

01

Introduction



01

Purpose of the Plan

The Michiana on the Move: 2050 Transportation Plan acts as a blueprint for how the Michiana region will address its transportation needs and how federal, state and local funds will be invested into highways, public transit, freight, bikeways and pedestrian walkways. The Plan also references other local and regional plans in order to coordinate multimodal and intermodal services throughout the community.

This plan is guided by input from public officials, agency staff, key stakeholders, and citizens of the region as a roadmap for implementing multimodal transportation improvements in the Michiana region through the year 2050. Throughout this process, the regional transportation system is evaluated in order to identify and formulate the best solutions to address safety, congestion, highway, public transit, bike and pedestrian and multi-modal systems for the local communities. The 2050 Transportation Plan continues to emphasize the use of existing roads and alternate modes of transportation as invaluable in addressing and identifying solutions to congestion problems.

MPO Background

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a transportation policy-making body made up of representatives from local government and transportation agencies with authority and responsibility in metropolitan planning areas. Federal legislation passed in the early 1970's required the formation of an MPO for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000 residents. MPOs were created in order to ensure that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs were based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning process. Federal funding for transportation projects and programs is channeled through the MPO.

The Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) is a regional organization serving Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties in Indiana. MACOG was originally organized under the 1964 Amendments to the Interlocal Cooperation Act of the Indiana General Assembly, Section 53-1101 to 53-1107 and the Urban Cooperation Act No. 7, Michigan Public Acts of 1967. Bylaws were adopted by the organization on December 2, 1970.

MACOG serves as a forum for regional discussion and cooperation. MACOG, as a regional organization, is the U.S. DOT designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region's urban counties of Elkhart and St. Joseph and a Rural Planning Organization (RPO) for the region's rural counties of Kosciusko and Marshall. In addition, MACOG operates the Interurban Trolley, a public fixed-route transit service in the cities of Elkhart and Goshen; serves as the designated Economic Development District by the United States Economic Development Administration; and staffs the St. Joseph River Basin Commission representing seven Indiana counties. MACOG is governed by a Policy Board and Transportation Technical Advisory Committee that provides guidance and assistance to MACOG in its regional planning activities.

The MACOG Policy Board

The MACOG Policy Board is the body responsible for policy formulation, project guidance, and administrative coordination of all policies relating to the development of the transportation plan and its implementation within the Michiana region. Official action taken by MACOG must be approved by the Policy Board. The Policy Board includes elected officials representing the cities and counties within the metropolitan and rural planning areas. A list of the current Policy Board members is included in the acknowledgments.

Transportation Technical Advisory Committee

The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) is comprised of planners, engineers, and other professional staff from various departments representing the local public agencies in the planning area. TTAC serves as the advisory group to the MACOG Policy Board. MACOG

staff works closely with TTAC members on project development, planning and oversight. A list of current TTAC members is listed in the acknowledgments.

Planning Area

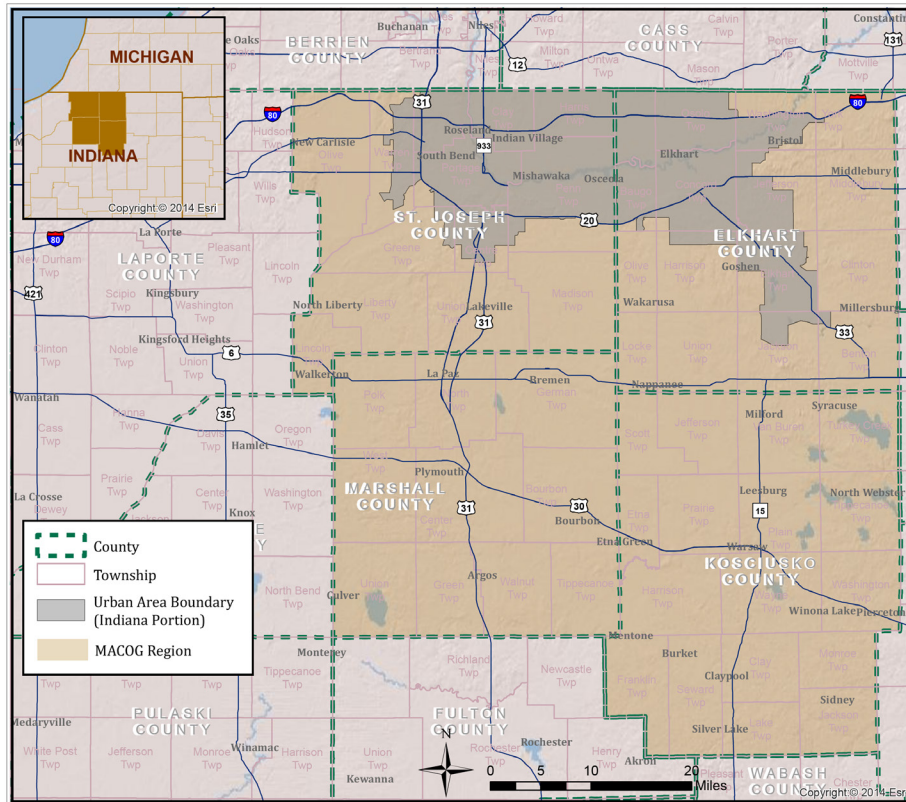
The MACOG planning area consists of the federally designated urbanized areas of Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties. MACOG also serves as a rural planning organization to Kosciusko and Marshall Counties. The four-county region contains an estimated 605,360 (2021 Census Population Estimates), covers 1,921 square miles, and includes 35 cities and towns. MACOG is unique in the sense that it is an MPO representing two urbanized areas (the South Bend Urbanized Area and the Elkhart/Goshen Urbanized Area). In addition to the two urban areas, a portion of the South Bend Urbanized Area extends into Michigan around the City of Niles. MACOG coordinates with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) for planning in the Niles area.

