

Chapter 1: Introduction

Plan Corridor and Primary Goal

Collectively, the route formed by Jackson Avenue, Huron Street, Washtenaw Avenue, Cross Street and Hamilton Avenue is the main east-west road connecting points from the western edge of the City of Ann Arbor, through Pittsfield and Ypsilanti Townships and the City of Ypsilanti, and Michigan Avenue and Ecorse Road connect downtown Ypsilanti to Wayne county and Willow Run Airport. Today, tens of thousands of residents, students, employees, and commercial vehicles live, work, shop, attend class, and visit key destinations along the corridor. Among the key destinations are downtown Ann Arbor, the Arborland Mall, the University of Michigan, downtown Ypsilanti, Eastern Michigan University, and Willow Run Airport. The route serves as the key transportation corridor for moving significant automobile traffic, commercial goods, the highest volume of transit riders of any corridor in the county, and many pedestrians and bicyclists.

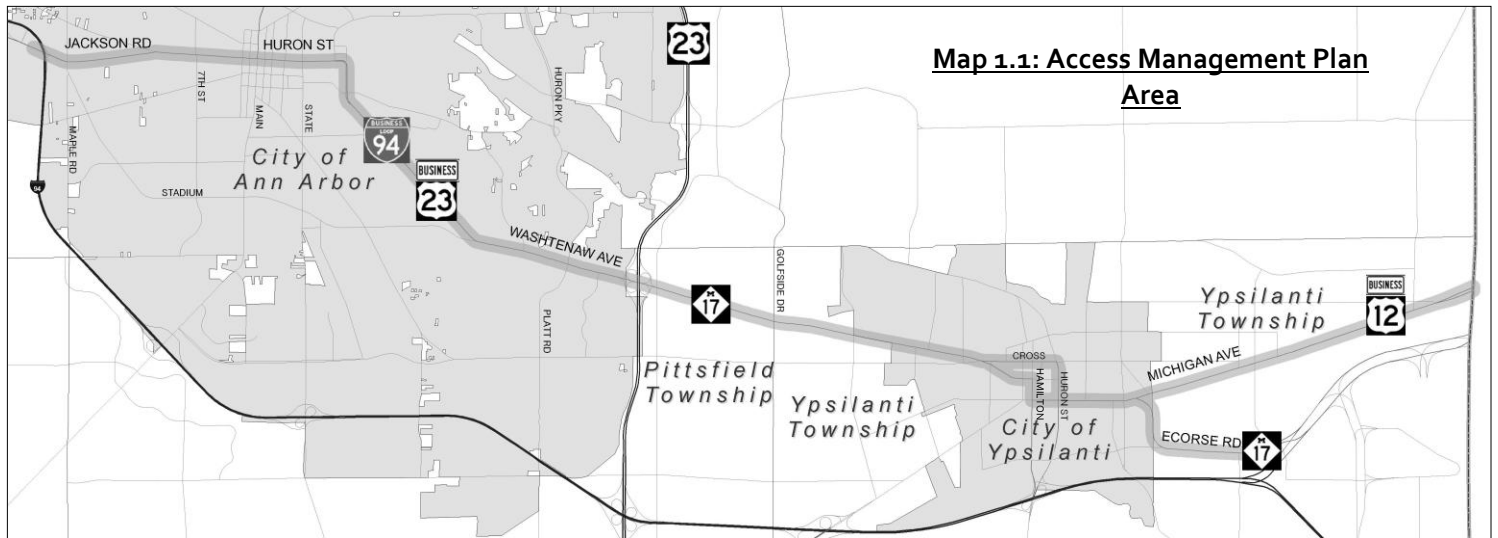
The cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, the townships of Pittsfield and Ypsilanti, the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC), and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), all have jurisdiction over or along the corridor. MDOT has recognized that there are opportunities to improve safety along this highly developed corridor by retrofitting the existing access system and improving the interaction between motorists, non-motorized users, and transit users throughout the plan area. All recognize the need for a coordinated approach for efficient and safe travel for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. In addition, the corridor needs to serve as a catalyst for redevelopment consistent with the intended character. To that end, access management is recognized as a key tool to improve transportation conditions and safety for all users. The plan area is illustrated on the next page.

