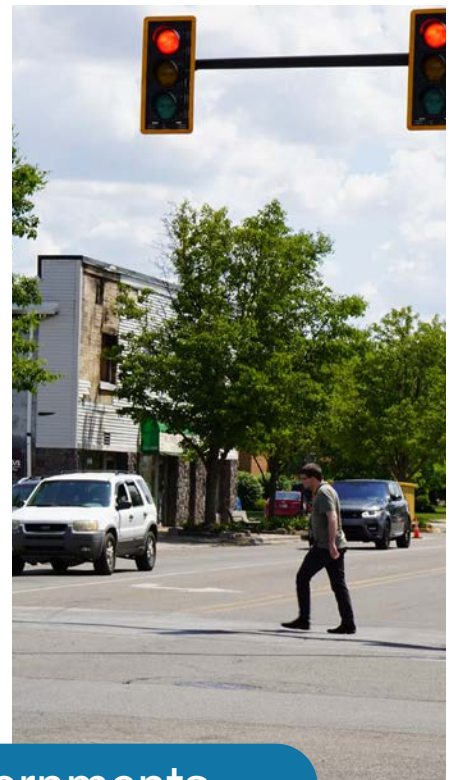


# ANNUAL REVIEW



20  
24



Michiana Area Council of Governments



# INTRODUCTION



As we embark on a new year, it is with immense gratitude that we recognize the unwavering dedication and remarkable achievements of our incredible staff members. Their hard work and expertise have propelled our organization forward, enabling us to reach new heights and make a lasting impact on our communities.

In this 2024 Annual Review, we are thrilled to showcase the exciting work that our staff has accomplished throughout the past year. From innovative projects to groundbreaking initiatives, their efforts have not only strengthened our organization but have also paved the way for a brighter future for our Region.

As you delve into the pages of this report, you will discover the many ways in which our staff has gone above and beyond to serve our communities. We invite you to celebrate their accomplishments and join us in looking forward to the exciting journey that lies ahead.



MACOG was presented with the Outstanding Public Involvement Award at the 2024 Indiana MPO • IARC Conference

Lake Michigan

MICHIGAN

INDIANA



## About MACOG

The MACOG region is located in North Central Indiana and consists of Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall and St. Joseph Counties. Two of the four counties (St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties) border the Michigan state line. There are 35 cities and towns in the MACOG region.



Visit our online **Regional Profile** to learn more about the MACOG Region.

**Regional Profile**  
[dashboards.mysidewalk.com/regional](https://dashboards.mysidewalk.com/regional)

## VISION

The Michiana Area Council of Governments contributes to the advancement of the Region's economic vitality, enhanced quality of life, strong sense of place, and expanded opportunities that attract and retain talented individuals and organizations to the Michiana Region.

## MISSION

The Michiana Area Council of Governments is a voluntary organization of local governments that studies and attempts to resolve, for the benefit of each member and the Region, areas of inter-local issues, which includes but is not limited to transportation, transit, economic development, environment, and other issues that impact the Region.



# TRANSPORTATION



**\$26.2 million**

was awarded to 29 communities in the Community Crossings Matching Grant



**76.4 Million**

went to construction for 15 projects.



**\$31.8 million**

was awarded on 6 new projects through MACOG's Urban Call for Projects



**\$8.1 million**

was awarded on 8 projects through INDOT's Rural Call for Projects

## Developing a Safety Action Plan

MACOG, working with stakeholders and the consulting firm Toole Design Group, spent 2024 delving into safety on our region's roadways to complete a Regional Transportation Safety Action Plan, Move Safe Michiana. The end result of this planning process outlines a prioritized regional network where roadway infrastructure improvements could be most needed. Additionally, the plan outlines 26 strategies around policy, education, planning, and evaluation to further the Region's safety goals. This plan will be presented for final adoption in April, and will qualify local jurisdictions to apply for implementation grants through the federal Safe Streets and Roads for All grants.

To further our understanding of traffic safety in the region, MACOG continues to ensure that crash records retrieved from the Automated Reporting Information Exchange System (ARIES) are cleaned and spatially located. In 2024, MACOG reviewed over 600 crashes. This information can be found on [two dashboards](#): including one for fatal and serious injury crashes, and another for all vulnerable road user crashes (bike, pedestrian, and horse and buggy) that have occurred throughout the Region since 2019. These dashboards enable local jurisdictions and the public to view crash data using interactive filters for specific years, locations, or crash types.



