

WINTER 2017

Semscope

A quarterly publication of SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments

A photograph of a city street scene. In the foreground, there are green bushes and a small evergreen tree. In the middle ground, three flagpoles stand tall, flying the United States flag, the Michigan state flag, and a blue flag with a yellow emblem. To the left, there is a brick building with a sign that says "The Roof" and a "Hockey Town" sign. In the background, there are more buildings, a stadium, and a construction crane under a cloudy sky.

2017-2018 LEGISLATIVE POLICY PLATFORM

SEMCOG MOVES FORWARD

SEMCOG

SEMCOG

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Cover photo:

At the beginning of each Congressional session, SEMCOG develops a legislative policy platform for federal and state advocacy purposes. That document is contained in this issue of Semscope. The flags in this photo represent the federal, state, and international policies in the platform. The photo was taken on Woodward Avenue in Detroit looking north from downtown, and includes a look at construction of Little Caesars Arena on February 6, 2017.

Preparation of this document was financed in part through grants from and in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation with the assistance of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and local member dues.

Please direct any questions about this publication to Sue Stetler, 313-324-3428 or stetler@semco.org

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Rodrick Green
SEMCOG Chairperson
*Trustee, Superior
Charter Township*

A new beginning

Greetings! As we venture forth into a new year, we are embarking on what is clearly a new beginning. A new administration in Washington, new legislators in Lansing, even new leaders locally, means that we have a unique opportunity in our midst – to craft a new direction for our region, our state, and our nation.

A great civil rights leader and politician, Andrew Young, once remarked, “I’d rather light a candle than curse the darkness.” While others may lament the recent turn of events, we can seize the opportunity it presents and come together as a community to demonstrate the power of partnerships. Now more than ever, regionalism is not just an ideal. It’s a necessity. Communities must come to grips with shrinking dollars and shifting populations to think outside of the box. We must tap into the resources that have made Michigan a great state – great universities, great cities, and a great workforce determined to find its place in a changing world. Situated on an international border and stretching forth to key points in the Midwest, Michigan is a major player in the progress of America. A changing automotive world, new and exciting technologies, and great innovations position Southeast Michigan uniquely to take advantage of this new beginning (see information on SEMCOG’s Reimagining Transportation: Transforming Southeast Michigan summit on page 17). I believe we are on the threshold of a new era of greatness, but it can only be achieved by local communities partnering and working together for the greater good.

We face a great challenge. We must and will provide a regional transit system that enhances our mobility and speeds the movement of people and products. We must and will protect our waterways and environment in a way that enhances and promotes Southeast Michigan as a great place to live, work, and play. We must and will provide the leadership, locally, regionally, and nationally, that reminds the nation that Michigan is still the engine that drives our economy and the heartbeat of the heartland of America.

Are you ready? Are you ready for a new beginning? Are you ready to take charge and join hands in these changing times? I believe we are and that together, we can do great things! At SEMCOG, we’re ready for a new beginning and a great year!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodrick K. Green". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Talking infrastructure



(From l-r) John Walsh, former State Representative from Livonia, now Governor Snyder's Director of Strategy, Kirk Steudle, Director of the Michigan Department of Transportation, Evan Pratt, Water Resources Commissioner for Washtenaw County, and Robert Daddow, Deputy Oakland County Executive

The release of recommendations from Governor Rick Snyder's 21st Century Infrastructure Commission precipitated an important initial discussion at SEMCOG's January Executive Committee meeting between local leaders and members of the commission.

In her introductory remarks, Executive Director Kathleen Lomako acknowledged SEMCOG's long history of working on infrastructure issues, noting that quality infrastructure is the foundation of a healthy, prosperous Southeast Michigan. She also emphasized the importance of looking at infrastructure holistically, stressing that having quality infrastructure means we need to invest more, collect data to invest wisely, and ensure coordination among public and private infrastructure providers to reduce costs and disruption to the public.

SEMCOG provided data and information to the infrastructure commission, along with our experience with transportation asset management. We discussed how this approach of gathering data is effective in strategically and efficiently managing infrastructure systems.

The panelists participating in the Executive Committee discussion were all members of the 21st Century Infrastructure Commission, all with roots in Southeast Michigan. Here are some of the highlights of the discussion.

John Walsh, Governor Snyder's Director of Strategy, former State Representative from Livonia: Noted that while the infrastructure challenge is nationwide, this report is the only one of its kind in the nation. With 100 recommendations, the report looks at strengths and weaknesses; seeks a collaborative approach from all agencies, starting with a pilot test of an integrated asset management system; creates the Michigan Infrastructure Council as a permanent resource; and establishes a \$4 billion annual price tag to move forward.

Kirk Steudle, Director of the Michigan Department of Transportation: Among the transportation-related recommendations in the report, Steudle cited intelligent vehicle technology and allowing its testing and operation in Southeast Michigan; upgrading transit through consistent funding sources; creating an asset management plan for airports; improving regional nonmotorized connectivity; building a second Soo Lock; rightsizing infrastructure; and establishing local revenue options (e.g., user fees, tolling).