Plan Organization



The questions this access management plan will help address include:

- *What access-related improvements should be made to existing uses to reduce crash potential and facilitate trips between businesses within shared parking areas?*
- *How can land use/site plan decisions support the recommendations and enhance the effectiveness of this access management plan?*
- *What standards for access and related transit and non-motorized facilities should be adopted to help improve safety and efficiency while still providing reasonable access to adjacent land uses?*



Primary Goal

Steering Committee Members:

- City of Ann Arbor
- Pittsfield Township
- Ypsilanti Township
- City of Ypsilanti
- Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)
- Washtenaw County Planning and Environment (WCPE)
- Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC)
- Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS)
- Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA)

The primary goal driving this access management plan is to improve transportation operations and increase safety along the corridor for all users. Access management improves safety by reducing the number and improving the spacing of conflict points along a corridor. This is accomplished by limiting new vehicular access points and working to close and consolidate existing access, while also paying careful consideration to the interaction between automobile access points and the non-motorized and transit facilities along the corridor. A secondary goal for this plan was to improve access and mobility for non-motorized users (which includes transit riders) of the corridor.

Preparation of This Plan

To oversee the development of this plan, a Steering Committee was formed with representatives from a wide range of stakeholders. The committee met regularly to review the issues, provide suggestions on draft recommendations and assist in obtaining and interpreting comments from the public and local officials. It should be noted that the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University were both made aware of the project during the RFP process and at the beginning of the project, but did not participate.

This plan was developed over eight months and included a series of meetings with the public and individual local communities and agencies. The public involvement process included two public workshop/open houses, which were held at the Washtenaw County Community College on Thursday, September 27, 2007, and the

Washtenaw County Service Center Library on Monday, October 29, 2007. These open houses provided formal presentations on the benefits of improved access management, including improving safety of motorists, non-motorized, and transit users in this plan area. Drafts of the plan recommendations graphics and concepts for select intersections (found later in this plan) were on display illustrating the preliminary access management recommendations. Comments and recommendations by the public, local officials and the MDOT staff were considered and incorporated into the final recommendations.

An Overview of Access Management

As noted on page 1.1, the goal behind this access management plan is to improve transportation operations and increase safety along the corridor for all users while maintaining reasonable access to properties. Access management involves maximizing the existing street capacity and improving the corridor for transit riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians by reducing or limiting the number of access points, carefully placing and spacing access points (commercial driveways), and provision of non-motorized facilities where missing.

Numerous studies nationwide have shown that a proliferation of driveways or an uncontrolled driveway environment can increase the number or severity of crashes, reduce capacity of the street, and may create a need for more costly improvements in the future. Areas where access management plans have been adopted and implemented by the communities and road agencies have resulted in 25-50 percent reductions in access-related crashes.

In the State of Michigan, access management has been in practice for over two decades. In 1999, MDOT commissioned a task force to research, discuss, and organize the best practices on access management, and officially adopted a statewide guide, known as *The Access Management Guidebook*, in 2001. That document and its significant national research and statistics form the basis for this plan's standards and recommendations.

Benefits

Access management often provides benefits to motorists, non-motorized users, transit riders, communities, residents, businesses, and land uses along the corridor. There are many short and long term benefits, based on national experience and studies of other corridors, including the following:

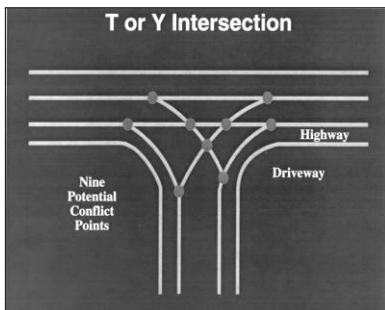
Access management involves maximizing the existing street capacity and improving the corridor for transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians by reducing or limiting the number of access points, carefully placing and spacing access points (commercial driveways), and other enhancements.

The terms "access" and "access point" are used frequently throughout this document; these terms refer to commercial driveways (e.g. retail, office, industrial, etc.) and platted roadways or private roads but generally do not refer to driveways for individual single family homes.

