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# INDIAN & BUTTLES CORRIDOR COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

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**Additional Information Packet**

**Prepared September 18, 2019**

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## Timeline of Downtown Midland Planning Actions

To better understand how the Indian and Buttles corridors are included in the City's overall economic development strategy, review the timeline below.

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**1989** Midland Downtown Development Authority Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district is formed.

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**1997** The City of Midland Master Plan envisions office and commercial use for the blocks between Indian and Buttles streets.

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**2007** The City of Midland Master Plan envisions mixed use for the blocks between Indian and Buttles streets.

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**2012** The expanded Downtown Development Authority district is formed to include the blocks between Indian and Buttles streets.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

Please find below a list of questions the City has received since the road diet trial began. For more information or answers to additional questions, please visit [www.cityofmidlandmi.gov/roadstudy](http://www.cityofmidlandmi.gov/roadstudy).

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### ***How was the Corridor Study initiated?***

The US-10 Business Route (BR) Corridor Study was commissioned by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). This study included a corridor-wide data collection effort, review of traffic data, development of a traffic model, and development of alternatives which met the project purpose. The study was supported by the City.

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### ***What is the purpose of even considering a reduction in the number of lanes on Buttles Street? Why would we consider reducing the number of lanes? What is the long term goal?***

Buttles and Indian Streets are overbuilt in their current designs. This provides conditions that are unnecessarily unsafe. A single lane reduction is being considered to change how drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians use the road in order to reduce speeding and encourage safety for everyone. A lane reduction would also result in more space that can be devoted to other uses. A final decision has not been made as to how the space could be used, but examples of potential uses include widened sidewalks, buffer zones, dedicated vehicle turn lanes, or separated bike lanes.

The long-term goal for this area of Downtown Midland can be found within the City's Master Plan. The Master Plan envisions this corridor for additional mixed use development that consists of a combination of restaurants, shops, residential, services, and offices. Indian and Buttles Streets in the current, overbuilt design do not support mixed use development.

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### ***What is the purpose of the road diet trial now taking place?***

A study completed by consultants examined several redesign options for the US 10 Business Route corridor. The preferred alternative, based on the needs of all corridor users, was a reduction in the number of lanes from three to two.

The consultants' recommendation to reduce Buttles Street from three to two lanes was based on an engineering analysis completed and presented in the final study report using a variety of available and collected traffic data. Although the recommendation was and remains supported by the information that was available at that time, on-street testing was desired by both MDOT and the City of Midland to make certain the consultant's findings would hold up under real-world conditions. Short trials took place in August 2017 and November 2017, both of which supported the consultants' findings that only two lanes of travel are needed to accommodate the traffic using the corridor between Jerome Street and State Street. The trial now underway is an expanded testing of this finding and continues to collect data that will be used to make a final decision for the future of this corridor.

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***I don't see pedestrians or bicyclists using the closed lane on Buttles Street. Doesn't this show that the trial isn't working and the lane closure is not needed?***

No. The closed lane is closed to all users, including bicyclists and pedestrians. It is not intended for any use during the trial that is taking place. In fact, since the markings of this lane are only temporary plastic bollards, it is not safe for anyone to use that lane at this time. Both MDOT and the City therefore actively discourage any use of the lane at this time. As such, there should be no pedestrians or bicyclists in the lane - which is what we are observing.

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***Why are we considering closing a lane of traffic to accommodate bicyclists?***

There is a common misconception that the road diet is intended to create a bike lane for the use of bicyclists. This misconception likely came from early concept drawings showing bike lanes in several of the options considered for the Buttles Street corridor. The reality is that no design for the corridor has yet been developed and no decision has been made on what could be included in that corridor. While a bike lane is one possible option, other options for non-motorized mobility and connectivity include separated, off-street pathways or widened sidewalks.

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***It has been reported that Buttles Street has seen an increase in crashes because of the road diet. Why?***

In the first year of the road diet trial (from May 2018 to May 2019), 37 accidents were reported in the trial area, compared to 26 crashes for the same timeframe in the previous year. While traffic accidents are never an ideal situation, it's not uncommon for areas to experience an increase in traffic crashes for a brief time period after experiencing a change in traffic patterns. In fact, the 42% increase in year-over-year traffic accidents (26 versus 37) is not the largest percentage increase in accidents this corridor has seen in the past five years. See the charts at the end of this document for more information.