# Making Strides with the Data Bike

MACOG made significant strides in understanding regional trail conditions in 2024, utilizing a Data Bike equipped with cameras and phone software to assess roughness of over 123 miles on the Crossway Trails Network. This innovative approach allowed MACOG to assess



surface quality, identify possible maintenance needs, and track long-term wear on the Region's trail network. By leveraging data-driven insights, MACOG is ensuring that local communities have the right information to create safe, accessible, and well-maintained trails for recreation and transportation. Continuous tracking and monitoring of trail conditions play a crucial role in prioritizing future maintenance efforts, optimizing funding allocation, and enhancing the overall user experience.



# Utilizing Deep Learning (AI) in Transportation Planning

In 2024, MACOG utilized new deep-learning technology within ArcGIS Pro to identify sidewalks and curb ramps from aerial imagery. This innovative approach not only improved the accuracy of sidewalk and curb ramp inventory data, transitioning from a manual process to a more automated process, but also enabled MACOG to update ADA Transition Plans across the Region more effectively. MACOG continues to train this model and study other ways this technology can be used for network identification and assessments.



**2,017,796**  
trail users were counted from 12 trail count sites with a daily average of 5,513



**23**  
Asset Management Plans were updated with MACOG's support



**229**  
centerline miles of roadway pavement condition was rated for 11 communities.



**1,930**  
traffic locations were counted. 1,114 with video footage and 816 with road tube.

OTHER TRANSPORTATION FACTS



# Federal Grants Awarded in 2024



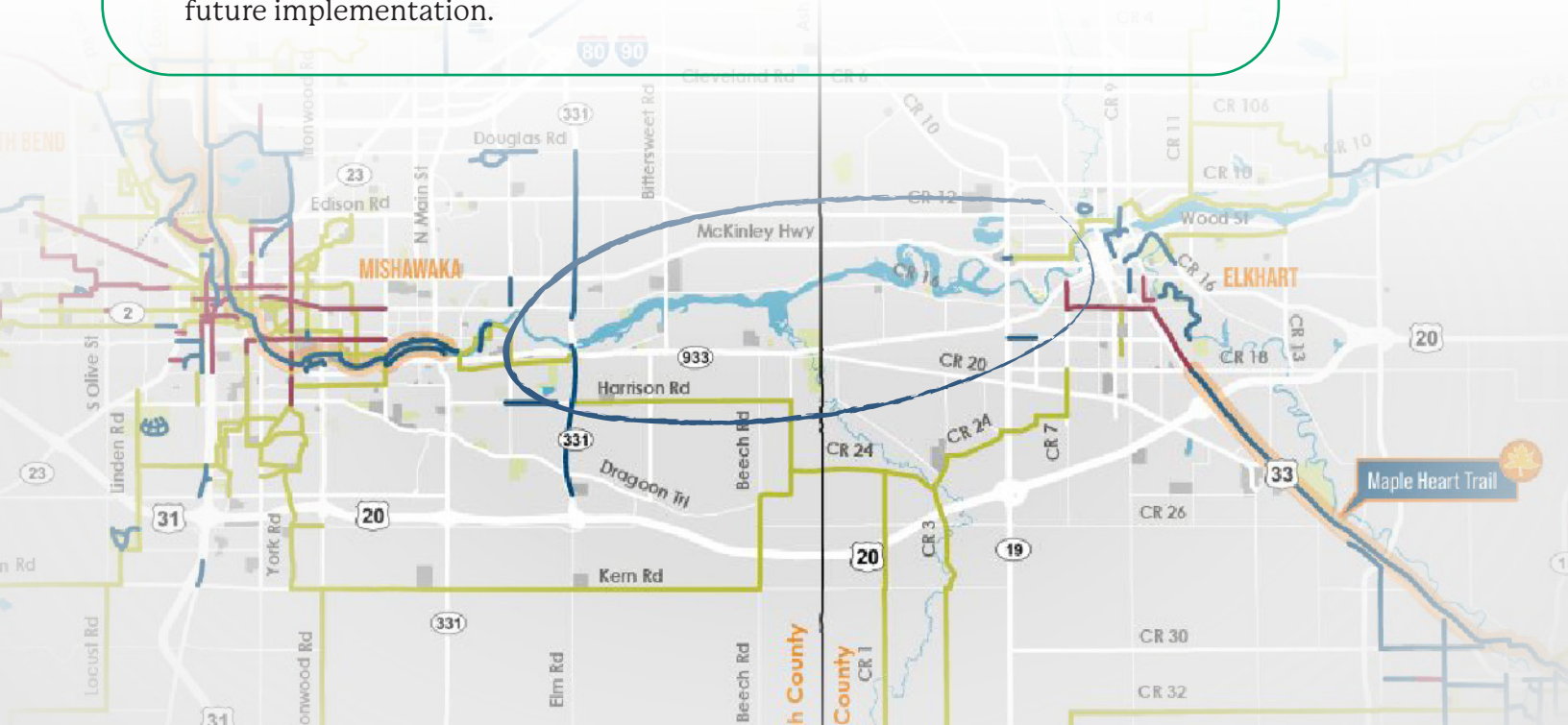
## Rail Crossing Elimination Grant

MACOG, in partnership with St. Joseph County, applied for the Rail Crossing Elimination (RCE) program in September for a rail crossing study at Ash Road and other nearby grade crossings (Apple, Beech, and Cottage Grove) along the Norfolk Southern Railway. In January the U.S. Department of Transportation announced RCE program selections, awarding \$1 million to the project, which will include an alternatives analysis for a grade separation near Ash Road and an evaluation of safety improvements at nearby crossings.



