A Citizens’ Guide to Transportation Planning in Southeast Michigan

How to get involved in the process
Mission

SEMCOG's mission is solving regional planning problems — improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the region's local governments as well as the quality of life in Southeast Michigan. Essential functions are:

- providing a forum for addressing issues which extend beyond individual governmental boundaries by fostering collaborative regional planning and
- facilitating intergovernmental relations among local governments and state and federal agencies.

As a regional planning partnership in Southeast Michigan, SEMCOG is accountable to local governments who join as members. Membership is open to all counties, cities, villages, townships, intermediate school districts, and community colleges in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties.

Responsibilities

SEMCOG's principal activities support local planning through use of SEMCOG's technical, data, and intergovernmental resources. In collaboration with local governments, SEMCOG is responsible for adopting regionwide plans and policies for community and economic development, water and air quality, land use, and transportation, including approval of state and federal transportation projects. Funding for SEMCOG is provided by federal and state grants, contracts, and membership fees.

Policy decision making

All SEMCOG policy decisions are made by local elected officials, ensuring that regional policies reflect the interests of member communities. Participants serve on one or both of the policy-making bodies — the General Assembly and the Executive Committee.

Prior to policy adoption, technical advisory councils provide the structure for gaining input on transportation, environment, community and economic development, data analysis, and education. This deliberative process includes broad-based representation from local governments, the business community, environmental organizations and other special interest citizens groups.

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First Edition
February 2001
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Abstract

This guide outlines the broad picture of regional transportation planning in Southeast Michigan. It describes the activities of SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, and shows concerned citizens how they can participate in the transportation-planning process.

Preparation of this document was financed in part through grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration and Federal Highway Administration through the Michigan Department of Transportation and local membership dues.

Permission is granted to cite portions of this publication, with proper attribution. The first source attribution must be “SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments”; subsequently, “SEMCOG” is sufficient. Reprinting in any form must include the publication’s full title page.

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The purpose of this booklet is to outline the broad picture of regional planning for Southeast Michigan citizens. We hope to familiarize you with the activities of SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, and show you how you can participate as a concerned citizen.

The pages of this Citizens' Guide will zero in on SEMCOG's role in transportation planning and tell you how to get involved in the process. If there's something you want to change, our basic message is that the earlier you get involved, the better your chances will be to create the impact you desire.

To illustrate, here are two real-life examples:

- A grass-roots organization of concerned citizens in Monroe County used the Internet to eliminate an alternative from further consideration in a Michigan Department of Transportation study to construct a portion of the proposed I-73 superhighway through Whiteford, Bedford, and Erie Townships.
- The Livingston County Road Commission removed the widening of Winans Lake Road in Hamburg Township from SEMCOG's 2025 Regional Transportation Plan. A public hearing in Hamburg Township influenced the decision and suggested other viable alternatives.

Is it worth the effort to become versed in the mobility business? More and more Southeast Michigan citizens are answering "yes" to that question. Whether motivated by a wish to improve public transit, a quest to understand why every road seems to be under construction, or a desire for radically different transportation systems, all seek a say in how the millions of dollars in public monies are spent annually on the region's extensive network of highways, public transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian routes, local roads, bridges, and waterways.

Our aim is to encourage informed and productive citizen participation in transportation activities. No single organization has a monopoly on good ideas. Often, good ideas happen through an open exchange of information and viewpoints. And, given increasing demands on limited public funds, transportation programs and projects cannot proceed without...
citizen acceptance and support that come through an educated public and an open, inclusive process.

We’ve done our best to explain things in plain language. However, a lot of the work that SEMCOG does, including transportation planning, seems to have a language all its own. To help you out, we’ve provided a glossary, beginning on page 30 of this guide, that defines commonly used terms and acronyms.

Some basic facts about Southeast Michigan

Population

With a population of more than 4.8 million, Southeast Michigan is the eighth-largest metropolitan area in the United States. By the year 2025, the region’s population is expected to climb to 5.4 million, while the number of households grows 20 percent, from the current 1.83 million to 2.2 million. In addition, the number of jobs regionwide will increase from 2.73 million to over 2.9 million.

The region

Southeast Michigan encompasses seven counties — Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne.

Wayne County is the region’s most populous county, with a population of more than two million. By 2025, Oakland County’s population will likely grow the most, increasing by more than 311,000 to a total of 1.5 million; Livingston County is expected to have the largest percentage increase in population at 41 percent to a total of more than 217,000.

Home to 233 municipalities, the region’s 4,600-square-mile area is 35 percent developed. To accommodate the anticipated growth in Southeast Michigan, an additional 367 square miles (nearly one quarter of the remaining undeveloped land) could be developed by 2025. By that year, SEMCOG estimates that the region could be 43 percent developed.

