



# Commission Communications

*A communications tool of the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission*

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**June/July 2002**

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## THE BIG MOVE

WMSRDC has moved to:  
**316 Morris Avenue**

*(on the third floor of the Terrace Plaza building in downtown Muskegon)*

Please continue to send all correspondence to:

**P.O. Box 387  
Muskegon, MI 49443-0387**

The telephone and fax numbers remain the same:

**(231) 722-7878  
(231) 722-9362 - fax**

### Rural Projects Going Strong

#### Regional Rural Development Committee

The Regional Solid Waste Committee will now be known as the Regional Rural Development Committee. The committee is made up of county officials from Lake, Mason, Newaygo and Oceana Counties; Regional Commission staff; and representatives from Sunset Waste. They began meeting in June of 2001 to discuss solid waste

*(see Rural Development, page 8)*

#### West Michigan Economic Development Coalition

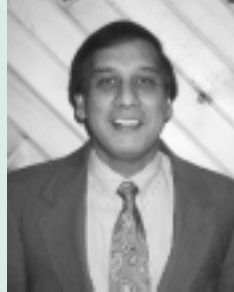
On Friday, July 19, 2002 the West Michigan Economic Development Coalition entered into its fifth year of existence. The Coalition began meeting in 1997 and is made up of economic development professionals from Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana Counties. Additional members include representatives from the U.S. Depart

*(see WMEDC, page 8)*

# DIRECTIVES

A COMMENTARY BY SANDEEP DEY,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Muskegon Mall Closed/ Wimzerdick Moving Out...VERY SAD!!!



As I write this short commentary, work stations in the office are being dismantled and packing boxes filled for our move next week to another downtown Muskegon office location. It is sad.

The downtown Muskegon Mall, once the centerpiece of urban revitalization of the central city of Muskegon, is closed - a victim to a brand new, \$50 million suburban mall. The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (Wimzerdick is the Commission's nick name amongst local government officials!!!), which has been a tenant of several Muskegon Mall buildings for over two decades, is moving out.

Though the Commission's commitment to the central city remains strong, as evidenced by our relocation to another downtown location, it is sad to see the closed Muskegon Mall. There is talk in the community of turning the mall into a casino for gamblers, a move I have strongly recommended against in the past and continue to do so.

There is no short cut to economic development. Community leaders need to develop a new vision for the vacant mall, just like visionary leaders of the 1970s came together and built it a quarter century ago.

Sincerely,

Sandeep Dey

## At A Glance

A Digest of Information Related to  
the Regional Commission

### New Marriage

Congratulations to Associate Planner Brian Mulnix and his wife Melissa who were married on June 15, 2002.

### Meeting Notice

A Muskegon Area Transportation Planning Program (MATPP) Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2002.

Commission Communications is a copyrighted publication of the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC). WMSRDC is a regional council of governments serving 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana Counties. The Commission is financed by funds from state and federal grants and by member communities.

Michael McGovern, Chairman

Ray Rathbun, Vice-Chairman

Larry Hansen, Secretary

Amy Haack, Newsletter Editor



# FOCUS: Special Projects

## WMSRDC Contributions...Leading the West Michigan Region into the 21st century

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, created in 1970 under state enabling legislation (Public Act 46 - Regional Economic Development Commission Act), undertakes a number of planning and development programs in the area of economic development, transportation planning, housing and community development, environmental management and local government services. The Commission also undertakes a limited number of special projects. A few of the special projects undertaken over the years include:

- Preparation of the Muskegon Area Children's Agenda: Profile, which through a statistical analysis of key indicators of children's health, traces the different phases of a child's development into adulthood. Project received a national innovation award.
- Development and implementation of the Groundwater Education in Michigan (GEM) project funded by the Kellogg Foundation. This innovative project, which also received a national award, attempted to educate local governments and their planning commissions regarding best management practices for protecting groundwater in Michigan.
- Development of a feasibility study for an Arts and Crafts Incubator Center in one of our rural counties in the region.
- Preparation of a location study for an adult community corrections center for a metropolitan county in our region utilizing federal standards. This study was utilized in deciding the location of the new facility.
- Development of a pioneering industrial land absorption analysis to develop a system of regional industrial parks in the region.

