritize identifying park-and-ride locations in underserved or transit-deficient areas, ensuring that residents of these communities have access to convenient transportation options. Ensure the park-and-ride lots are well-lit and safe to accommodate early/late trips, accessible, offering amenities such as accessible parking spaces, ramps, ample seating, and appropriate signage.
- Identify opportunities where existing or future park-and-ride lots could serve as EV charging locations (including locations that are privately-owned). Form partnerships with businesses and assess opportunities for future EV Charging infrastructure implementation, operations, and maintenance.
- Negotiate with parking lot owners and formalize partnership/lease agreements.
- Create a map of all available park-and-ride lots in the region and include it in the regional TDM knowledge library.

Benefits

Provides access to transit, carpooling, and vanpooling for those not directly served by fixed-route transit.

Implementation Roles

Leads: The Rapid; MDOT
Partner: GVMC (technical assistance)

Cost

Staff time (coordination and analysis, negotiation)

Timeline

Planning: mid-2024
Implementation: mid-2025

- Develop a marketing and promotion plan to increase awareness of new and existing park-and-ride facilities.
- Pilot an outreach and marketing campaign to test the promotion plan at a single facility.
- Refine the marketing and promotion plan and expand outreach and marketing efforts to additional park-and-ride facilities.

Provide funding for job access transportation (i.e., new vanpools, Wheels to Work, etc.) and explore ways to make vanpooling easier for participants to start or maintain.

Reliable access to jobs is critical for regional employers and employees. Vanpooling and employer-funded transportation services, such as the established Wheels to Work program operated by Hope Network, offer access to jobs in areas where other transportation options are lacking and for individuals who do not have reliable access. This strategy will explore ways to make vanpooling and the Wheels to Work program more attractive and accessible to employers. It could take the form of start-up subsidies for new vanpools and/or a temporary operating subsidy for Wheels to Work to recruit and serve new employers.

Once established, the regional TDM program will focus resources on promoting the subsidy and recruiting employers to participate.

Implementation Action Items

- Identify program administration options and funding availability (direct subsidy to individuals/grant funding to organizations).
- Develop requirements for this new funding, including but not limited to the following:
 - Funding minimums and maximums per person or vehicle.
 - Eligible organizations or individuals.
 - Timeline for these funds.
 - Structure the funding and subsidies to make participation in vanpooling or employer-funded transportation programs financially feasible for low-income individuals.
- Develop criteria for this new funding. Consider criteria with an equity focus, including:
 - Covers a diverse range of neighborhoods and communities, including underserved areas with limited transportation options.
 - Subsidized services accommodate second and third shifts.

Benefits

It improves access to work for people who otherwise may not have access to cars and for whom taking transit is not available or feasible.

Presents an opportunity to engage new employers.

Implementation Roles

Lead: GVMC; West Michigan Rideshare
Partner: Wheels to Work; MDOT/MichiVan; The Rapid/Enterprise

Cost

Staff time
\$25,000 (pilot phase)

Timeline

Planning: early 2025
Implementation: mid-2025

- Vehicles are accessible to individuals with disabilities, providing accessible options for all participants.
- Programs are accompanied by culturally sensitive communication materials that resonate with various communities, emphasizing the value of transportation alternatives and flexibility.
- Tracking requirements to determine the impact of these funds on improving access to jobs.
- Identify and reach out to target employers and organizations.
- Evaluate metrics and determine the long-term viability of the program.

Explore an equity pass/mobility wallet that could combine a transit pass, bike and e-scooter share, and Uber/Lyft/taxi credits, giving people many choices to get around.

An equity pass or mobility wallet is a transportation benefit that provides more options than a traditional transit pass and typically aims to improve transportation access for individuals with low incomes. The pass can expand existing transit fare cards that allow users to pay for another type of transportation option, such as a rideshare service or bike or e-scooter share. The program can also be implemented as a debit card with a fixed amount available every month. The debit card should be limited using industry code restrictions so that it is used for relevant travel options. A debit card also provides flexibility to allow users to pay for other services, such as bike repairs at a bike shop.

This strategy will build on the Mobility Wallet Challenge, a current pilot project funded by MDOT with participation by The Rapid. It will involve tracking the progress and results of current pilot programs to see how the effort can be sustained and expanded following the pilot period.

Implementation Action Items

- Follow and evaluate current pilot programs in progress.
- Document potential project risks regarding privacy/security and data sharing and determine how to overcome them early in the process.
- Determine eligibility, administration, marketing methods, fund distribution, and evaluation metrics. Incorporate the following equity considerations:
 - The program is accessible and usable and includes service offers in all geographic areas, including underserved neighborhoods and suburbs.
 - Provides multiple opportunities throughout the month for users to reload their mobility wallet, accommodating those who might not receive income every month.

