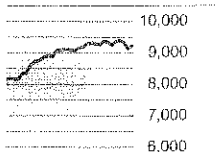


Output program

Trucker traders' top 10

Tuesday morning, dealers in the U.S. had deals to trade in 4 clunkers for new ones, getting rebates of 1,500 from the federal government. Most of the vehicles have been pickups and sport utility vehicles. The top 10 vehicles chased by those clunker trades are: a Corolla, a Civic, Focus, a Camry, a Prius, a dai Elantra, Escape (front-drive), a Fit, in Versa, da CR-V (four-drive)

and the Cadillac SRX Wagon, GM said. Cobalt and Malibu has been popular with people in older less-efficient vehicles under the clunkers program which offers up to 3,000 people to scrap vehicles with gas mileage of 18 mpg or less. At the end of July, GM had 100,000 worth of Cobalts on lots, according to AutoInfoBank. But the clunkers program is not starting until late July, dealers reported spot shortages of vehicles.



Low 9,134.36

BENTON HARBOR

# Federal funding depends on knowing the road

Communities that want grants for freight projects must do their homework, highway planner says

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI  
H-P Correspondent

BENTON HARBOR — Communities that learn how goods and services move through their areas will have the best chance of cashing in on federal funding for freight-related projects.

That was the message Monday from Christopher Dingman of the Federal Highway Administration's Michigan Division during a transportation forum at Southwest Michigan Regional Airport.

Dingman said a bill to reauthorize federal funding for transportation is generating a lot of discussion in Washington — including what role, if any, freight should play.

If the funding comes through, the next problem

will be how to position Michigan to secure some, said Dingman, a transportation planner and research coordinator for the agency's Lansing office.

"As it stands right now, there's no dedicated funding source at the federal level specifically for freight projects," Dingman said. "It's something that a lot of people are advocating for the next bill."

The almost-anonymous presence of railroad and truck traffic often makes it easy to overlook the need for freight planning, Dingman said.

"People in urban areas will say, 'We really don't have a lot of freight issues here,'" Dingman said. "Well, if you have a Walmart — or a Whirlpool, for example — you have freight that needs to be shipped to and from your area."

Freight is taking on a greater role in the nation's transport network — especially as gas-price spikes and a struggling economy push down passenger car mileage, Dingman said. Be-

tween 1990 and 2005, total truck mileage increased by 52.4 percent vs. 44.2 percent for Class I railroad and 20 percent for passenger car miles, the administration's figures showed.

Class I railroads are the large systems like CSX Transportation, which has tracks through Southwest Michigan.

"Essentially, from 2005 to 2035, we're looking at a doubling in the amount of freight traffic on the transportation network as a whole," he said.

Much of that increase will come from additional domestic and international traffic, which will likely be followed by more construction, more congestion and a greater need than ever before to plan, he said.

But with the U.S. carved into 114 regions, it can be tough to get a handle on trends affecting local and regional areas, Dingman said. In addition, there's a two-year lag time for publication, which means that the 2007 data won't be available till this year, he said.

"While it is a robust set of data, it does have deficiencies in terms of what we can work with," Dingman said.

That's why it's critical for municipalities to form close working relationships with local freight providers and shippers, "so they can be aware of what the issues are," Dingman said after the meeting.

"There's no uniform source — as it stands currently — to tap into (for data collection), so that's where those local relationships, those local partnerships, are most important," he said.

Dingman's presentation coincided with the monthly planning meeting of TwinCATS (Twin Cities Area Transportation Study), said Anna Rahtz, associate planner for the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission. Meetings typically take place at the airport.

The commission is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the TwinCATS project, Rahtz said. The commission helps participating communities work together, she said.