Evan Pratt, Water Resources Commissioner for Washtenaw County: Succinctly stated that nothing else you own is worth more than infrastructure; if you're not investing 4-5 percent per year in infrastructure improvements, you're underinvesting. Noted the benefits of consolidation and the savings gained from using asset management principles. Advocated for collaborative watershed management and use of green infrastructure.

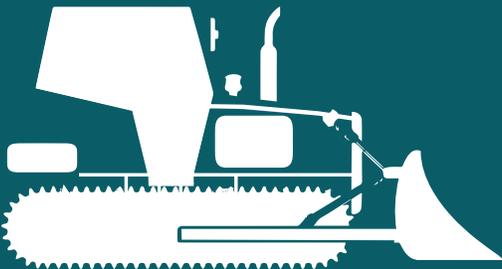
Robert Daddow, Deputy Oakland County Executive: Focused on the funding recommendations of the report, noting that the \$4 billion annual need is over and above what is currently being spent on infrastructure. Cited competing needs and political will as obstacles. Saying, "Government is not cheap and services are not free," Daddow emphasized that leaders must convince citizens that investing in government is an investment in themselves. Forming the Michigan Infrastructure Council and getting a better idea of the numbers through an asset management database are the first important steps to moving forward.

Next page: See SEMCOG advocacy positions on Infrastructure in its 2017-2018 Legislative Policy Platform.

SEMCOG Legislative Policy Platform

The following recommendations reflect needed changes to federal and state policy that are foundational to health and economic prosperity in Southeast Michigan. Many are derived from SEMCOG's plans and policies that are geared toward providing, on a sustainable basis, an efficient local governance structure that is transparent and trusted, a high-quality public infrastructure and healthy natural environment, a skilled workforce, an enhanced quality of life, and improved economic vitality for our region. This platform was informed by a task force of SEMCOG members and approved by SEMCOG's Executive Committee.

Infrastructure



Michigan must do a better job of investing in its infrastructure needs. The foundation of all economic development starts with basic infrastructure. In 2015, the state made significant progress in funding our transportation system, but only half of the funds come from a guaranteed source. The federal government has also made a major commitment to our transportation system with the FAST Act.

While our transportation system is the most visible, there are other infrastructure needs in both the public and private domain that are also critical to our economic future and even more importantly, to our health. Sewer, water, and stormwater systems go unnoticed by the public until a problem occurs. The availability of electricity is simply assumed by all. These infrastructure systems must be financially supported to ensure continued operations.

General Provisions

- Encourage more data-driven funding decisions through use of asset management principles and support better integration of roadway improvements with other underground infrastructure projects. **SF**
- Encourage/reward asset management and provide incentives for maintaining existing infrastructure, especially in distribution of grant funds. **SF**
- Support development of comprehensive coordinated data systems through GIS and other means that document the location and condition of all underground infrastructures in order to facilitate strategic investment decisions. **SF**
- Support flexibility in the use of state and federal funds so that regional and local needs are better addressed. **SF**
- Emphasize the needs of older areas that have deteriorating road and bridge infrastructure. **SF**
- Oppose proposals that would require local governments to pay for relocation costs of private utility facilities located within the public road easement area. **SF**
- Continue to recognize the significant leadership role of local elected officials in the infrastructure planning process. **SF**

“What government service can be more important than helping a person find a job?”

— **Brenda Jones**, President, Detroit City Council;
 Chairperson, Legislative Policy Task Force

“As hard as it was to get recognition that more money was needed for roads, imagine how hard it will be to get approval for more funding for the infrastructure that we don’t see.”

– **Don Hubler**, Secretary, Board of Education, Macomb Intermediate School District

Transportation

- Ensure General Fund revenue contained in the 2015 state transportation package is appropriated as promised. **S**
- Support efforts to move away from a fuel consumption tax as the basis of funding our transportation system. **SF**
- Work with the governor, legislature, and owners of the transportation system to review Act 51 to ensure existing transportation funds are allocated in the best possible manner. **S**
- Support transportation funding that is formula-based and minimizes discretionary funding programs. **SF**
- Support efforts to make Michigan the leader in implementing Intelligent Transportation Systems. **SF**
- Support implementation of the Gordie Howe International Bridge and funding for the customs plaza at the Blue Water Bridge. **SFI**

- Support multi-modal transportation programs. **SF**
- Support a regional transit system that safely and efficiently transports people from where they are to where they need to go. **SF**
- Support efforts to improve traffic safety, especially those programs emphasizing interactions involving pedestrians and bicyclists. **SF**

Water/Sewer/Stormwater

- Seek a legislative solution to fund stormwater system construction, improvements, and operations now that the state Supreme Court has ruled that a fee-based funding mechanism cannot be used for this type of infrastructure. **S**
- Increase grant funding for improving municipal wastewater treatment and water supply. **SF**
- In order to minimize flooding of roadways and adjacent neighborhoods, require engineering studies on the impact that major roads have on neighborhood stormwater systems. **SF**
- Support increased resources for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) and the Sewer Revolving Fund (SRF). **SF**

Energy

- Support plans to ensure that Michigan has a reliable source of electrical power that is clean, affordable, and able to meet all projected future needs. **SF**



“With the increasing availability of diverse energy platforms and need for reliable power, it is critically important for our state to have approved policy that addresses future energy needs.”