Benefits

A mobility wallet can provide transportation subsidies to user groups who do not have access to traditional transit pass programs, such as employer-based transit pass programs.

By subsidizing multimodal travel, it improves access for low-income individuals.

It removes barriers and facilitates multimodal travel by combining payment mechanisms for more than one mode.

Implementation Roles

Lead: The Rapid – pilot technology and concepts; MDOT – advance technology platform
Partner: GVMC; HOPE Network and other rural transit providers; Micromobility providers; Amtrak; Rideshare companies

Cost

Staff time, future funding requirements pending pilot results.

Timeline

Planning for pilot phase: 2024
Pilot phase implementation: 2025-2026
Planning for next phase: 2027
Next phase implementation: 2028-2029

- Ensures provision of the technology and staff support for participants to access the Mobility Wallet. Consider in-person distribution of physical cards by using central distribution locations as an alternative to mailing physical cards to home addresses.
- Vehicles and services are accessible and safe for individuals with disabilities. Explore partnerships with healthcare providers to offer mobility wallet users information about accessible transportation options for medical appointments.
- Community organizations and leaders are involved in designing and promoting the equity pass/mobility wallet to ensure it addresses diverse needs. Develop culturally sensitive communication materials that resonate with various communities, emphasizing the value of transportation alternatives and flexibility. Ensure that participants reflect the greater population according to race and household income.
- Evaluate pilot progress and outcomes and determine expansion plan, including which service providers to include, and a plan for long-term sustainable funding.

Objective: Integrate TDM into infrastructure investments, land use policy, and parking decisions

Sub Objective: Educate key decision-makers on the benefits of TDM (government, large employers, funders, etc.).

Create policies, incentives, or requirements to coordinate outreach and messaging around large infrastructure construction projects or major transit enhancements with the regional TDM program.

Large transportation infrastructure projects tend to be disruptive to all travel modes. TDM strategies applied during the construction phase can be used to improve travel options and user satisfaction during the construction phase and to create demand for future transit services, such as the planned West Michigan Express. Because construction activity disrupts typical travel behaviors, it creates an opportunity to promote transportation alternatives to drivers while they are rethinking their routes and options. GVMC should develop guidance and incentives for large road and transit projects to coordinate outreach and messaging with the regional TDM program to take advantage of this opportunity.

Implementation Action Items

- Develop policies, incentives, and requirements in tandem with key stakeholders. These should include, at a minimum:
 - Coordination/collaboration with integrating TDM criteria into MPO-sponsored plans and products ensures that major construction projects require or incentivize a TDM component.
- Identify funding opportunities for potential projects and project types.
- Develop a TDM construction mitigation resource guide and scoping template for municipalities, agencies, and other regulatory groups to meet construction-related requirements. The guide should include an overview of applicable TDM strategies, management plans, and implementation recommendations. The guide should incorporate key equity considerations for this program, including:

Benefits

Integrates TDM into infrastructure investments capitalizes on behavior change moments with key messaging and can prime the market for new transit services or other modes.

Implementation Roles

Lead:

GVMC

Partner:

West Michigan Rideshare

MDOT

Regional working group

Cost

Staff time

Timeline

Planning: mid-2026

Implementation: early 2027

- Ensure that outreach and messaging efforts are targeted at high-traffic areas and reach underserved communities that the construction projects might impact.
- Consider different communities' varying schedules and routines when scheduling outreach events. Host information sessions at different times of the day, including evenings and weekends, to accommodate those who work non-traditional hours.
- Provide information about affordable transportation alternatives, such as discounted transit passes or ridesharing options, to mitigate potential financial burdens imposed by construction-related disruptions.
- Ensure that all messaging and outreach materials are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Include information about accessible transportation options and provide contact details for assistance.
- Develop outreach materials that resonate with diverse communities' cultural backgrounds and preferences. Highlight the benefits of alternative transportation in ways that align with various cultural values.

Develop and publish a TDM Toolkit for municipalities, developers, and funders with best policy practices.

A TDM Toolkit will provide municipalities, developers, and funders with the information and tools they need to implement TDM strategies and improve transportation choices in their jurisdiction. The toolkit would also help promote collaboration and coordination among stakeholders, essential for successful TDM implementation.