National Planning Factors

The current federal legislation, Infrastructure Investment and Job's Act (IIJA) continues previous directives to address transportation infrastructure issues through performance-based planning frameworks, and emphasizes the importance of resiliency and sustainability in the transportation planning process. An MPO must have a 20-year long range transportation plan and a transportation improvement program that implements the plan. Together, the plan and program work on comprehensive development and management of transportation systems that considers all transportations modes.

There are ten (10) national Planning Factors, which MACOG took into consideration during the planning and development of the 2050 Transportation Plan.

Figure 1-1: MACOG Planning Area



1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
4. Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight.
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
7. Promote efficient system management and operation.
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.
9. Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation.
10. Enhance travel and tourism.

Planning Process

The Michiana on the Move plan was developed through coordination with other plans and agencies including federal, state and local partners. Additionally, an overarching component to the planning process is public participation. The Plan is a reflection of the needs of the public on transportation investments for the future. This plan is required to be realistic and fiscally constrained. An extensive planning process was followed in the development of the Michiana on the Move 2050 Transportation Plan. Essential elements included the identification of needed projects and resource allocation. These were supported by the following tasks:

- Public Outreach
- Forecasting socioeconomic data
- Existing conditions and needs identification
- Forecasting travel demand
- Environmental Coordination and Red Flag Analysis
- Title VI and Environmental Justice

Public Outreach

MACOG conducted a variety of public outreach efforts throughout the development of the Michiana on the Move 2050 Transportation Plan as detailed in Chapter 4. The engagement for this plan can be divided into two groups: Stakeholder and Public. Stakeholder engagement involved feedback from representatives across many sectors and local public agencies, either in person or by survey response. Public engagement centered around a project specific website, surveys, comment map and attending pop-up events to seek people's feedback on goals and transportation needs for the region.

The website provided background information on the planning process and access to the survey and an interactive comment map for location specific feedback. To further raise awareness of the website and feedback opportunities, staff utilized a wide ranging approach including:

- Social Media posts
- Informational videos
- Attendance at events
- Promotional fliers at area libraries
- Yard signs

Socioeconomic Forecasts

Socioeconomic data such as population, number of households, household income, and employment levels are important to assess the future transportation needs of the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). This data can greatly inform future travel behavior. The historic and current socioeconomic data available along with projections developed by Woods & Poole and

other economic forecasts were used to develop the future population and employment numbers of the MPA. The regional socioeconomic data was allocated to Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs) and incorporated into a hybrid travel demand model for the 2050 Plan. The data was used in the travel demand model to assess the current conditions and future travel demand within the region.

Existing Condition and Needs Identification

MACOG used various planning tools to conduct an existing condition and needs analysis. A detailed description of the region's current conditions, trends and projections are found in Chapters 2 and 3. Data informing congestion, bridge and pavement conditions, crash location, and connectivity can provide crucial information to communities when prioritizing needed transportation enhancements.

Providing safe and efficient movement of goods and people, with access to core services is the primary role of the transportation system. The network should be available and accessible to everyone in the region, which is why the Michiana on the Move plan identifies and considers all forms of transportation. The Plan attempts to coordinate the impact of connectivity between various land uses and between various communities through the transportation planning process.

Forecasting Travel Demand

Forecasting travel demand is an important part of transportation planning. Anticipating the demands of future travel assists local governmental agencies in identifying the future needs of the region and planning to account for and fulfill those needs. The travel demand model not only forecasts the generation of future trips but also forecasts the modal splits based on the affordability of a personal vehicle, availability of alternative modes of transportation, and travel behavior of the users based on time of day, facility types and travel conditions of the roadways.

MACOG uses a hybrid tour based model developed for the 2040 Transportation Plan to forecast future travel demand. In 2019, the model was expanded to not only include Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties, but also Marshall and Kosciusko

Counties and Niles, Michigan. The model is sensitive to conditions such as the availability of alternative modes of transportation, urban design elements, types of controls existing at the intersections, speeds and delays, and fuel prices. Unlike the traditional 4-step trip-based travel demand model, MACOG's hybrid model includes 12 steps. A description of the modeling process is provided in Appendix C.

Environmental Coordination and Red Flag Investigations

In order to help determine potential environmental impacts of potential transportation projects, MACOG conducted a red flag analysis on most projects included in the 2050 Transportation Plan. A red flag analysis uses GIS and available datasets compiled by the Office of Environmental Policy at INDOT to identify the existence of environmental items of concern with respect to:

- Infrastructure
- Water Resources
- Mining/Mineral Exploration
- Hazardous Materials
- Ecological Information
- Cultural Resources

An inventory of the Red Flag Investigations are provided in Appendix E.

Title VI and Environmental Justice

MACOG believes that Title VI and Environmental Justice are critical elements to the transportation planning process. Title VI and Environmental Justice are about the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income. In Appendix F, MACOG conducted a study on Environmental Justice populations which summarizes the potential impacts of the proposed projects.

