

SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

Guide to Transportation Planning

2026

SEMCOG

SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

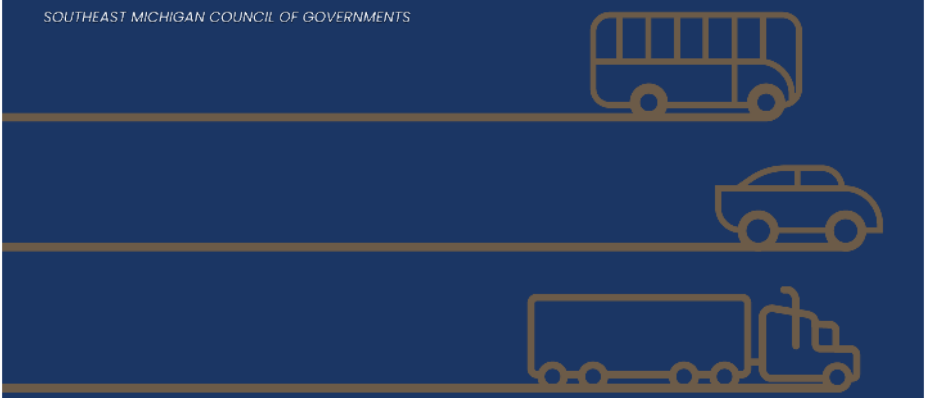


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INTRODUCTION TO

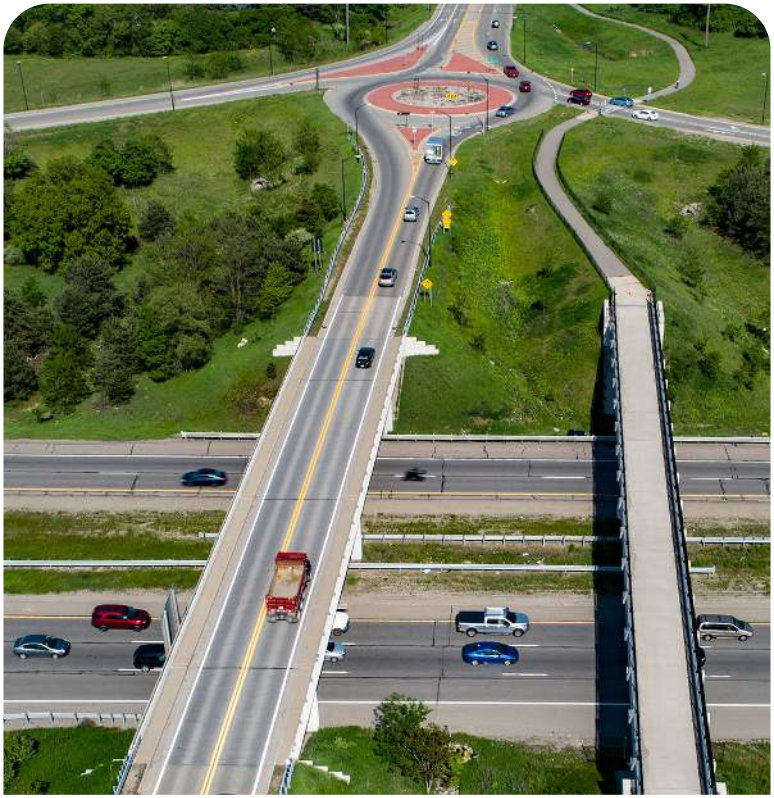
Regional Transportation Planning

Transportation planning refers to a set of practices and programs that work to ensure public dollars intended to improve and maintain our shared **transportation system** are spent effectively. Government leaders rely on a combination of data collection and analysis, **regional forecast modeling**, community input gathering, and public review to make investment decisions for the **region**'s highways, **public transit** systems, bicycle and pedestrian routes, and local roads and bridges.

The **Southeast Michigan Council of Governments** (SEMCOG) is a regional partnership of over 185 local governments. We support regional planning throughout the seven counties of Southeast Michigan. This includes the development of a **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)** and a four-year list of federally funded transportation projects called the **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**, along with several other key regional plans on topics such as economic development, water resources, and parks and recreation.



