

Chapter Five IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter briefly reviews the principal steps that need to be taken to implement this Plan. Actions are described first for major road improvements and second for access management activities. The most important activities in each category relate to continued coordination between MDOT and local governments along the corridor.

ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

Chapter Three sets forth the rationale for some road improvements along the US-10/US-31 corridor and Chapter Four detailed specific access management improvements to address congestion and safety issues. Before action on any road improvements, a more refined analysis of the options and dialogue between MDOT and the affected local units of government should take place before selecting the preferred option. In most cases, the selected option will probably be funded using traditional funding sources. In other cases, special funding may need to be pursued. This is most likely with regard to the roundabout options for the north and south junctions of US-10/US-31 outside Scottville, because the cost of these improvements is likely to be significantly more than the other options. These are not high priority recommendations and should be pursued as the opportunity arises, or the need increases. However, some of the new parallel roads may be eligible for financial assistance from MDOT when related to economic development. These are higher priority in many cases and some should be pursued soon.

The first seven objectives in Chapter Two could serve as guidelines in selecting sets of potential improvements and for choosing among options for particular improvements to make in a given year. These objectives are reproduced below:

- “1. Periodically identify the cause of existing or projected congestion along the highway and following examination of alternatives, select improvements that safely preserve the traffic carrying capacity of the highway.*
- 2. When selecting from among alternative capacity improvements, give special consideration not only to cost-effectiveness, but also to uniformity in design so that driver confusion is minimized.*
- 3. When selecting from among alternatives, give special consideration to those that help preserve the investment in existing and planned improvements to the road, such as those that incorporate access management into the design.*
- 4. Design and implement improvement projects in a way which minimizes disruption not only to existing traffic, but also to abutting residences, businesses and other actively used lands.*
- 5. Plan traffic capacity improvement projects to roads managed by MDOT sufficiently far ahead, and in a manner which permits, local governments and the County Road Commission, to most effectively coordinate associated infrastructure improvements on intersecting roadways and to accommodate cost-effective utility expansions or replacement.*

6. *Implement traffic or intersection improvements that are consistent with this Plan.*
7. *Periodically update this Plan to ensure that it continues to guide coordinated land use and highway improvement decisions along the corridor.”*

Once improvements are decided upon, they need to be inserted into MDOT's Five-Year Transportation Plan, which is updated annually. There is no need, nor any realistic likelihood that all the improvements identified in this Plan will all be implemented at the same time, or even that they will all be undertaken. In most cases, improvements will need to be staged over time, probably by common geographic area in order to take advantage of some economies of scale. In some cases, projects in the same area could be staged over several years.

By far the most important consideration as local governments work with MDOT and representatives of any other funding sources to implement the improvements in this Plan, is to maintain a united front and to be mutually supportive of improvements in various parts of the corridor. Very often, projects that might not be highly rated when proposed by a single jurisdiction are much more highly rated when part of a larger plan, and when supported by a variety of jurisdictions. To this end, cooperation among the participating local governments and MDOT in reaching agreement on priorities and a multi-year schedule for corridor improvements will likely pay off with success for all parties.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Chapter Three presented common access management techniques necessary to protect the investment in existing and planned improvements to US-10/US-31. Chapter Four identified specific locations in which some access management improvements are necessary; most of these are to improve safety. While implementing the recommendations in this Plan are very important, there are other important steps that will need to be taken by each of the local governments with zoning authority individually, and then together in concert with MDOT.

Most of these steps are addressed in objectives 8-12 in Chapter Two. Together they represent effective guidelines for implementing the access management and intergovernmental coordination measures presented in this Plan. These objectives are reproduced below:

- “8. *Ensure that land planned and zoned for intensive economic development activities is well suited for such use; that such use is compatible with uses on adjoining lands and the physical characteristics and capacity of the segment of the highway providing access; and is consistent with the local comprehensive plan for the area.*
9. *Ensure that prior to approval of intensive new land uses along the corridor, that appropriate traffic impact studies are done and review is coordinated between MDOT, the local government in which the development is proposed, and affected units of government in adjoining jurisdictions.*
10. *Ensure that prior to site plan approval for any land use along the corridor, that the proposed site plan is first reviewed by a Corridor Advisory Committee so that consistent access management decisions can be made along the corridor.*