For further information on other Commission special projects, contact the Commission's office or log on to WMSRDC's website at [www.wmsrdc.org](http://www.wmsrdc.org) ■



## Current Transportation Trends

According to a recent issue of the Futurist Magazine, in many parts of the world, recent trends do not favor diverse, next-generation transportation systems. Rather, cars, trucks, and planes are moving more people and goods, while rails, bicycles, and other less environmentally damaging transport modes are declining. Increasing incomes, sprawling cities, and globalizing companies, among other factors, are sustaining these shifts. Fuel use for transportation is rising as a result.

The global car fleet now numbers more than 500 million. In the United States, the number of household vehicles increased at six times the rate of the population between 1969 and 1995. In western Europe, passenger car traffic more than doubled between 1970 and 1995, and trucking traffic tripled, growing faster than rail or water traffic.

As road and air travel have grown, rail has become relatively less important. Since the 1980s, road networks have expanded more than rail networks in a number of countries. The World Bank railways database shows that rail passenger traffic has been decreasing in many countries and that rail freight traffic has been decreasing in many countries and that rail freight traffic has changed little except in the United States, where it has increased. In Europe, however, railways have become less important for moving freight while trucking has greatly expanded.

Just as cars and trucks appear to be taking long-distance customers away from railways, motorcycles and cars are supplanting bicycles for shorter trips. Bicycle production fell to 79 million units in 1998, which was 25 percent below the peak of 107 million bicycles in 1995. Bicycles are on the decline even in Asia, the world's leader in production and use.

Many factors are contributing to the growth in road and air travel. As people get richer, they often buy motor vehicles. For instance, between 1980 and 1995, South Korea's GDP tripled - and the number





of vehicles increased 16-fold.

But income alone does not dictate differences in travel. Studying 47 major metropolitan areas in Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America, researchers at Australia's Murdoch University found that car use in cities of North America and Australia is higher than could be explained by wealth alone. The U.S. cities surveyed has, on average, 141 percent more car use than the European cities, but had 15 percent less per capita income. Lower car use is linked not simply to lower incomes but to greater support for public transit and bicycling, land-use rules that promote development along public transportation routes, and higher fuel taxes.

Cars have helped to change the structure of cities, which in turn has contributed to greater vehicle use. Cities have spread out over larger expanses of land as builders have constructed wide expressways and ample parking to accommodate motor vehicles. Even U.S. metropolitan areas with stable or declining populations over the past 30 years - places like Detroit or Cleveland - have actually grown in land area. As cities sprawl, cars become essential while transit, bicycling, and walking become less practical.

Bikes are much cheaper than motor vehicles and are well suited to short trips, but pollution, unsafe roads, and a lack of safe bike parking often keep cyclists off the road. For instance, the U.S. based Institute for Transportation and Development Policy found that 60 percent of very short, "bikable" trips in Surabaya, Indonesia, are made by motor vehicle; in Germany, where streets are more inviting for pedestrians and cyclists, only 15 percent of such trips are by motor vehicles.

With the most energy-intensive transportation methods - cars, trucks, and planes - being used more often, fuel use is increasing. Energy use in industrial countries has shifted from "production to pleasure," according to Lee Schipper of the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. While improved efficiency has lowered energy use in manufacturing, trends in personal mobility - more vehicle use with fewer passengers per vehicle - have actually raised energy use in the transportation sector. Personal travel now outweighs trucking transport in industrial countries. Passenger trips generally account for 60 to 70 percent of energy use and emissions from transportation ■



# PERFORMANCE REPORT

## Hazard Mitigation Plans

All five counties in the region have passed resolutions in support of preparing hazard mitigation plans; and have designated the Regional Commission as the planning agency to prepare plans through a joint cooperative planning process.

The Regional Commission will soon be submitting an application to the Michigan Department of State Police, Emergency Services Division, for a planning grant ■

## Long Range Transportation Plan Approved

The Regional Commission received official confirmation that the Year 2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for Muskegon County was approved July 1, 2002, by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The LRTP provides for a multi-jurisdictional, multi-year look at the Muskegon area's future

transportation system. Transportation needs and resources were evaluated for the period 2000 to 2025, and appropriate plans were made for meeting long-term needs, in the best manner possible with constrained finances. The plan also includes the use of local, state, and federal transportation goals and objectives to guide transportation plans and projects.