Transportation network

Southeast Michigan’s transportation network includes 382 miles of interstate freeways, 6,000 miles of major roadways, 15,150 miles of local streets and roads, and 950 miles of bike paths. In all, that’s 22,500 miles which must be maintained, policed, cleaned, and frequently repaved or rebuilt. In addition, there are 3,543 bridges, 915 miles of active railroad tracks, five major airports, and two ports.

Mass transit — DDOT (Detroit Department of Transportation) and SMART (Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation) own 900 large buses, which travel a total of 102,000 miles daily on major roads in our region. Total daily ridership averages about 173,000. There are also more than 470 small buses and vans which travel some 38,000 miles daily on our local streets and roads. In addition, daily ridership on AATA (Ann Arbor Transportation Authority) buses averages about 15,000; on the BWATC (Blue Water Area Transportation Commission), average daily ridership is 1,200. Two percent of workers travel to work by bus.

The typical household makes eight trips a day.

The commute

Work trips account for nearly 20 percent of all travel in Southeast Michigan. On an average work day, 94 percent of the region’s commuters travel to work by car, van, or light truck; one percent by car or vanpool with two or more persons; and two percent by public transit. Two percent walk and one percent travel by some other means, such as bicycle, motorcycle, or taxi.

Vehicles

In Southeast Michigan, there are 3.9 million passenger vehicles traveling our road network, plus some 200,000 additional passenger cars that travel into our region each day. Also sharing the roads each day are 61,000 18-wheel trucks, 710,000 smaller trucks and vans, and 64,000 motorcycles. In total, those vehicles travel 42 billion miles annually; by 2025, that will increase to 48 billion miles annually.

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An overview of SEMCOG

What is SEMCOG?

SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, is legally organized as a multipurpose regional planning agency under Michigan Public Act 281 of 1945. SEMCOG was formed in 1968 and is an organization of local member governments. SEMCOG recognizes that the best solutions are those developed closest to home. Thus, this partnership improves the ability of local governments to work on their own and provides a means to meet common regional concerns. SEMCOG is not itself a government.

Organization — SEMCOG operating procedures support representative democracy. Each local member government (currently, there are 147 members, including all seven counties) is represented at SEMCOG by a locally elected official. Citizens are, thereby, represented on SEMCOG by the officials they elect, who are, in turn, appointed to SEMCOG committees.

SEMCOG is governed by a General Assembly, comprised of elected officials who are delegates and alternates from all member communities. The General Assembly meets three times a year to adopt the annual work program, annual budget, and membership fee schedules; adopt or amend bylaws; and approve regional plans.

SEMCOG’s main policy-making body is the Executive Committee, a subset of General Assembly delegates and alternates. This committee reviews regional studies and takes action on policies and legislation. It typically meets seven times a year. Executive Committee and General Assembly meetings are open to the public.

Staff and budget — SEMCOG has a full-time-equivalent staff of 90 and an annual operating budget of $9.7 million, funded through grants from federal and state government and local membership contributions.

What does SEMCOG do?

The staff at SEMCOG wear many hats, but their goal is always the same — working together to enhance the quality of life in Southeast Michigan. Here are some examples:

SEMCOG spreads the word — SEMCOG is a forum where all levels of local government officials in Southeast Michigan meet and deliberate on regionwide issues. SEMCOG also takes its message on the road, meeting with local governments and citizens on issues of regional importance.

SEMCOG plans — As a regional planning agency, SEMCOG supports local planning through technical, data, and intergovernmental resources.

As the region’s designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), SEMCOG’s regional transportation planning responsibilities include developing the official Regional Transportation Plan (see page 10 for more information).

SEMCOG is also the federally designated Transportation Management Area (TMA) under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), a designation given to all urbanized areas with populations over 200,000.

Under the federal Water Pollution Control Act and the Clean Air Act, SEMCOG is the designated planning agency for both water and air quality.

SEMCOG is also responsible for specific housing and land use planning elements, as authorized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

SEMCOG advocates — SEMCOG represents local governments in both Lansing and Washington, advocating for policies related to its planning areas. This has become an increasingly important role with the realization that SEMCOG’s single, strong voice represents 147 local government members.

SEMCOG provides data — What are the latest population estimates for the region? How many miles of roadway are in Southeast Michigan? What are the most recent projections for economic growth? Ask SEMCOG.

SEMCOG is the premier resource for data in the region, routinely gathering and analyzing information on the region’s economy and quality of life for public and private sector decision making.
Some specifics of the 2025 RTP

Not enough money — We have identified $24 billion in funds currently available to improve and maintain Southeast Michigan’s transportation system over the next 25 years. But, we’ve identified $41 billion in needs. That means we are $17 billion short.