– **Robert Clark**, Mayor, City of Monroe

Environment



One of Michigan's chief assets is its natural surroundings. To enhance the quality of life in Southeast Michigan, it is important to protect and promote the region's wide variety of environmental assets. Being responsible stewards of these assets, while balancing the needs of the business community, is key to achieving economic prosperity and creating desirable communities throughout the region.



Environment

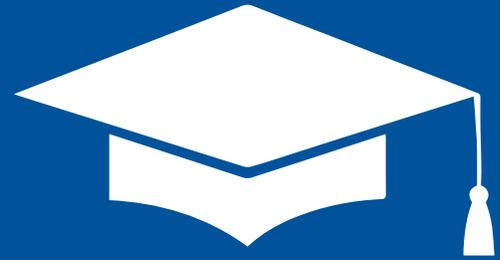
- Ensure that proposed regulations by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the State of Michigan balance environmental protection with economic sustainability especially in areas such as ozone, carbon dioxide emissions from power plants, and definitions of navigable waters under the Clean Water Act. **SF**
- Support locally developed strategies to attain and maintain national air quality standards based on sound data. **F**
- Provide financial assistance to prevent, control, and eradicate invasive species threats to the Great Lakes, including Asian carp, phragmites, and ballast water discharges, recognizing that this will require collaboration with other states as well as with Canada. **SFI**
- Minimize the potential impacts of oil and gas extraction and distribution to our water resources through additional local government oversight as well as enhanced coordination and collaboration between local, county, regional, and state agencies. This includes siting new facilities, ensuring transparency of the operation, validating safety of the operation and distribution network, and verifying adequate emergency response preparedness. **SF**
- Support ongoing grant programs, such as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which focuses funding on habitat restoration, invasive species management, and stormwater mitigation. **F**
- Ensure efforts to manage nutrients in the Great Lakes focus on their primary source and are not overly burdensome to local governments. **SF**
- Develop policies and programs that address environmental health issues in older urban areas. **SF**
- Support the streamlining of environmental processes, and adequately staff governmental regulatory agencies to ensure timely review and approvals. **SF**
- Support the Natural Resource Trust Fund's continued prioritization of acquiring and developing parks in areas easily accessible to the state's major population centers. **S**

“Encouraging integration of family social services in public schools will bring more success to at-risk students.”

– **Theresa Rich, Ph.D.**, President, Oakland Schools
Board of Education

Education & Workforce

- Provide and maintain stable, adequate, and equitable funding for all levels of public education, including early childhood education, K-12, community colleges, and higher education. **S**
- Support development of soft skills in the K-12 setting. These are the basic skills and personal behaviors that enable workplace success. **S**
- Support programs for adult literacy and training for displaced workers that lead to workplace success. **SF**
- Develop formal, incremental, and robust career guidance systems in K-12 to assist students in identifying their aptitudes, interests, and skills for future educational and career decisions. **SF**
- Develop new mechanisms to make higher education affordable in order to educate our region’s future workforce. **SF**
- Develop programs designed to retain recent college graduates in the state. **S**
- Require all publicly funded schools to follow the same regulations and requirements for accountability and transparency. **S**
- Provide funding support for training initiatives that are an alternative to traditional higher education programs, such as apprenticeships and credential programs. **SF**
- Provide additional funding for students with special needs as identified in the recent Michigan Education Finance Study prepared for the State of Michigan. **S**
- Encourage integration of family social services within public schools, especially in schools with large, at-risk student populations. **SF**



The strength of our region’s job growth is dependent on the quality of our workforce. The specific skill sets needed are ever changing. Our workforce must have the skills necessary to perform the jobs of today, but they must also be capable of learning the skills necessary to perform the jobs of tomorrow. This begins with a robust K-12 system and recognizes and supports a diverse mix of post-high-school education and training programs.





Vibrant communities and neighborhoods are the cornerstones of a thriving economy. Revenue structures must be established to support public infrastructure as well as finance needed services for the future success of our communities. As lifestyles evolve, the region must be able to provide a spectrum of housing options. Common elements of success include safe, affordable housing integrated with a transportation system that provides easy access to desired destinations.

“The state has balanced their own budget by diverting billions of dollars of revenue sharing away from local governments. This must stop!”