The strategies in the toolkit should support a shared vision of implementing TDM in the region, considering different segments where travel behavior is influenced. They will be tailored to different audiences and the different land use typologies found in the region, acknowledging that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. TDM should be presented in the context of workforce development, job access, and housing affordability. This toolkit will focus on policies, incentives, and code revisions related to land use and parking, including parking requirements, parking pricing, and parking cash-out options. Best practices and policy examples will be featured to provide proof of concept, estimates on impact, and equip local municipalities with resources to get started and obtain buy-in.

Implementation Action Items

- Develop the toolkit, drawing from local and national best practices that apply to the various land use typologies in the Grand Rapids region. Ensure that the TDM Toolkit addresses:
 - The varying needs of different types of municipalities in the region.
 - Off-peak travelers
 - How TDM policies can benefit a variety of communities, emphasizing equity and social inclusivity.
- Publish the toolkit in the information library.
- Promote the toolkit to municipalities, developers, funders, and economic development organizations.

Benefits

Toolkits will provide guidance and examples for integrating TDM into infrastructure investments, land use policy, and parking decisions, expanding the adoption of TDM regionally in a cohesive and consensus-backed manner.

Implementation Roles

Lead: GVMC

Supporting Organizations as resources for informing the toolkit: Regional working group; MDOT; Michigan Association of Planning (MAP); Culturally specific business-serving organizations (e.g., Grand Rapids Black Chamber of Commerce, West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce); Local economic and community development departments; Local planning and zoning officials

Cost

\$40,000

Timeline

Planning: mid-2026

Implementation: mid 2027

Develop a regional webinar TDM training program for municipalities and offer regular training during the next five years. Municipal training would focus on integrating TDM into land use and parking policy.

A regional webinar training program will build on the TDM Toolkits and other active TDM programming, highlighting ways for municipalities and organizations to implement and manage TDM. The training curriculum could include introductory training followed by two to three deep dives on specific topics. Training should be offered at least once a year or more frequently, depending on the extent of the curriculum and the demand.

The training curriculum should be made available to municipalities and other organizations to be used internally to help inform land use and parking policy decisions.

Implementation Action Items

- Identify the most critical training needs and develop content. Ensure all webinar materials and resources are accessible to individuals with disabilities by providing closed captions, transcripts, and screen reader-friendly content. Offer technical support for participants who might need assistance accessing and navigating the online training platform.
- Identify initial demand for training and set a training schedule. Schedule webinars at varying times to accommodate participants' work schedules. Record webinars to further expand access.
- Promote the training. Develop an email distribution list of interested participants.
- Provide downloadable resources, toolkits, and materials from the webinars to ensure that municipalities can continue learning and implementing TDM strategies even after the live sessions.
- Track attendance, downloads, and feedback to revise training for future years.
- Document policy changes enacted by municipalities.

Benefits

Webinars can help municipalities and related stakeholders to understand the opportunities and benefits of applying TDM in their unique setting.

Builds capacity to implement TDM across the region.

Overcomes barriers to integrating TDM into infrastructure investments, land use policy, and parking decisions.

Implementation Roles

Lead:

GVMC – Develop curriculum and lead training

Assist with/inform training:
Regional working group
MDOT

Michigan Association of Planning (MAP)

Cost

Staff time or consultant
(\$20,000-\$25,000)

Timeline

Planning: mid-2026

Implementation: mid 2027

Objective. Build relationships with employer partners to maintain the trip reduction benefits of flexible work locations and hours.

Create a Targeted Employer Outreach Program for Downtown Employers.

Downtown Grand Rapids hosts numerous medical and university-affiliated employers, all experiencing similar transportation-related challenges. To create a targeted outreach strategy, it will be crucial for the West Michigan Rideshare team first to initiate direct dialogue with these employers to capture their up-to-date issues and create a program that resonates with their needs. It will also be an opportunity to showcase the updated brand, incentives, and new technologies. The result will be a key partnership between West Michigan Rideshare and downtown employers built on tailored strategies.

Based on initial interviews and a data review, two opportunities were identified to initiate a TDM strategy: maintaining hybrid work choices and increasing transit ridership by promoting The Rapid in-bulk ticket and pass purchase program to employers.

Hybrid work options encompass a flexible blend of remote and in-office work. The rise of hybrid models was initiated by the COVID-19 pandemic and showcased the positive elements of reduced commuting. To instill confidence in sustaining these strategies, which are pivotal in reducing traffic congestion and increasing employee satisfaction, the outreach team will need to furnish up-to-date research on employee retention, fairness considerations for in-office workers, real-world examples, and economic advantages associated with partial in-office work weeks.

Complementing the hybrid work strategies will be a campaign to return to (or try) transit on "in-office" workdays. The first strategy will be working with The Rapid on promoting the group purchase pass programs, which offer discounted tickets or passes to

Benefits

Builds relationships and strengthens partnerships with key downtown employers to implement TDM strategies.