SEMCOG developed this guide to help explain how transportation planning works in Southeast Michigan. It is meant to be a resource for local elected officials, residents, and stakeholders to better understand and engage with the planning process.





Who is SEMCOG?

SEMCOG is a regional planning partnership of local governments serving nearly five million people in the seven-county region of Southeast Michigan, made up of Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties.

SEMCOG works together with our members, partners, and regional stakeholders to support local government effectiveness and facilitate cooperative regional planning across Southeast Michigan. Regional leaders, industry experts, and other stakeholders are convened in committees and task forces to develop regional plans and policies across topics such as economic development, environmental issues, and transportation and mobility.

SEMCOG Transportation Committees

COMMITTEE	FUNCTIONS
Transportation Coordinating Council	Guides SEMCOG policies, engaging stakeholders across the region.
Civic Advisory Committee	Reports to the Transportation Coordinating Council and brings together residents and other local stakeholders to discuss shared regional issues. **See page 22 for more information.**
Federal-Aid Committees	Guides transportation planning across the region by recommending projects.
Rural Task Force #1	Estimates available funds, identifies rural projects and monitors project implementation for the region's rural counties.
Transportation Safety Action Committee	Exchanges information on transportation safety efforts in the region and monitors the implementation of the Southeast Michigan Transportation Safety Plan.
Freight Task Force	Guides development of the Regional Freight Plan for Southeast Michigan and engages regional partners in consensus building and decision-making.
Southeast Michigan Active Transportation Committee	Advances the regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Plan through updates, collaboration, and strategy.

The SEMCOG Region



Our Shared Regional Transportation System

A regional transportation system is the interconnected network of ways people and goods move in a region. This includes driving a personal vehicle, catching a bus or light rail, walking, cycling, and even rideshare (**Commuter Connect**). A system that works well enables people to get where they want to go when they want to be there.

Southeast Michigan's transportation network is vast and no single mode works in isolation. An effective transportation system connects all modes: roads, public transit, biking and walking, freight, and more. This system improves mobility and the quality of life for people in the region.



Southeast Michigan's Transportation System

BY THE NUMBERS



25,000+ miles of public roads
4,000 miles of all-season truck routes
3,000 bridges



33 million domestic and international travelers at Detroit Metropolitan Airport in 2025
18 regional airports
4 cargo airports



7 marine ports
29 commercial marine terminals
7 international border crossings



2,300 miles of fixed-route bus service
9 fixed-route transit providers
35,000 bus stops
32 million transit riders
6 intercity bus services



24,000 miles of walkways
3,500 miles of bikeways
500 miles of regional trails

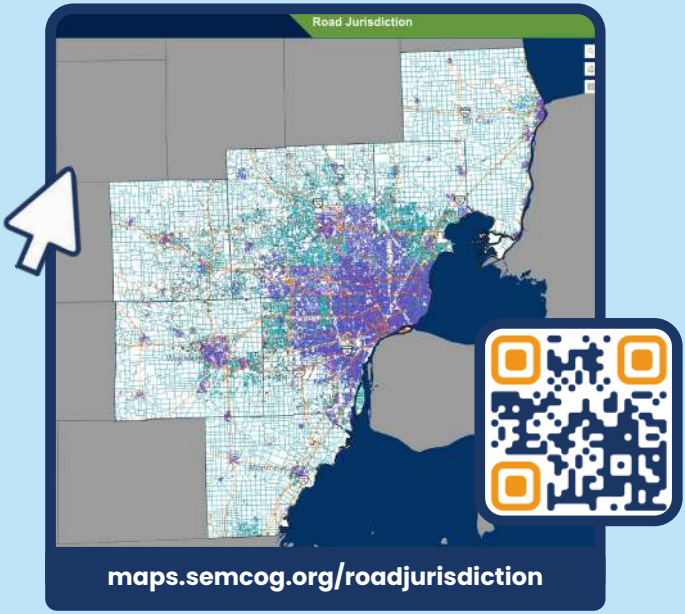


900 miles of rail lines
6 rail intermodal terminals
1,050 at-grade rail crossings
2 long-distance passenger routes

Who is Responsible for the Roads and Bridges?