## Raise Grant

In partnership with St. Joseph County, the City of Mishawaka, the City of Elkhart and Elkhart County, MACOG applied for a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant to connect the two extensive, but isolated trail networks between Mishawaka and Elkhart. Most notably, the Indiana + Michigan River Valley Trail, traveling from Niles, Michigan, through South Bend, IN and terminating in Mishawaka, IN for a total of 22 miles; as well as the MapleHeart and Pumpkinvine Nature Trail traveling from Elkhart, IN, through Goshen and Middlebury, IN and terminating in Shipshewana, IN for a total of 25 miles. The approximately \$800,000 awarded for the Mishawaka-Elkhart Trail (MET) Planning project will advance the project from concept to ready for future implementation.



# TRANSIT



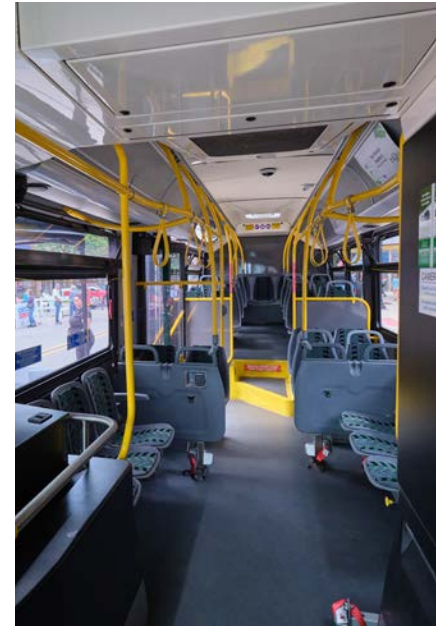
**408,908**

Interurban Trolley  
Passenger Boardings.  
An increase of 14%  
from 2023.



**31,098**

Trolley Access Trips with  
339 unique riders



**10,527**

passes were sold  
using the Token Transit  
app. 57% of all pre-  
purchased trolley  
passes

## Section 5310 Program

The Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program provides federal funding to improve transportation options for older adults and individuals with disabilities when existing services are unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate. Funds are distributed by formula, with allocations designated for large urbanized areas, small urbanized areas, and rural areas. MACOG, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the South Bend Urbanized Area, administers this program locally. MACOG facilitates funding opportunities for nonprofit organizations, local government authorities, and eligible transit operators to enhance mobility services. Funds can be used for traditional capital projects, such as vehicle purchases, and nontraditional projects that expand transportation services beyond ADA requirements.