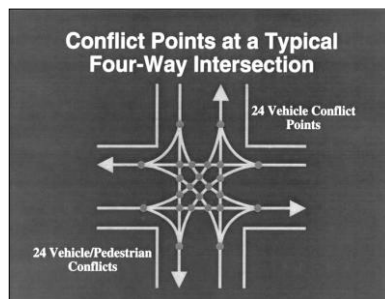


Coordination of access and parking often provides more space for consolidated signs, non-motorized facilities, and transit riders.

- Reduces crash potential through regulation on the placement, spacing, and design of future access points and the redesign of existing ones as opportunities arise.
- Provides landowners with reasonable access to their property from the corridor, though in some cases the number of access points may be fewer or more indirect.
- Promotes continued coordination and communication between the MDOT, WCRC, local governments, the public and the transit providers when reviewing development proposals and considering improvements.
- Provides general background and information on the benefits of access management to assist local and county officials.
- Improves air quality.
- Informs the property owners, business operators and potential developers, and the general public about access management, its benefits, the rationale for recommendations, and how it is applied over time.
- Improves access to and from businesses.
- Maintains or increases travel efficiency and corridor vitality.



In addition to the measurable benefits, the public also benefits due to the reduction in roadway improvement costs and reduced environmental impacts. Land owners and developers benefit from the long term enhancement of property values and knowing “up front” that there are established access criteria thereby reducing the need for redesign and the likelihood of a drawn out site approval process.



Techniques

Realization of the benefits listed above can be accomplished through a variety of techniques, both physical and regulatory. Key recommendations of this access management plan, listed below, are explained with greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

Each new driveway adds to the number of conflict points along a street at which a traffic crash could occur.

Source: MDOT "Improving Driveways and Access Management in Michigan," 1996.

- Identify changes to existing access points, including closure or consolidation of existing access points to improve spacing. Specific recommendations are illustrated on a series of drawings for corridor segments.
- Gradually replace selected individual direct access points with access through rear service drives, cross access between parking areas, or shared driveways.
- Establish access standards to both retrofitted existing sites

and to apply to new developments, through the adoption of access management standards into the local zoning ordinances.

- Identify short- and long-term opportunities to improve access, including individual driveways, alternate roadway cross-sections, and future restoration of two-way traffic.
- Identification of locations needing improved non-motorized facilities and transit improvements.



Left: One technique recommended by this plan is the use of physical elements to restrict turning movements; this driveway island effectively prevents left turns in- and out-of the parking area. **Right:** Reduction of the overall number of access points is especially important near signalized intersections; gas stations located on corners often have 4 or more driveways where only 1 or 2 are needed.

Tools

Access management involves tools to increase spacing of access points, to restrict certain turning movements at select access points, and to improve the connectivity of transit or non-motorized facilities along a corridor. Some of these tools are the:

- Reduction of overall number of access points (to reduce the opportunity for conflict between automobiles, transit, and non-motorized users).
- Optimum location of bus stops (relative to sight distance, intersections, non-motorized crossings, and access points).
- Connection of key gaps in non-motorized facilities (to promote safe, off-street movements and provides options for trip making).
- Proper spacing of access points along the same side of the street and from access points on the opposite side of the street (especially spacing between intersections and other access points).

- Geometric design of physical barriers to restrict certain turning movements (usually left turns).
- Shared access systems (connections between land uses, shared driveways, frontage roads or rear service drives).

Plan Implementation

Successful implementation of the plan's recommendations will require continued coordination between the local communities, county agencies, transit agencies, and MDOT. This access management project includes the development and adoption of ordinance amendments for each of the four local communities to provide regulatory support for implementing the recommendations and standards of this plan when development or redevelopment occurs in the corridor. A detailed flow chart to guide the necessary coordination and review process between all agencies for project applications is included at the end of Chapter 3. The plan will be endorsed and used by MDOT, WCRC, WATS, and the local communities to improve the plan corridor.

The most important product of this process is the recognition that effective and timely communication between the cities, townships, county agencies, and MDOT is the key to successful implementation.

Following this chapter, Chapter 2 discusses in detail the standards for access, non-motorized, and transit facilities, Chapter 3 identifies process, protocol, and opportunities for implementation, and Chapters 4-7 include specific recommendations for this seventeen mile plan corridor.