Southeast Michigan contains over 25,000 miles of roads and over 3,000 bridges within its seven counties, 93 cities, 24 villages, and 115 townships. Each of these levels of government, along with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), has different ownership and responsibility to maintain infrastructure. We know that when people are using the transportation system they don't necessarily know who "owns" the asset they are using - they simply expect it to be safe and reliable. When support is needed, it is important to know who is responsible.

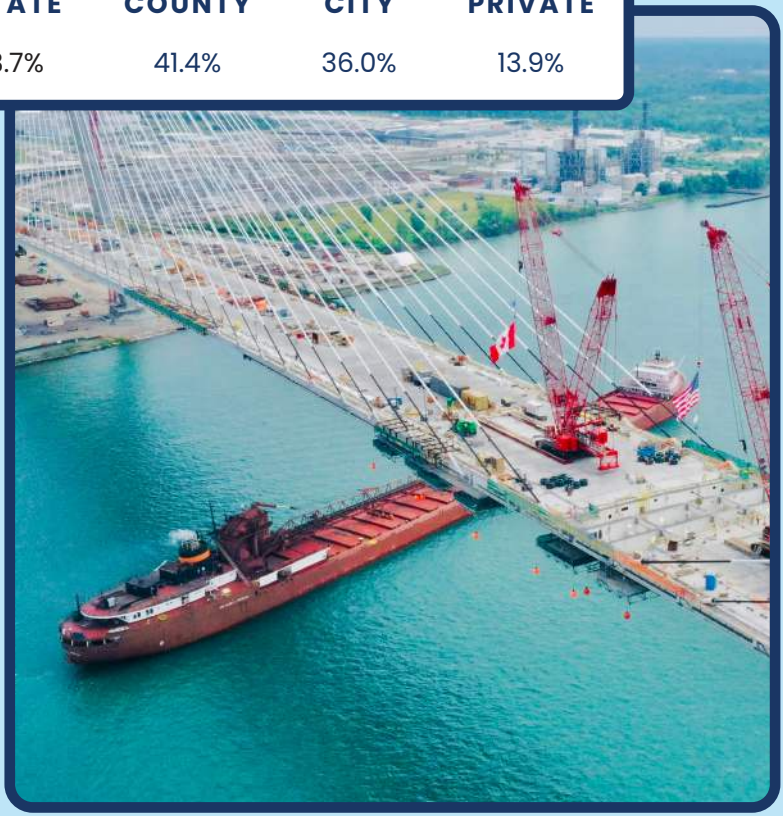
SEMCOG's Road Jurisdiction Map shows the ownership/ responsibility of road and bridge infrastructure throughout the region.



Funding for transportation assets (roads, bridges, etc.) typically comes from federal, state, or local funding sources. These sources depend on the ownership of the asset and related guidelines for eligibility and project selection processes. While SEMCOG guides the federal transportation funding process for the region, transit agencies, local cities, villages, and county road commissions have their own processes for the state and local funds they receive. Read more on our website.

Road ownership in Southeast Michigan

STATE	COUNTY	CITY	PRIVATE
8.7%	41.4%	36.0%	13.9%



Challenges and Opportunities

Access to Core Services

Transportation access to core services is fundamentally about having options—not only where people can go, but how easily and efficiently we can get there. SEMCOG's Transportation Access to Core Services report evaluates the ease with which residents can reach everyday opportunities – jobs, schools, healthcare facilities, grocery stores, parks, childcare, and more – within a reasonable amount of time.



Find the full report at semcog.org



Driving is by far the most dominant mode of reaching core services throughout Southeast Michigan. Across nearly all core services measured, shifting from driving to non-driving modes—walking, biking, or fixed-route transit—substantially reduces access.