In 17 of the 37 crashes reported in the trial area since data collection began, a motorist disregarded a traffic control signal (ran a red light or stop sign) on Buttles or a cross street and experienced a collision. (See the "Angle straight" column in the chart above.) These types of crashes are almost exclusively attributable to driver error and are not likely to have been caused by the lane reduction on Buttles Street.

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***Who was responsible for initiating the US 10 Corridor Study in 2015?***

The study of the US 10 Business Route Corridor, including Indian and Buttles streets, was initiated by the Michigan Department of Transportation with the support of the City of Midland. Momentum Midland (now known as the Michigan Baseball Foundation) was invited to participate as part of a stakeholders' group during the study, but did not initiate either the 2015 study or the road diet trial now underway.

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### ***Whom are the stakeholders that asked for this?***

The US 10 Business Route Corridor Study conducted in 2015 was initiated by the Michigan Department of Transportation with the support of the City of Midland. It was not initiated by any other organization or stakeholder. At an early meeting between MDOT and the City in June 2015, several stakeholders whose input would be sought were identified. The stakeholders identified at that meeting included the following, in addition to the City of Midland and MDOT personnel:

- City of Midland Non-Motorized Transportation Committee
- Chamber of Commerce
- Discovery Square businesses
- Downtown Development Authority
- Midland Area Community Foundation
- Midland Tomorrow
- Momentum Midland

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### ***What has already been decided by City Council?***

City Council has received the 2015 Corridor Study and considered the options presented in that report. On December 17, 2017, City Council passed a resolution that supported in principle the conversion of Buttles Street between Jerome Street and State Street from 3 lanes to 2 lanes. This resolution provided for the longer data collection process known as the Buttles Street Road Diet Trial that is now underway. The trial started on May 14, 2018.

A decision regarding the lane configuration on Buttles Street has not yet been made. Similarly, the decision of what this section of Buttles Street would look like if converted to a two-lane corridor has also not yet been made. Opportunities for public comment and input that will be considered before those decisions are made are currently underway and will continue to be provided before City Council takes any position and makes any final recommendation to MDOT.

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### ***The decision on this trial has already been made. Why should I participate in any future meetings?***

The only decision made by the City Council to date is to support the conversion of Buttles Street from Jerome Street to State Street in principle. This has permitted the trial now underway to take place, thereby allowing MDOT and the City to collect and analyze real-world data. It is not a final decision and does not direct what would be done with the corridor if a lane reduction is ultimately determined to be appropriate. In fact, specific alternative designs for the corridor have not even been prepared, so a final decision could not have been made. Further discussion and deliberation will be needed, and all input received will be considered through that process.

If you have specific comments you feel we should hear and consider, we would encourage you to submit them in writing to us. If you simply want to talk about the corridor, we would encourage you to contact

the City Planning Department for that purpose. Through September 30, 2019, you can also share your experience via an online survey the City's public engagement platform, E-CityHall, at [www.cityofmidlandmi.gov/ecityhall](http://www.cityofmidlandmi.gov/ecityhall).

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***What data is being collected during the current trial period?***

Traffic data collected during the trial period includes vehicle speed and traffic volume. MDOT has also performed two delay studies during this trial period. Crash data within the corridor is also being collected by MDOT and the City during the trial period. The traffic data collected has been presented at two prior meetings of City Council, including at the October 29, 2018 meeting and then again at the May 20, 2019 meeting.

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***What happens next?***

Following conclusion of the trial, the final data will be reviewed and analyzed by MDOT and presented to City Council. City Council will then need to make a decision on whether or not to move forward with the process to determine a final design for Buttles Street with two-lanes. Consideration at that time could also include Indian Street and the possibility of maintaining the current three-lane profile.

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***How can I share my experiences in the corridor with the City?***

Discussions with a staff member to share specific experiences you have had in the trial area are always helpful. The more specific you can be, the more helpful that discussion will be for us at the City as the trial progresses. City Planning staff would be happy to have that discussion with you.

If you wish to have your thoughts, experiences, and suggestions noted officially for the public record, you may always do so in written form. Emailing a member of City staff, an elected member of City Council, or sending a mailed letter are all available options. Finally, you are encouraged to take an online survey about your experiences during the trial on the City's public engagement platform, E-CityHall, at [www.cityofmidlandmi.gov/ecityhall](http://www.cityofmidlandmi.gov/ecityhall).

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***What happens to my comments after I submit them in writing to the City?***

Every written correspondence sent to the City is included in the official record. Each time that the trial comes before the City Council, letters received since the last meeting and prior to the City Council agenda being posted are included in the agenda packet so that all members of City Council receive and are able to review them. As City Council agenda packets are publicly available, this also makes every written correspondence available to the public for review and consideration.

