

## **Introduction**

### **History of the Region/County**

Rene' de LaSalle arrived in Berrien County in 1679 and built Fort Miami at the mouth of the St. Joseph River. This would become the base for many explorations into the Mississippi River Valley. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, subsequent French explorers built Fort St. Joseph up the river at the present city of Niles, Michigan. "Tis a spot, the best adopted of any to be seen, for the purpose of living;" French explorers stated in 1718 when observing the region. Fort St. Joseph was heavily utilized until the French left the area in 1763. The British held the fort until it was later captured by the Spanish in 1781. Berrien County remained mainly unsettled until 1823 with the arrival of Squire Isaac Thompson, the county's first settler. The County officially organized in 1831 and was named after U.S. Attorney General John M. Berrien. At that point, the County saw population increases during the 1830s. John Harner, one of the county's first settlers wrote in 1834; "others are sure to follow" (Southwest Michigan Business and Tourism, 3/24/2008). Harner was right in his predictions for Berrien County; many did follow. In 1834 settlers started to take advantage of the moderating affect of Lake Michigan on Berrien County's climate and its sandy soils, which provided a perfect environment for agriculture, including a breadth of fruits and vegetables. The first shipment of peaches from Berrien County to Chicago was sold in 1839. Berrien County's fruit production continued to grow as did its population. By the civil war in 1861-1865 the County's population stood at over 20,000.<sup>1</sup>