This plan covers transportation for all of the Muskegon area and, as such, is heavily flavored with input from local elected officials, municipal and road agency staff, and the citizens of Muskegon County. The plan provides for both short term and long term transportation plans that cross municipal boundaries and provides a transportation vision for the entire metropolitan area.

For more information on the LRTP, please contact Brian Mulnix, Associate Planner at (231) 722-7878 ext. 20 or at [bmulnix@wmsrdc.org](mailto:bmulnix@wmsrdc.org) ■

## 2002 CEDS Update

The 2002 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update is currently underway. Projects were due to the Regional Commission at the end of May. There were a total of 139 projects received from units of government in the five county region.

This years CEDS will once again provide community profiles for each of the five counties that include the most recently released 2000 census figures. The document will be completed in September and submitted for approval to the Economic Development Administration by October 1, 2002.

For more information regarding the 2002 CEDS update, contact Erin Kuhn, Associate Planner at (231) 722-7878 ext. 18 or at [ekuhn@wmsrdc.org](mailto:ekuhn@wmsrdc.org) ■

## **Muskegon County CDBG Program Completed**

The Regional Commission just completed the fourth Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program for Muskegon County.

The \$375,000 grant allowed for the repair of seventeen homes occupied by low-income households and leveraged an additional investment of \$130,630 from the households. The program engaged the services of several contractors and their subcontractors and required supplies from various businesses ■

## **Census 2000 Profiles Released for Michigan**

The Census Bureau released Census 2000 demographic profile tables with social, economic, and housing characteristics for Michigan recently. The data, summary tabulations of the responses to census long-form questions, will be used by elected officials and planners to make decisions affecting the quality of life in their communities.

Three new tables are based on answers to the long-form questionnaire, which was delivered

to about 1-in-6 - roughly 19 million - households nationwide.

Some of the characteristics included in the new profile tables are:

- Educational attainment, marital status, grandparents as caregivers, disability status, language spoken at home, place of birth, and ancestry;
- Employment status, occupation, industry, commuting to work, income in 1999 and poverty status in 1999;
- Units in structure, year structure built, vehicles available, home heating fuel, value of owner occupied housing units and monthly rent.

A fourth table, with profile data from the short form, was released last year. It includes characteristics such as age, sex, race, Hispanic or Latino origin, household relationship and household type and homeownership.

The profiles are available for every county, place, metropolitan area, American Indian or Alaska Native area, Hawaiian homeland and congressional district (106th Congress).

To access the profile tables in a downloadable PDF format, go to the Regional Commission's website at [www.wmsrdc.org](http://www.wmsrdc.org) and click on to the demographic section of the website.

For more information or to obtain hard copies of the profiles contact Amy Haack, Senior Planner at (231) 722-7878 ext. 19 or by email at [ahaack@wmsrdc.org](mailto:ahaack@wmsrdc.org) ■

## **MPO Becoming Larger**

Regional Commission staff is currently working on the logistics of enlarging the Muskegon Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) due to Census data released recently. The Census Bureau placed much of the northern Ottawa County Tri-Cities area in Muskegon's urbanized area.

This opens the way for new federal transportation grant possibilities and the potential for Tri-Cities municipalities to join the existing Muskegon MPO.

For more information, please contact Amy Haack, Senior Planner at (231) 722-7878 ext. 19 or by email at [ahaack@wmsrdc.org](mailto:ahaack@wmsrdc.org) ■

## **WMEDC**

*(continued from page 1)*

ment of Commerce Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and WMSRDC Staff.

The Coalition meets on a quarterly basis with the location of the meeting rotating between the five member counties. The

next West Michigan Economic Development Coalition meeting is scheduled for October 25th in Oceana County.

For more information regarding the West Michigan Economic Development Coalition, contact Erin Kuhn, Associate Planner, at (231) 722-7878 ext. 18 or at [ekuhn@wmsrdc.org](mailto:ekuhn@wmsrdc.org). ■

## **Rural Development**

*(continued from page 1)*

issues facing each of the four counties. Over the past year, the issues being discussed by the committee has expanded well beyond solid waste. Therefore, they decided to change the name of the committee as well as broaden their focus.

The next meeting of the newly named Regional Rural Development Committee will be on Friday, September 2, 2002 at the Oceana County Building located in Hart ■



# Commission Communications

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