11. *Encourage all local units of government along the corridor to adopt and thereafter maintain (with a thorough review at least once each five years), a future land use plan, master plan or comprehensive plan of future land use that serves as the basis for future zoning and infrastructure decisions along the highway, and is carefully coordinated with similar plans in adjoining jurisdictions.*
12. *Encourage all local units of government along the corridor to maintain (with a thorough review at least once each five years), a zoning ordinance which appropriately manages access to the highway consistent with regulations based on MDOT's model regulations and those of adjoining jurisdictions, and is consistent with the future land use, master or comprehensive plan of each community."*

More specifically, the following remedial, preventive and coordinated actions need to be taken by local governments along the US-10/US-31 corridor to successfully implement this Plan.

Remedial Measures

In the already developed parts of the corridor, there are a number of access related remedial measures that were identified in Chapter Four. Most focus on driveway consolidation, driveway closure, sharing of driveways or linking of parking lots. There are two common ways in which these measures are typically implemented. Both are opportunity driven. The first occurs as other road improvements are made. Even simple resurfacing, or rebuild projects in which no capacity improvements are made, present excellent opportunities to close unnecessary driveways and to consolidate and/or share driveways. This requires a coordinated effort between the local unit of government and MDOT to plan far enough ahead so that a representative of each entity can visit with each of the landowners with excess driveways and explain the benefits of driveway closure and reconstruction of a contemporary driveway that meets MDOT standards. If MDOT offers to pay for the removal of the driveways to be closed and to install a new driveway in the most appropriate location and up to current standards, many landowners will agree to the closure and/or consolidation. MDOT can achieve significant cost savings when such measures are coordinated with road resurfacing or reconstruction projects. Landowners often benefit by freeing space in front for parking, snow storage and/or landscaping as well. Obviously, the same effort should be made when capacity improvements are to be undertaken in an area targeted for driveway closures.

The second common opportunity arises when a landowner comes to the local government with a project which requires local site plan approval. This is the process whereby drawings and accompanying information are reviewed to ensure conformance with local zoning requirements, as well as the requirements of county, state or federal agencies. The project could be adaptive reuse of an existing building, expanding an existing building, tearing down an existing building and constructing a new one, or constructing on undeveloped land. As long as the local government has adopted access management standards, then approval of the site plan can be conditioned upon conformance with the access management standards. In situations involving adaptive reuse or expansion of an existing facility, this could provide an opportunity to consolidate or close driveways, connect parking lots, or shift primary access to a side street where one is available. In situations where a new use or structure is involved, a single driveway, properly spaced, with a deceleration lane or taper and correct geometry could be required. Where multiple new uses are involved, a single driveway serving multiple uses could be required instead of separate driveways for each use. In any of these

situations, these are substantial ways in which the access management objectives of this Plan can be implemented.

The site plan review process can be enhanced and potential conflicts avoided by coordinating review of the site plan with MDOT, the County Road Commission and adjoining units of local government. A coordinated site plan review procedure is described a little later in this Chapter.

Preventive Measures

Since large segments of the corridor have not been developed, perhaps the greatest opportunity for successful application of access management techniques is in these areas. Typically that means ensuring wide minimum lot widths to keep driveways widely separated and restricting each existing parcel to only a single access point, even if it is divided in the future. This also ensures adequate driveway spacing which reduces the number of potential conflict points and turning movements, as well as helps ensure the highway traffic is able to move at design speeds--which in turn prevents future congestion. These measures are embodied in the sample access management ordinance in Appendix A, along with the lock-in access option discussed in Chapter Three.