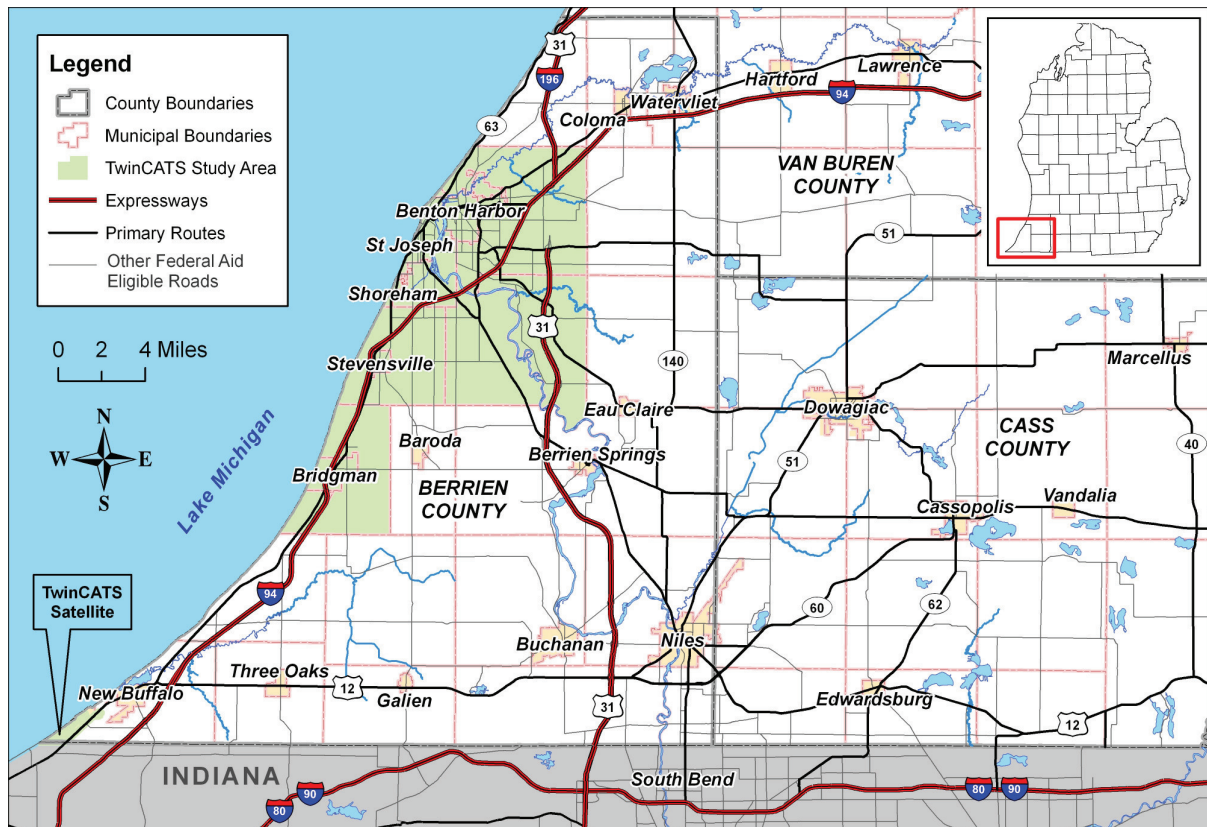
### **Geographical Area**

Berrien County is located in Michigan's southwest corner. The southern border of the County abuts the northern Indiana State line. The Cities in the southern portion of the County are strongly influenced by the population and economics of the Indiana cities that lie in close proximity including South Bend and Mishawaka. Chicago is also a powerful influence on many aspects of life in southwest Michigan as it lies in the Lake Michigan Watershed Basin just as does Berrien County. It is widely accepted that a Chicago "Mega-Region" includes Berrien County.

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<sup>1</sup> Southwest Michigan Business and Tourism Directory, July 2, 2008  
[http://www.swmidirectory.org/History\\_of\\_Berrien\\_County.html](http://www.swmidirectory.org/History_of_Berrien_County.html)

Berrien County comprises total area 580.273 square miles and is bordered by Michigan's Cass County to the east and Van Buren County to the north and Indiana's LaPorte and St. Joseph Counties. The western edge of the County comprises a portion of Michigan's Lake Michigan western "sunset" coastline. All told, Berrien County contains 42 miles of Lake coastline.



## **Agriculture**

Today, Berrien County is part of the Michigan "Fruit Belt", which runs along the western border of the Lower Peninsula along the eastern coast of Lake Michigan. Prevailing Lake Michigan breezes protect the fruit trees during the development of their buds in spring and the Lake's moderating affect extends the growing season further into fall by diminishing the severity of the fall frost. The Lake also provides needed moisture in times of drought. In Michigan, Berrien County leads in the production of peaches, pears and grapes, is second in apples, plums and prunes, and is a respectable fourth in tart

cherries. Berrien County's grape production has led to the presence of an emerging winery industry.<sup>2</sup>

### **Tourism**

Tourism in Berrien County benefits from an advantageous proximity to Chicago, Lake Michigan, and eighty-six inland lakes. Capitalizing on this economic opportunity, there is a wealth of activities on land and on water ranging from festivals, golf, boating, and fishing. Berrien County also provides tourists with outstanding fresh water beaches.

### **History of Transportation Planning: Early Highway Planning**

The increased usage of automobiles in the early 1900s fueled early highway planning practices. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1925 was the birth of the country's highway system. Introduction of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices was introduced in 1927 by American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO), which included signs, traffic signals, markings, and other devices. Soon after, highway construction began to connect population centers. Soon, existing highways were considered inadequate as the size and weight of vehicles began to quickly grow. In the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1934, Congress authorized that 1.5 % of the federal funds apportioned to any state annually could be used to survey, plan, engineer, and conduct economic analysis for highway construction.

As needs grew it was soon apparent that highway planning needed a systematic approach to the problems of inadequate width, grade, and alignment. In 1937 the Committee on Planning and Design Policies of AASHO introduced updated vehicle performance and highway design features to create the Geometric Designs of Rural Highways. Since 1938 policies related to highway classification have been introduced and updated. Ultimately, these policies became known as the "Blue Book" and are accepted as the gold standard for highway design.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> History of Berrien and Van Buren Counties, Michigan, Philadelphia D.W. Ension & co 1880, XIX The Fruit Belt Chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Urban Transportation Planning in the United States An Historical Overview, Revised Edition, November 1992, Edward Weiner

### **Beginning of Transportation Planning**

During World War II (1941-1945) highway expansion stopped and transit system ridership across the country reached an all-time high. After World War II, there was a huge demand for vehicles and homes as soldiers came home, settled down, and started families. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944 significantly increased funds for road building. Prior to this time, electric, railways were the backbone of public transit. As automobiles found their way into most American garages and buses grew as a strong intercity option, electric railways moved into the background of the transportation network.