Establishes TDM program credibility by showcasing success at notable employers.

Provides needed resources to maintain the trip reduction benefits of flexible work locations and hours.

Serves as a pilot location for a Try Transit program.

High return on staff time investment achieved through trip reduction in a dense activity area.

Implementation Roles

Lead: West Michigan Rideshare; City of Grand Rapids
Support: Downtown Area Development Authority/DGRI; Chamber of Commerce; The Right Place.

Cost

Staff time

Try Transit passes

Campaign marketing: \$5,000

employees within a single organization.

Complementing the updated pass program would be a time-bound, targeted Try Transit campaign to incentivize new transit riders around the Silver Line or Laker Line. Either line serves major employers downtown and along its corridors. This campaign would work with small and large employers in the corridor to distribute Try Transit passes to interested employees, conduct trip planning for employees, and hold events to promote the campaign and the transit line.

Timeline

Planning: mid-2024

Implementation: early 2026

Implementation Action Items

- Create a partnership framework for employers that showcases key areas of assistance for their employees, including but not limited to:
 - TDM Technology Platform
 - Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH)
 - Access to the Information Library, including resources that support hybrid work schedules
 - Employer pass program
 - Limited-time campaigns
- Meet with key employers to showcase the framework and tailor specific offerings based on their needs. Discuss opportunities for limiting travel demand through hybrid work and shift schedules.
- Plan and implement a limited-time, targeted Try Transit campaign with the goal of incentivizing new transit riders around Silver Line or Laker Line.
 - Advocate for subsidized transportation passes specifically for low-income employees, ensuring that cost is not a barrier to using public transit or alternative transportation modes. Develop policies that grant nonexempt employees access to reduced transit passes.
- Expand programming each year based on a needs assessment of partners. As partnerships are formed, identify champions and develop case studies of employers with effective and innovative programs. Use storytelling and showcase through regional spotlights (see marketing and communications plan).

Appendices

Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Discussion Group Summary

The project team conducted a series of small group and one-on-one discussions to help round out the existing conditions findings and complete our understanding of key transportation and TDM issues, opportunities, and resources. The following groups were engaged:

- Business District Representatives – July 21, 2022
- Employers without TDM – July 20-21, 2022
- Essential Needs Task Force – September 27, 2022
- The Rapid CAC – August 20, 2022

Key Findings Overview

Opportunities

- Better manage parking resources.
- Incentivize and reward people making sustainable travel choices.
- More targeted promotion and information about existing programs.

Challenges

- Stigma exists around alternative modes.
- Service and policy gaps, esp. in outlying areas.
- Safer walking environments needed to encourage mode shift.

Key Topics from each Group Type

Business District Representatives

Parking	Pedestrian, Biking, and Micro-mobility	Desired Policy and System Changes
Businesses concerned about lack of parking and paid parking limiting client base.	Pedestrian safety issues on congested streets	Engineering and design policies
Visitor parking on residential streets	Lack of street space allocated to non-motorized mobility options.	More transit system incentives, including discounted transit passes.
Empty, private parking lots		

Desire for better scooter management and education

Adjust approach for reducing traffic congestion.

Effectively communicate changes and educate the public throughout implementation

Employers without TDM

Ineffective Service

Lack of connections to employers at suburban commercial

Desire for increased connectivity to Downtown Grand Rapids to attract talent.

Low utilization of regional van pool program

Low utilization of Rapid flexible transit services

Employee Needs

Expanded transportation options.

Increased flexibility of transportation services

Increased reliability of transportation services

Increased connectivity to park-and-ride and expansion of carpooling possibilities

Employer Activities and Limitations

Past discussions to provide transportation incentive benefits (ultimately fell through)

Informational materials about transportation options already provided to employees during onboarding process.

Need for increased funding for incentive programs or pilot programs

Essential Needs Task Force

Education and Marketing challenges

Lack of coordination on information about available services

Lack of awareness of options and available discounts

Insufficient Services

Gaps in service and lack of service at night and on weekends

Lack of options for niche groups (e.g., high schoolers)

Desire for more micro-mobility service

Insufficient Funding and Resources

Desire for more DOT funding to increase services, particularly in rural areas.

Desire to increase fresh food access.

Need for more funding and resources to enhance reliability

The Rapid CAC

Education and Marketing challenges

Low ridership levels on public transportation

Stigma that public transportation is only for lower class residents; Need for rebranding.

Better information about services available

Insufficient Services

Lack of public transportation options in rural areas of the county

Better information provided at bus stops showing arrival times and location of services.