– Rod Green, Trustee, Superior Township

Finance

- Amend the State Constitution to remove Headlee millage rollback requirements. **S**
- In keeping with the intent of Article IX Sec. 30 of the Michigan Constitution, require the state to return the same proportion of its revenues to local governments as it did when Proposal A revenue was fully realized. **S**
- Provide state assistance in administering of local income tax programs. **S**
- Ensure that local governments are properly reimbursed for lost personal property tax revenues. **S**
- Focus DDA and other Tax Increment Finance programs on Taxable Value “additions” as used under the property tax laws. **S**
- Modify rate limitations on property taxes to take into account the impacts of Proposal A. **S**
- Return state-shared revenue distributions to 21.3 percent of the first four cents of the state sales tax. **S**
- Provide incentives to encourage local government and school district collaboration and consolidation, without jeopardizing current local government revenue streams such as revenue sharing. **S**
- Rectify the inequity in tax structure for homes in manufactured housing parks. **S**
- Ensure local option taxes and fees that can be levied at the local, county, and regional levels are consistent with the geography of the services provided. **S**
- Maintain the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds and the deductibility of state and local tax payments. **F**
- Support home values by maintaining the tax deductible status of mortgage interest. **F**

“A system that allows local government revenues to be drastically cut during the Great Recession and then limits growth to inflationary increases thereafter is deeply flawed.”

– Dan O’Leary, Supervisor, Washington Township

Operations

- Support walkable communities and complete streets to meet local needs. **SF**
- Enact tools that facilitate renovation and reuse of residential, commercial, and industrial properties. **S**
- Provide funding and flexibility for programs that facilitate housing rehabilitation and demolition. **SF**
- Support planning processes that recognize local needs. **S**
- Maintain and enhance funding for development and redevelopment of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households. **SF**
- Increase funding and flexibility of the Community Development Block Grant program to address local challenges. **F**
- Repeal the state fireworks law which limits local government control. **S**

Regional Concerns

- Maintain the region’s current jurisdictional boundaries. **SF**
- Encourage federal investment and procurement in Southeast Michigan for defense, human services, homeland security, and other services/programs. **F**
- Ensure that the American Community Survey is conducted at a level sufficient to provide detailed demographic and economic data, and maintain provisions that compel citizen participation. **F**
- Support modification or elimination of term limits for elected officials at the state level of government. **S**



“I voted for term limits, but I’m no longer confident that we are well served by them. We need to consider alternatives to our current system.”

– Michael Sedlak, Clerk, Green Oak Township

Investing in Southeast Michigan's transportation system

Projects in SEMCOG's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) geared to regional priorities

Investments in transportation projects ensure that our region's transportation network safely and effectively enables people, goods, and materials to reach the places they need to go. In 2017, more than \$1.4 billion in road and transit projects are programmed region-wide. While current funding falls short of what is needed to properly maintain all our roads and bridges and provide robust regional transit, local elected officials working through SEMCOG, guide a significant investment in our transportation system. Through SEMCOG's coordinated long-range *Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)* and four-year *Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*, projects are selected and approved to fulfill regional priorities such as economic prosperity; safe and reliable infrastructure; and access to services, jobs, markets, and amenities. TIP projects programmed for 2017 will help to implement these goals throughout Southeast Michigan.

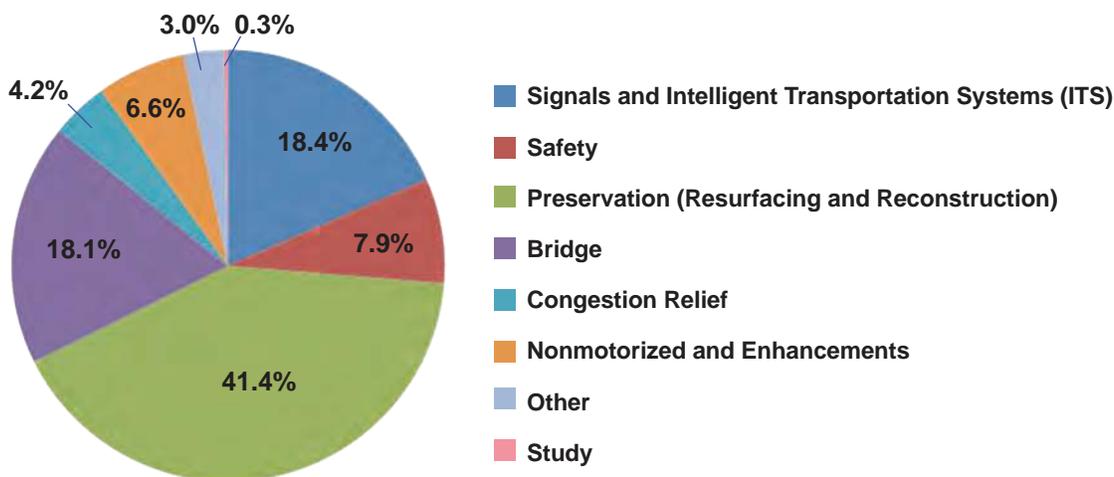
With three amendment opportunities each year, the TIP is very much a living document. So while it changes often, the makeup of the current year's projects helps with understanding the major investments being made

in our transportation system by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and local road and transit agencies.