As highways grew, travel surveys began to be used to study destinations of trips and basic factors affecting travel. The home interview origin destination survey was created for use in transportation planning and forecasting. By the mid-1950s, a computer method for distributing future origins destination travel data using growth factors was developed. At the end of the 1940's, AASHO introduced a manual for conducting benefit-cost analyses. The manual's basic intent was to promote the idea that just as investment profits should be reinvested, investments should be made in highway projects so as to promote economic growth. The manual was updated in 1960, and 1977 and was expanded to include the promotion of bus transit improvements.

The National Committee on Urban Transportation was created in 1954 to help cities do a better job of transportation planning. The collection of basic facts about urban transportation systems was advocated by a series of 17 procedural manuals describing techniques for planning highway, transit, and terminal improvements.

The Housing Act of 1954 demonstrated congressional concern with urban problems and recognition of the urban planning process as an appropriate approach to dealing with the problems. In the 1940s and 50s developments in analytical methodology began to be applied in urban transportation studies. The Sagamore Conference on Highways and Urban Development was a response to the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act and focused on the need to conduct the planning of urban transportation on a regional scale and in a comprehensive basis that supported the development of urban areas. The Housing Act of 1961 explicitly dealt with urban mass transportation.

### **Transportation Planning Coming of Age**

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 required that any Federal-aid highway project in an urbanized area of 50,000 or more in population would be based on a continuing, comprehensive urban transportation planning process carried out cooperatively by the states and local governments. Thereafter highway construction projects would grow in some measure from a transportation planning process. Two features stand out with respect to early organizational arrangements for carrying out a transportation planning process. The first feature identified was to set a regional standard for planning by calling the focus of the planning process “urban areas” rather than cities. The second requires the process to be done cooperatively by the states and local communities. The act also dedicated 1.5 percent of federal transportation funds to research and planning. This was the first legislative mandate requiring planning as a condition to receive federal funding. The U.S. Department of Transportation interpreted the act’s provisions into “the 3C’s” of transportation planning: cooperative, continuing, and comprehensive. Cooperative was defined as cooperation between federal, state, local units of government and various agencies within the same level of government. Continuing refers to the need to re-evaluate and update the plan. Comprehensive includes the basic ten elements of the 3C planning process:

1. Economic factors affecting development
2. Population
3. Land use
4. Transportation facilities including those for mass transportation
5. Travel patterns
6. Terminal and transfer facilities
7. Traffic control features
8. Zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, building codes, etc.
9. Financial resources
10. Social and community

The 3C process is an empirical method that required considerable data input. An organization was necessary to carry out the planning process and develop local goals and objectives. Surveys and inventories of existing conditions and facilities were mandated. The analysis of current conditions and the use of that analysis for the calibration of forecasting models were necessary as well. The forecasting of future

activity and travel was a requirement through the Act. An evaluation was required of alternative transportation networks that could result in a recommended transportation plan. Finally the staging of the transportation plan; and identification of resources to implement it were deemed vital to the planning process. <sup>4</sup>

The first breakthrough in travel forecasting came in 1955 with the introduction of the gravity model, which links land use to urban traffic flows. The second breakthrough addressed traffic assignment, specifically evaluating the driver's choice of route between origin and destination. In 1952 AASHO published "A Basis for Estimating Traffic Diversion to New Highways in Urban Areas," which was a standard traffic diversion curve to determine traffic assignment. The conventional urban travel forecasting process used mathematical models that allowed the simulation and forecasting of current and future travel that consisted of four steps: trip generation, trip distribution, modal split, and traffic assignment. Urban development simulation models enable planners to evaluate alternative urban development patterns, and to produce information on population, employment, and land use in estimating travel and transportation requirements. The "Lowry Model" was the first large-scale and complete simulation model. The Lowry Model provided the conceptual framework for further development in the mid 1960s.

The era of the early 1960s was called the "Golden Age" because all 224 urbanized areas existing at that time had a transportation planning process underway by July 1, 1965. The Joint Report on Urban Mass Transportation in 1962 integrated highways and mass transit together. In April 1962 President Kennedy delivered his first message to Congress on the subject of transportation. His message drew upon the Joint Report on Mass Transportation by recognizing that the successful shaping of urban areas depended on the close relationship between community development and the need to properly balance private automobiles and mass transit. The Hershey Conference on Urban Freeways was held in June 1962 in response to the growing concern of freeway construction in urban areas. It concluded that freeways can not be planned independently from the urban areas that they pass through. Planning needed to be done in a team setting.

