



I-94 Modernization Project E-Update

January/February 2022

Welcome to the I-94 e-Update!
Here are the latest happenings on the project.



Contractors remove snow from Cadillac Avenue bridge over I-94 and continue work. (Photo Description: At sunset, four construction workers

in safety gear work across a surface of steel bridge beams. A multi-story brick building is visible in the background.)

Advanced Bridges Update

In 2013, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) set out to rebuild the bridges that were in the poorest condition along Detroit's I-94 corridor. To-date, 13 bridges have been completed. Below is an update on the bridges that are currently, or soon will be, under construction.

The **East Grand Boulevard** and **Mt. Elliott Street bridges** over I-94 and the **Milwaukee Avenue** bridge over I-75 are complete and open to traffic. All that remains is minor miscellaneous work on each structure.

Work at the **Frontenac Street, Burns Street** and **Cadillac Avenue bridges** is ongoing. Contractors are waiting for warmer weather to pour the bridge deck at the **Frontenac Street bridge**. At the **Burns Street bridge**, they are currently installing bridge deck steel reinforcement and pouring the I-94 median concrete barrier wall.

At the **Cadillac Avenue bridge**, all beams have been set and crews are waiting for haunch grades to be approved. Haunch grades are the measurement between the top of beam elevation and the proposed bottom of deck elevation at predetermined intervals along each beam. The metal pan decking (the bottom of the deck form between beams) is installed at the haunch grade elevation so that the bottom of the deck is uniform across the bridge, which will result in a uniform deck thickness when it is paved. When approved, the contractor will start installing the permanent metal pan decking followed by bridge deck steel reinforcement. In the meantime, they're forming the abutment backwall at the ends of the beams. The contractor is also pouring the I-94 median concrete barrier wall.

At the **Second Avenue bridge**, the concrete knuckles and the tie girders that will connect to the steel arches at both ends of the bridge have been completed.

The **Third Street bridge** has been demolished and the large conduits that will contain utility lines have been installed under the freeway.

Utilities are in the process of being cleared at the **Grand River Avenue bridge** ahead of demolition. Stay tuned to local media for an announcement about when the bridge will be demolished and related weekend freeway closures. Information will also be posted on the I-94 website at www.I94Detroit.org.

Work to rebuild the **Cass Avenue bridge** will not get underway until the **Second Avenue bridge** is complete and reopened to traffic.

For questions or concerns during bridge work, please contact:

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Tell Us How You Get Around the I-94 Corridor



(Photo Description: Decorative Image)

We want to hear from you! MDOT has launched the I-94 Modernization Mobility Study.

There are four ways to participate in the study:

1. [Click here to take the survey.](#)
2. Our staff will help you take the survey by phone. **Call: 313-230-1019**
3. As part of a **focus group**. There are two sign-up dates available.
Wednesday, Feb. 16 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. or
Saturday, Feb. 19 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.
[Click here to sign up.](#)
4. Are you a community organization or block club on Detroit's eastside? We want to talk to you about working with MDOT to host a focus group so that the people you represent can be heard! **Please contact Bradleigh Merrill at: bmerrill@hntb.com.**

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What is the I-94 Modernization Mobility Study? It is a study to learn how Detroit residents travel on or across I-94, Gratiot Avenue, East Warren Avenue, East Jefferson Avenue, Mack Avenue, and/or Harper Avenue to get to work, school, shopping, doctor's appointments, and other important destinations. MDOT will use community input collected during the study to figure out the best mobility strategies for easing travel when the department rebuilds I-94 starting in late 2023/early 2024.

Why is my participation important? MDOT wants to make sure that the proposed mobility strategies meet your needs, so hearing from you is critical!

Is MDOT only interested in how we get around in cars? No! MDOT wants to hear about all the ways that you travel, whether it is by:

- Bike/e-bike
- Bus
- Carpool
- Driving with a friend or family member
- Driving your own car
- Sharing a car with your household
- Van service (provided by Dial-A-Ride, local church, senior center, DDOT, or others)
- Rideshare service (Uber, Lyft, or others)
- Taxi
- E-scooter or e-bike (Spin, Bird, Lime e-scooter, Mogo e-bike)
- Mobility aid (wheelchair, mobility scooter)

Who does MDOT want to hear from? While MDOT knows that everyone's mobility will be challenged as I-94 is rebuilt, right now the department is focused on identifying strategies that will help people who are likely to be disproportionately affected. To that end, MDOT is especially interested in hearing from people who live on Detroit's eastside along or near the I-94 corridor, including:

- Detroit residents with household incomes of less than \$40,000 annually
- Detroit residents of color
- Detroit residents with limited English language skills
- Detroit residents under 18 and over 65 years of age
- Detroit residents with disabilities that affect their mobility
- Detroit residents who depend on transit
- Detroit residents from women-led household



The Spiral of Life, a ceramic mural by Detroit artist Hubert Massey commissioned by MDOT, graces the Bagley Avenue pedestrian bridge in southwest Detroit. It was part of MDOT's I-75 Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project. (Photo Description: Against a blue sky, a suspension bridge with a tall center pillar is visible in the background, in the foreground is a brightly colored tile mural.)

Public Art for the Cass Avenue Bridge

When you think about rebuilding a freeway, what comes to mind? Odds are it is not the creation of beautiful art. But MDOT is seeking an artist, or team of artists, to do just that on the Cass Avenue bridge that will be rebuilt in 2022-23.

