

Memo

Norvell Township

To: Concerned Residents

From: Supervisor Bill Sutherland

Date: March 2026

Subject: Overview of MDOT Meeting and FAQ on M-124 Haul Route Concerns

In February of this year, Township officials met with a representative of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to review concerns related to the proposed use of M-124 as the haul route for the American Aggregates of Michigan (AAOM) mining application. Given the high level of public interest and the complexity of state-level authority over this roadway, the purpose of the meeting was to obtain clear guidance on what measures are—and are not—available to the Township regarding potential truck traffic.

The product of that discussion is an FAQ document summarizing MDOT's positions, statutory limitations, and potential avenues for further evaluation. This resource is intended to help residents, board members, and partner agencies understand the practical constraints surrounding M-124, as well as the steps the Township can take to monitor and address traffic impacts should the mine be approved.

Key topics addressed in the FAQ include:

- **Township ownership of M-124:** feasibility, costs, legal risks, and MDOT's limited authority over truck restrictions.
- **Traffic control devices:** criteria for installation, safety considerations, and potential legislative support.
- **Speed limit authority:** the Michigan State Police's exclusive role and the risks associated with requesting a speed study.
- **Applicant-supplied traffic data:** concerns about seasonal accuracy, MDOT's assessment of capacity, and options for requiring future studies.
- **Performance bonds and maintenance responsibilities:** Addressed in the FAQ.

This memo and the accompanying FAQ are intended to provide transparency and clarity as the Township continues its review of the Conditional Use Permit application. While the Township has limited authority over a state highway, there are still meaningful steps we can take to evaluate impacts, advocate for safety improvements, and ensure that any future operations are monitored appropriately.



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Frequently Asked Questions

For further questions, please contact 517-780-7540

- 1. Can the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) prohibit trucks on M-124?**
 - a. MDOT is unable to prohibit trucks on M-124. Allowing trucks on M-124 is a requirement to receive federal funding to repair and rebuild this highway. The US Department of Transportation will not allow trucks to be prohibited within one mile of routes on the National Truck Network. US-12 and M-50 are on the National Truck Network.
- 2. Could M-124 become a local road and prohibit trucks?**
 - a. A complex process exists to allow local authorities to eliminate the state highway designation by taking ownership of a state roadway. This may require repayment of funds invested into M-124 and will require the local township and/or county to fund the repayment and future repairs of the highway. A portion of M-124 lies within Lenawee County, which would require agencies in that county to also participate.
 - b. If there is a business located within a section of a roadway that is newly restricted to trucks, the local road authority must provide access from that location to the nearest truck routes.
 - c. Typical highway funding would not be available to the township and/or county to maintain the roadway if trucks are prohibited.
- 3. Does the gravel pit need a permit or permission from MDOT to use M-124?**
 - a. No. Any proposed gravel pit or other proposed commercial/residential development which is not located directly on a state highway does not need a permit from MDOT. Any vehicle meeting the legal width, height and weight requirements is allowed to access state highways, regardless of origin.
- 4. Can MDOT require a performance bond from the gravel pit for damages to M-124?**
 - a. No. MDOT is unable to require a highway damage bond from a private development. MDOT is unable to assess fees to lawful users of state highways.
 - b. In the spring of each year, M-124 is designated with weight restrictions due to frost laws. This requires all vehicles to carry a lower amount of weight(cargo) to avoid damage to M-124 for several weeks.



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5. Does MDOT have any upcoming roadwork planned for M-124?

- a. MDOT has a chip and fog seal planned on M-124 to be constructed in summer of 2027. This is a preventative maintenance treatment that will seal the existing cracks and preserve the driving surface.

6. Can MDOT install a traffic signal on M-124 due to the gravel pit?

- a. When reviewing traffic studies that involve new or changed traffic patterns at state highway intersections, the Michigan Department of Transportation follows established guidelines and standards outlined in the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Devices to determine if new traffic signals are warranted. Some of the factors that are included in the analysis are traffic volumes, crash history, and vehicle delay.
- b. MDOT reviewed the traffic study prepared for the proposed gravel pit. With the additional proposed truck traffic, traffic volumes at the US-12/M-124 intersection are approximately 70% below the threshold to consider a full traffic signal.
- c. For the intersection of Hardcastle at M-124, with the additional proposed truck traffic, volumes are approximately 89% below the thresholds for a full traffic signal. These locations will be monitored if the proposed gravel pit begins operating to see if changes or upgrades are necessary.

7. Can MDOT lower the speed limit on M-124?

- a. Speed limits are set by the Michigan State Police (MSP) and MDOT based on the Michigan Vehicle Code which requires modified speed limits to be set based on traffic engineering practices and an objective analysis of the highway's characteristics, as well as the speed at or below the 85th percentile of the speed drivers travel.
- b. An unofficial speed study was conducted on January 6, 2025, in the section of M-124 currently signed at 50 MPH. The 85th percentile speed of vehicles was 56 MPH. This result supports a posted speed limit of 50 MPH or higher.
- c. If a formal speed study is requested, the Norvell Township must agree to abide by any findings, which could result in a higher speed limit on M-124 based on the actual 85th percentile speed of vehicles.

8. The traffic counts on M-124 were taken in February. If counts were taken in the summer, would there be enough traffic in the future to install a traffic signal?

- a. The seasonal differences in traffic volumes are highly unlikely to justify traffic control devices.
- b. To determine the seasonal impacts on traffic volumes, MDOT compared historic traffic counts for summer and non-summer periods on similar state highways. Summer traffic volumes averaged about 54% higher than non-



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summer volumes. This is similar to M-124 where traffic counts are approximately 46% higher in summer. MDOT evaluated the volume thresholds discussed in item #6 above with projected summer traffic volumes. Summer traffic on M-124 is still 57% below the threshold at US-12 and still 70% below the threshold at Hardcastle Road.

- c. Using the projected peak truck volumes from the traffic study to determine future impacts on traffic results in the following:
 - i. The commercial traffic volumes on M-124 will increase by up to 180 trips/day.
 - ii. Total average annual daily traffic (AADT) on M-124 will increase by about 10.8%.
 - iii. Commercial traffic on M-124 would be approximately 210 vehicles per day.
 - iv. Nearby state highway M-50 carries approximately 470 commercial vehicles per day and US-12 carries approximately 410 commercial vehicles per day.
- d. With or without the proposed gravel pit, M-124 is significantly below its capacity to carry vehicles.