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***Does the City compile other communications about the road diet, such as letters to the editor in the Midland Daily News or posts on social media outlets?***

No. While we do monitor both print and digital communications outlets in the community, comments must be submitted directly to the City via the methods suggested above if you wish them to be part of the formal public record.

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***How does a lane reduction better connect downtown to the surrounding community?***

Buttles and Indian Streets are overbuilt in their current design. This provides conditions that are unnecessarily unsafe. A single lane reduction is being considered to change how drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians use the road in order to reduce speeding and encourage safety for everyone. A lane-reduction would also result in more space that can be devoted to other users. While a final design has not been determined, the resulting space could be used to accommodate other non-motorized users thereby improve these users access into downtown. Improved infrastructure to support non-motorized access will better connect the surrounding neighborhoods to downtown, while still maintaining adequate access by vehicle users.

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***What is the plan for evaluating the lane reduction?***

The lane reduction (or road diet) is being evaluated against the purpose outlined in the 2015 MDOT study. This purpose is to provide a change that will accommodate future traffic, enhance safety, increase connectivity, improve non-motorized mobility, be context sensitive and support economic development within the corridor.

The information being collected now for evaluation is related to traffic data only. This traffic data will be used to test the validity of the information used in the traffic model for the 2016 study and the corresponding recommendation in the 2016 Corridor Study. Various traffic indicators identified have been collected during the trial period, including information on vehicle speed and volume. Also vehicle delay information and crash data is collected.

Once traffic data confirms whether or not a reduction in lanes can be accommodated now and into the foreseeable future, City Council will review that data as well as all public comments received. Additional data may be requested at that time, and additional public input opportunities will be provided. Once City Council is satisfied that the data they need to render a decision has been provided, they will make a further recommendation to MDOT on their preferred design for the corridor.

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***How will City Council address the public feedback it receives?***

As with all of its decisions, members of the City Council will review all received public comments and reflect on discussions with residents of the community. Public feedback from residents, as well as the data collected during the road diet trial, will be reviewed and utilized by the City and members of the City Council before any final decision is made.

***The plastic bollards in place are ugly and make the area unattractive. Can't we do something that looks better?***

Yes, the orange plastic bollards in place are not attractive; however, only certain traffic control devices are permitted for use on a public road. The bollards need to stay as long as the data collection process continues. As soon as that data collection is complete, the orange bollards will be removed and the community discussion about what the future of this corridor will continue.

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***How will this impact emergency vehicles traveling through the corridor if traffic is backed up?***

Police, fire and ambulance service are all being considered as various options for the Buttles Street corridor are explored. During the road diet trial, no delays for these emergency service providers have been reported. Following the completion of the trial, all three emergency services will be further consulted to assess their experiences in greater detail before any design options are developed or considered.

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***Why were earlier trials conducted before the current trial was started?***

Both MDOT and the City of Midland have been taking a slow, measured approach to testing the feasibility of a two-lane street along Buttles Street from Jerome Street to State Street. The first step, following presentation of the Corridor Study by MDOT to City Council in March of 2017, was a three-day temporary lane reduction from August 28 - 30, 2017 to assess the impact of reduced lanes in this corridor. Following a public open house that was held by MDOT on September 13, 2017, concerns were expressed about the timing and duration of the first temporary lane reduction. A second temporary lane reduction was therefore implemented from November 6 - 13, 2017.

Using information obtained from the two temporary lane reductions, MDOT presented the final report and recommendations to City Council on December 18, 2017. City Council supported in principle the preferred option of reducing Buttles Street to 2 lanes. The road diet trial now underway is testing on a larger and more complete scale the report findings and the ability of the corridor to handle the traffic that travels through this corridor regularly. The longer trial allows all anticipated travel volumes and conditions to be assessed. The trial will last until the M-20 bridge construction is completed, traffic patterns return to normal thereafter, and sufficient data is obtained to fully understand the effect of the reduced lanes on vehicles in this corridor. MDOT and the City are currently discussing how much longer the trial will be needed once the M-20 bridge construction ends this fall.

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***Why is the trial taking so long to complete? When will it end?***

The trial is complicated and lengthened by the ongoing construction of the M-20 bridge crossing the Tittabawassee River. Traffic conditions through the study corridor during this construction are different than what will be experienced when that bridge is completed and traffic returns to its normal patterns.