Example: How trips to the grocery store illustrate access challenges by mode

- *Within a 10-minute drive, 97% of households have access to a grocery store*
- *To reach a grocery store by fixed-route transit within 30 minutes, 39% have access*
- *57% can access a grocery store within a 10-minute bike ride and 13% in a 10-minute walk*

Regional Transit

Transit is an integral part of the transportation system. To improve the mobility of all people, including those with special needs and those without cars, SEMCOG works to provide data and resources that help public and private transportation providers meet the mobility needs of the people and communities they serve. Here are some facts related to current transit access in our region:

- *Approximately 75% of transit-dependent households are within a 15-minute walk of fixed-route transit while 67% are within 10 minutes*
- *About 46% of all households in the region are within a 10-minute walk of fixed-route transit*
- *Areas with strong fixed-route transit service—such as downtowns in Detroit, Royal Oak, and Ann Arbor—offer the highest levels of transit access to jobs*
- *Only 12% of working-age population and 11% of all households are within a 30-minute transit ride of an American Job center (job training center)*
- *Only 10% of transit-dependent households are within a 30-minute transit ride of a passenger train station*
- *Access to Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW) by fixed-route transit is extremely limited, as just 0.4% of all households and 0.8% of transit-dependent households can reach DTW within a 45-minute transit trip*

Southeast Michigan's regional transit providers, with support from SEMCOG, are actively leading efforts to improve service. Contact information for transit providers is listed beginning on page 23 of this document.

Active Transportation

Nonmotorized transportation, often referred to as **active transportation**, refers to modes such as walking, biking, and fixed-route transit (which also involves walking and/or biking). The region benefits from a connected and safe walking and biking network that offers options beyond automobile travel, and enhances connections to nature and regional assets such as town centers, downtowns, commercial and cultural destinations.

Locally, communities and residents benefit from active mobility with broadened transportation choices. Those choices can improve health, reduce traffic **congestion** on roadways, and encourage activity and interaction along corridors that can spur placemaking and economic vitality.

Here are some facts about bicycle and pedestrian mobility in Southeast Michigan:

- *The number of people walking and biking is increasing*
- *Safety and comfort for people walking and biking are being increased through infrastructure improvements across the region*
- *The active transportation system is a vital component for increasing access to core services and amenities for people of all ages and abilities*
- *There are gaps in the regional system, and the responsibility to improve infrastructure is shared by many; collaboration and coordination are required to develop and sustain a regional system*



Among non-driving modes, biking provides the broadest reach. Walking and fixed-route transit, essential for many residents, offer lower accessibility due to factors such as land-use separation, incomplete pedestrian infrastructure, and gaps in fixed-route transit coverage or service frequency.

SEMCOG supports expansion of the nonmotorized transportation network, which also improves ADA accessibility. Communities throughout the region are developing and implementing sidewalks, trails, safe crossings, and other improvements.

Environment and Resilience

As severe flooding events persist and rainfall patterns increase, SEMCOG is working to understand vulnerabilities in the region's transportation and infrastructure networks and determine best practices to address these challenges. To support effective planning solutions for flooding and other environmental challenges, SEMCOG has developed and launched applications such as the Flood Risk Tool and Eco Planning Tool.

As part of its regional transportation process, SEMCOG performs **Air Quality Conformity Analysis** to measure air quality attainment and protect Southeast Michigan's public health. As required by federal transportation programs, impacts on **Environmental Justice** populations are also analyzed and considered in project selection.

The Southeast Michigan Healthy Climate Plan identifies the region's major sources of greenhouse gas emissions and tracks how energy is used across sectors. Based on this analysis, the Plan outlines comprehensive pathways to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, and support economic development across Southeast Michigan through 2050. It focuses on five regional opportunities:

- *Modernize Mobility Systems*
- *Promote Efficient, Affordable Homes and Buildings*
- *Expand Local Renewable Energy Options*
- *Advance Clean Innovation in Industry*
- *Manage Waste and Natural Resources Sustainably*

Reach out to your local community to learn more about its resilience planning and resources.





