

# Evaluating Traffic Impact Studies, A Recommended Practice for Michigan Communities

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## Abstract

Communities and road agencies in Michigan are continually confronted with proposals for new development. Traffic impacts are often a major concern of both the community and the road agency. The lack of an accepted practice for when traffic impact studies should be submitted, and what evaluation should be included led to inconsistent studies and varying requirements throughout Michigan. In addition, there is growing litigation regarding the responsibility of developers to correct deficiencies in the transportation system. Transportation professionals, developers, attorneys and public officials agreed that a standard practice for Michigan was needed.

In response to this dilemma, the handbook *Evaluating Traffic Impact Studies, A Recommended Practice for Michigan Communities* was developed. This handbook was reviewed by the committee of 70 transportation professions, developers, public officials and attorneys. The handbook builds upon previous work in Michigan, ITE and other states, but also addresses or links new topics. This handbook describes:

- Benefits of traffic impact
- When traffic impact studies should be
- The level of analysis needed for different situations or land uses
- Recommendations on trip generation rates, pass-by-rates, background traffic volumes, evaluation of mitigation alternatives and other issues involved in the preparation of traffic impact studies
- Elements beyond “traditional” traffic impact studies that should be included, such as access management alternatives
- Qualifications for the preparer and reviewer
- How community and road agency staff should coordinate their development reviews

The benefit of an agreed upon practice in Michigan could be realized by other states, MPO’s, communities or agencies. The handbook has become recognized as the standard practice in Michigan. Numerous communities have adopted the handbook through their zoning ordinance. Many road agencies now reference the handbook when reviewing development proposals. Most preparers of traffic impact studies, and an increasing number of reviewers, use the handbook. Copies were distributed to communities and road agencies throughout Michigan. A slide presentation on the handbook was prepared and has been presented throughout Michigan. A slide presentation on the handbook was prepared and has been presented throughout Michigan. The handbook generated interest from the Michigan Society of Planning Officials, which used the handbook as the foundation for a four-hour instructional program, “Managing Traffic in Your Community”, which continues to be presented throughout Michigan.