Lack of reliable options for non-seniors

System interoperability and coordination

Hope Transportation and Go! Bus providing similar services.

Improving ability to access system as a whole – across various services

Public Workshop/Online Engagement Summary

The public workshop held in January 2023 solicited feedback on initial draft strategies. The workshop was accompanied by an online engagement opportunity using the Social PinPoint platform. The table below summarizes the feedback and comments received by strategy type.

Love & Skeptical Like & Dislike		Communication and Marketing	
95%	5%	Strategy 1: Create a marketing/branding plan for TDM at the regional level	
		Ideas	Coordinate with neighboring MPO's Connect these marketing efforts to a usable and actionable TDM toolbox Emphasize idea transit is for everyone
		Groups to engage	Parents (through schools), library patrons
72%	28%	Strategy 2: Develop an award program to recognize excellence in TDM in the region	
		Awards/Incentives	Awards should be given to users/residents "Winner" should be defined as who moves the most people (v. cars) Incentives for new and continuing riders. Include in marketing efforts
88%	13%	Strategy 3: Solicit and publish the story of commuters who ride the bus, walk, bike or car/vanpool to their destinations	
		Critiques	Stories can become stale if content isn't updated Skeptical that stories influence behavioral change
		Ideas	Use stories and marketing for state-level advocacy campaigns Solicit stories from people like (1) EMT drivers (2) delivery van drivers (3) public transit bus drivers Emphasize idea transit is for everyone Use as a job creation tool
		Other	
		Educate	Educate about current options available Ridership has to start young Video tutorial on how to ride the bus Educate about infrastructure challenges in Michigan and other materials/options (bike lanes, sidewalks)

Love & Skeptical & Like & Dislike		Policy and Funding	
94%	6%	Strategy 1: Fund a dedicated staff person to assist with implementing regional TDM programs	
		Capacity	One person asked if capacity within existing staff. 2 ppl recommended multiple staff members/team
100%	0%	Strategy 2: Develop an award program to recognize excellence in TDM in the region	

		<p>Coordination Can this be folded into an existing group (like ENTF) and include people who are high users? work with high users, community members, not just those who are well-connected</p> <p>Case studies Consultant group should provide examples of other regions who have successfully made this journey</p>
92%	8%	Strategy 3: Develop a competitive grant program to fund TDM initiatives that supplement the regional program
		<p>Ideas Could fit in with recent state and federal initiatives Offer pilot and on-going funding to support new initiatives owned/run by ppl of color and/or low income</p> <p>Skeptics Two skeptical comments about how TDM initiatives should not be left up to other entities</p>
100%	0%	Strategy 4: Develop TDM performance criteria for MPO sponsored plans, projects, and programs starting in the 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program
		<p>Criteria criteria should include VMT reduction, increase in transit mode share, cycling Use stakeholders to develop criteria (transit users, public officials, business owners, etc.)</p>
79%	21%	Strategy 5: Require annual work programs to be reviewed/approved by regional working group
		<p>Review Review process should include representatives of neighboring MPO's</p>
86%	14%	Strategy 6: Conduct a TDM strategy review prior to any roadway capacity project
		<p>Review process priorities Dedicated lanes for buses! Consider needs of all users and impact on accessibility issues, especially ppl with visual impairments Use existing processes, +1 Could work if review is done in seamless way within current process</p> <p>Skeptics Needs real implications</p>
		Other
		<p>Thoughts Utilize small businesses and remove more barriers, LLCs not just non-profits GVMC should provide accurate and updated data Equity and economic development missing Tax based on vehicle size, with a mechanism to account for family size Eliminate fares on Rapid, not understanding how fare works is a huge barrier</p> <p>Policy Ideas Keep fares, but increase bus service frequency and extension of service hours Eliminate parking minimums, +2 Mixed use zoning and greater density in general Require major employers and large properties to do TDM for employees/tenants, require employers who provide free parking to provide alternative incentives equal to value of space</p>

Bike facility quotas
 more funding for disabled/dependent population options
 Increase millage
 Unified State Government Support (1) facilitating urban development patterns (2) mileage-based users (3) comprehensive transportation services (4) transportation services enabling act (5) TDM pilot for MPO limited access roads