SEMCOG's Flooding Task Force meets regularly to collaborate and develop a comprehensive regional plan.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

The value of Southeast Michigan's transportation system is based on how well it connects people with the places they want and need to go. Safety, travel time, and mobility options are all key considerations for planning, as are the locations of our region's job centers; schools, colleges, and universities; economic institutions; parks and recreation; and other regional assets.

Economic Development

Transportation is integral to the regional economy of Southeast Michigan. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Southeast Michigan was adopted in 2026. Developed under the guidance of SEMCOG's multi-sector Economic Development Council, the CEDS informs regional and local efforts related to supporting economic development and promoting prosperity. The CEDS focuses on three interrelated pillars:



Great Places

Southeast Michigan's Place assets feature quality-of-life amenities such as the Great Lakes and natural areas that support recreation and culture; historic downtowns, dynamic urban centers and unique neighborhoods; accessible mobility options for people and goods; high-quality universities, colleges, and school systems; first-class medical facilities and healthcare services; and much more. These make Southeast Michigan a desirable location to live, work, visit, and conduct business.



Regional Prosperity

Southeast Michigan's economic prosperity relies on ensuring residents and businesses have access to essential resources - including education, technology, and capital - that support economic growth and upward mobility. A thriving regional economy drives population growth and business expansion, strengthens community vitality, creates quality jobs, retains key industries, and attracts new enterprises and entrepreneurs. Central to this success is the ability to develop, attract, and retain talent, which fuels innovation and competitiveness. To sustain growth, the region must provide affordable, high-quality opportunities for individuals to build long-term careers, enhance their skills, and build personal wealth.

Economic Resilience

Economic resilience is a core investment priority of the U.S. Economic Development Administration, emphasizing strategies that strengthen a region's ability to withstand and recover from disruptions - whether caused by industry shifts, market volatility, or natural disasters. Effective planning and implementation efforts build adaptive capacity, ensuring long-term stability and growth. For Southeast Michigan, embedding resilience into economic development initiatives is essential to safeguarding prosperity and ensuring long-term progress. Regional economic stressors or shocks typically arise from one or more key factors. Understanding these potential triggers is essential for developing strategies that strengthen economic resilience and ensure regional stability.



Housing

Personal mobility involves all sorts of trips between all sorts of places, but everyone needs to make many trips to and from the same location: their homes. In addition to providing millions of destinations across our transportation system, housing is a key component of economic and community vitality. Quality housing contributes to creating desirable communities and neighborhoods. It supports talent attraction and retention in the region; housing options near employment centers and key amenities can increase access to jobs, and essential services and improve productivity and livability.

Many communities are working to add housing that is purposefully located in areas that can support new development including underground infrastructure – water and sewer, access to schools and core services, and transportation and public transit availability.

Connect with your community's planning and/or zoning commissions to get involved with housing decisions in your community.



CHERRY HILL VILLAGE | CANTON, MICHIGAN



CITY OF HARPER WOODS

Freight

Freight is the movement of goods from one place to another, and it is essential to our economy and quality of life. Southeast Michigan's extensive network of highways, railroads, airports, water ports, and border crossings positions the region as a hub for domestic and international freight movement. Freight is predominantly moved by private companies using both public and private infrastructure. Due to the broadness and complexity of freight movement, effective planning requires strong partnerships and coordination among all industry partners and each level of government.

Federal freight funding is primarily provided to state departments of transportation, though some competitive federal discretionary grant programs are available for local and regional freight improvements. These grants often require significant collaboration among public and private stakeholders. SEMCOG brings these partners together, identifying shared priorities, and helping advance freight investments that strengthen the regional economy.



HOW AN IDEA BECOMES



1 Project Idea

A transportation need is identified by a resident, business, agency, or transportation study.



2 Transportation Agency Review

Ownership of the asset – sidewalk, transit route, road – will determine how an idea is considered for feasibility and funding eligibility.



3 Planning

Generally, transportation agencies have plans that guide long-term investments and future asset management needs. SEMCOG is required to develop the Regional Transportation Plan, which brings together a vision for how available federal funding will be invested in transportation projects over the next 20 years.

