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TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Milton Dohoney Jr., Interim City Administrator

CC: Transportation Commission

SUBJECT: City Ownership of State Trunklines Analysis

DATE: January 3, 2022

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City staff intends to solicit proposals in the first quarter of calendar year 2022 to identify the tradeoffs of transferring ownership of State trunklines from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to the City of Ann Arbor. Proposals will be evaluated and if one is deemed acceptable, a corresponding budget amendment will be brought forward by staff as part of the FY2023 budget development process to fund this analysis. This analysis must be conducted for the City to understand the pros/cons and benefits/costs of such a transfer of ownership. The analysis will be shared with City Council for their contemplation and possible future action if found to be desirable.

#### Background

State trunklines bisect the City of Ann Arbor and are owned, operated, and controlled by the MDOT; namely North Main Street and the Washtenaw Avenue/Huron Street/Jackson Avenue corridor.

It can be argued that MDOT and the City view these corridors differently. It is the impression of City staff that MDOT views trunklines as part of regional mobility and prioritizes vehicular and freight movement as the top priority. Conversely, the City views these roadways as important to local transportation and prioritizes safety, mobility, accessibility, and healthy people and sustainable places as top priorities.

The ownership of these roads by the State has limited the ability of the City to make improvements to these corridors consistent with adopted policies, plans and studies developed by the City and regional partners. While MDOT may consider improvements suggested by the City, it is not compelled to incorporate local recommendations. There is a litany of examples whereby the City and MDOT have differing opinions on the

appropriate roadway treatments along State trunklines. A non-exhaustive list of such examples include:

- MDOT's current plans for a resurfacing project along North Main Street (tentatively scheduled for 2026) include no other changes or improvements to the corridor. North Main Street has had several studies over several decades including the Northeast Area Study and the North Main Huron River Corridor Project which recommend significant changes to this corridor.
- As part of the Downtown Development Authority's Huron Street project, City Council passed a resolution (R-18-322) that supported non-rush hour on-street parking along Huron St. Despite the resolution of support (which was requested by MDOT), the State denied this design element along Huron Street.
- The City's recently adopted "Moving Together Towards Vision Zero" Master Transportation Plan identifies twelve separate intersections and segments on trunklines as High Crash Locations. However, these locations are not high enough on the State-wide crash list to be a priority for MDOT. This difference in priority is notable because if the City is to get to Vision Zero, crashes along these trunklines must be addressed.
- Washtenaw County led a community-wide and multi-agency effort to develop the [Reimagine Washtenaw Avenue](#) report in 2009 and a subsequent implementation strategy in 2010. Over a decade has passed since these documents were produced and only nominal improvements along the corridor have been made.
- There have been repeated concerns voiced by the City and its residents over the posted speed limits on State trunklines. MDOT's methodology to determine posted speed limits is arguably rigid and outdated. In fact, MDOT raised the posted speed limit the last time the City asked MDOT to evaluate lowering the speed limits along Washtenaw Ave.
- The City had voiced concerns over the crosswalk on Huron Street between Thayer and Ingalls for years. MDOT would not contemplate improvements at this location until after a pedestrian was seriously injured at this location in early 2019. This crosswalk was finally upgraded with Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons in the fall of 2021.

### Analysis Approach

The exact scope for the solicitation has not been drafted yet. However, staff anticipate the scope will include a thorough cost/benefit analysis of near-term, mid-term, and long-term considerations such as: the condition of the roadways; costs to bring the roadways up to an acceptable state of good repair; costs to operate and maintain the roadway in perpetuity; and anticipated increases to gas tax revenues. Additionally, staff intend for the analysis to capture other positive and negative externalities that might result from the transfer of ownership such as: the ability to mitigate crashes; the ability to incorporate active transportation along the corridor; the ability to align these key corridors with transportation, carbon neutrality, and planning policies; the ability to implement changes at a quicker pace; the ability to address the concerns of local emergency responders; and the ability to be more responsive to resident concerns; among others.

Staff anticipate that the tradeoffs, costs, and benefits will vary from corridor to corridor. It is also not guaranteed that MDOT will agree with the outcomes of the analysis or may not agree to the transfer of the trunkline(s); though MDOT has increasingly suggested this as an option. However, this is an important first step to have a more informed discussion on this topic.

Lastly, staff are open to suggestions from City Councilmembers on other considerations that should be incorporated into this analysis. Please share any such recommendation with Sara Higgins by February 1, 2022 so they can be contemplated for inclusion before the solicitation is released.

Staff hope you find this information helpful. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance or if you have any questions.

cc: D Delacourt  
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