Making Better Use of What We Have

Transportation System Management is a concept of short range transportation planning aimed at efficient use of existing transportation facilities. Transportation System Management projects do not usually involve major new construction. Rather, they increase the capacity of what is already in use largely through improved management of existing facilities.

Transportation System Management actions fall into several categories. Among those which improve traffic flow are:

- Improved use of traffic lights to facilitate flow of traffic;
- Traffic lanes which carry inbound traffic during morning rush hour, and outbound traffic during evening rush hour;
- Metering freeway ramps to monitor traffic flow; and
- Widening of intersections to reduce congestion.

Improvements in public transit service are also Transportation System Management actions. The more trips taken by public transit, the fewer cars on the road, the more efficiently the highway system functions.

Projects to encourage public transit use include:

- Park and ride lots;
- Bus shelters; and
- Advertising and promotion of the benefits of public transit, and of transit service available.

All of the actions listed above have been taken in Southeast Michigan. In addition, three major Transportation System Management activities were in progress in 1977.

The first, highly visible to people who live in, work in or visit downtown Detroit, falls in the category of redirecting auto traffic in congested areas. That action is the Woodward Avenue Mall.

While the mall will serve other purposes, the banning of auto traffic on Woodward will facilitate a switch to public transit in a highly congested area.

Other major Transportation System Management activities – ride sharing, freeway monitoring and bikeways – are covered in this report.

Share Rides, Reduce Congestion

Getting people to use fewer vehicles is a major activity under the program known as Transportation System Management. It is the trip to work which lends itself most readily to ridesharing, especially in a large industrial and employment center like Southeast Michigan.

Carpooling

Often many people from the same neighborhood work at the same location without being aware of it. Were these people to share rides to work, highway congestion during peak hours would be reduced. In addition, great amounts of energy could be saved and air pollution could be reduced. Finally, the commuters themselves could save money and eliminate the strain of daily driving.

Seeing the obvious benefits of ridesharing, SEMCOG undertook a ridesharing program in 1977. Ridesharing: Carpools and Vanpools is a SEMCOG report that details those benefits. See the box on page 4 for details on obtaining a copy of this report.

Carpooling is one meaningful solution to saving energy and reducing congestion on our streets and freeways.

Vanpooling

On Sept. 1, SEMCOG co-sponsored a vanpooling seminar with the Federal Energy Administration.

Vanpooling is a relatively new and well accepted means of ridesharing. It involves the lease or purchase of nine- to 15- passenger vans, usually by employers, for the use of their employees. All the passengers but the driver pay a fare adequate to meet all the costs of the van. The driver usually rides free and must maintain the van.

SEMCOG invited all the major employers in Southeast Michigan to the seminar. Among the companies sending representatives were such large employers as Ford Motor Co., General Motors Corp., the Automobile Club of Michigan and Michigan Bell Telephone Co. Hopefully vanpooling, already underway at Chrysler Corp. and Detroit Edison Co., will meet wider acceptance in the region in the near future.

Study Aims to Reduce Downriver Truck Traffic

Sixteen communities in the southeastern portion of Wayne County known as the downriver area received suggestions for reducing truck traffic on their major streets in a study completed by the Council of Governments in 1977.

The study, considered the first of its kind anywhere, proposes a phased improvement program for this heavily industrialized area which includes-

- Better use of truck route signs to direct truck traffic into streets where it will cause the least congestion;
- Separating streets from railroads at key crossings, thus preventing traffic back-ups around railroad tracks; and
- Future development of specific truckways if the need arises.

The problem arises from the fact that trucks traveling Interstate 75 freeway are forced to use east-west streets through the downriver communities to reach their destination industries. Most of these industries are located along the Detroit River.

Some of the problems which arise from the constant influx of large trucks are excessive noise, exhaust emissions and damage to pavement.

The communities which were covered by the study include Allen Park, Brownstown Township, Ecorse, Flat Rock, Gibraltar, Grosse Ile Township, Lincoln Park, Melvindale, River Rouge, Riverview, Rockwood, Southgate, Taylor, Trenton, Woodhaven and Wyandotte.

Bikes: Energy Efficient Transportation

The Transportation System Management program is meant to provide for all kinds of travel, and this includes one of the most energy-efficient of all – bicycling.

Because bicycles are gaining in popularity, SEMCOG has undertaken development of a Regional Bikeway Plan. This plan will become an element of the Regional Transportation Plan, which now contains highway and transit elements.

The plan is the result of research and analysis of existing facilities, usage patterns, technical and legal considerations, and potential funding for projects.

A major corridor was open to bike traffic during the 1977 year along segments of Interstate 275 in western Wayne County. However, the Council's bikeway plan shows that the greatest need in Southeast Michigan is to provide for safe urban and suburban biking.

The Council of Governments' Regional Bikeway Plan calls for making urban and suburban bicycling safer.