In the chart of 2017 road projects shown below, preservation (resurfacing and reconstruction) of existing roads is a top priority. When choosing projects, Southeast Michigan transportation agencies use an asset management process to determine where to make the greatest impact with limited funding resources.

Bridge restoration and signals and ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems) on the below chart, follow next as significant areas of investment. The frequency of bicycle and pedestrian (nonmotorized) projects continues to grow, and their share of 2017 is expected to expand further during upcoming amendment periods. One project expected to be completed this year in Detroit will add bike lanes on Warren Ave. between Eastern Market and the City of Dearborn. In addition to making this roadway more bicycle friendly, enhancements will include handicap accessible ramps, and signal and signage improvements. Total anticipated investments for 2017 road projects in Southeast Michigan are expected to exceed \$1 billion.

2017 Road Projects by Work Type



Total transit investment, at approximately \$400 million, will remain consistent with current levels. Transit funding falls into two categories – capital projects and funding dedicated to operating the transit systems. As with transit agencies throughout the country, far more is expended for transit operations (more than \$300 million expected for 2017) in Southeast Michigan than for capital items (more than \$100 million).

While this investment will certainly help make our daily trips safer and more efficient, it is imperative that we find long-term funding solutions to implement enhanced regional transit and bring our roadways and other infrastructure up to the level necessary to make this region thrive into the future.

Michigan's first Flex Route to alleviate traffic problems between Brighton and Ann Arbor

One of the most notable transportation developments of 2017 is MDOT's Flex Route 23 project, which will feature several significant enhancements along US-23 between M-14 and Silver Lake Road. A \$92 million investment, Flex Route 23 will include bridge repair and replacements, pavement repairs, and upgraded acceleration and deceleration ramps. While all these improvements are important, the innovative part of this project is the coordinated Flex Route (active traffic management) system, which will manage traffic flow by using a new camera-guided lane control system to direct drivers during peak congestion and other travel incidents. Upgraded median shoulders will allow an additional lane to open during peak periods, while electronic message boards will communicate to drivers which lanes are open and when to merge. Six new crash investigation sites will enable traffic to flow as smoothly as possible after incidents occur in the roadway. The Flex Route system will be monitored at MDOT's Statewide Transportation Operations Center through the use of ITS technology.



Concept illustration courtesy of Michigan Department of Transportation

Survey says: Our travel patterns have changed

Implications for the future

Twenty years ago, the SEMCOG region was a much different place. Historically, a typical Southeast Michigan resident's weekday travel was very predictable – drive to work in the morning and return in the evening at the same time each day. Like clockwork. Weekday travel predominantly focused on work. Errands and other activities were reserved for the weekend.

To plan for the future, SEMCOG and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) conducted a Travel Survey in 2015, collecting data from residents about their weekday travel. Information was gathered from nearly 12,400 households and 28,800 people across Southeast Michigan. SEMCOG has conducted similar travel surveys every 10 years, allowing the opportunity to see trends and changes in travel patterns.

Today, traffic patterns in the SEMCOG region are much different – residents are still traveling to and from work, but where else are they going? The 2015 survey told us

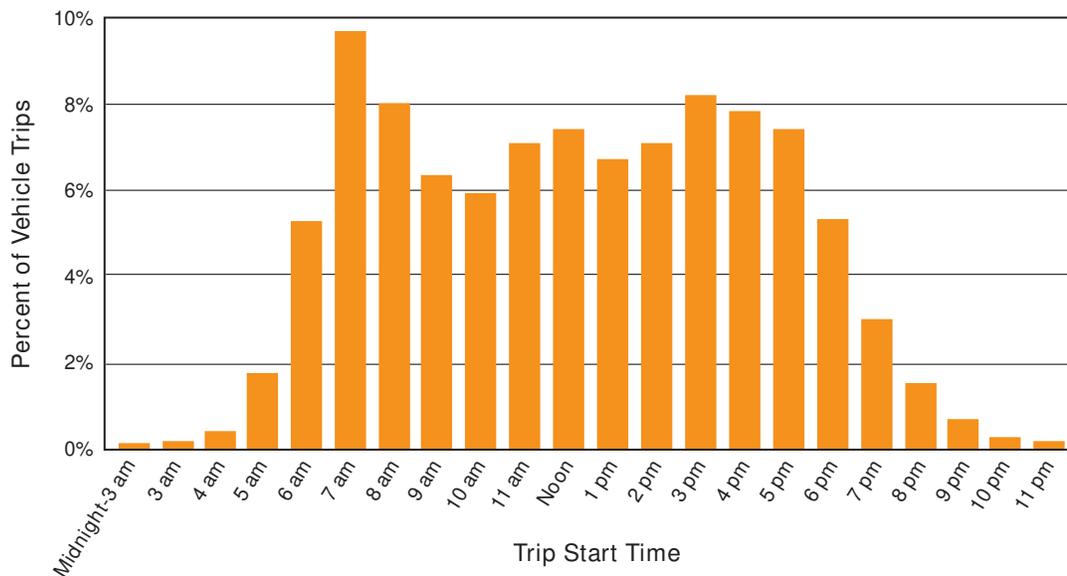
that four out of every five trips people make every day are for reasons other than going to work. This is a significant finding and says a lot about our lives today.