Maintaining, not enhancing — The shortage of funds means that we will spend our available money maintaining the existing infrastructure (roads, bridges, buses), but not enhancing it. We’ll spend 40 percent of RTP funds resurfacing or rebuilding 7,100 miles of road — responding to the public’s dissatisfaction with driving conditions. To help address the congestion problem on 727 miles of freeway and roadway, 425 miles will be widened. Only 13 miles of new roadway will be built.

Corridor studies — The 2025 RTP includes 24 travel-corridor studies, which will analyze current and projected needs and develop recommendations for improving travel along high-priority corridors. Studies on both I-75 in Oakland County and I-94 in Detroit, two of the area’s most congested corridors, are nearing completion.

Transit — Public transit is a significant part of the 2025 RTP, but public comment indicates that more should be done. The plan contains $6 billion in public transit projects over the next 25 years. And while we will spend every available transit dollar, that will do nothing more than maintain the existing, inadequate system. Why? Local funding for transit is currently only $19 per capita. Compare that to San Francisco, which leads the way with $139 in local funds per capita. Even if more federal funds were available for capital projects, we could not provide the local match needed to receive the funds. The 2025 RTP calls for SEMCOG to develop a vision for public transit. Currently under development, it will need to be a vision so compelling that the region’s citizens and its elected leaders will vote for the local funding.

The RTP’s four goals:

1. Provide accessibility and mobility for all people and goods.
2. Invest strategically in transportation infrastructure to enhance the vitality of the community.
3. Promote a safe and secure transportation system.
4. Protect and enhance the environment.
Think locally, act locally — the best way to influence transportation spending

Whether you’d like to see improved transit service for the region or just wish someone would repaint the crosswalk at the corner, you have a stake in the region’s transportation system. And, as a citizen, you can have a voice in how transportation dollars are spent. The key is learning how best to be heard.

Federal money = federal requirements

Nearly all major transportation improvements made in Southeast Michigan receive federal funding. Most often, the federal government pays for part of a project, and the local community or transportation agency matches their funds. But, before a transportation project can receive those federal funds, it must take a series of steps to make sure that the public money is well spent. Each step presents an opportunity for citizen involvement—for your voice to be heard. As Southeast Michigan’s Metropolitan Planning Organization, SEMCOG represents an important part. For any transportation project in the region to receive federal money, it has to be included in SEMCOG’s RTP.

For instance, if a local community plans to request federal funds to upgrade traffic signals, they must submit their plans to the county Federal-Aid Committee. Each of Southeast Michigan’s seven counties, in turn, make a list of all the projects they and their communities have planned, and pass it along to SEMCOG. The City of Detroit, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) all submit their project lists separately. SEMCOG evaluates each project’s merit according to broad, regional priorities outlined in the RTP. If you want to shape regional policy, SEMCOG is the place to go. However, if you hope to influence a particular project, your impact will be greater a little closer to home.

Go to the source

The best place to influence a project is at the local level — where projects begin. For instance, if you have a suggestion for resurfacing a road, find out who has jurisdiction over the road (is it a city, county, or state road?). MDOT, your local municipal government, or county road commission will be able to direct you to the right place (see page 23). Once you know who’s in charge, take full advantage of opportunities they present to voice support for or objection to projects. Often, this will mean commenting at a local council or committee meeting. You can also write a letter, phone, or e-mail the appropriate elected official(s).

The sooner and closer to home you comment, the greater the impact. Officials can more easily incorporate your suggestions if they come at the beginning of the process, before time and energy have been invested hammering out the details. Projects aren’t set in stone until they receive federal approval, but after local approval, the cement begins to dry. When projects are on the ground level you can speak with those most familiar with them. By the time they reach SEMCOG, the project you care about is just one among thousands.

The path to completion

SEMCOG staff compiles the thousands of projects received from other agencies into a single list. The list moves through a series of committee meetings to final adoption at SEMCOG’s General Assembly. During this entire process, individual projects remain open to public scrutiny and comment and are subject to change. SEMCOG accepts comments via fax, mail, e-mail, phone hotline — you name it. Or come to one of SEMCOG’s meetings and voice your ideas in person.

When projects from the long range RTP are ready to be implemented, they are plucked from the RTP and submitted to SEMCOG again — with yet another round of evaluation, voting, and public comment—for programming into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP; see page 20). Inclusion in the TIP basically means that the planned project is ready to become a reality.