In 2024, MACOG issued a call for projects for Section 5310 funding through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Nonprofit organizations in the South Bend Urbanized Area applied for funding to purchase vehicles supporting transportation services for seniors and individuals with disabilities. We awarded five organizations with funding to purchase a total of 11 vehicles, with the federal cost covering 80% of the vehicle costs.

## Section 5310 Awards:

- Logan Center
- REAL Services
- AIDS Ministry
- Corvillia
- Robinson Community Learning Center

**Total: \$791,691**

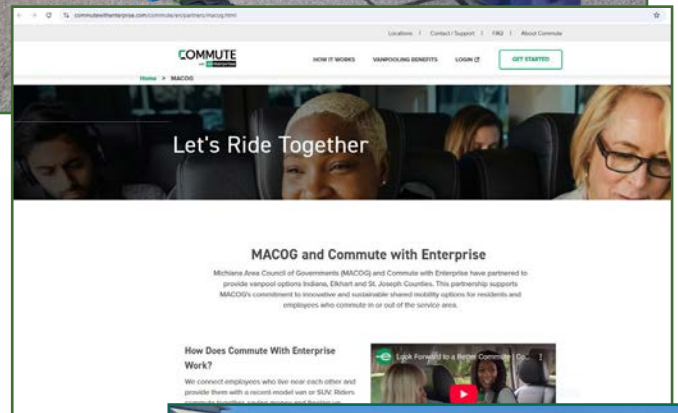


# Regional Collaboration Initiatives

MACOG embarked on several initiatives to promote collaboration between transportation providers within the four county region, and improve mobility for residents everywhere. Members of the transit team worked with many other MACOG departments to create the **Regional Mobility Plan**, which serves as the Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation for the Region. This plan, endorsed by the Policy Board in August, outlines gaps in transportation accessibility that make it difficult for individuals to reach essential medical care, food, and work opportunities. The plan then sets four goals: expand available service, enhance awareness of service, improve accessibility, and promote regional collaboration.

In service of these goals, MACOG has created the **Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC)**, which meets quarterly to bring together all kinds of transportation providers from the Region to discuss needs, opportunities for collaboration, and share advice and resources. This group had its first two meetings in 2024, and will continue to meet in different locations to showcase the wide variety of services that operate in the MACOG Region.

Moving into the future, MACOG has begun working on building a **regional mobility platform**, which will allow the public to see all of the transportation options available across the four counties, plan trips, and better understand how to access transportation. This mobility hub will also help to promote active and sustainable modes of transportation through rider challenges and initiatives, with a target launch date in the late spring of 2025.



## Regional Vanpool Program

MACOG launched a vanpooling initiative in October in partnership with Commute with Enterprise to improve regional job accessibility. The Commute program matches commuters in Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties who share similar work shifts and locations, customizing vanpools to group needs. Commute with Enterprise supplies the vehicle, insurance, maintenance, and support once four or more riders are matched.

MACOG selected Commute with Enterprise for their expertise, scalability, and professionalism to ensure program success. Beginning with six vanpools in October, the program grew to eight vanpools and 48 participants by the end of the year. MACOG anticipates continued growth and integration of the program into regional mobility solutions over the next year.





# SUSTAINABILITY

## Local Governments Get Behind the Wheel

MACOG hosted two private electric vehicle test drive events exclusively for local governments at Tire Rack in South Bend, attended by 72 individuals from 21 MACOG communities. The events were targeted to law enforcement, and models commonly used by police departments were available, including the Chevy Blazer EV, Ford Lightning, Tesla Model 3, and Tesla Model S.

Two electric pickups were available: the Ford Lightning and Chevy Silverado, which would meet the needs of many departments in attendance, including Public Works, Parks, and Utilities.

Other vehicles suited for administrative or non-pursuit use included the Chevy Equinox, Chevy Bolt, Nissan Leaf, and Ford Mustang Mach-E. The events were made possible thanks to Drive Clean Indiana, Tire Rack, and local dealerships Campbell Ford, Gates Chevy South Bend, Gurley Leep Ford, Oliver Ford, and McCormick Motors.