In addition to work, think about all of the places you go throughout the day. Did you drop a child off at school? Did you stop at the gym to work out? Maybe you met a friend for coffee or went to the grocery store before going home. Once you got home, did you take a walk or ride your bike to the park? Along with an increasing number of people within the region, maybe you shared a ride, rode a bus, or worked from home, eliminating the commute to work completely.

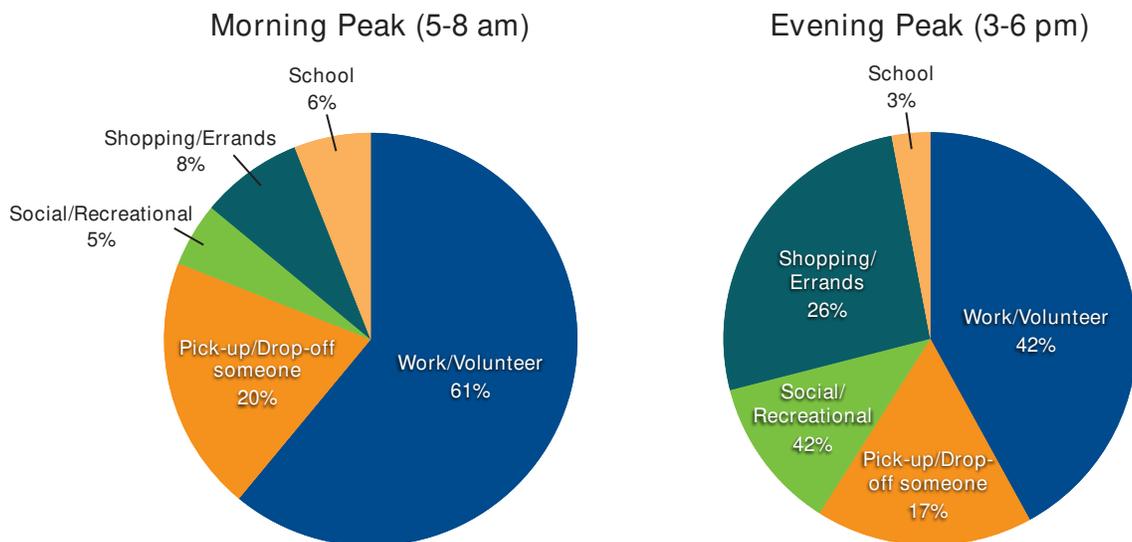
Not only have the reasons we travel changed, but the ways in which we get places have also changed. Although driving is still the primary mode of travel, there is an increasing number of people walking, biking, and using transit within the region.

People travel at all times of the day

Percentage of common travel hours by start time, 2015



Trip Purpose During Peak Travel Times



The results from the Travel Survey serve as an important planning tool and provide a snapshot of the travel patterns in Southeast Michigan. Here's what we learned:

- **People are traveling at all times of the day.** “Rush hours” have changed and the historical “evening peak” in travel is now spread out over several hours. Roadways are now used throughout the day, not just mornings and evenings. Considering the fact that six percent of residents now work from home, there is increased flexibility allowing for a more varied travel schedule.
- **In addition to driving, there are other ways we get places.** Walking, biking, transit, and sharing a ride are increasing as modes of transportation. These different modes make up nearly 40 percent of all travel, compared to less than 10 percent in 1994.
- **More than 20 percent of people ages 16-24 do not have a driver's licenses.** This suggests that younger people are waiting to obtain driver's licenses or are choosing not to drive, using other options such as rideshare, biking, or transit to get places.
- **Travel times remain consistent.** On an average weekday, people spend about an hour and 10 minutes traveling in Southeast Michigan. Over 50 minutes of that time is spent commuting to work and back, which has stayed fairly consistent in the past 20 years.
- **People are traveling more often.** The average number of daily household trips has increased by two trips per day since 1994.

The survey results help us better understand why and when people travel and provide input to SEMCOG's 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP anticipates Southeast Michigan's travel needs and identifies priority areas to invest limited transportation funds. Knowing the travel habits in the region helps SEMCOG ensure regional transportation plans address current and future travel needs of all of the region's residents. A similar survey of commercial and freight movement is now underway to help us understand future needs.