Love & Like	Skeptical & Dislike	Technical Assistance and Resources	
100%	0%	Strategy 1: Develop a regional webinar TDM training program for employers and offer regular trainings during the next five years	
		Ideas	Also include other groups (other than employers) that use vanpooling (churches, block clubs, etc.)
92%	8%	Strategy 2: Develop a regional webinar TDM training program for municipalities and offer regular trainings during the next five years	
		More than just training!	Not just training - encourage/"sell" TDM to employers and residents Not just training - Should offer clear best practices to encourage policies for TOD, zoning, parking, housing, etc. (strategies that impact utilization patterns) Also incorporate into in-person transportation conferences (ex: Transportation Bonanza)
100%	0%	Strategy 3: Develop and publish a TDM toolkit for municipalities, developers and funders with the best policy practices (parking, development guidelines, etc.)	
		Policy Practice recommendations	Large minimum lot sizes are a TDM barrier Minimum parking requirements
		Ideas	AND highlight barriers and how to remove them
		Collaboration	Share with Michigan Township Association/MAP/Michigan Municipal League (even if West MI focus)
62%	38%	Strategy 4: Develop a remote/hybrid work/flex work guide for employers	
		Potential Partners	Steelcase, Miller/Knoll
100%	0%	Strategy 5: Conduct a regional commute survey every two years	
		Thoughts	Reach the broadest possible population Frequently update strategies based on survey results Think about what will be gained from survey when developing
100%	0%	Strategy 6: Explore an equity pass/mobility wallet that could combine a transit pass, bike- and e-scooter share, and Uber/Lyft/taxi credits giving people many choices to get around	
		Ideas	Try to work with Amtrak, rideshare companies, etc. on this Should be simple and affordable
89%	11%	Strategy 7: Develop a regional park-and-ride program that focuses on information, communication, and expansion	
		Thoughts	Should be at neighborhood level and include broader information so residents can utilize

Focus on commuters
 May need to require people to pay
 How to ensure park-and-ride only used for carpooling/getting on bus?

Love & Like	Skeptical & Dislike	Direct Services, Programs, Partnerships	
92%	8%	Strategy 1: Provide additional funding for vanpools and explore ways to make vanpooling easier for participants to start or maintain	
95%	5%	Strategy 2: Focus employer strategies on downtown institutions that have good access to transportation options	
		Ideas	Identify high-volume nodes in surrounding areas
		Thoughts	Need solutions for Downtown employees that use downtown as a starting point each day but that daily schedules takes them in and out of the downtown/City
100%	0%	Strategy 3: Create an airport industrial district pilot program	
		Ideas	Expand upon the RAPID's On Demand Service in Kentwood Combine with more frequent timing for GRR Routes Leverage 44th Street bus to connect airport to silver line Study rail transit from the airport to downtown Leverage employer participation, promotion and financial support
100%	0%	Strategy 4: Implement school-based strategies that build on Safe Routes to School and existing Grand Rapid Public Schools programs	
		Ideas	Consider involving other school districts and colleges (GRCC, Aquinas, GVSU, etc.) Safety should include 25mph or less and protected/separated bikeways
97%	3%	Strategy 5: Pilot a year-long resident-focused Try Transit program	
		Ideas	Document effort to tell story of trial and error, and obstacles overcome and share out Offer free-fare periods whenever frequency is improved on a bus route Pair with strategy 6 Sell good routes to non-frequent riders (need to improve non-accessible low frequency routes first)
96%	4%	Strategy 6: TDM strategy around existing and future regional BRT / express bus service, including the W. Michigan Express	
		Coordination	Requires communication and coordination with surrounding MPOs and area employers
		Ideas	Find ways to use existing capacity Implement signal priority for BRT Skeptical because BRT/WMX will fail without policy change (like getting rid of parking mins, encouraging density)
100%	0%	Strategy 7: Optimize and expand the regional TDM program West MI Ride share with a better technology platform and additional commuter resources	

		Coordination	Look to Walker - good example of employer partnerships with new on-demand service
		Need	ACCESSIBLE technology
92%	8%	Strategy 8: Target visitors & event attendees by providing information on transportation options & removing barriers to using transit	
		Ideas	Utilize DASH, educate about DASH Make WAVE card easier to obtain for new riders and allow people to pay for friends on their card Incentivize convention groups to plan with transit options in mind (ex: offer excursions using transit)
		Other	
		Ideas	At-time-of-purchase rebates of electric bikes with higher rebates for folks with lower incomes Premium parking spot locations downtown for people who carpool Comments about improving bus service Congestion surcharge pricing on high-demand / urban sections of expressways Explore removal/replacement of urban expressways to reduce barriers and make space for transit projects/non-motorized transportation
		Coordination	Better connections between airport, downtown, medical mile Partner with neighborhood groups and have commuter cycling workshops, bus-riding events Strengthen partnerships between GR DDA, Grand Action 2.0 (and CCA), and other economic development orgs

Draft Plan Comment Summary

The draft plan was distributed and posted on Social PinPoint to gather feedback from stakeholders and the public. Reviewers were asked if the plan meets the project objectives, whether the plan inspired them to get involved and take action, and to share any additional comments they have.