From the TIP, projects are sent to Lansing for inclusion in the State TIP (STIP). By now, the major steps have been completed. After the STIP receives approval from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), projects are completed by their sponsoring agencies and FHWA or FTA sends reimbursement from federal funds.
**2025 RTP revenues**

Thirty-seven percent of the funds in the 2025 RTP come from the federal government’s coffers and the remaining 63 percent is contributed by state and local government agencies such as cities and counties. State and local funds for both road and transit agencies are primarily used for operating expenses (rather than capital expenditures). While some operating expenses are included in MDOT’s state and local funds, this represents only a small portion of the actual figure.

**2025 RTP expenditures**

Projects in the 2025 RTP cover everything from bridges to buses — essentially, anything that moves people or products by land or water. It is important to note that 88 percent of the capital funds in the 2025 RTP will be spent maintaining what currently exists. The following are the major categories that receive funding.

**Preservation** — Resurfacing or replacing 7,100 miles of the region’s 22,576 miles of existing roadways.

**Bridges** — Repairing and/or replacing 2,064 of the region’s 3,500 bridges.

**Transit Capital** — Maintaining the region’s transit systems (e.g., replacing buses).

**Road Capacity** — Increasing traffic capacity, usually by widening existing roads.

**Safety** — Funding safety projects and infrastructure (e.g., traffic signals, crosswalks).

**Non-motorized** — Maintaining and improving non-motorized transportation infrastructure (e.g., pedestrian walkways and bike paths).

**Study** — Funding studies to plan for the region’s future transportation needs by evaluating the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of plans and exploring alternatives.

**Other** — Funding for numerous miscellaneous projects, such as public education, alternative commute, intermodal transportation, and border-crossing projects.

**2025 RTP funding distribution: How we’re spending $13 billion**

[Note: In addition to the capital expenditures described above, there are $11 billion in road and transit operating expenditures.]
More than just roads: Examples of 2025 RTP projects

With a transportation network spanning seven counties and 223 local governments, the RTP weaves thousands of projects into a cohesive unit. The following list and map (right) illustrate the types of projects included in the RTP, with an example from each county. The projects described are a sampling; they do not represent county priorities. A complete list of projects in the 2025 RTP is available from SEMCOG.

Roads: In Macomb County, Harrington Rd. from M-3 to Mulberry in Mt. Clemens will be reconstructed.

Bridges: In Livingston County, the Grand River Rd. bridge over the Red Cedar River will be replaced.

Transit: In St. Clair County, the Blue Water Area Transportation Commission (BWATC) will purchase 20 compressed natural gas (CNG) paratransit buses and one large CNG bus.

Non-motorized: In Washtenaw County, access to parks will be increased for pedestrians along the Huron River in the City of Ypsilanti.

Safety: Macomb County will spend nearly $17 million to improve traffic signals and safety at intersections countywide.

Technology: Oakland County will operate the FAST-TRAC signal-coordination program to improve traffic flow.

Study: In Wayne County, a study will determine if a rail system from Downtown Detroit to Detroit Metro Airport is feasible.

Marine ports/ferries: The Detroit River waterfront dock in Wayne County will be reconstructed.

Railroads: In Monroe County, Conrail lines will be consolidated and Warren Yard will be relocated.

Intermodal freight facilities: An intermodal freight facility will be built in southwest Detroit.

International border crossings: Access from I-75 and I-96 to and from the Ambassador Bridge will be improved.
Regional goals are developed

A regional assessment identifies:
- Financial limitations
- Demographic changes
- Federal, state, and local input
- Current and future needs

A regional strategy is developed to address:
- Projects
- Policies
- Initiatives

Regional assessment identifies:
- Financial limitations
- Demographic changes
- Federal, state, and local input
- Current and future needs

The plan moves through committees to final adoption:
- SCCOTS reviews
- UATS reviews (see page 22)

Plan is evaluated to make sure it accounts for:
- Air quality
- Environmental justice
- Finances
- Public involvement
- Federal planning requirements
- 2025 RTP goals

SEMCOG Executive Committee reviews and approves

SEMCOG Transporation Advisory Council reviews and recommends to Executive Committee

State review (MDOT/MDEQ) (see page 31)

Federal review (USDOT/USEPA) (see page 34)
**TIP: Putting the RTP into action**

If you think of the RTP project list as a warehouse full of transportation projects for the next 20-plus years, the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) is the vehicle that carries those projects to market. Every two years (more frequently, if needed) the TIP pulls projects from the RTP which will be ready to begin within the next three years.

Each county and the City of Detroit has a Federal Aid Committee which develops lists that SEMCOG compiles into the TIP. The process begins when SEMCOG asks Federal Aid Committees to propose projects for the coming years. UATS in Washtenaw County and SCCOTS in St. Clair County submit the proposed projects for their counties to SEMCOG. MDOT and SMART also submit their projects.