**Following the first event, ten local governments applied for a grant, and four were awarded including Marshall County Highway, City of Plymouth, City of Nappanee, and Town of Walkerton.**

Watch Video Recap: [January 2024](#), [December 2024](#)

## State Grants Fund 8 EVs: Nappanee Unveils Electric Work Truck

The City of Nappanee was the first of four communities to accept delivery of one of eight electric vehicles in the MACOG area funded by nearly \$600,000 from the Indiana Office of Energy Development's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program. The City unveiled the Chevy Silverado EV work truck that now serves the planning department. In 2025, the remainder of the vehicles will be put into service, including the first all-electric pursuit rated police vehicle currently being outfitted for service for the Town of Walkerton.



# AmeriCorps Program Enters Third Year

The AmeriCorps Program at MACOG entered its 3rd year and partnered with several new service sites including the City of Plymouth, Community Foundation of Elkhart County, and South Bend Bike Garage. MACOG also laid the groundwork for members to serve with other service sites including the St. Joseph County Parks Department and the City of Mishawaka.

## The 14 services sites included:

1. Community Foundation of Elkhart County
2. Elkhart Environmental Center
3. enFocus, Inc.
4. Goshen Health
5. City of Goshen Department of Environmental Resilience
6. Green Bridge Growers
7. City of Plymouth
8. MACOG
9. Seed to Feed at Church Community Services
10. Shirley Heinze Land Trust
11. South Bend Elkhart Regional Partnership
12. South Bend Bike Garage
13. St. Joseph River Basin Commission (Trine University)
14. Tolson Center for Community Excellence

The presence of AmeriCorps members at service sites throughout the Region has significantly enhanced the capacity to deliver vital environmental stewardship and economic resilience programs. These programs are essential for supporting vulnerable community members, ensuring they have access to the resources and support necessary for a sustainable future. The unique skills and dedication of AmeriCorps members have allowed our service sites to expand their reach and effectiveness in ways that would not have been possible with existing staff and volunteers alone. This has led to increased attention on new grant opportunities with deliverables that would not be possible otherwise.

## 46 members

served in 2024 with AmeriCorps

- 38 members completed service in Year 2
- 5 members continued serving from Year 2 into Year 3
- 8 new members started service in Year 3



*[Video Highlights](#): Listen to members share their experience in their own words*



# Brownfields Redevelopment Momentum Spurred by New Award

MACOG was one of three Indiana recipients to receive brownfields assessment funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2024. MACOG continues momentum with the Regional Brownfields Coalition through the \$1,500,000 grant, the third award since 2019. The funding is available to conduct environmental site assessments and planning for cleanup and reuse. The target areas include the Benham neighborhood in the City of Elkhart; the Kennedy Park neighborhood in the City of South Bend; the Tinkey Oil site in the City of Warsaw; the McCords site in Plymouth; and small towns with a population less than 5,000.

The funding programs will help transform once-polluted, vacant and abandoned properties into community assets such as new housing projects like the redevelopment of the former Arnolt site in Warsaw.



Former Arnolt site in Warsaw. Before (above) and After (below).



## St. Joseph River Basin Commission



The St. Joseph River Basin Commission works to improve water quality, encourage conservation, and increase coordinated management of the water and related land resources within the St. Joseph River Basin. Over the course of the year the team worked to educate the public about watershed education as well as monitor and sample the water in the river basin.

- Sampled 12 ongoing biological monitoring sites.
- Collected six water samples from Bowman Creek over the span of six weeks.
- Continued two water quality monitoring programs:
  - **LaGrange County:** monitored 13 sites for 25 weeks, giving a total of 325 water samples.
  - **Steuben County:** 10 monitoring sites sampled



17

watershed education presentations and one Hoosier River Watch Training presentation



4

AmeriCorps members served with the SJRBC for a total of 1,800 hours served.

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## Rural Communities Receive OCRA Grants

MACOG offers grant writing and administrative services throughout our region. In 2024, we successfully assisted four communities to receive seven grants from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA).

The City of Warsaw partnered with Fellowship Mission to submit a Blight Clearance grant to demolish two blighted buildings and remove the asbestos-contaminated materials on East Winona Ave for a total cost of \$694,943.

