

## **Chapter III Environmental Justice**

The Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC) works diligently to ensure that all people have access to the transportation planning process, especially those citizens that have traditionally been under-represented, including those residents that are members of racial and ethnic minority populations and low income persons. The GVMC transportation planning process has always been open to the public, but with recently enacted Federal guidance, the means of evaluating interaction with traditionally under-represented groups is more defined.

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (42 U.S.C. 2000d-1) states that “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Expanding on what had been done previously, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898 on February 11, 1994, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*. The main objective of this order furthers what had been expected with Title VI including “achieving environmental justice as part of (each Federal agency’s) mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”

GVMC has chosen to address environmental justice by first identifying those areas with concentrations of traditionally under-served populations through thematic mapping. Once those areas of under-served populations were identified, those areas were compared to a map of the projects identified in the Transportation Improvement Plan to be completed over the next three years. Staff then compared the two maps across the entire region, paying special attention to the projects proposed in areas of traditionally under-served population. If any portion of a proposed project touched any of the highlighted environmental justice areas, that project was included in the environmental justice analysis.

Based on the spirit and intent of Environmental Justice, GVMC is striving to identify and inform two major sectors of the population, targeted minority populations and low income residents. Low-income means persons whose “household income is at or below the Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines.” Minority populations, as defined by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Environmental Justice order, are those individuals that are of African-American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American descent.

Environmental justice areas are designated based on the population of the targeted population group as it compares to the overall population of the entire metropolitan

area. In the case of African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, if any census block exceeds the population percentage for that population group throughout the region as a whole, that block is flagged. For low income identification, the same methodology is used as for the other population groups but census block groups are used to identify those populations as that is the format by which the data is provided by the census.

Once the environmental justice areas have been identified and compared with the project lists, the notification process is put into action. Any property parcel that touches the proposed roadway improvement within an environmental justice area is highlighted through the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. A mailing list is generated for that roadway corridor and a letter is sent to each adjoining property owner. The letter explains the environmental justice process and encourages input from the property owner on the proposed project. GVMC staff phone numbers, addresses, e-mail addresses, and fax numbers are provided. A public meeting is also held for the purpose of providing property owners the opportunity to learn more about the transportation planning process as a whole. The meeting also gives interested citizens the chance to communicate with GVMC staff on the environmental justice projects in the Transportation Improvement Plan.

The comparison of scheduled projects to areas of under-represented populations is being more carefully scrutinized and analyzed than ever before as part of this ongoing process. The level of analysis now being done will insure that neighborhoods are informed of projects, have the ability to provide input into the transportation planning process, and are minimally impacted by future transportation improvements.

For more specific analysis, other data sources should be used to verify Census data.

**Table 2 - Percent of Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations in the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area for the Year 2000**

	Total	White	African-American	Native American	Asian-American	Hispanic	Low Income
Metro Area Total	648,138	548,357	52,148	3,375	11,404	41,312	53,593
Percent of Total		84.60%	8.05%	0.52%	1.76%	6.37%	8.27%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census of Population

The results using the above methodology identify that 41% of the entire metropolitan area fits one or more of the criteria used for environmental justice.

## Environmental Justice Continued

The letter below is an example of the letters that were sent to property owners where there are protected populations based on the Environmental Justice analysis by the Grand Valley Metro Council:

March 22, 2005

Dear Property Owner:

The Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC), as the federally designated transportation planning agency for the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area, is sending you this notice as part of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Process. Part of that process involves compliance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Executive Order 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice." These federal programs seek to serve traditionally under-served populations by including them in the decision-making process for programs that received federal funds. Every two years, GVMC works with local cities, counties, the State of Michigan, and the Federal government to identify future transportation improvements in the area and when those improvements will be completed. As a result of this process, you are receiving notice of a future transportation improvement scheduled to take place in your area.

### **Proposed Project:**

**Monroe Avenue from Frank Street to Palmer Street**

### **Proposed Work:**

**The existing roadway will be reconstructed in 2006.**

This project will be financed in part with federal transportation funds. Because federal funds are being used on this project, we are providing the opportunity for input if you so desire. If you feel the above mentioned transportation project will negatively impact the physical environment or surroundings in your neighborhood, please contact us.

Grand Valley Metro Council  
40 Pearl Street, N.W., Suite 410  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
Attn: Chris Dingman, Senior Transportation Planner  
Telephone: (616) 776-7669  
Fax: (616) 774-9292  
E-mail: [dingmanc@gvmc.org](mailto:dingmanc@gvmc.org)

Action on your part is not required. You are receiving this notice for information purposes only.

