

= Interstate 696 =

Interstate 696 ( I @-@ 696 ) is an east ? west auxiliary Interstate Highway in the US state of Michigan . The state trunkline highway is also known as the Walter P. Reuther Freeway , named for the prominent auto industry union head by the Michigan Legislature in 1971 . I @-@ 696 is a bypass route , detouring around the city of Detroit through the city 's northern suburbs in Oakland and Macomb counties . It starts by branching off I @-@ 96 and I @-@ 275 at its western terminus in Novi , and runs through suburbs including Southfield , Royal Oak and Warren before merging into I @-@ 94 at St. Clair Shores on the east end . It has eight lanes for most of its length and is approximately 10 miles ( 16 km ) north of downtown Detroit . I @-@ 696 connects to other freeways such as I @-@ 75 ( Chrysler Freeway ) and M @-@ 10 ( Lodge Freeway ) . Local residents sometimes refer to I @-@ 696 as " The Autobahn of Detroit . "

Planning for the freeway started in the 1950s . Michigan state officials proposed the designation I @-@ 98 , but this was not approved . Construction started on the first segment in 1961 , and the Lodge Freeway was designated Business Spur Interstate 696 ( BS I @-@ 696 ) the following year . The western third of the freeway opened in 1963 , and the eastern third was completed in January 1979 . The central segment was the subject of much controversy during the 1960s and 1970s . Various municipalities along this stretch argued over the routing of the freeway such that the governor locked several officials into a room overnight until they would agree to a routing . Later , various groups used federal environmental regulations to force changes to the freeway . The Orthodox Jewish community in Oak Park was concerned about pedestrian access across the freeway ; I @-@ 696 was built with a set of parks on overpasses to accommodate their needs . The Detroit Zoo and the City of Detroit also fought components of the freeway design . These concessions delayed the completion of I @-@ 696 until December 15 , 1989 . Since completion , the speed limit was raised from 55 to 70 miles per hour ( 90 to 115 km / h ) . In addition , some interchanges were reconfigured in 2006 .

= = Route description = =

I @-@ 696 , which has been called " Detroit 's Autobahn " by some residents reflecting a reputation for fast drivers , begins in the west in the city of Novi as a left exit branching off I @-@ 96 . This ramp is a portion of the I @-@ 96 / I @-@ 696 / I @-@ 275 / M @-@ 5 interchange that spans the north ? south , Novi ? Farmington Hills city line linking together five converging freeways . The freeway curves southeasterly and then northeasterly through the complex as it runs eastward through the adjacent residential subdivisions . I @-@ 696 passes south of 12 Mile Road in the Mile Road System through Farmington Hills , passing south of Harrison High School and north of Mercy High School . After crossing into Southfield , I @-@ 696 passes through the Mixing Bowl , another complex interchange that spans over two miles ( 3 @-@ 2 km ) near the American Center involving M @-@ 10 ( the Lodge Freeway and Northwestern Highway ) and US 24 ( Telegraph Road ) between two partial interchanges with Franklin Road on the west and Lahser Road on the east . The carriageways for I @-@ 696 run in the median of M @-@ 10 from northwest to southeast . East of this interchange , cargo restrictions have been enacted for the next 10 @-@ mile @-@ long ( 16 km ) segment of I @-@ 696 ; no commercial vehicles may carry flammable or explosive loads .

After passing through the Mixing Bowl , I @-@ 696 follows 11 Mile Road , which forms a pair of service drives for the main freeway . The Interstate passes through the city of Lathrup Village before turning southward and then easterly on an S @-@ shaped path to run along 10 Mile Road . This segment of freeway is known for its extensive use of retaining walls , with three large landscaped plazas forming short tunnels for freeway traffic near the Greenfield Road exit . The freeway passes next to the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit as it passes under the third pedestrian plaza . The Interstate then picks up 10 Mile Road , which forms a pair of service drives , as the Reuther runs along the border between the cities of Oak Park and Huntington Woods . I @-@ 696 follows the southern edge of the Detroit Zoo . Immediately east of the zoo , the Interstate intersects M @-@ 1 ( Woodward Avenue ) , and crosses a line of the Canadian National Railway that also

carries Amtrak passenger service between Detroit and Pontiac .