About the 2045 RTP

SEMCOG's 2045 Regional Transportation Plan represents the region's long-range transportation vision for a safe, reliable, and accessible system for the residents of Southeast Michigan and beyond. The plan will include policies, initiatives, and projects that will be funded and implemented while supporting the vision and goals of the region from now until 2045. It is scheduled for adoption in March 2019. There will be numerous opportunities for public input between now and then.

Maintaining roads in ice and snow



Learning about new and efficient ways to keep the roads safe in winter.

In the end, everyone who uses roads in the winter months wants the same thing: to reach their destination safely.

Now, though, it's more than just plows clearing the snow. Technology and limited local government budgets are influencing how roads are maintained in winter. Last year, SEMCOG hosted its eighth annual Winter Maintenance workshop, bringing together operations experts from communities across the region to discuss practices and techniques for keeping roads safe during inclement winter weather. Dealing with the reality of constrained budgets, communities are developing better practices and taking advantage of new technologies to maximize existing resources to keep roads clear and safe. Here are a few examples of what's happening in Southeast Michigan.

Farmington Hills: Many communities, including Farmington Hills, have been shifting from a solid, salt-based approach to winter maintenance to a liquid-based approach using brine. This shift, according to Kevin McCarthy, DPW Superintendent, and Bryan Pickworth, Road Maintenance Supervisor, allows roads to be pre-treated, preventing snow and ice from bonding to pavement. It takes approximately 9,000 gallons of liquid to anti-ice the city's 171 lane-miles of major roads prior to a winter storm, and it takes over 11 hours to refill the storage tanks.

As brine usage increased, the city needed both greater production capability and more storage capacity. The new state-of-the-art 10,000-square-foot addition to the existing DPW building was constructed, enabling storage of over 30,000 gallons of brine, 18,000 gallons of blending product, and 6,000 gallons of test product. As a result, McCarthy estimates that the city's salt use and cost is now between 30 and 60 percent of years past. Other communities making and using salt and/or well brine include

Livonia, Novi, West Bloomfield, Wixom, and the Road Commission for Oakland County. Farmington Hills has provided brine to Farmington, Livonia, and Wixom to name a few, with the trade-off being equal value of rock salt. They have won awards for innovative use of brine to pre-treat pavement while also reducing costs, increasing efficiency, and lessening environmental impacts.

Westland: Launched a new online snowplow tracker to help residents know where snowplows have been after a major storm. According to Dan Bourdeau, Westland Director of Technology and Innovation, the online tracker tells where trucks are, where they've been, whether plow blades are up or down, and whether they're applying salt. The URL for the snowplow tracker is <https://westland.connectanywhere.co/public>. Users will see a yellow banner at top of website homepage after a storm for easier access.

Wayne County: Has a similar tracking system that gives users a video look at roads via cameras mounted on trucks. According to Commissioner Glenn Anderson, Wayne County's Compass is a web-based technology designed to help the motoring public better manage their commutes. Drivers can access Compass and learn what major highways and surface roads were cleared by the Roads Division's fleet of snowplows/salt trucks. Compass displays real-time traffic issues, traffic cameras, locations of road maintenance trucks and snowplows, and weather radar. Access the tool at compass.waynecounty.com.

Dealing with the reality of constrained budgets, communities are developing better practices and taking advantage of new technologies to maximize existing resources to keep roads clear and safe. Here are a few examples of what's happening in Southeast Michigan.

Novi: An important strategy in clearing the roads and maintaining roadway service is keeping the public informed. Matt Wiktorowski, Novi Field Operations Senior Manager, described a combination of strategies – social media, community meetings, and other traditional forms of outreach. He also cited the use of Wing plows retrofitted to existing vehicles that clear roadways in one-third of the time previously needed. These efforts have contributed to fewer traffic crashes over the past several years.

Oakland County: The Road Commission for Oakland County has equipped six winter-maintenance vehicles with green lights to increase visibility/safety and alert motorists to slow down when approaching a snowplow. Recently, the Michigan Legislature enacted Public Act 161 of 2016 that legalizes the use of green flashing lights on vehicles used to address snow and ice conditions. The use of green flashing or oscillating lights enhances the current use of required amber lights on winter-maintenance vehicles. RCOC is closely monitoring the green lights and looking at their effectiveness elsewhere throughout the state. If the green lights are successful at improving safety, RCOC will equip additional winter-maintenance vehicles with them as well.



