



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
CADILLAC TRANSPORTATION SERVICE CENTER

PAUL C. AJEGBA
DIRECTOR

September 11, 2020

City of Newaygo
Attention: Jon Schneider, City Manager
P.O. Box 308
Newaygo, Michigan 49337

Dear Mr. Schneider:

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) implemented a pilot traffic lane configuration on M-37 between Quarterline Road and 68th Street last fall. The City of Newaygo (the City) implemented a pilot traffic lane configuration on M-37 between River Street and Quarterline Road this spring and summer under permit. The final design for the 2021 M-37 construction project is being developed now. The purpose of this letter is to provide the City with an update and next steps on each of these items impacting M-37 through the City.

The piloted traffic lane configuration on M-37 between Quarterline Road and 68th Street added lane designations at the M-82 north junction on both northbound and southbound M-37, and a lane reduction from 4 lane to 3 lanes with shoulders affording additional parking between Quarterline Road and Water Street. A primary concern heard from the community prior to this pilot was vehicle speed. This reconfiguration to a single southbound lane eliminated a second lane being used as an extension of the southbound passing relief lane as well as calming the traffic queuing coming into the Quarterline Road signal. The reconfiguration to a single northbound lane eliminated a second lane being used for lane changes and passing coming into the M-82 north junction signal. This pilot has resulted in notable decreases in vehicular speed as well as reducing left turn/rear crashes between Quarterline Road and Water Street, with minimal negative impacts. While additional tweaks in signing and markings might be considered, this lane reconfiguration will be incorporated into the 2021 project.

The piloted traffic lane configuration on M-37 between River Street and Quarterline Road added southbound parking to an existing three lane section, with the existing northbound parking, by narrowing all lanes (travel lanes and parking lanes). This pilot also added a signed mid-block crossing. It should be noted that this pilot was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which Michigan residents were required to shelter-in-place for non-critical travel for most of the spring and summer of 2020. As a result, traffic volumes and vehicle miles travelled on Michigan roadways decreased dramatically. Results of this pilot are mixed. Business owners and some residents appreciate the on-street parking for the convenience it provides. The designated mid-block crossing also receives use. However, MDOT has repeatedly observed parked vehicles encroaching across the white edge line into the thru lane on both bounds. Additionally, it was observed that most large thru vehicles are crossing the yellow center turn lane lines to buffer away from the parking areas. This behavior had not been noted prior to the start of the pilot. Pavement markings are considered a traffic control device. Crossing a pavement marking is disobeying a traffic control device and therefore a violation of the Michigan Vehicle Code.

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If traffic feels as though it must disobey the Michigan Vehicle Code to remain safe, the pilot lane configuration is not working and therefore must be discontinued, to ensure the safety of both moving and parked vehicles.

It is expected that when normal traffic volumes resume after the COVID-19 pandemic has ended, and shelter-in-place restrictions are lifted; this type of behavior will increase and may result in more dangerous situations for both vehicles and pedestrians and potentially jeopardize the integrity of the road. If the City would like to try another pilot, such as providing separation with a painted shoulder area between vehicular traffic and the sidewalk on one side, there may be a brief window this fall to do so. Otherwise, please plan on having the pavement markings replaced to the original configuration by October 8, 2020, for the River Street to Quarterline Road segment.

The midblock crossing between River Street and Quarterline Road appears successful though pedestrian traffic seems to be split between the existing and piloted crossings. MDOT and the City should work to determine if one of these crossings is ultimately more desirable. Upon agreement with the City, improvements to the midblock crossing will be included in the project. These improvements are expected to improve pedestrian access to businesses on the west side of M-37 when parking on the east side of M-37.

During early discussions, the City had indicated an interest in placing additional permanent bump outs at appropriate agreed to locations, at the City's expense. If the City still wants to do so, please let MDOT know as soon as possible so construction plans, and a construction and maintenance agreement for next year's project, can be developed prior to construction. Note that with the construction of permanent bump outs, the parking areas become ineligible for federal and state funding during future projects. Any future work to the parking areas or bump outs would be a City expense.

Sincerely,

Del Kirkby, P.E.
Manager
MDOT – Cadillac TSC

cc: Cadillac TSC Development Staff
Cadillac TSC Traffic, Safety and Permits Staff
Grand Region Planning