Because of this, the trial will need to run past the completion of the bridge (currently on schedule to be completed in September of 2019). The original thought was that one year of data collection following the bridge completion may be necessary, although MDOT and City officials are discussing this timing now.

Remembering that the trial's purpose is to collect data that will be used to help inform upcoming decisions on the future of the road corridor, the trial will end as soon as MDOT and City officials are confident in the data collected. As soon as that takes place, the City will work with MDOT to immediately end the trial, remove the temporary plastic bollards, and begin a broader community discussion on what should be done with the corridor.

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***Are there plans to do the same on Indian Street?***

The 2015 US 10 Business Route Corridor Study conducted by MDOT included several options for Indian Street. The preferred option for that street was the same as for Buttles Street: a reduction from three to two travel lanes. Consideration of those options has not yet taken place and no direction or decision on Indian Street has yet been made by City Council or MDOT.

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***Wouldn't it be better to stop the trial until all construction downtown is finished?***

The trial is intended to collect data on the ability of Buttles Street to operate as a two-lane road instead of the current three-lane configuration. Construction in the downtown area does not significantly impact the trial or the data being collected. While specific construction sites may be in the study area and may have an impact on traffic at times, observing this and seeing the impacts of the trial during this time is beneficial. Since construction in the downtown area never really stops, it would also be difficult to select a time where no construction is taking place. Stopping the trial now, and then restarting it again in the future, would also prove more problematic and frustrating for corridor users than would finishing the trial now as quickly as possible.

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***Why are there three lanes now? If they were needed before, why aren't they needed now?***

A traffic study conducted by MDOT in 1959 proposed the idea of 2 one-way streets to relocate the main thoroughfare that then passed through downtown. Prior to 1962, Ellsworth Street served as the primary route through Downtown Midland. In 1962, the change was made to the 2 three-lane one-ways of Indian and Buttles Streets.

During the mid-century, traffic planners and road designers had one main goal: move as many vehicles through communities as quickly as possible with the only consideration given to cars. While this approach - called "Motordom" - was efficient for vehicles, it had little to no regard for the impact that those roads would have on the surrounding neighborhoods. This resulted in some very impactful tradeoffs that weren't all positive.

Additionally, local traffic on Indian and Buttles during the 1950s - 1980s was heavily influenced by shift changes at the area's manufacturing employers. As staffing levels have changed, and access routes have shifted into the industrial park, volumes during peak times has greatly decreased on Buttles and Indian Streets. In fact, traffic volumes during the roads' peak rush hour - between 7 - 8 a.m. - are down 28% from where they were 30 years ago. This reduction results in a corridor that is overbuilt for current and forecasted future needs.

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***The City has been growing. How does reducing the number of lanes make sense? Have you accounted for future growth?***

Midland has experienced a negligible population growth over the past two decades. Midland's population in 2000 was 41,869; in 2018, it was estimated at 41,800. While new development has taken place and the city has spread outward, the number of people living here has not increased. Nevertheless, to account for commercial/industrial growth and residential development beyond the City limits, the traffic studies all included an assumed 0.5% growth in traffic each year moving forward.

The number of vehicles commuting into the downtown area has dramatically decreased over the years as manufacturing activities have moved to other areas of the community. Today, commuting traffic makes up most of the motoring population on Buttles and Indian streets. While getting the motoring public from point A to point B safely is important, it is also important to provide an enjoyable experience that slows traffic for those working and living along the corridor and encourages those driving through our community to perhaps stop in for shopping, dining and entertainment.

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***Who will be paying for any future changes to the road and what would the timeframe be to start construction?***

Buttles Street is an MDOT corridor, so changes made to its roadway fall within MDOT's jurisdiction and control. Once plans are developed for the corridor, MDOT will coordinate the project and ultimately contract for the changes through an open bidding process.

The cost of any work to be done in the corridor is ultimately the responsibility of MDOT, but there are both federal and local shares of the project cost that would be the responsibility of the City of Midland. Previously, typical MDOT projects have required a 2 - 3% City match.

The timeline to start any possible work within the Buttles Street corridor is not known at this time. Once a project design is decided upon, cost estimates will need to be prepared and both MDOT and the City of Midland will need to budget funds for the project. This process is likely to take several years given State of Michigan and City of Midland budgeting processes.

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***How have road diets benefited other communities?***

Many other communities across the state of Michigan and the country have seen improvements following road diet improvements. While many of these involve four lane, bi-directional roadways being “dieteted” to three lanes, the same improvements can be achieved by reducing a one-way roadway from three lanes to two. These improvements include traffic calming and better accommodation of other corridor users including pedestrians and bicycles. To read case study examples, please visit [www.cityofmidlandmi.gov/roadstudy](http://www.cityofmidlandmi.gov/roadstudy).