The TIP not only lists specific projects, but also the anticipated schedule and cost for each project. Like the RTP, the projects in the TIP must be financially constrained, undergo a series of evaluations, and include opportunity for public comment (see the TIP flowchart at right).

Once compiled, review of the TIP begins. Next, the TIP Development Committee (TIPDC), an advisory committee to SEMCOG’s Transportation Advisory Council (TAC), convenes to recommend the list of projects. Projects receive air-quality and environmental justice analyses, and during this time there is a 30-day public review.

SEMCOG’s TAC then reviews the projects and makes recommendations to SEMCOG’s Executive Committee. TAC and the Executive Committee reviews provide forums for elected representatives from local communities to determine the final list of TIP projects. Upon Executive Committee approval, the TIP is submitted to the governor for approval, and then forwarded to the federal government (FHWA and FTA) for final approval.

The TIP is a changing document. Frequently, projects may be added to meet changing priorities or to take advantage of a special opportunity. Other projects may need to be dropped from the list. For this reason, the TIP may be changed after it is approved. It can be amended in order to add, change, or delete projects for a variety of reasons. Amendments to the TIP must undergo the same review and public scrutiny as the original TIP.
Public comment opportunities: RTP process has many partners

The process for developing the Regional Transportation Plan is a complex, collaborative effort involving SEMCOG, the Federal Highway Administration, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Urban Area Transportation Study (UATS), St. Clair County Transportation Study (SCCOTS), regional transit providers, county and local transportation agencies, special interest groups, and the general public.

Public comment on the region’s transportation system is ongoing. It begins with dialogue at the local government level at local government meetings and public hearings. Letters, phone calls, and e-mail are also effective. Public comment is always encouraged and appreciated.

Informed citizens should be aware of SEMCOG’s transportation planning partners, as they all contribute to the RTP. If you live in Washtenaw or St. Clair County, there is an additional partner (UATS or SCCOTS, respectively) between the local governments and SEMCOG.

Because Ann Arbor and Port Huron are urbanized areas with more than 50,000 population, there is also an additional step in the process. In these areas, county-wide organizations collect transportation information and prepare plans for inclusion in the RTP. These organizations are the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Urban Area Transportation Study (UATS) and St. Clair County Transportation Study (SCCOTS). More information on these partners can be found on pages 27-28.
Serving the people: SEMCOG’s public-outreach activities

SEMCOG touches the public in many ways. Here are some examples:

Ozone Action!

The Clean Air Coalition of Southeast Michigan, staffed by SEMCOG, calls Ozone Action! days when weather conditions are likely to combine with pollution to increase ground-level ozone, a threat to human health and the environment.

RideShare

SEMCOG provides a free regional RideShare matching service which offers alternatives to driving alone – carpooling, vanpooling, and telecommuting. As an enhancement to the carpool and vanpool programs, RideShare also provides a Guaranteed Ride Home Program to registered car and vanpoolers.

Information Services

Information Services is responsible for responding to inquiries for SEMCOG publications, census data, maps, aerial photography, and other technical information. Approximately 10,000 requests are received annually via mail, phone (313-961-4266), fax (313-961-4869), email (infoservices@semcog.org), and visits.

SEMCOG Library

Established in 1972, SEMCOG’s library has grown to become the largest planning library in Southeast Michigan. The library’s collection includes more than 1,200 master, land use, and recreation plans for Southeast Michigan communities; approximately 20,000 books and reports on regional planning issues in the areas of transportation, the environment, community and economic development, demographics, public safety, land use, and intergovernmental cooperation; an extensive collection of census material back to the 1940s, with an emphasis on Michigan material; 350 periodicals; and an extensive variety of databases.

Library hours – Library hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. SEMCOG members may borrow materials from the library. Others may use materials on-site; duplication facilities and interlibrary loans are available.

Speakers Bureau

SEMCOG maintains a Speakers Bureau, making public presentations on the transportation planning process to any group upon request. Although primarily used to disseminate information and educate people, each presentation is also a major opportunity to gather new ideas, opinions, and concerns from meeting participants.

SEMCOG’s Web site

Another way to access SEMCOG data is through its Web site — www.semcog.org. The site receives about 300,000 “hits” annually and contains some information unique to the Web, including monthly Population and Household Estimates for all communities in Southeast Michigan.

Community Profiles provides a statistical overview of Southeast Michigan’s communities. Each profile contains census data, current population estimates, forecasted population data, recent residential development, employment forecasts, and current land use. A recent addition to the Web site is Mapping Southeast Michigan, where users can create custom maps of the seven-county region.
There are currently six background layers, 14 additional geographic layers, and 71 datasets that can be interactively mapped.