A PROJECT



4 Project Selection

SEMCOG compiles federal-aid eligible projects prioritized within the region in the Transportation Improvement Program. Projects can be funded through local processes as well, via State or local funds. Who owns the asset will determine funding eligibility and feasibility of the project.



5 Project Implementation

The project receives final approvals for design, environmental impacts, and requirements. Funding is committed and the project moves into construction and delivery.

How to Participate

Your voice helps shape how we move around in our region. Transportation decisions affect your life every day: traffic on the way to work, walking or biking in your neighborhood, or the local bus schedule. It all counts. Getting involved with the planning process is a great way to make a difference.

You can make a direct impact at the local level. Learn more about your local government by visiting its website, visiting its office, and/or attending council/board meetings.

Attend Public Meetings

In addition to your local community, SEMCOG and our region's transportation providers hold public meetings to support planning and implementation, and each meeting has an opportunity for **public comment**. These meetings are open to everyone. They are a great opportunity to hear directly from the experts, ask questions, and give your thoughts on new projects.

You can also attend **Federal-Aid Committee meetings**. These are good places to speak up and have an impact on decisions about local infrastructure.

semcog.org/events



SEMCOG events are opportunities to learn about transportation planning and projects across the region.



Make Your Needs Known

If you have ideas or see problems related to particular roads and bridges, you can share these with the agency that maintains them. SEMCOG's Road Jurisdiction map shows which agency is responsible for each asset. This helps you know exactly who to talk to so your voice is heard.

Join the Civic Advisory Committee

The **Civic Advisory Committee** is a direct way to help shape transportation decisions for our region. This committee is made up of local groups and residents from across the seven counties in Southeast Michigan and reports to the **Transportation Coordinating Council**. Email infocenter@semcog.org for info.

These meetings let you stay involved in important new plans. They also give you a direct way to share your feedback with the leaders who make decisions on transportation funding.

Transportation Contacts

Transit Agencies

Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA)

theride.org | 734-996-0400

Offers a variety of fixed-route and on-demand public transit services for the greater Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area in Washtenaw County

Blue Water Area Transit (BWAT)

bwbus.com | 810-987-7373

Provides regularly-scheduled bus service six days a week to the City of Port Huron and Fort Gratiot Township as well as a dial-a-ride service in parts of St Clair County

Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT)

detroitmi.gov | 313-933-1300

Services 85,000 riders daily on 37 fixed-route bus lines to the city of Detroit, surrounding suburbs, and neighboring cities, including Highland Park and Hamtramck

Detroit Transportation Corporation (People Mover)

thepeoplemover.com | 313-224-2160

A fully automated, light rail system that operates on an elevated, single-track guide way loop in Detroit's central business district

Lake Erie Transit (LET) - Monroe County

www.lakeerietransit.com | 734-242-6672

Eight Fixed Routes as well as Dial-A-Ride services throughout Monroe County

Livingston Essential Transportation Services (LETS) – Livingston County

milivcounty.gov/lets 517-546-6600

Public transit services throughout Livingston County

Qline Detroit

qlinedetroit.com 313-402-1020

A 3.3-mile circulating streetcar on Woodward Avenue in Detroit

Regional Transit Authority for Southeast Michigan (RTA)

www.rtamichigan.org 313-402-1020

A public agency with the mission to create new and better ways to move and connect people throughout Southeast Michigan and operates the Qline, D2A2 (express bus service connecting Detroit and Ann Arbor), and Detroit Air Xpress (pilot express bus service connecting Downtown Detroit to Detroit Metro Airport)

Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART)

smartbus.org 866-962-5515

Bus system offers a variety of Fixed-Route and curb-to-curb service options and programs with 47 routes, over 5,300 bus stops serving over 11 million riders annually throughout Macomb, Oakland and Wayne Counties

Transportation Contacts

Road Agencies

The following agencies are responsible for planning, building, and maintaining public roads, bridges, and traffic infrastructure within their specific county.