East of the rail crossing , I @-@ 696 has a four @-@ level stack interchange with I @-@ 75 over the quadripoint for Royal Oak , Madison Heights , Hazel Park and Ferndale . This interchange marks the eastern end of the cargo restrictions . I @-@ 696 jogs to the northeast near the Hazel Park Raceway , leaving 10 Mile Road . Crossing into Warren in Macomb County at the Dequindre Road interchange , the freeway begins to follow 11 Mile Road again . Near the Detroit Arsenal Tank Plant , I @-@ 696 has another stack interchange for Mound Road ; through the junction , the freeway makes a slight bend to the south . The freeway continues east through the northern edge of Center Line , crossing a line of Conrail Shared Assets and heading back into Warren . The Interstate crosses into Roseville near the M @-@ 97 ( Groesbeck Highway ) interchange and then meets M @-@ 3 ( Gratiot Avenue ) just west of the eastern terminus at I @-@ 94 ( the Edsel Ford Freeway ) in St. Clair Shores . The service drives merge in this final interchange and 11 Mile Road continues due east to Lake St.Clair.

Like other state highways in Michigan , I @-@ 696 is maintained by the Michigan Department of Transportation ( MDOT ) . In 2011 , the department 's traffic surveys showed that on average , 185 @,@ 700 vehicles used the freeway daily east of I @-@ 75 and 38 @,@ 100 vehicles did so each day in part of the Mixing Bowl , the highest and lowest counts along the highway , respectively . As an Interstate Highway , all of I @-@ 696 is listed on the National Highway System , a network of roads important to the country 's economy , defense , and mobility .

= = History = =

= = = Planning and initial construction = = =

I @-@ 696 is part of the original Interstate Highway System as outlined in 1956 ? 58 . As originally proposed by the Michigan State Highway Department , the freeway would have been numbered I @-@ 98 . Construction started in 1961 . The Lodge Freeway , the first segment of which opened in 1957 , was given the Business Spur I @-@ 696 designation in 1962 . The first segment of I @-@ 696 built was the western third of the completed freeway which opened in 1963 ? 64 at a cost of \$ 16 @.@ 6 million ( equivalent to \$ 259 million in 2015 ) . This section ran from the I @-@ 96 in Novi east to the Lodge Freeway in Southfield . The then @-@ unfinished freeway was named for Walter P. Reuther , former leader of the United Auto Workers labor union after he and his wife died in a plane crash on May 9 , 1970 . The next year the Michigan Legislature approved the naming by passing Senate Concurrent Resolution 57 .

In the late 1970s , during the second phase of construction , lobbying efforts and lawsuits attempted to block construction of the central section . If successful , the efforts would have left the freeway with a gap in the middle between the first ( western ) and second ( eastern ) phases of construction . During this time , MDOT assigned M @-@ 6 to the eastern section of the freeway under construction . Signs were erected along the service roads that followed 11 Mile Road to connect the already built stack interchange at I @-@ 75 east to I @-@ 94 . By the time the eastern freeway segment was initially opened in January 1979 between I @-@ 94 and I @-@ 75 , the signage for M @-@ 6 was removed and replaced with I @-@ 696 signage ; it cost \$ 200 million ( equivalent to \$ 954 million in 2015 ) to complete . Later in 1979 , a closure was scheduled to allow work to be completed on three of the nine interchanges on the segment .

= = = Controversies over middle segment = = =

The central section was the most controversial . Governor James Blanchard was 15 years old and a high school sophomore in neighboring Pleasant Ridge when the freeway was proposed and purchased a home in the area in 1972 . He joked during remarks at the dedication in 1989 , " The unvarnished truth about this freeway ? I wasn 't even alive when it was first proposed , " and added , " frankly , I never thought it would go through . " Total cost at completion for the entire freeway at the

end of the 30 @-@ year project was \$ 675 million ( equivalent to \$ 1 @.@ 65 billion in 2015 ) .