**SEMCOG Advisory Councils**

Five advisory councils meet regularly to perform the background work necessary to submit recommendations to the Executive Committee and General Assembly. The advisory councils are the Transportation Advisory Council (TAC), Environmental Policy Advisory Council (EPAC), Community and Economic Development Advisory Council (CEDAC), DataCenter Advisory Council (DAC), and Education Advisory Council (EAC). All meetings are open to the public. SEMCOG’s Web site calendar lists all meeting dates; citizens can also call SEMCOG Information Services for meeting dates and times.

Transportation Advisory Council (TAC) — Works with staff to identify and respond to regional issues that involve existing and future transportation systems, including roads and traffic safety, transit, airports, rail, and non-motorized (i.e., bikes and pedestrians). It works to merge public and private sector interests on regional transportation decisions and legislative issues. It recommends action on the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and project implementation through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The Transportation Improvement Program Development Committee (TIPDC) is an advisory committee to SEMCOG’s Transportation Advisory Council. TIPDC reviews projects submitted for funding through the Transportation Improvement Program. The committee consists of members from each of the county’s Federal-Aid Committees, transit agencies, MDOT, TAC, and representatives from counties, cities, villages, townships, and school districts.

**SEMCOG mailing list**

Citizens who wish to receive information from SEMCOG, including its quarterly magazine, SEMscope, are encouraged to complete and mail back the comment card in the back of this guide.

**Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Urban Area Transportation Study Committee**

The Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Urban Area Transportation Study Committee (UATS) is the planning agency for one of the Transportation Management Areas (TMA) within the Southeast Michigan region. The TMA covers all of Washtenaw County, which includes the cities of Ann Arbor, Saline, and Ypsilanti, the villages of Chelsea, Dexter and Manchester as well as twenty townships and half of the City of Milan. The cities, villages, the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) and the Washtenaw County Road Commission are the agencies that initiate the transportation improvements that UATS evaluates and incorporates into the planning process.

UATS frequently provides assistance to its local unit members on transportation-related projects, programs, and issues. This assistance includes securing project funds, analyzing transportation impacts of specific development proposals, supporting grant applications, advocating local views on proposed projects, expediting projects through the implementation process and providing information on transportation-related issues.

Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Urban Area Transportation Study Committee

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SCCOTS — the St. Clair County Transportation Study — helps develop a coordinated transportation system by managing the planning process and encouraging all levels of government, civic groups, and the general public to participate.

SCCOTS is housed within the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) for St. Clair County. It is also a 3-C (Continuing, Cooperative, and Comprehensive) Transportation Study organized under SEMCOG. The planning activities, documents, and programs developed by SCCOTS are designed to complement those of SEMCOG and the MPC.

SCCOTS works with its local partners and SEMCOG to enhance the quality of life in St. Clair County by:

• Spreading the word about the importance of transportation. This is done, in part, through the publication of SCCOTS Fact Sheets (on various subjects) and the SCCOTS Monthly Update, a newsletter.

• Developing, monitoring, and refining local transportation plans and transportation improvement programs for inclusion in SEMCOG’s plans and programs.

• Advocating for specific improvements or services at the local, regional, state, and federal levels, and by commenting on how local development affects the transportation system.

• Collecting, developing, and disseminating data, such as traffic counts and demographics.

SCCOTS operates through a three-tiered committee process — the MPC serves as the policy committee; the SCCOTS Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the MPC; and the SCCOTS Technical Subcommittee makes recommendations on technical issues to the Advisory Committee.

The SCCOTS Advisory Committee serves as a forum for discussion of pertinent issues. Members of the committee include the chief elected official of each city, village, and township; the Chair of the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners; the Chair of the MPC; the chief elected/appointed official from the St. Clair County Road Commission, the Blue Water Area Transportation Commission, SEMCOG, the Michigan Department of Transportation’s Bureau of Transportation Planning and Port Huron Transportation Service Center; and the Federal Highway Administration; as well as the chief elected representatives from interested civic groups. The individuals listed above may appoint an alternate to represent them.

How can I make my thoughts and/or preferences known? Decisions affecting the transportation system are most successfully modified at the beginning of the planning process. Here is a listing of the transportation agencies/agencies/communities operating in St. Clair County:

• City and village roads are controlled by their municipal councils.

• Township roads are controlled by the St. Clair County Road Commission.

• Transit service is controlled (where available) by the Blue Water Area Transportation Commission.

• State highways are controlled by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

The next best place to affect local transportation decision-making in St. Clair County is at SCCOTS. All SCCOTS Advisory Committee and Metropolitan Planning Commission meetings are open to the public. Call the SCCOTS office for more details. You can also comment on projects at the regional level by contacting SEMCOG.