If you wish to comment and have that comment be included in the 2006-2008 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) document, you must submit your input by **April 8, 2005**. There will be a meeting to introduce the federally funded TIP projects for the Grand Rapids Area. The list is used to analyze how those projects will impact federal environmental justice areas and the levels of air quality in the area. The meeting will be held:

**April 5, 2005, 5:30 PM at the Wyoming Public Library, 3350 Michael Avenue**

If you have questions, comments or need more information, please use the contact information above.

Thank you and have a nice day.

## Environmental Justice Continued

**Table 3** shows the actual TIP projects flagged by the GVMC Environmental Justice analysis:

## FY2006 - 2008 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROJECTS

PROJECT	LIMITS	PROJECT SCOPE	JURISDICTION	EJ PROJECT?
Lake Drive	Plymouth to Bagley	Reconstruct Existing	East Grand Rapids	Yes
Wealthy Street	West City Limits to Plymouth	Resurface	East Grand Rapids	Yes
Division Avenue	Burton to Crofton	Reconstruct Existing	Grand Rapids	Yes
Hall Street	12' E of Cl of Buchanan to 22' W of Cl of Division	Reconstruct	Grand Rapids	Yes
Ottawa Avenue	Michigan to Mason	Resurfacing	Grand Rapids	Yes
Monroe Avenue	194' North of Frank Street to North of Palmer Street	Reconstruct	Grand Rapids	Yes
Cherry Street	CL of Jefferson to CL of Prospect	Reconstruct	Grand Rapids	Yes
Knapp Street	Wyndham Hill Drive to East City Limits	Widen 2 to 4 lanes	Grand Rapids	Yes
Wealthy Street	26' E of CL of Division to 26' E of CL of Lafayette	Reconstruct	Grand Rapids	Yes
Fuller Avenue	Franklin St to 19' S of CL of Wealthy	Reconstruct	Grand Rapids	Yes
Prairie Parkway	Ivanrest to Wentworth	Resurfacing	Grandville	Yes
Ivanrest Avenue	28th to Chicago Drive	Resurfacing	Grandville	Yes
Prairie Parkway	Wilson Avenue to Wallace Street	Resurface	Grandville	Yes
Division Avenue	60th to 68th St.	Reconstruct & Widen to 5 Lns	KCRC	Yes
28th Street	Kraft To Cascade	Rotomill/resurfacing	KCRC	Yes
Division Avenue	68th St to 76th St	Reconstruct & Widen to 5 Lns	KCRC	Yes
West River Drive	Samrick Ave to Jupiter Ave	Reconstruct & Widen to 5 Lns	KCRC	Yes
68th Street	Division Ave to Kalamazoo	Resurface	KCRC	Yes
Northland Drive	13 Mile Rd to 14 Mile Rd (M-57)	Reconstruct & Widen to 5 Lns	KCRC	Yes
10 Mile Road	2700' West of Wolven to Childsdale Ave	Reconstruct & Widen to 5 Lns	KCRC	Yes
Fuller Avenue	19' N. of CL of Wealthy to 33' S. of CL Lake Dr.	Rotomill/resurfacing	KCRC in Cities	Yes
East Paris Avenue	52nd Street to 60th Street	Reconstruct	Kentwood	Yes
East Paris Avenue	36th Street to Swank Drive	Reconstruct & Widen to 4 Lanes	Kentwood	Yes
Kalamazoo Avenue	60th Street to 52nd Street	Reconstruct & Widen to 5 Lns	Kentwood/KCRC	Yes
I-96	16th Avenue East to Bristol Avne	Major Rehabilitation	MDOT	Yes
US-131/I-296	ANN ST NORTH TO TO NORTH PARK ST.	RECONSTRUCTION+ NB W/M LANE	MDOT	Yes
M-11	EAST OF DIVISION AVE. TO WEST OF KALAMAZOO AVE.	REHABILITATION	MDOT	Yes
M-11	WEST OF US-131 EAST TO WEST OF DIVISION AVE.	RECONSTRUCTION	MDOT	Yes
Main Street	60' N. CL of Courtland to 40' W. CL of Northland	Reconstruct Existing	Rockford	Yes
Madison Avenue	32nd to 28th	Rotomill/resurfacing	Wyoming	Yes
Wilson Avenue	52nd Street North 1400'	Widen to 4 Lanes with Median	Wyoming	Yes
44th Street	Clyde Park to 500' West	Widen to 6 Lanes	Wyoming	Yes