Does this plan meet the project objectives?

Objective 2 doesn't even make any mention of defined transit expansion projects, beyond the vague gesture towards vanpooling services. West Michigan has serious unmet needs in terms of transit, GVMC should be able to at least broadly identify some larger projects for future study/funding, and incorporate these as recommendations in the TDM. To not do so would be a serious missed opportunity. Also, why are park-and-ride lots included as a strategy for helping people get around without a car???

Plan focuses too much on helping people who can't have a car live and work as if they do, not on helping all people not want or need a car. Suggest better separated bike infra, sidewalk improvements on car-centric roads like Beltline/Plainfield/Alpine/28th, driver education about sharing the road with bikes as all more sustainable than subsidizing a van ride in an ICE vehicle. Subsidized 6000 lbs van with one driver and a passenger or two isn't an SOV but is less sustainable than a 15 lbs bike!

The plan is ambitious but how will it be feasible to pay for it? Create as much transit as you want but from where are you gathering the funding? Are you going to be dependent on government interaction? There has to be a need and those in need actually willing to use the transit services. You can't create a utopia transit system and then expect people who were not using transit to suddenly use it because you provided the option. If it's not driveway to workplace, it won't catch on. Convenience.

Not enough here about making biking and walking safer, easier, and more pleasant. I don't see a way to "like" others' comments, but would like this one if I could figure out how to do so: "Plan focuses too much on helping people who can't have a car live and work as if they do, not on helping all people not want or need a car..."

Adding park-n-ride lots doesn't really help people who don't have cars. We need more bus routes, more frequent bus routes, and protected, safe bike and pedestrian infrastructure.

It would be great to have some sort of public transit into grand rapids along the 131 corridor. Perhaps picking up at the park and share lots located by the exits. I'd certainly like an option to go into GR for a day and leave my car behind. I'd be happy to see light rail replace automobiles (not likely, but they do have it in Japan and Europe)

Did something in the plan inspire you to get involved and take action?

Already working on it! Biked to work more than 90 times since May. But I'm fortunate to have the fitness to do that and a route that supports it, and to be young and male to handle the handful of bad actors getting trash thrown at me, cursed at for inconveniencing drivers, dusted by diesel "coal rollers" with illegal tuners, forced off the road... Hoping to do my part to shift the Overton window just a little so that I can eventually be joined by less crazy, less devoted bike commuters.

I will fight this plan if the plan cannot succeed on its own. You cannot expect everyone to subsidize this. Would the people who run this entity even use it? I have a car because it brings me from my driveway to my work faster than transit options. I do not have to get earlier. Some days I am on the road at 415am. Will there be one specific transit option solely for me? I bet not.

I can't speak to how this plan is for an employer, but as a regular person who regularly uses my bike to get around--and tries mightily to convince others to try it as well--this plan is very, very uninspiring.

The plan doesn't have any meaningful steps toward increasing transit/micromobility modeshare. It would not impact my life significantly, getting around without a car will be just as painful and difficult as it is now without large scale improvements to transit/cycleways, which are not included in the report. If the plan goes forward as drafted, my involvement will consist of moving away to a different locality where carfree residents are not treated as second-class citizens.

I already live car-free and bike, walk, and take transit when I need to get somewhere. This plan won't really help me not get hit by cars in existing unprotected bike infrastructure, and it won't make the bus run more frequently. These are the two biggest hurdles to making living car-free more feasible for more households.

What other feedback do you have?

Don't forget about Rockford please! Algoma Township could use a LOT more bike-lanes on its (rural narrow) roads than what there are right now (i.e. almost none) - please get us some funding for that!

Please ensure that funding does not become a burden to home owners. Home owners should not be the only funding source. Home owners pay many additional dedicated taxes local and county wide.

I'm pleased to see that the plan includes e-bikes and e-scooters, that new tech will open up new types of transit. But the plan calls them non-motorized even though they have electric motors - it needs a new taxonomy. It is also critical to address early whether or not these vehicles should be allowed on non-motorized trails! I personally don't use a motor, but I'm happy to share the trails with non-car for people who can't or won't walk or bike as far as enthusiasts.

Make it work without penalizing the people who do not need transit options or would not use it.

I don't understand why park-and-ride lots are included as a strategy for helping residents get around without a car. What are we supposed to be parking there?

None of this plan will be any of use without some kind of measure to control sprawl / an urban growth boundary. Mindless highway expansions like M-37 are huge subsidies to greenfield development, and there needs to be a counteracting force to encourage more focus on areas with preexisting infrastructure.