St. Clair County Transportation Study
St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission
200 Grand River Avenue
Suite 202
Port Huron, MI 48060-4017
Phone: 810-989-6950
Fax: 810-989-5931
E-mail: gbaumann@stclaircounty.org
Web site: www.stclaircounty.org
Glossary and acronyms

AATA - Ann Arbor Transit Authority. Provides bus transit service within Washtenaw County.

Air Quality Conformity Analysis - The process of measuring air quality against the NAAQS set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 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 national ambient air quality standards.

Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Urban Area Transportation Study - See UATS.

BWATC - Blue Water Area Transportation Commission. Provides bus transit service in the City of Port Huron and surrounding areas (St. Clair County).

Capacity - The maximum number of vehicles that a road can be reasonably expected to move at expected speeds, under normal conditions.

Capital expenses (also, expenditures, or costs) - Non-recurring or infrequently recurring costs of long-term assets such as buses, stations, or buildings, often including related expenses. Capital funding is financial assistance from federal, state, or local sources to finance public highway or transit-capital-related projects.

Commute trip - Trips made travelling back and forth from home to work.

Congestion - What occurs when road capacity is exceeded, and vehicles are forced to travel slower than the road's designated speed. Congestion can either be recurring congestion (happening often, even daily) or non-recurring (caused by random forces, such as a traffic crash).

Cross-jurisdictional - Describes transportation service that is provided across municipal boundaries (e.g., a road that crosses from one city to another).

DDOT - Detroit Department of Transportation. Oversees the municipal roads and transportation system within the City of Detroit.

Drivers - All motor vehicle operators, bicyclists, pedestrians, and train engineers.

Environmental Justice - Based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 12898 of 1994, there are three basic principles of environmental justice — to avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionate negative effects on low-income and minority populations, to enable meaningful public participation in decision-making, and to prevent the denial of benefits to persons regardless of race, color, or national origin.

Executive Committee - SEMCOG's main policy-making body; the Executive Committee provides the management of the organization. The Executive Committee is the second-to-last SEMCOG committee to review the RTP.

Federal-Aid Committee (FAC) - The agencies charged with managing federal transportation spending, generally at the county level. In Southeast Michigan, Federal-Aid Committees are staffed by the county road commissions. UATS, SCCOTS, and the City of Detroit also have FACs.

FHWA - Federal Highway Administration. Administers, plans, funds, and regulates the federal highway system.

Financial constraint - Federal regulations require that the RTP and TIP be financially constrained, i.e., all projects must have identified a source of funding.

FTA - Federal Transit Administration. Administers, plans, funds, and regulates the country's public transportation systems.

General Assembly (GA) - Composed of elected-official representatives from all SEMCOG members. The GA meets three times a year and votes to adopt regional plans. The GA is the “final stop” at SEMCOG for voting on the RTP.

Intermodal - The movement of people or freight by two or more modes of transportation — on air, land or water. For instance, a shipping container moving from a train, to a truck, to a freighter is using intermodal transportation.

Jurisdiction - The agency or community having legal control of a project.

MDEQ - Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation. The state agency overseeing the operation of state roads and the distribution of state transportation funds.

MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization. The organization designated by the governor that is responsible, along with the state, for comprehensive transportation planning in a metropolitan area. SEMCOG is Southeast Michigan's MPO.

NAAQS - National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Standards required by the Clean Air Act to protect human health and the environment.

Non-motorized transportation - Any method of transportation not using a motor vehicle (usually bicycling or walking).
Operating expenses (also, expenditures, or costs) - Expenses necessary to provide transportation service, to plan and coordinate improvements, and to maintain safe conditions, including both direct costs (such as wages and fuel) and indirect costs (computer expenses and advertising).

Operating funds - Financial assistance from federal, state, or local sources to finance public highway or transit operating expenses.

Pedestrian - An individual traveling on foot (or wheelchair).

Public comment - Feedback from the community as a part of the region's public involvement process.

Public involvement - Public involvement efforts include a variety of techniques targeting the entire community (including ethnic, minority, and low-income groups) and assures that the public has the opportunity to help shape the substance of plans and projects. This includes public participation on committees and at special "visioning sessions."

Public transit - Passenger transportation service. It operates on established schedules along designated routes or lines with specific stops, and is designed to move relatively large numbers of people at one time (e.g., buses and subways). Also known as "mass transit;" "public transportation;" "mass transportation;" and "transit."

Region - An entire metropolitan area, including designated urban and rural subregions. The Southeast Michigan region includes Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties.

RideShare - SEMCOG's program to encourage carpooling and vanpooling. The program aims to conserve energy, reduce pollution, and alleviate congestion, crashes, and injuries.

Road commission - The agency overseeing county roads. Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, and Washtenaw counties each have county road commissions. In Wayne County, the Department of Public Works oversees roads. (See also Federal-Aid Committees.)