City of Detroit Department of Public Works

detroitmi.gov

313-224-3901

Livingston County Road Commission

livingstonroads.org

517-546-4250

Monroe County Road Commission

mcrc-mi.org

734-240-5100

Road Commission for Oakland County

rcocweb.org

248-858-4804



Macomb County Department of Roads

macombgov.org

586-463-8671

St. Clair County Road Commission

sccrc-roads.org

810-364-5720

Washtenaw County Road Commission

wcroads.org

734-761-1500

Wayne County Department of Public Services

waynecountymi.gov

313- 224-7600



Transportation Contacts

Federal, State, and Subregional Agencies

Federal Highway Administration, Michigan Division (FHWA)

highways.dot.gov/field-offices/michigan

517-377-1844

Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

transit.dot.gov

312-353-2789

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)

michigan.gov/mdot

517-373-2240

St. Clair County Transportation Study (SCCOTS)

stclaircounty.org

810-989-6950

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS)

miwats.org

734-994-3127



Glossary and Acronyms

Air Quality Conformity Analysis

Process of measuring air quality against the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA); involves physical and chemical measures of various pollutants' concentrations in the ambient air for a specific geographic area during a defined time period and determines whether the area meets the NAAQS.

Civic Advisory Committee (CAC)

A representative group of residents, business owners, community leaders, and other interested parties that meet regularly to discuss issues of common concern. SEMCOG's CAC is open to participation from all such individuals in Southeast Michigan.

Commuter Connect

Commuter Connect is a rideshare program of SEMCOG and the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (TheRide) that provides a resource for finding travel options like carpool, vanpool, transit, and other options throughout Southeast Michigan. You can also record your trips to see your savings, track your impact, and even qualify for special rewards.

Congestion

Traffic congestion occurs when vehicular travel drops to an unacceptable speed. Congestion can either be recurring (happening during peak travel periods on a daily basis) or non-recurring (happening at unpredictable times and places).

Environmental Justice (EJ)

A federal directive requiring all federal programs to identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. Populations considered to be EJ populations are: African American, Asian American, Native American, or Hispanic persons; and low-income households.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

A branch of the U.S. Department of Transportation that administers the federal-aid highway program and provides financial assistance to states for improving highways, urban and rural roads, and bridges.

Federal-Aid Committee (FAC)

Each county has a Federal-Aid Committee that evaluates data and recommends projects to meet regional transportation goals while satisfying local needs. The transportation studies in St. Clair County (SCCOTS) and Washtenaw County (WATS) also serve as FACs. The City of Detroit also has its own FAC.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

A branch of the U.S. Department of Transportation that administers, regulates, and helps fund the country's public transportation systems.

Active Transportation

A transportation mode not using motorized vehicles. For example, walking, bicycling, horseback riding, and rollerblading are all types of active – or nonmotorized – transportation.

Glossary and Acronyms

Public Comment

Feedback from the public as part of the region's public involvement process.

Public Transit

High-capacity passenger transportation services operating on schedules along designated routes.

Region

A metropolitan area that includes urban and rural subregions. The Southeast Michigan region includes Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

The 20+ year, long-range, multimodal plan updated every four years, documenting policies, initiatives, and projects related to the region's surface transportation.

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)

A regional planning partner with a voluntary membership comprising counties, cities, villages, townships, intermediate school districts, and community colleges in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties. SEMCOG also serves as the region's designated MPO.

Transportation Coordinating Council (TCC)

A SEMCOG council that identifies and responds to regional transportation issues. The TCC recommends action on the Regional Transportation Plan and its implementation through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Infrastructure

The physical underpinnings of society at-large, including, but not limited to, roads, bridges, water systems, transit, sidewalks, and bikeways.

Transportation System

An intermodal system containing all forms of transportation in a unified, interconnected manner, including roads, bridges, transit, airports, border crossings, ports, sidewalks, and bicycle pathways.

U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)

A federal agency that serves the country by ensuring a fast, safe, efficient, accessible, and convenient transportation system, while enhancing quality of life.



SEMCOG

SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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Southeast Michigan Council of Governments

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