mita accident 10/19/06 11:57 AM Page 1

crashes 66 percent. As a result, more than $200 million would be saved in terms of health care, insurance and lost wage and productivity costs.

But these improvements all cost money, which is in short supply when it comes to available transportation dollars in Michigan. The state is currently facing an annual funding shortfall of roughly $700 million for its state transportation system (MDOT managed) and at least $2 billion more for its local roads (counties, cities and villages).

Under current state and federal revenue projections, Michigan expects to spend $34 billion through 2025 to improve the condition of the highway system, which will certainly have a positive impact on safety. But with an estimated need of $50 billion, the state falls short by a whopping $16 billion.[1]

This $16 billion shortfall could result in 23,200 more deaths and 800,000 more injuries.

State leaders must recognize the critical need to increase spending on our state's highways and bridges to ensure the highest level of safety for all motorists. An investment in our transportation infrastructure will also expand economic development opportunities, reduce congestion and improve Michigan residents' quality of life.

A traffic accident is something you never forget. Michigan state policy leaders must remember that with stable and adequate highway funding, they can see to it that many of those memories will never exist.

1 The Road Information Program, *Michigan's Transportation System*, 2004

SOURCES:

American Road & Transportation Builders Association

Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

National Safety Council

The Road Information Program

drivemi
A Comprehensive Strategy For Fully Funding Michigan's Transportation System In The 21st Century

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Crash Courses:

An Analysis of Traffic Accidents In Michigan

mita accident 10/19/06 11:57 AM Page 2

A traffic accident occurs in Michigan every 85 seconds. Someone is injured in one of those crashes every five minutes. Tragically, a person is killed in one of those accidents every eight hours.

In 2004, 1,129 people were killed on Michigan's roads and another 90,510 were injured. Between 2000 and 2004, traffic accidents killed an average of 1,286 people annually in Michigan. That's more than three people per day who lose their lives on our roads and highways. One out of every 8,725 Michigan residents will be killed in a traffic accident, and one out of 101 will be injured.

An increasing amount of accidents are directly tied to Michigan's deteriorating road conditions. Crumbling pavements, road congestion and the lack of proper safety devices are growing concerns when it comes to traveling safely around the state. And all of these concerns can be tied to one factor – a shrinking transportation budget.

Michigan has averaged **408,747** accidents per year over the past decade.

Source: 2004 Michigan Traffic Crash Facts

PLAY IT SAFE

In 2004, more than three out of every five accidents occurred on rural roads. With more than 373,000 motor vehicle crashes statewide, over 60 percent of them happened on Michigan's smaller, less-traveled roads. In fact, the number of fatal or severe accidents on these routes increased by nearly 800 in 2004, keeping the fatality rate for these rural counties well above their urban neighbors.

While the 10 counties with the most fatalities in 2004 were also some of the most populous counties, their average fatality rate of 11.1 per 100,000 residents was half the national county average. These areas generally feature interstates and major trunkline routes which are required to have certain safety features as part of their design which help to reduce accident rates and severity.

Michigan's interstate highways have saved approximately 5,900 lives since 1956. On average, the interstate system saves 170 lives per year, due in part to the minimum of four lanes of traffic, gentler curves and often paved shoulders, and other safety features. While rural roads claimed more than 230,000 accidents in 2004, the interstate system only saw 39,340 accidents.

In averaging the 10 counties with the highest fatality rates, it becomes apparent that they are all rural in nature. Their fatality rate comes in at an astounding average of 50.1 per 100,000. People might assume that rural roads are safer by carrying less traffic and motorists traveling at reduced speeds. But some of these roads lack centerline stripes, shoulders or edge markings. Some have curves that require them to be posted with reduced speeds. And the majority of these roads feature intersections and cross-traffic that can cause accidents.

It is important to note that all of these counties have roadway safety as a top goal, and whether they are metropolitan or rural in nature, they are all doing everything they can to make accidents and roadway fatalities non-existent. Unfortunately, transportation budgets that barely include enough for maintenance leave little for safety upgrades, particularly in rural areas.

THE PRICE WE PAY

Using calculations from the National Safety Council, Michigan's economic loss to traffic accidents was more than $9.36 billion in 2004. That amounts to a $942.47 loss for every resident. Nationally, the government estimates that highway crashes cost $230.6 billion a year.

These figures are calculated based on medical costs and insurance payments that result from an injury sustained in an accident, but less-apparent impacts are also taken into consideration. Companies must deal with lost output. There is usually property damage and vehicular repair costs involved. Finally, there is a financial impact associated with injuries and death.

Since 2001, traffic accidents have cost Michigan an average of **$9.55** billion annually in economic losses.

Source: National Safety Council

RATES OF RETURN

To increase the safety of Michigan motorists and prevent further tragedies, state leaders must increase funding to improve our roads and bridges. Every $100 million invested into road improvements can prevent 145 deaths and 5,000 injuries. Simple things such as constructing medians to separate traffic can reduce accidents as much as 73 percent, while realigning roadways and removing roadside obstacles can reduce