

MICHIGAN'S PLANET M: WHERE BIG IDEAS IN MOBILITY ARE BORN

A new campaign dubbed Planet M aims to coordinate the state of Michigan's prowess in personal mobility and market those capabilities through a single initiative. Officially launched in June 2016, it's a broad and open-source campaign that allows everyone in the state who is involved in the mobility industry to align themselves with Planet M and use its logo in their own promotions.



Kevin Kerrigan

Planet M, which is strongly backed by Gov. Rick Snyder, is being coordinated by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation in close association with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Kevin Kerrigan, MEDC's senior advisor for automotive initiatives, describes Planet M's goals and objectives.

What is the underlying focus of Planet M?

There is more mobility-related technology and know-how in Michigan than anywhere else. Planet M is a state promotional campaign that aims to attract jobs and companies to Michigan and to retain talent already here. But it's not just a trade initiative; it's a movement. We've generated immediate interest among transport industry companies, the academic sector and local government, who want to know how to be a part of Planet M.

What are the immediate priorities?

We're underscoring Michigan's leadership position in the mobility space, which means the technologies and services that enable people and goods to move around. The safety, efficiency and convenience promised by advanced mobility will reshape the global auto industry as we know it today. Michigan is extremely well positioned to help develop the possibilities and bring them to market.

For example, Michigan is home to Mcity, the 32-acre, world-class mobility test facility at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Mcity is backed by eight of the world's largest carmakers and has become virtually booked solid since it opened in mid-2015. We're also building the American Center for Mobility, a 335-acre test and evaluation facility 10 miles east of Ann Arbor at Willow Run that will be the largest of its kind in the U.S. Developers will be able to safely test advanced technologies there at 70 mph or more.

In addition, MDOT is coordinating America's largest real-world deployment of vehicle-to-infrastructure technology. Michigan's "Smart Corridor" currently consists of 125 miles of smart highways in the southeastern quadrant of Michigan's lower peninsula, and it is being expanded to 350 miles of roadway. The area is loosely defined by the I-69, I-94 and U.S. 23 expressways, which flow through the five counties that encompass the greater Detroit region and surroundings. The corridor goes through the heart of Michigan's automotive and technology area and links several other connected-car

initiatives in Ann Arbor, Detroit and Oakland County.

Recently MDOT collaborated with the U.S. Army Tanks Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center in Warren, Michigan, to test automated truck platooning on I-69 in south central Michigan. TARDEC is the Army's lead developer of ground vehicle technology.

Of course Michigan also is home to General Motors, Ford and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, along with thousands of automotive suppliers, dozens of engineering development companies and several major universities that are deeply involved in turning advanced mobility concepts into actual products and services.

Is Planet M related to Michigan's "Brainpower" initiative launched in 2015?

They are independent campaigns, but there is an intersection point for them. Planet M is all about the mobility space, while Brainpower focuses on Michigan's talent base in advanced transportation technologies. Certainly the latter is critical to the former, so there is an overlap that we will explore in the future as Planet M becomes more established.

How are you spreading the Planet M message outside the state?

First, Michigan has a state business development task force that coordinates with regional and city jobs initiatives. Planet M enables us to present the collective message to locations from California to China. It's not just about highlighting the state's capabilities in the mobility space. Planet M also is being used to alert students about the exciting opportunities offered by mobility in general and in Michigan in particular.



Is there a Planet M website?

Yes, and it's very active. PlanetM.com is full of easy-to-understand information about the world of advanced mobility covering everything from terminology to Michigan's pivotal role in the future of personal mobility. Visitors will find short videos that explain how the ability of cars to communicate with their environment will help reduce traffic jams, provide very sophisticated weather updates and even make our roads better. There are even links to mobility-related educational initiatives in the state.

Where will Planet M go from here?

Right now we're focused on Michigan's current capabilities. In the near future, we will be using input from the state's transport industry to determine how we can best support its efforts and solidify Michigan's position in this new era in personal transportation.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about Michigan's Planet M program or visit [PlanetM.com](#).