RTP - Regional Transportation Plan. The longrange (at least 20 years) transportation plan that documents the projects, policies, and initiatives needed to meet the region's transportation needs.

SCCOTS - St. Clair County Transportation Study. SEMCOG's partner in St. Clair County; they collect transportation information and prepare plans for inclusion in the RTP.

SEMCOG - Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. A regional planning partnership of local governmental units serving 4.8 million people in the seven-county region of Southeast Michigan. Currently, there are 147 member communities, including all seven counties. SEMCOG is the region's designated MPO.

SMART - Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation. Provides bus service for Macomb County and for specific communities within Oakland and Wayne counties.

STIP - State Transportation Improvement Program. The State of Michigan's compilation list of all the TIPs in the state.

TAC - Transportation Advisory Council. TAC includes elected officials, transportation technicians, and representatives of special interest organizations. TAC is the first SEMCOG committee to review the RTP.


TIP - Transportation Improvement Program. SEMCOG's document listing transportation projects to be funded under federal transportation programs for a three-year period. To be eligible for federal funding, a project must be included in the TIP.

TIPDC - Transportation Improvement Program Development Committee. An advisory committee to SEMCOG's Transportation Advisory Council. TIPDC reviews projects submitted for funding through the Transportation Improvement Program. The committee consists of members from each of the county's Federal-Aid Committees, MDOT, and representatives from counties, cities, villages, townships, and school districts.

TMA - Transportation Management Area. An urbanized area with a population over 200,000 (as determined by the latest census); TMA designation is usually requested by the governor and the MPO (or affected local officials), and is officially designated by FHWA and the FTA. In Southeast Michigan, SEMCOG and UATS are designated TMAs.

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

Transportation system - An intermodal system containing all forms of transportation in a unified, interconnected manner, including highways, transit, non-motorized pathways, aviation, marine ports, etc.
Trip - Any travel by a person involving a motorized vehicle, walking (five minutes or more), or use of a bicycle. Walking for exercise, neighborhood strolling, and recreational biking are not considered trips.

Urbanized area - An area containing a city or “twin cities” of 50,000 or more people surrounded by a closely settled incorporated area, which also meets specified criteria for population and density. Southeast Michigan has four urbanized areas — Detroit, Ann Arbor, Port Huron, and Toledo, Ohio.

UATS - Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Urban Area Transportation Study. SEMCOG’s partner in Washtenaw County, they collect transportation information and prepare plans for inclusion in the RTP; is also a federally designated TMA under TEA-21.

USDOT - United States Department of Transportation.

USEPA - United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Directions to SEMCOG

Parking is available in structure adjacent to building.

Southbound I-75*

Take I-75 south to I-375, follow I-375 south onto westbound Jefferson Ave. Turn right on Woodward Ave. Go north two blocks, turn left on Congress. Turn left on Griswold, go south half a block and turn right into the Larned/ Griswold/ Congress Parking Garage. (Eastbound I-94 will connect you to I-75.)

Southbound Lodge (M-10)*

Follow the Lodge south to eastbound Jefferson Ave. Turn left onto Woodward. Go north two blocks, turn left on Congress. Turn left on Griswold, go south half a block and turn right into the Larned/ Griswold/ Congress Parking Garage. (Northbound I-75 and westbound I-94 will connect you to the Lodge.)

*Eastbound I-96 connects to both I-75 and I-94.
Tell us what you think . . .

This Citizens’ Guide is part of a larger effort to foster greater public awareness of and involvement in the transportation decision-making process. Comments and suggestions for future editions of this guide and for improving SEMCOG’s public involvement activities are always welcome; contact information is listed below. Also, we hope you’ll take a few minutes to fill out and return this form. Thanks for your interest!

Please rank these “pieces” of the region’s transportation system. (Use 1 to indicate the most important to you.)

[ ] Highways and roads  [ ] Public transit  [ ] Freight and trade  [ ] Non-Motorized

I’d like to make the following comments/ suggestions for future editions. ____________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________ ...
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

If this edition of the Citizens’ Guide has piqued your interest in the transportation planning process, check the appropriate boxes below and return to SEMCOG.

[ ] Send me more copies of this issue of the Citizens’ Guide ( ______ quantity).
[ ] Send me a copy of the special edition of SEMscope that summarizes the 2025 Regional Transportation Plan for Southeast Michigan.
[ ] I’d like someone from SEMCOG to speak to my civic organization about the 2025 Regional Transportation Plan. Please contact me at the number listed below.

Name/ Title ________________________________________________________________________________________
Organization _______________________________________________________________________________________
Address __________________________________________________________________________________________
City/ State/ Zip ____________________________________________________________________________________
Phone/ E-Mail _____________________________________________________________________________________