In 2020, MACOG assisted Kosciusko County in being selected to participate in the new Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) with OCRA. Since then, we have worked with the Towns of Milford, Mentone, and Pierceton to submit one construction project and one planning project each. This year, the following projects were awarded and moved to implementation.

The Town of Milford selected to upgrade new water meters throughout the town for \$460,157 and to create a Downtown Master Plan for \$70,800.

The Town of Mentone was awarded to enhance Menzer Park with new playground equipment, a new pavilion, and various other improvements for \$714,504 and to create a Downtown Master Plan for \$60,000.

The Town of Pierceton chose to construct a new sidewalk in a neighborhood that connected the school and park to their downtown for \$607,059 and to create a Master Water Utility Plan for \$100,000.

MACOG looks forward to celebrating with these communities when projects are completed.



### 3 Plans

are in progress;  
Argos Comprehensive Plan,  
Middlebury Parking Study,  
and a CEDS Update.  
2 plans were completed.



Provided grant writing and  
administrative services.

**Total Projects: 7**

**Total Costs:  
\$2.7 million**



# Regional Housing Study

In 2024, MACOG commissioned a comprehensive Regional Housing Study conducted by Community Scale, in partnership with the South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership and Community Foundations in St. Joseph, Elkhart, and Marshall Counties. The study aimed to evaluate the current housing market and develop a strategic plan for sustainable regional housing improvements. The research involved extensive data analysis and the creation of an interactive dashboard that displayed key housing indicators, providing valuable insights for stakeholders.

MACOG actively engaged with a diverse group of over 135 stakeholders throughout the study. This group included elected officials, real estate and financial institutions representatives, developers, construction companies, and housing advocates. By gathering input from various perspectives, MACOG ensured that the study's findings and recommendations would be comprehensive and reflect the community's needs. The study's analysis revealed a pressing need for more diverse housing types, including multi-family units, townhomes, apartments, and single-family homes, to accommodate a wider range of households. Additionally, the study highlighted the critical need for more affordable housing options to address the growing housing affordability crisis in the Region.

To address the identified housing needs, the study proposed the creation of a Regional Housing Collaborative. This would integrate a land bank, which would acquire and manage vacant land for development, with a housing investment fund, providing financial resources for affordable housing projects. The proposed Collaborative aimed to create a sustainable and coordinated approach to regional housing development. Following the study's completion, the Community Foundations received a substantial \$20 million grant from the Lilly Foundation to establish the Regional Housing Collaborative in partnership with MACOG. The work to launch the

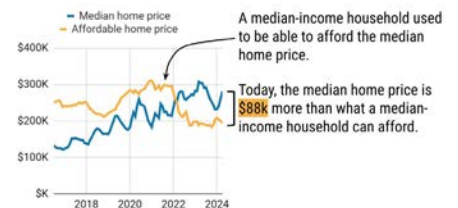
Collaborative is set to commence in 2025 and is expected to significantly impact the Region's housing market by increasing the availability of diverse and affordable housing options.




Received a  
**\$20 million**  
grant from the Lilly Foundation to establish the Regional Housing Collaborative



**The affordability gap is growing, driven by high interest rates, rising costs, and increased market competition.**



On area median salaries...

## What can essential workers afford?

Household earners	Median salary	Max. affordable home price	Affordable monthly rent
Teacher + Firefighter	<b>\$103k</b> 120% AMI (\$52k + \$51k)	<b>\$249k</b> \$32k short of median price	<b>\$2,140</b> Enough for average 3+ BR
Nurse (NP)	<b>\$86k</b> 100% AMI	<b>\$204k</b> \$77k short of median price	<b>\$1,770</b> Enough for average 3+ BR
Paramedic	<b>\$58k</b> 70% AMI	<b>\$137k</b> \$144k short of median price	<b>\$1,190</b> Just enough for average 1BR, not 2BR

Regional Housing Study

# ADMINISTRATION

## Public Engagement

It is important to MACOG to stay connected to the community and give the public as many opportunities as possible to connect with us. With each new year we are working to reach more people as well as working to share the best and most relevant information.



