

WESTERN WASHTENAW REGIONAL COORDINATION TRANSIT STUDY

The Washtenaw Area Transportation Study is conducting a study to determine how to merge the services of the Western Washtenaw Area Value Express (WWAVE) and the transit service provided by the Manchester Area Senior Citizens Council (MASCC). The Agency will be focusing the study on the eight western Townships of Washtenaw County including Lyndon, Dexter, Sylvan, Lima, Sharon, Freedom, Manchester, and Bridgewater, the City of Chelsea and the Villages of Dexter and Manchester. The outcome of this study will be an analysis of the existing transit service as well as the identification of the unmet need for public transit in western Washtenaw County. The study will focus on how to better serve senior citizens that live within western Washtenaw County. Many seniors rely on the current transit service provided by the WWAVE and MASCC to meet their every day needs, such as trips for medical appointments, to the pharmacy, shopping, and social gatherings.

The WAVE Community Connector is a fixed route transit service, carrying 4,353 trips in 2004, that runs from the City of Chelsea to the Village of Dexter and connects with AATA at the western edge of the City of Ann Arbor, with eleven stops each way. The Western Washtenaw Area Value Express provided 12,967 trips in the fiscal year of 2004. Of the total trips the WWAVE provided in fiscal year 2004, 57% were from Sylvan Township, 20% from the City of Ann Arbor, 13% from Lima Township and 9% from the Village of Dexter. The WWAVE also operates a door-to-door shared bus service that runs Monday through Friday 8:15 am to 4:15 pm in and around the City of Chelsea on an on call basis. The MASCC provides an on-demand service to senior citizens living in the Village of Manchester and the surrounding area. MASCC provided transportation service to 2,673 seniors and 449 seniors with disabilities; while the MASCC vehicle traveled more than 6,500 miles from October 2003 to October 2004. The MASCC will take seniors to the cities of Chelsea, Saline, Clinton, Tecumseh, Ann Arbor, Jackson, Ypsilanti, and farther in order to meet their everyday needs.

In December 2005, a steering committee was developed to help guide the study process. WATS will be completing the Western Washtenaw Regional Coordination Transit Study in mid to late March of 2006.

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THE VEHICLE

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THE VEHICLE

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SAFETEA-LU FUNDING AND REQUIREMENTS UPDATE

U.S. President George Bush signed the \$286.4 billion six-year transportation reauthorization bill the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) on Aug. 10, 2005. The details of the reauthorization package are becoming clearer daily; SAFETEA-LU authorizes Michigan an annual increase of \$239 million compared to the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), or more than \$1.123 billion annually to fund transportation projects. Unfortunately it appears that much of the funding increase will come in the form of earmarks and the funding available for improvements that have been identified through the planning process will be less. In addition to these highway funds, Michigan transit will receive approximately \$750 million over five years.



There will be an improvement in Michigan's donor state status through an increase in the minimum return of highway funds from 90.5% of apportioned highway funding to 92% in 2008. Michigan's share of federal highway funds will increase gradually from 90.5% to 91.5% in 2007, and 92% in 2008 and 2009. A rate of return at 92%, however, is the new minimum of return. There also are 8 local earmarked projects that are within or impact Washtenaw County; including the Ann Arbor to Detroit rapid transit project. In addition to funding changes there will be many changes in the process of operations and deadlines of WATS' activities. Below are some of these changes:

- ◆ TEA-21 had 5 core programs within the legislation, in SAFETEA-LU there are now 6 core programs. Safety has been removed from the Surface Transportation Program and made a core program. The legislation also requires that each State have a Strategic Highway Safety Plan and its goals and objectives must be included in each State's and MPO's plans
- ◆ Metropolitan transportation plans must be updated at least every four years in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas. Washtenaw County is a non-attainment area. The previous legislation stated that transportation plans had to be updated every three years in non-attainment areas. If attainment status can be reached, the requirement changes to every five years.
- ◆ The TIP process, which in the past was updated every 2 years with a 3 year scope, now will be updated at least every 4 years with a 4 year scope.
- ◆ A "Safe Routes to School" program has been added where each state will be allotted a minimum of \$1 million to hire at least one full-time statewide safety coordinator and provide funding to applicable projects. The State of Michigan will receive slightly more than \$3 million.
- ◆ The Borders & Corridors programs have been separated and the Borders program has been limited to improvements within 100 miles of a national border with Canada or Mexico.
- ◆ The new legislation will require the long range transportation plans to consider environmental resources, identify possible ways to protect and mitigate affects on them.
- ◆ The legislation also requires a Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Plan be developed that covers the entire planning area. This plan is a requirement for eligibility for 5310, 5316(g) and 5317(f) transit formula funding.