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<sup>4</sup> Urban Transportation Planning in the United States An Historical Overview, Revised Edition, November 1992, Edward Weiner

The Highway Planning Program Manual, first issued in August of 1963, was created to provide technical guidance for carrying out highway planning. The manual covered basic elements of a highway planning program. The Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 was the first federal effort to provide assistance to mass transportation by encouraging the planning and establishment of area-wide mass transportation systems was needed for economic and urban development. The Williamsburg Conference on Highway and Urban Development in 1965 was held to address the concerns that the planning processes were not adequately evaluating social and community values. It was concluded at that conference that transportation must be directed toward raising urban standards and enhancing aggregate community values.<sup>5</sup>

### **Purpose of the Plan**

This plan is an update of the previous LRTP adopted by the SWMPC. It is revised every four years for a twenty-five year look at the issues and needs of the Twin Cities Area. It is especially significant because of the changes in the Federal Aid Urban Boundaries (FAUB) as determined by the 2000 U.S. Census. Lake Charter Township and the City of Bridgman were added to the FAUB in 2003 in accordance with the redefined U.S. Census boundary. This event is a significant change in the FAUB. The impacts are only just being identified. Their extent will be acknowledged, studied, and integrated into the planning process. The first step is gaining the understanding of how the change affects the process of funding and the flow of funds that once came from rural planning and transportation improvements program monies and must subsequently come from urban planning and transportation improvements program monies.

There are two primary reasons to develop a comprehensive transportation plan. The first is basic to public policy and the expenditure of public funding. Decisions are better when the decision makers, working in cooperation, have as much information as possible and base their policy choices on a comprehensive analysis. Although the process of gathering information for analysis is always beneficial, it becomes even more important when investment decisions are expensive and the consequences long-lasting. Such is the case in transportation system improvements; a great deal of money is spent on various transportation system improvements such as adding lanes to roads, repaving

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<sup>5</sup> Urban Transportation Planning in the United States An Historical Overview, Revised Edition, November 1992, Edward Weiner

or reconstruction, or building pedestrian/bicycle facilities. These are expensive projects but are necessary to the economic and social life of a community.

The second reason concerns the federally-mandated transportation planning process for urbanized areas. TwinCATS was established in 1983, following guidelines for concentration of population within a geographic area and the expectation of urban development. The SWMPC is the MPO for TwinCATS. The MPO is charged with maintaining a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process. At a minimum, the jurisdictions within the defined planning boundaries shall collaborate to set regional priorities for all modes of movement in the transportation system and determine their formula for producing the local, non-federal match required for federal assistance in planning and transportation-related activities.

The SWMPC reviews and affirms the decisions of the TwinCATS Policy Committee. Together, the MPO committees produce the following: an annual Unified Work Program (which describes the planning work to be accomplished in that year), a four-year Transportation Improvement Program (which prioritizes all transportation improvement projects in the four-year period), and a LRTP (which covers a twenty-five year period and is revised every four years). In addition, the committees may produce any other document, policy, or initiative that may be determined to advance the efficient and effective use and development of the regional transportation system. Typically, corridor studies, access management studies, and non-motorized planning are the types of activities the committees may undertake.

In June of 2004, the EPA declared Berrien County a "base non-attainment area" for 8-hour Ozone standards. This requires air quality conformity determinations for all capacity expansion and "regionally significant" transportation projects. It also requires modeling for conformity with each significant change to the Transportation Improvement Program or the Long Range Transportation Plan. The committees must insure that their plans and projects are not detrimental to air quality standards.

### **Legislation**

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law by George W. Bush On August 10, 2005. SAFETEA-LU continues the MPO and statewide transportation planning process established in the

previous federal transportation, but changes are made in the planning process for surface transportation; some of these changes add flexibility and efficiency, while others add new consultation and environmental planning requirements. Safety and security are identified as separate items to be considered in both metropolitan and statewide planning processes and consultation requirements for states and MPOs are significantly expanded. Requirements are added to the transportation planning process to address environmental mitigation, improved performance, multimodal capacity, and enhancement activities; tribal, bicycle, pedestrian, and disabled interests are to be represented. SAFETEA-LU expires September 30, 2009.