## Website

**Active Users: 22k**  
[www.macog.com](http://www.macog.com)

**Active Users: 33k**  
[www.maps.macog.com](http://www.maps.macog.com)



## 31 videos

were published with  
2,860 total views

**Most watched video:**  
Local EV Driver Feature -  
Maureen, Chevrolet Volt  
EV with 230 views.



## ~50 Events

MACOG hosted or Co-hosted

**Connected with over  
1,140 participants**



## 38

News Releases and  
over 50 MACOG and  
Interurban Trolley News  
articles were published



## MACOGazette

an electronic bi-weekly newsletter

**Total Editions: 27**  
**Total Emailed: 20,917**

Ended the year with **776 subscribers**

## Social Media



**MACOG**

## 1,517 Followers

between  
MACOG Facebook and  
LinkedIn pages.  
242 more than 2023.

Interurban  
**TROLLEY**



## 314 Followers

on the Trolley page.  
41 more than 2023.



## 419 Followers

on Crossway Trails page.  
12 more than 2023.



**+880**

informative and interactive posts were  
made between all 4 pages

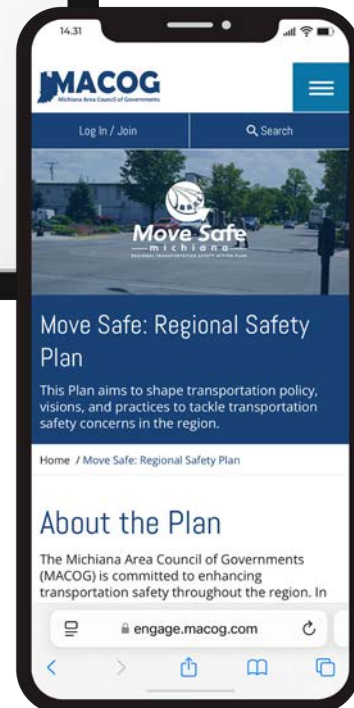
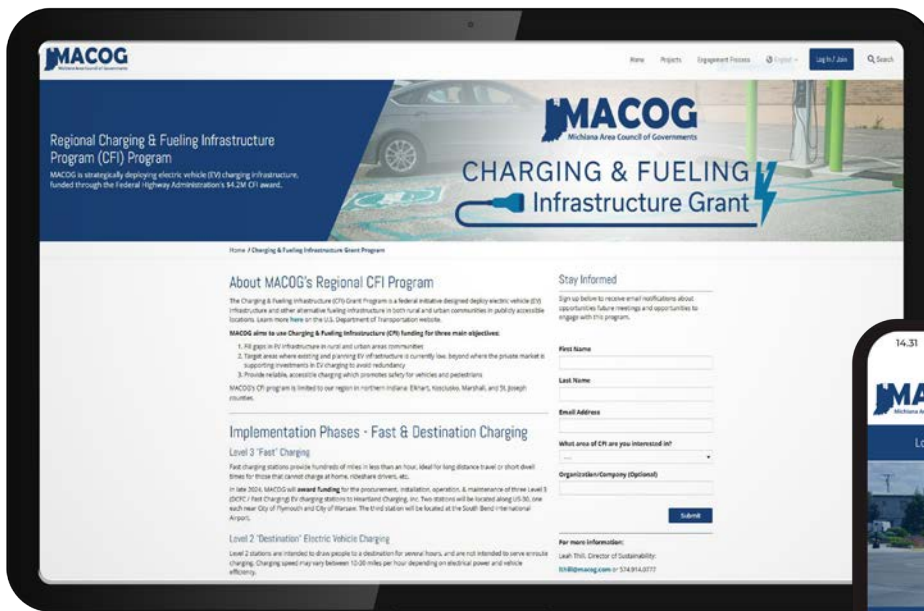


# New Online Engagement Platform

This year, MACOG launched a new website, [engage.macog.com](https://engage.macog.com), to centralize our various online engagement efforts in one place. This website, hosted through Social Pinpoint, will assist MACOG in facilitating online public engagement through all our programs. Previously, MACOG used various tools to host project websites, conduct public surveys, create public input maps, and create email campaigns surrounding various planning efforts. This often resulted in inconsistent use across different departments and forced the public to find information in different locations. This new platform brings everything together in one place.