Arguments between local officials were so intense that during the 1960s , then @-@ Governor George W. Romney once locked fighting bureaucrats in a community center until they would agree on a path for the freeway . During the 1970s , local groups used then @-@ new environmental regulations to oppose the Interstate . The freeway was noted in a Congressional subcommittee report on the " Major Interstate System Route Controversy in Urban Areas " or the controversies in 1970 . Before 1967 , local communities had to approve highway locations and designs , and the debates over I @-@ 696 prompted the passage of an arbitration statute . That statute was challenged by Pleasant Ridge and Lathrup Village before being upheld by the Michigan Supreme Court . Lathrup Village later withdrew from a planning agreement in 1971 ; had that agreement been implemented , construction on the central section was scheduled to commence in 1974 and finish in 1976 .

The community of Orthodox Jews in Oak Park wanted the freeway to pass to the north of their suburb . When this was deemed to be futile , the community asked for changes to the design that would mitigate the impact of the freeway to the pedestrian @-@ dependent community . Final approval in 1981 of the freeway 's alignment was contingent on these mitigation measures . To address the community 's unique needs , the state hired a rabbi to serve as a consultant on the project . In addition , a series of landscaped plazas were incorporated into the design , forming the tunnels through which I @-@ 696 passes . These structures are a set of three 700 @-@ foot @-@ wide ( 210 m ) bridges that cross the freeway within a mile ( 1 @.@ 6 km ) . They allow members of the Jewish community to walk to synagogues on the Sabbath and other holidays when Jewish law prohibits driving . These plazas had their length limited ; if they were longer they would be considered tunnels that would require ventilation systems .

The Detroit Zoo was concerned that noise and air pollution from the Interstate would disturb the animals . They were satisfied by \$ 12 million ( equivalent to \$ 29 @.@ 3 million in 2015 ) spent on a new parking ramp and other improvements . The City of Detroit tried to stop I @-@ 696 as well , but in the end the city was forced to redesign its golf course . A refusal to grant an additional nine feet ( 2 @.@ 7 m ) of right @-@ of @-@ way by Detroit forced additional design and construction delays during the 1980s .

One of the last obstacles to construction of the freeway was a wetlands area near Southfield . MDOT received a permit from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to destroy 6 1 ? 2 acres ( 2 @.@ 6 ha ) of wetland and create a replacement 11 @-@ acre ( 4 @.@ 5 ha ) area . In the process , some prairie roses and wetlands milkweed were transplanted from the path of I @-@ 696 in 1987 . The final section of the eight @-@ lane freeway opened at a cost of \$ 436 million ( equivalent to \$ 1 @.@ 06 billion in 2015 ) on December 15 , 1989 . At the time , one caller to a Detroit radio show commented , " do you realize we have been to the moon and back in the time it has taken to get that road from Ferndale to Southfield ? "

= = = Since completion = = =

As part of the overall rehabilitation to the Mixing Bowl interchange , a new interchange at Franklin Road was to be constructed in 2006 . An exit ramp from I @-@ 696 eastbound to American Drive opened in April 2006 . An entrance ramp from Franklin Road to I @-@ 696 westbound opened in July 2006 . The Franklin Road overpass , which had been closed during this time , re @-@ opened in October 2006 . On November 9 that year , the speed limit was increased from 55 to 70 mph ( 90 to 115 km / h ) along the length of I @-@ 696 .

= = Exit list = =

= = Related trunkline = =

Business Spur Interstate 696 ( BS I @-@ 696 ) was the designation given to the Lodge Freeway in

the Detroit area in 1962 . This 17 1/2 @-@ mile @-@ long ( 28 @.@ 2 km ) freeway was renumbered as part of US 10 in 1970 , when that highway designation was shifted off Woodward Avenue .