



Fact Sheet

Stop the \$320 Million Hartman-Hammond Bridge, Fix the Roads, and Protect the Boardman River Valley

Grand Traverse County can reduce traffic congestion and protect its prized places by pursuing a better, faster, cheaper “mix of fixes” on the county road network

The Grand Traverse County Road Commission is trying once again to build a highway bridge—now estimated to cost \$320 million—through the Boardman River Valley south of Traverse City. It’s the latest chapter in a long-running saga of a bridge that the public and state and federal regulators have previously rejected. The [Groundwork Center](#), in partnership with the [Northern Michigan Environmental Action Council](#), urges the road commission to cancel the bridge and pursue the better, faster, cheaper “mix of fixes” on the county road network called for in its own taxpayer-funded study.

Groundwork and NMEAC support the findings of the Grand Traverse County Road Commission’s 2019 study on east-west traffic, which recommended placing a priority on improving congested and dangerously designed South Airport Road and the Beitner-Keystone corridor before the Hartman-Hammond bridge project is even considered. Taking a [“fix-it-first”](#) approach to the transportation system will unclog the many congested arteries across the road system, rather than focus on a single blockage in Garfield Township, and do so faster and at far less cost to taxpayers.

We remain deeply committed to stopping the proposed Hartman-Hammond bridge and protecting the beloved Boardman River Valley. Since our founding in 1995, Groundwork has built support for affordable [transportation solutions](#) that meet the mobility needs of all people and strengthen community character and local prosperity. The proposed road-and-bridge fails the test on all counts.

Hartman-Hammond ...

1. **Risks \$300 million on a massive bridge** – A bridge connecting Hartman and Hammond roads would span 2,200 feet and cost about \$320 million – likely making it the largest and most-expensive county-owned bridge in the United States, according to news reports. That’s in a county of fewer than 100,000 residents that ranks 646th in the nation in population. The soaring cost of the bridge is about equal to the asset value of the entire Grand Traverse County road system. It’s so expensive that the road commission recently voted in a rush – without reviewing a written contract first – to



spend more than \$250,000 on consultants just to help seek funding to build the bridge.

2. **Doesn't relieve congestion** – The road commission's own [2019 study](#) found that "constructing a new corridor will provide traffic relief for a limited piece of the roadway network and does not provide relief for other corridors in the Region that are experiencing congestion." The study said that "benefits similar to adding another crossing of the Boardman River can be achieved with a 'mix of fixes' applied throughout the network" and could be completed faster, serve more of the county, and save millions of taxpayer dollars.

The study recommended placing a priority on improving congested and dangerously designed South Airport Road and the Beitner-Keystone corridor and said the Hartman-Hammond bridge project could be considered in the next decade, if justified at that time. The road commission, however, spent an additional \$2 million studying the bridge and then voted unanimously to build it and rejected the "mix of fixes" recommended in the study they had funded.

3. **Wastes taxpayer money while other roads go unfixed** – The road commission has spent more than \$4.5 million since 2019 on studies to justify a new bridge. Those taxpayer dollars would be far better spent on road repair, with 10% of the 1,020-mile county road network currently in "poor" condition. That includes a segment of Bluff Road on the Old Mission Peninsula [still closed after three years](#) due to damage from erosion. It's a replay of the road commission's costly effort in the late 1990s and early 2000s to study and build the bridge. The Groundwork Center (then the Michigan Land Use Institute) and allies – including the Northern Michigan Environmental Action Council and the Sierra Club – even [sued the road commission in 2002](#) to challenge the bridge project, which ultimately failed to gain state and federal environmental approval and the funding needed to build it.

4. **Pours heavy traffic into the Boardman River Valley** – A giant bridge would desecrate the [Boardman River Valley](#), which has recently undergone the [largest dam removal project in Michigan history](#) and the largest-ever wetlands restoration in the Great Lakes region. The project removed three dams and reconnected 160 miles of the river and its tributaries. The Boardman is a [Michigan Natural River and Blue Ribbon trout stream](#), and its valley bursts with plant and animal life and is prized for fishing, hiking, paddling, and other [outdoor recreation](#).

Now the Grand Traverse County Road Commission wants to fill the valley back up with a 100-foot-wide, concrete highway bridge carrying four lanes of noisy and polluting car and truck traffic. The impact would scar the landscape, and spread sprawl development. The bridge project also would violate a key [goal of the road commission's study](#), which says, "The alternatives and actions should conserve the natural environment and enhance positive benefits for adjoining properties, neighborhoods, parks and businesses."



The residents of the region and the river deserve better.

Visit [GroundworkCenter.org](https://groundworkcenter.org) to learn more and join our campaign to:

1. **Stop the Hartman-Hammond bridge** proposed by the Grand Traverse County Road Commission.
2. **Support a “mix of fixes applied throughout the network”** of county roads as an affordable and effective traffic reduction alternative, which includes improvements to South Airport Road and other county roads.
3. **Permanently protect the Boardman River Valley** where the massive bridge is proposed.

Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities creates sustainable solutions in local food, climate and clean energy, and livable, walkable towns. We were founded in 1995 under the name Michigan Land Use Institute. groundworkcenter.org

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