At the start of the year, MDOT announced the re-opening of a call for artists to create public art for the Cass Avenue bridge over I-94 in Detroit's Midtown as part of the I-94 Modernization Project. The call was postponed after the Covid outbreak began in 2020. Opportunities for public art are located at the southwest corner of the bridge and for integrating artwork into the barrier walls that line the sidewalk.

Artists are invited to apply to the open call online using the link to Call for Entry (CaFÉ) bit.ly/CaFE-CassBridge. **The deadline for applications is Monday, Feb. 28, 2022.**

Virtual Artist Information Sessions were held on Jan. 22 and Feb. 7, 2022. Each included a detailed presentation after which project staff responded to participants' questions. Recordings of both sessions may be found at I94Detroit.org.

Anyone with questions or needing more information about the project should contact Regina M. Flanagan. Flanagan, an artist and landscape designer, and artist Seitu Kenneth Jones, are administering the project on behalf of MDOT.

A public art committee (PAC) advising MDOT includes representatives from the City of Detroit, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the College for Creative Studies, the Wayne State University Art Department, Midtown Detroit, Inc., and the Detroit Collaborative Design Center, along with community residents.

“During planning for the I-94 Modernization Project, stakeholders expressed their hope that the freeway re-design would reflect community identity and Detroit’s rich cultural heritage,” said Terry Stepanski, P.E., I-94 senior project manager. “Public art helps meet this goal by contributing to placemaking, elevating aesthetic quality, and revealing history and culture.”

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For more information about the public art project, contact Regina Flanagan at regina@artlandscapedesign.us.

SBE Spotlight

One of MDOT’s goals for the I-94 project is to create opportunities for small and minority-owned businesses. The Small Business Enterprise (SBE) program is a mentoring program for small and minority-owned businesses, providing them a unique environment to collaborate with the main contractor on the project. It helps them gain experience, grow their technical capabilities, and meet the financial requirements for working on future MDOT projects.

Tarolyn Buckles is president and CEO of Onyx Enterprise, Inc. (OEI) and has been a participant in the SBE program since 2017.



Tarolyn Buckles, CEO of Onyx Enterprise, Inc. (Photo Description: A close headshot of a woman smiling. She has brown skin and curly black hair.)

I-94 Team: What kind of work does OEI do on the I-94 project?

Tarolyn Buckles: OEI worked on two municipal utility design contracts and two construction computer office tech contracts for the I-94 project. We design the relocation of utilities as the major designers are designing the bridges. Our team coordinates with all the utility agencies, Detroit Water and Sewage Department/Great Lakes Water Authority (DWSD/GLWA) agencies, and lead bridge designers to identify conflicts among watermains, sewers, DTE gas lines and ATT or Comcast lines. When there is a relocation needed, OEI designs the utility relocation. My designer Janice Tanner is amazing. She is a Black, female design engineer, and she is particularly good with civil site design.

We were recently awarded another municipal utility design contract for the

bridges along the I-94 corridor from Burns Avenue to Barrett Avenue.

I-94 Team: How has working on the project affected your business?

Tarolyn Buckles: OEI has increased staff from two employees to an average of 10. From the construction engineering aspect, our project awards have increased every year.

We have had the opportunity to prime contracts in two different areas of expertise, municipal utility designs and computer office tech construction. We used the knowledge we gained to pursue MDOT pre-qualification in both areas.

We have received amazing experience and training. Imagine working for five years with a wonderful team of partners: MDOT, small and major engineering firms, all with the same mission of delivering quality work.

OEI also had significant growth through the MDOT Mentor-Protege program. We were awarded seven MDOT mentor-protégé construction engineering/ inspection contracts, and one is in material testing. OEI is the only Black, female Tier One consultant in the Material Testing category in Michigan. We have construction inspectors working on several roadway projects including I-69, I-94 Jackson, and I-75 as well a design contract with US-12 Corktown.

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We have also received many awards, including:

- Best Small Business in Michigan - 2020
- Crain's Notable Women in STEM - 2019
- Michigan 50 Companies to Watch Award winner with Michigan Celebrates Small Business - 2019
- National Association of Women in Construction - Crystal Vision Award - 2019
- Michigan Chronicle - Women of Excellence Award - 2019

- National Society of Black Engineers - Golden Touch Entrepreneur of the Year Award - 2019

I-94 Team: What does the future hold for OEI?

Tarolyn Buckles: The future is bright. We are headquartered here in Detroit and have offices in Atlanta and Cleveland. We have pursuits in Atlanta with the Georgia Department of Transportation and the airport. In Cleveland, we have done hydraulic modeling work for the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District. Another target market is Tampa, Florida. And we were recently awarded the Dingell Tunnel project for construction engineering.

In 2019, we launched another firm, A/E Collaborative, LLC. It is an architecture and engineering firm with three partners.

I-94 Team: What made you want to become an engineer?

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Tarolyn Buckles: I love math and science. I was extremely competitive in school, and I am still competitive. I can remember always raising my hand with the correct answer and always competing with the boys. I was active in engineering and science programs like the Detroit Area Pre-College Engineering Program (DAPCEP). I wanted to be an architectural engineer until MDOT came to my high school when I was 15-years old. That is where I learned about civil engineering. I worked with MDOT while I was a student at the University of Michigan and graduated with a B.S. in structural engineering.

It has come full circle now because MDOT is my client.



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Project Website

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