Of course the most effective means of minimizing new access points and preserving the traffic carrying function of a road is to plan and zone abutting land for low intensity resource-based land uses like forestry and agriculture. Much of the land in the eastern part of US-10 and northern part of US-31 is already zoned that way, and the longer it stays that way, the better the goals and objectives of this Plan will be achieved. The worst scenario for achieving the goals and objectives of this Plan is to zone more land for strip commercial or even strip residential development where there is no public sewer or water service already in place. Future commercial or residential development should be planned and built in clusters with the primary access by means of a single access drive, rather than separate driveways for each commercial use or residence. This will require careful coordination of both zoning and land division decisions. But first, those communities on the corridor that do not have a current future land use plan and an updated zoning ordinance with full site plan review provisions, need to get these adopted or there will be little ability to guide future land use and access management decisions consistent with this Plan. Once adopted, it is important to review and if necessary update the local future land use plan and zoning ordinance at least once each five years (which is now required for local plans). Since most of this land is subject to county zoning, the key will be ensuring the County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance are consistent with this Plan.

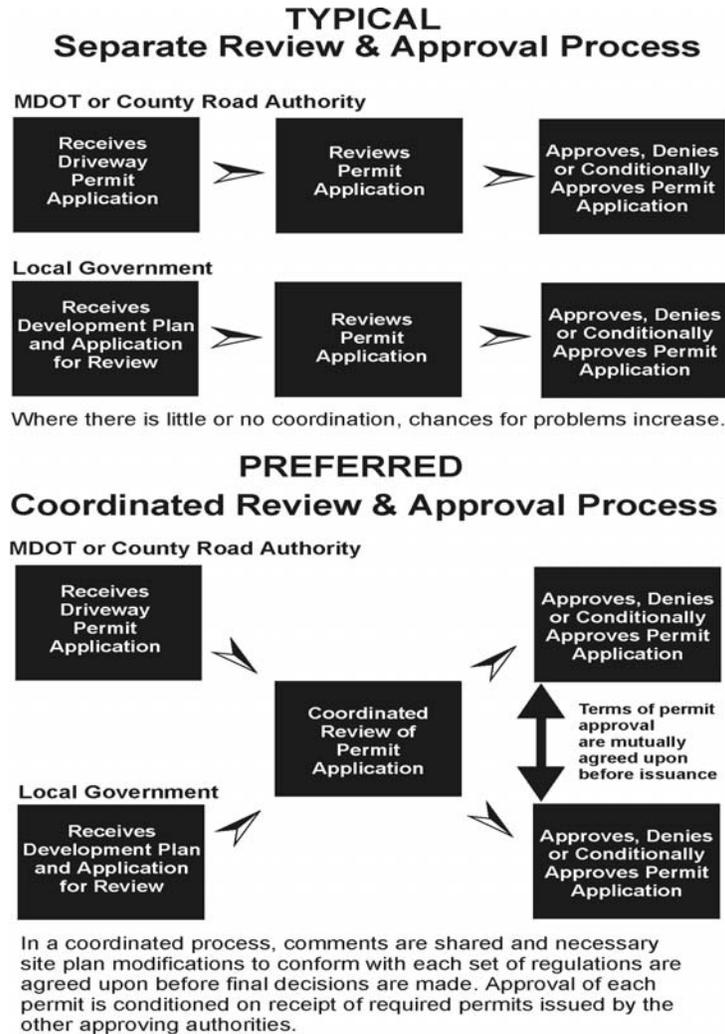
Coordinated Permit Reviews

The "glue" that works best to ensure consistent application of access management standards over time, is a coordinated review process involving all the local government units with zoning authority along the corridor and each of the road authorities. The typical and preferred process are illustrated in Figure 5-1.

The Corridor Advisory Committee should continue to meet at least quarterly (unless a local project requires a meeting in-between) and review all the pending permits and prospective development projects proposed along the corridor. The Corridor Advisory Committee should include a representative of Ludington, Pere Marquette Charter Township, Amber Township, Scottville and Mason County routinely; and then Custer

Township, Village of Custer, Branch Township, Victory Township, Sherman Township, Grant Township and Free Soil Township when development proposals are in or would affect those jurisdictions. MDOT, as well as a representative of the County Road Commission, and the County Planning Commission should always be represented.