Nate Fisher operates an MDOT tow plow during a winter storm in February 2016. MDOT now has automatic vehicle location (AVL) devices on all of its winter road maintenance equipment. These systems report where each truck is, and they gather data from other sensors in order to help better plan for winter storms. (MDOT Photo)

MDOT: Connected vehicle technology is helping MDOT clear snow and ice from roadways faster – making winter a little easier for drivers and saving taxpayers money. All MDOT plows now have GPS-based automatic vehicle location (AVL) devices, which report where each truck is, and gather data from other sensors to report details like atmospheric conditions, camera images, speed, and salt application rates for each vehicle. MDOT feeds that information, plus additional pavement and weather data and forecasts, into its maintenance decision support system (MDSS). It's a powerful combination for managing plowing and salting operations.

“Monitoring snowplow speeds and material application helps us apply efficient salting practices,” said Melissa Howe, Region Support Engineer for MDOT’s Maintenance Field Services Section. “Maintenance supervisors can also easily adjust work shifts based on the timing of a storm so we have plows on the roads precisely when they’re needed, assigning people proactively rather than reactively.” AVL and MDSS have helped MDOT reduce salt consumption, contributing to an estimated 2.2 percent increase in efficiency. MDOT spends about \$30 million on salt in an average year, so even these modest reductions in salt use save a lot of money. Download MDOT’s Mi Drive traffic information app at www.michigan.gov/drive.

Does your community have an innovative way of dealing with winter road maintenance?

Please let us know via an email to Communications@semcog.org.

PA 459 to save Southeast Michigan cities millions

In January, a new law signed by Governor Snyder will save cities millions of dollars. Public Act 459 removes the requirement of cities (including 23 in Southeast Michigan) to share in the costs of construction projects on state freeways that run within their boundaries.

For years, a minor provision in Public Act 51, the state transportation funding law, had a major impact on the most populous cities in the state. Cities with populations over 25,000 were required to pay for a portion of all state road projects that occurred within their boundaries, regardless of whether the cities agreed with the projects or stood to see any benefits. Anytime an interstate or an M-road was under construction in a city, that city was required to pay a portion of the cost.

SEMCOG, in partnership with the Michigan Municipal League, drew attention to this provision and encouraged the legislature to amend the law and give cities more discretion in how their limited construction resources would be spent. State Senator Marty Knollenberg (R-Troy) introduced legislation to remove the local funding requirement from all state road projects, and local officials from Southeast Michigan testified to the financial impacts that major freeway projects have on their city's local road programs. After an initial veto by the governor, revised legislation kept the requirement that large cities participate on projects involving state roads like Woodward or Gratiot Ave.

SB 1068 was approved by the legislature with near unanimous support during the last hours of the legislative session, and Governor Snyder signed the bill creating Public Act 459 of 2016. This new law puts millions of dollars back into local city road budgets. Lessons learned? When working with the legislature to enable effective local governance, keys to success include patience, persistence, and a having determined lawmaker for a partner.



The City of Troy estimates it will save a total of \$9.6 million over the eight-year timeline of the I-75 Modernization Project, which began in 2016.

“The City of Troy commends Senator Knollenberg for introducing this bill and highlighting funding integrity for regional transportation projects,” said Brian M. Kischnick, City Manager, City of Troy.

The City of Madison Heights estimates it will save more than \$4 million by not having to provide a local match on the I-75 project.

“We are very relieved and glad,” said Ben Myers, City Manager, Madison Heights. “That’s equivalent of about two years of funding for our streets division, which includes road maintenance and snow and ice removal, among other responsibilities.”



A must-attend event

SEMCOG Reimagining Transportation: Transforming Southeast Michigan summit is April 25th



Significant advancements in transportation technology are on the horizon. More than ever, we need to examine the impacts this transformation will have on Southeast Michigan.

- How will this new technology affect the economy and jobs in the region?
- How will it impact the curriculum offered by our educational institutions?
- How might the coming changes impact regional demographics?
- How will local governments and road agencies adapt to these new changes?

These are just a few of the topics to be discussed at SEMCOG's Reimagining Transportation: Transforming Southeast Michigan summit, to be held **Tuesday, April 25, 2017, at the Westin Southfield-Detroit in Southfield**. Event begins with registration and breakfast at 8 a.m.

The summit will feature presentations from a variety of experts on automated transportation technology, as well as a panel discussion that will highlight how these advances will impact careers of the future, education and workforce training, land use planning, and the retail environment. This is a must-attend event for elected officials, administrators, educators, business and civic leaders, and anyone else who is interested in knowing how Southeast Michigan can prepare for our exciting transportation future. Please reserve your seat now via the calendar at www.semcog.org.

Questions? Contact Mike Spence, SEMCOG Executive Office (spence@semcog.org).

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SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, is the only organization in Southeast Michigan that brings together all governments to develop regional solutions for both now and in the future. SEMCOG:

- Promotes informed decision making to improve Southeast Michigan and its local governments by providing insightful data analysis and direct assistance to member governments;
- Promotes the efficient use of tax dollars for infrastructure investment and governmental effectiveness;
- Develops regional solutions that go beyond the boundaries of individual local governments; and
- Advocates on behalf of Southeast Michigan in Lansing and Washington