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***Has future development growth and increased pedestrian usage been considered?***

Yes. The 2015-17 Corridor Study commissioned by MDOT included modeling and forecasts for increased vehicle and pedestrian volumes that could result from increased development not only in downtown Midland but also throughout the community and the surrounding area.

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***Is the corridor improvements only being considered to benefit the immediately surrounding properties?***

No. The improvements identified within the 2015 Corridor Study apply to the entire U.S. 10 Business Route corridor. These improvements include context sensitive design, improved safety and better access for pedestrians and bicyclists between surrounding neighborhoods, specifically Midtown, Downtown, and the cultural area that includes Midland Center for the Arts, Dow Gardens and Whiting Forest, and the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library.

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## Buttles Street – Total Vehicle Crashes

(Year-over-year increase delineated to the right)

	Angle Driveway	Angle Straight	Angle Turn	Bicycle	Fixed Object	Misc. Multiple Vehicle	Misc. Single Vehicle	Parking	Rear End Driveway	Rear End Left Turn	Rear End Straight	Side Swipe Same	Total	
May 2009 to May 2010		11	3							1	6	21		> 0%
May 2010 to May 2011	1	10	3							1	6	21		> 33%
May 2011 to May 2012		13		2	2				1	2	8	28		> -7%
May 2012 to May 2013	1	15	2							4	4	26		> 0%
May 2013 to May 2014		11	2		1		1		1	3	7	26		> -34%
May 2014 to May 2015		11	1		2					1	2	17		> 41%
May 2015 to May 2016		9			2		1			3	9	24		> -25%
May 2016 to May 2017		7	1		2					2	6	18		> 44%
May 2017 to May 2018		10		1	5					3	7	26		> 42%
May 2018 to May 2019		17			3	2		1	1	5	8	37		

Source: Michigan Department of Transportation, May 20, 2019

## Buttles Street – Vehicle Crashes by Type

	<i>Angle Driveway</i>	<i>Angle Straight</i>	<i>Angle Turn</i>	<i>Bicycle</i>	<i>Fixed Object</i>	<i>Misc. Multiple Vehicle</i>	<i>Misc. Single Vehicle</i>	<i>Parking</i>	<i>Rear End Driveway</i>	<i>Rear End Left Turn</i>	<i>Rear End Straight</i>	<i>Side Swipe</i>	<i>Same</i>
May 2009 to May 2010		52%	14%								5%	29%	
May 2010 to May 2011	5%	48%	14%								5%	29%	
May 2011 to May 2012		46%			7%	7%				4%	7%	29%	
May 2012 to May 2013	4%	58%	8%								15%	15%	
May 2013 to May 2014		42%	8%			4%		4%		4%	12%	27%	
May 2014 to May 2015		65%	6%			12%					6%	12%	
May 2015 to May 2016		38%				8%		4%			13%	38%	
May 2016 to May 2017		39%	6%			11%					11%	33%	
May 2017 to May 2018		38%		4%		19%					12%	27%	
May 2018 to May 2019		46%				8%	5%		3%	3%	14%	22%	

Source: Michigan Department of Transportation, May 20, 2019

## Buttles Street – Vehicle Crashes by Violation

	<i>Careless or Negligent</i>	<i>Disobeyed TCD</i>	<i>Drove Wrong Way</i>	<i>Fail to Stop ACD</i>	<i>Failed to Yield</i>	<i>Improper Lane Use</i>	<i>Improper Turn</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Speed Too Fast</i>	<i>Ran Red Light</i>
May 2009 to May 2010	8	1		3	5	1	2		7	
May 2010 to May 2011	7		1	3	5	3			7	
May 2011 to May 2012	1	11		3	3	4	2	1	13	
May 2012 to May 2013	10	1	4	7	1	1			11	
May 2013 to May 2014	6		4	9	3	3			7	
May 2014 to May 2015	9		2	2	1	2			10	
May 2015 to May 2016	5		4	5	3	4			8	
May 2016 to May 2017	5		3	4	2	3			6	
May 2017 to May 2018	9		1	3	4	6	1	1	10	
May 2018 to May 2019	12		6	6	1	2	1		17	

Source: Michigan Department of Transportation, May 20, 2019

Please note: Multiple violations can be issued for each accident, so these totals may not equal the total number of accidents recorded.