Figure 5-1



Coordinated permit reviews allow zoning jurisdictions to condition site plan approval on receipt of a driveway permit from MDOT and/or the County Road Commission and those agencies can condition their permits on receipt of zoning approval from the appropriate local government. Not only does this prevent developers from sidestepping important access management standards, it also typically results in a higher level of review of pending site plans, as many experienced persons may spot important considerations that any one person may miss. It can also point out emerging traffic safety or capacity problems that otherwise might not come to the attention of the road authority for some time. Developers typically benefit from the coordination by not having to take matters

back and forth between key agencies as often, since those agencies are already sitting down together in review of the same site plans.

Coordinated permit reviews also reduce the need for a separate monitoring and enforcement activity as all the responsible parties meet at least bi-monthly, and if a permittee is not properly following through with an issued permit, it is likely that several members of the group will have observed it in their travels on the corridor. It is also a beneficial forum for discussion of any needed changes to access management standards. If over time, a particular standard is recognized as problematic in multiple jurisdictions, then it may need to be changed. If it is changed in one jurisdiction, it most likely will need to be changed in all. By keeping a uniform set of access management standards along the corridor, the development community will more quickly become familiar with the standards and will not be faced with multiple sets of standards with slight differences that are otherwise hard to keep track of.

Another benefit of the coordinated site plan review procedure becomes evident when permit applicants request a variation or deviation from particular access management standards. By sharing experiences and carefully reviewing the merits of such requests, each community will benefit from the thinking that goes into the conclusion, making it less likely that one community will err from an independent analysis and create a situation that becomes cited by permit applicants in other communities as justification for a deviation on their project.

For their part, MDOT needs to commit to not issuing driveway permits in conflict with locally adopted access management standards. When all parties condition approval of permits on the receipt of approval of permits from the other, snafus will be avoided and the access management policy of this Plan will be implemented.

COORDINATED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

The last important implementation measure concerns coordinating local capital improvements along the corridor. Objectives 13-15 in Chapter Two address coordinated capital improvement planning and public input into decision making. These objectives are reproduced below:

- “13. Encourage all local units of government along the corridor to prepare and thereafter annually update a community wide capital improvement program that lists proposed infrastructure spending by location, cost, source of revenue and timing, with a special focus on coordinating such spending plans with MDOT and the County Road Commission where US-10/US-31 and county roads are concerned.*
- 14. Encourage MDOT to plan future road and access management improvements along the highway in a manner that is consistent with this Plan, that permits local input prior to final decision-making and that serves as a model of intergovernmental cooperation.*
- 15. Educate citizens, businesses and property owners about the basic contents of this Plan and seek their input prior to adopting any Plan updates.”*

Each of the Planning Enabling Acts make the local Planning Commission responsible for preparing and annually updating a list of proposed capital improvements consistent with

the adopted local future land use, master or comprehensive plan. This is usually embodied in a local capital improvement program or CIP. Capital improvements are physical facilities like sewer or water lines, roads, or parks; or buildings, like fire halls, police stations, and township halls. Each project proposed over the next six-years is listed by type, location, cost, means of financing, and year proposed to be constructed. As one year is finished, another is added during the annual updating process.

CIP's are an excellent tool for implementing local master plans and when coordinated with neighboring jurisdictions and road authorities, they can prevent duplicate expenditures (like tearing the same section of road up two years in a row, as for a resurfacing project one year, and then to make a sewer line extension the next year), and are a great aid in phasing work so as to avoid conflicts and take advantage of economies of scale (where they exist). Coordinated local CIP's also facilitate scheduling road improvement projects, and assist the development community by interjecting clear timetables and greater predictability into infrastructure improvement decisions.

While not all jurisdictions along the corridor currently have annual CIP's, nor do they routinely coordinate with MDOT as it prepares phasing plans for improvements on the US-10/US-31 corridor consistent with this Plan now—it is a great time to start. Eventually, if all jurisdictions prepare a CIP and coordinate their preparation to coincide with local, MDOT and County Road Commission budgeting, available infrastructure money will be spent in the wisest, most efficient manner that least disrupts the lives of citizens in Mason County and users of US-10/US-31.