Please contact WATS at wats@miwats.org or (734) 994-3127 if more information is needed.

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NEW DIXBORO BRIDGE OPEN TO TRAFFIC

On December 2, 2005 the Washtenaw County Road Commission held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Dixboro Bridge. The bridge spans the Huron River, the Norfolk Southern Railroad and the City of Ann Arbor's Water Treatment Facility. The ribbon cutting ceremony represented the culmination of 15 years of work by the Washtenaw County Road Commission.



The process began in 1990 when the Road Commission applied for Critical Bridge Program funding through the Michigan Department of Transportation. An Environmental Assessment (EA) began in 1997, which identified the preferred location for the new bridge. Years of preliminary engineering and pre-construction work followed before the construction phase of the bridge began in February 2004.



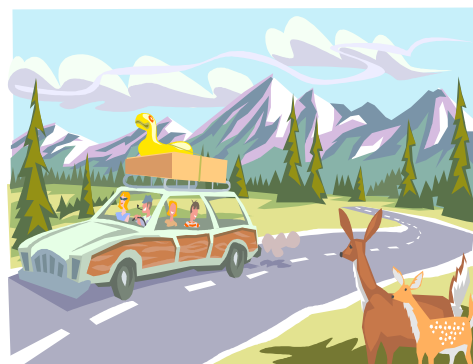
The \$11.5 million dollar 580 foot span represents the largest single phase project the Washtenaw County Road Commission has ever undertaken. In addition to its larger scale, the bridge also incorporates several features that will make the area much safer for all who traverse it. The elimination of an at-grade crossing with the Norfolk Southern Rail line will eliminate car-train crashes.

The addition of non-motorized facilities to the new bridge makes it a useable crossing for all modes of transportation, including walkers and bikers. The four-lane cross section will allow a free flow of traffic as opposed to the old two-lane bridge, which had fallen into disrepair.

The pictures (above right) show the new Dixboro Road bridge as well as the ribbon cutting ceremony.