The site launched in August with two initial projects, the Move Safe: Regional Safety Plan and the Charging Fueling Infrastructure Grant. Over the course of the year, the website had over 1,000 views with 817 visits from 392 visitors. In early 2025, several more projects will be added to the website, including the Regional Brownfields Coalition, Middlebury Parking Study, Transportation Improvement Program update, and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy update. We are excited to see the expansion of this platform and our public engagement improve across all our programs.

engage.macog.com had  
**over 1,000 views with 817 visits from 392 visitors**



**Charging & Fueling**

- 894 Views
- 707 Visits from 323 Visitors
- 33 Contributions from 31 Contributors

**Move Safe**

- 172 Views
- 126 Visits from 86 Visitors

# MACOG Team Member Updates

This year MACOG had several staff members join the team. Aidan McHugh joined the Transit Department in the Spring as a Transit Planner. Kelsey Triebold, an AmeriCorps member in 2023, joined MACOG part-time as a Transportation Planner, while continuing part-time AmeriCorps service with the Sustainability Department. Anton Getz began as an AmeriCorps member serving as an Active Transportation Fellow in the summer and then began a full-year position. Nick Dybas started as an AmeriCorps member placed at enFocus this summer, and then transitioned

to be an enFocus fellow placed at MACOG as a Transportation Planner.

We also recognize the departure of two long-time staff members. Johnnie Woggon retired after working in the Transit Department for 26 years! We appreciate her many years of service to the Region. Kate Barrett served as Aquatic Ecologist with the St. Joseph River Basin Commission since 2021, and is now a full-time professor. We wish them both the best in the next phase of their lives!



Aidan McHugh



Kelsey Triebold



Anton Getz



Nick Dybas

## Years Of Service Milestone

Congratulations to Caitlin for 10 years of service and to Zach for 15 years. A big thank you to all, whether it be one year or 30 years, MACOG is grateful for all of their employees and the hard work they do.

Caitlin Stevens



Zach Dripps





# 2024 MACOG POLICY BOARD MEMBERS

Cary Groninger - Chair  
Commissioner, Kosciusko County

Douglas Graham  
Councilman, Elkhart County

David Wood - 1st Vice-Chair  
Mayor, City of Mishawaka

Jeff Grose  
Mayor, City of Warsaw

Phil Jenkins - 2nd Vice-Chair  
Mayor, City of Nappanee

Todd Johnson  
Deputy District Commissioner, INDOT  
Ft. Wayne

Rod Roberson - Secretary  
Mayor, City of Elkhart

Canneth Lee  
Councilman, City of South Bend

Kathy Groninger - Treasurer  
Councilwoman, Kosciusko County

Gina Leichty  
Mayor, City of Goshen

Carl Baxmeyer  
Commissioner, St. Joseph County

Robert Listenberger  
Mayor, City of Plymouth

Jesse Bohannon  
Councilman, Marshall County

James Mueller  
Mayor, City of South Bend

Mike Burroughs  
Commissioner, Marshall County

Bryan Tanner  
Councilman, St. Joseph County

Matt Deitchley  
Deputy District Commissioner, INDOT  
LaPorte

Anthony Violi  
Councilman, City of Mishawaka

Dwight Fish  
Councilman, City of Elkhart

Suzanne Weirick  
Commissioner, Elkhart County

## MACOG STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
James Turnwald

TRANSPORTATION

Caitlin Stevens  
Dustin New  
Raj Parikh  
Anton Getz  
Nick Dybas

TRAFFIC DATA

Greg Slater  
David Harker  
Donald Cornelis  
Charles Kaufman  
William Takach  
Timothy Grueger  
Patrick Shelton

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS  
Zach Dripps

ADMINISTRATIVE  
Carla Herwarth  
Ashley Matthews  
Russ Ragimbekov  
Katie Dominguez

ENVIRONMENTAL

Matt Meersman  
Kate Barrett  
Leah Thill  
Amber Werner  
Kelsey Triebold

TRANSIT

Johnnie Woggon  
Jeremiah Cox  
Gauri Mhatre  
Aidan McHugh

ACCOUNTING  
Debbie Gardner  
Molly Chenoweth

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Donny Ritsema  
Olivia Nix









 **MACOG**  
**ANNUAL REVIEW**

Michiana Area Council of Governments

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