I apologize I did not review the entire plan. I would like to comment that I wish there was a way I could park somewhere in Rockford and take direct public transportation to downtown GR Medical Mile/LHCP. I would love either a direct bus or some kind of tram/train situation. I've lived in many cities throughout the US and the world (Washington DC, Lisbon, Charlotte) and always appreciated EFFICIENT public transportation as I would much rather be able to read or nap or email during my commute.

Please just stop designing for sprawl (adding park-n-ride lots) and start building a functional regional transit system. This means adding more routes (not just funnel everything through downtown GR) and prioritize sustainable transit modes over private vehicles. Build the protected bike infrastructure and address pedestrian safety. Make the bus run so frequently that you don't need to look at a timetable.

General Comments

I applaud this idea of demand management but I still think the area roadways are generally WAY behind where they need to be let alone planning ahead for growth or possible disruptions to traveling. Much of the metro area still has 2 lane freeways with left lane exits, there has been very little expansion lane wise or exit wise since they were implemented a half century ago. That seems like the logical priority. Then coupling with this study, my thoughts here would be to increase connections to other modes of transportation. The airport specifically could be an opportunity to not only increase direct accessibility for cars such as directly to I-96 but for other modes of transportation such as public transportation and possibly even bikes. There seems to be opportunity to increase passenger rail service for transportation and also better connect bike trail networks but that would be more for leisure. Bringing back a trolley system in the urban area, a light rail system and also utilizing the river via dredging to have access to Lake Michigan may be outside the scope here but "Grand ideas" that would really put the metro area on the map for innovation and progress.

I would add Objective 5, Apply to the State Transportation Commission to adopt:

Model Commission Policy on Transportation Demand Management Programs for Highway Facilities. This policy shall known as the Commission Policy On Transportation Demand Programs for Highway Facilities.

Findings:

a. Transportation demand management (TDM) is management of a transportation system by managing demand for highway capacity for motor vehicles with tires by means other than constructing new highway capacity, including programs for reducing or redirecting demand for highway vehicle capacity. Transportation demand management increases the efficiency of the state transportation system of highway facilities and reduces demand for highway capacity for motor vehicles using tires or redistributes this demand in space or in time. A transportation demand management fee is a fee charged for the purpose of managing demand for highway capacity for motor vehicles using tires. A congestion management fee is a demand management fee applied for the purpose of managing congestion. A demand or congestion management fee may be a mileage based user fee.

c. The transportation commission has the power and the duty under Section 28 Article 5 of the state constitution and article 7 of the State Transportation Commission Act of 1964 to establish transportation policy for department programs and facilities, including transportation demand management programs with regard to the use of highway facilities.

c. Under the current system of raising transportation revenue by fuel, registration and general taxes, the demand for highway capacity for motor vehicles will always grow to exceed the amount of highway capacity that can be constructed while maintaining a healthy balance between the transportation system and the human, natural, built and economic environments. This phenomenon is well known and described in the literature as induced demand. Further, since existing system preservation is only funded to about one third of good repair expense, maintaining any new construction only exacerbates the problem of chronic under funding of preservation and maintenance of the existing highway system.

d. Congestion expense is the expense to the state economy caused by congestion in the transportation system. National Transportation Research Nonprofit calculates the congestion expense to system users in Michigan is on the order of six billion per year.

e. A program for mileage based user fees on state trunkline limited access highways is feasible. See Michigan Statewide Tolling Feasibility Study (2023)

g. Comprehensive transportation includes the movement of people or goods, and reasonable appurtenances thereto, other than by means of personal motor vehicles using tires and other than movement of goods by commercial motor vehicles using tires. Comprehensive transportation includes non-motorized transportation. Comprehensive transportation oriented development is a reasonable appurtenance to comprehensive transportation.

Policy Direction to the Department

The Department shall prepare and recommend to the commission feasible transportation demand management programs for managing demand for highway vehicle capacity for motor vehicles using tires. The programs shall address capacity demands for commercial and personal vehicles and for limited access highway capacity. The programs shall be based on the following policies established by the commissions.

(1) Transportation demand management, congestion management, and transportation demand and congestion management fees are transportation purposes and comprehensive transportation

purposes.

(2) To the extent feasible, congestion expenses on the state trunkline system shall be mitigated by transportation demand management, including mileage based demand and congestion management fees. A per mile demand and congestion management rate shall be based on the amount necessary to manage demand and congestion.

(3) Proceeds of demand and congestion management fees shall be used for comprehensive transportation purposes.