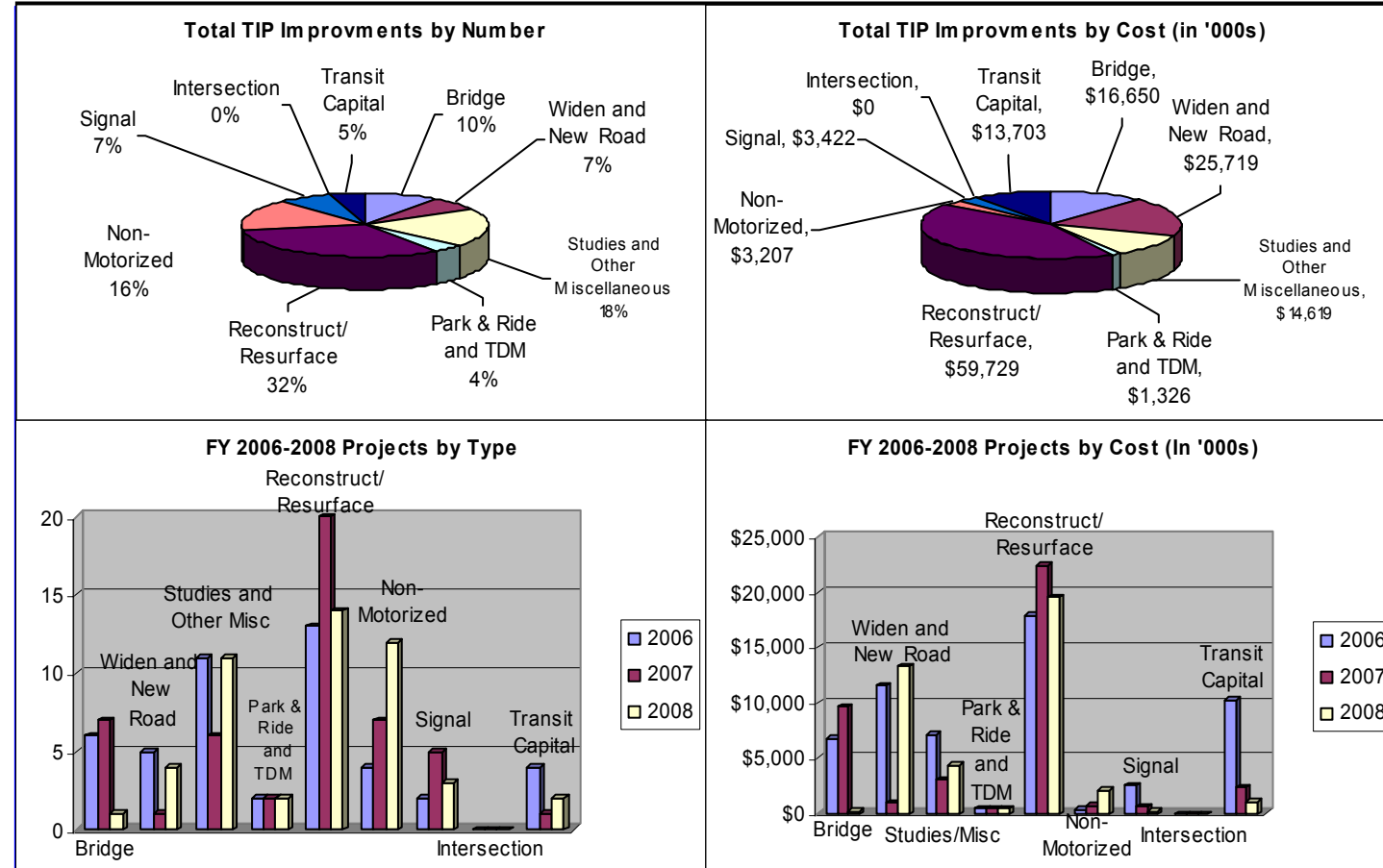
DON'T VEER FOR DEER

The State of Michigan is home to an estimated 1.75 million deer. Unfortunately, with such a high population of deer, inevitably there are a large number of car crashes that involve deer. Over the past ten years (1995-2004) there were more than 60,000 car-deer crashes each year. With each crash costing an average of about \$2,000 that adds up to more than \$120 million a year in property damage. The Michigan Deer Crash Coalition (www.semcog.org/tranplan/trafficsafety/mdcc) is sponsoring a campaign to increase awareness of car-deer crashes as well as publicize ways you can reduce your risk of being injured or killed in a car-deer crash. The slogan for this campaign is "Don't Veer for Deer".



Most injuries and deaths involving car-deer crashes are caused by fixed objects such as a tree, telephone poll or other vehicle that a driver hits when trying to avoid hitting a deer. While no one wants to see a deer die in a car crash, continuing in a straight path while attempting to stop is the safest way to handle these events. Car-deer crashes occur most often on rural roads with high speeds; active deer populations and time of day fluctuations can add to the likelihood of crashes. While not all car-deer crashes can be avoided, remember "Don't Veer for Deer".

... see *Deer* page 3



FY 2006 –2008 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM CHART CORRECTION

Information on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) was included in the previous newsletter. However, an error was made in the formation of the charts. The transit operating cost was included in the charts when it should not have been as road operating costs are not included. Transit Operating projects are included in the 2006-2008 TIP projects so that they may receive federal funding but are not included in the charts because they are not a capital cost. Above are the corrected FY 2006-2008 TIP charts updated from the October 2005 newsletter.

Deer from page 2...

Here are some tips from the Michigan Deer Crash Coalition to help you avoid a car-deer crash:

- Stay awake, alert and sober.
- Always wear your safety belt.
- Be especially alert in spring and fall, but keep in mind that car-deer crashes occur year-round.
- Heed deer crossing and speed limit signs.
- If you see a deer crossing the road, chances are there are more waiting. If you see one, slow down.
- Be especially alert for deer at dawn and dusk.
- Don't rely on gimmicks, flashing your high-beam headlights or honking your horn to deter deer.

