

= Interstate 196 =

Interstate 196 ( I @-@ 196 ) is an auxiliary Interstate Highway that runs for 80 @.@ 594 miles ( 129 @.@ 703 km ) in the US state of Michigan . It is a state trunkline highway that links Benton Harbor , South Haven , Holland , and Grand Rapids together . In Kent , Ottawa , and Allegan counties , I @-@ 196 is known as the Gerald R. Ford Freeway , or simply the Ford Freeway , after the 38th President of the United States , Gerald Ford , who was raised in Grand Rapids and served Michigan in the House of Representatives . This name generally refers only to the section between Holland and Grand Rapids . I @-@ 196 changes direction ; it is signed as a north ? south highway from its southern terminus to the junction with US Highway 31 ( US 31 ) just south of Holland , and as an east ? west trunkline from this point to its eastern terminus at an interchange with I @-@ 96 , its parent highway . There are currently three business routes related to the main freeway . There are two business loops ( BL I @-@ 196 ) and one business spur ( BS I @-@ 196 ) that serve South Haven , Holland and the Grand Rapids areas . Another business spur for Muskegon had been designated relative to the I @-@ 196 number .

The current freeway numbered I @-@ 196 is the second in the state to bear the number . Originally to be numbered as part of the I @-@ 94 corridor in the state , the Benton Harbor ? Grand Rapids freeway was given the I @-@ 96 number in the 1950s while another Interstate between Muskegon and Grand Rapids was numbered I @-@ 196 . That I @-@ 196 was built in the late 1950s and completed in the early 1960s . The first segment of the current I @-@ 196 was opened as I @-@ 96 near Benton Harbor in 1962 . Michigan officials requested a change in 1963 , which reversed the two numbers and the subsequent segments of freeway opened northward to Holland and from Grand Rapids westward under the current number . The gap between Holland and Grandville was filled in the 1970s , and a section of freeway that runs through downtown Grand Rapids was rebuilt as a wider freeway in 2010 .

= = Route description = =

Like other state highways in Michigan , I @-@ 196 is maintained by the Michigan Department of Transportation ( MDOT ) . In 2011 , the department 's traffic surveys showed that on average , 77 @, @ 500 vehicles used the highway daily between Lane Avenue and US 131 in Grand Rapids and 12 @, @ 778 vehicles did so each day north of the split with US 31 near Holland . These are the highest and lowest counts along the highway , respectively . As an Interstate Highway , all of I @-@ 196 is listed on the National Highway System , a network of roads important to the country 's economy , defense , and mobility . In addition , the highway has been named by the Michigan Legislature the Gerald R. Ford Freeway to honor the 38th President of the United States . The original legislation from 1974 extended that name to the full length of the freeway , but when the various memorial highway names were re @-@ codified in 2001 , the name was not applied to the Berrien County segment . From the junction with M @-@ 63 north to the split with US 31 except for the section that connects the ends of the South Haven business loop , the freeway is also a part of the Lake Michigan Circle Tour ( LMCT ) , a tourist route that follows Lake Michigan .

= = = Benton Harbor to Holland = = =

The freeway starts northeast of Benton Harbor at exit 34 on I @-@ 94 in Benton Charter Township in Berrien County . At the trumpet interchange , I @-@ 196 runs north from I @-@ 94 and passes to the west of the Point O 'Woods Golf & Country Club . US 31 joins I @-@ 196 from the southwest and runs concurrently with I @-@ 196 as the freeway passes through farm fields in southwestern Michigan . The trunkline turns northwesterly near the Lake Michigan Hills Golf Course and crosses the Paw Paw River . Past the river , the freeway turns northeasterly and runs roughly parallel to the Lake Michigan shoreline several miles inland . At the community of Lake Michigan Beach , I @-@ 196 / US 31 meets the northern terminus of M @-@ 63 at exit 7 , and the LMCT joins the freeway for the first time . North of this interchange , the freeway parallels A @-@ 2 , a county road that

follows the Blue Star Highway , the former route of US 31 .

A bit further north , I @-@ 196 / US 31 crosses into Van Buren County and assumes the Gerald R. Ford Freeway name . The inland side of the freeway is forested while the lakeward side is predominantly either forest or fields . As it approaches South Haven , the freeway passes near the Palisades Nuclear Generating Station and Van Buren State Park . North of the power plant and park , the freeway turns farther inland to bypass the city of South Haven . There is an interchange on the south side of town that provides access to Business Loop I @-@ 196 ( BL I @-@ 196 ) and M @-@ 140 . The freeway crosses over M @-@ 43 without an interchange and then intersects the other end of the business loop about two miles ( 3 @. @ 2 km ) later . It crosses the Black River near the Van Buren ? Allegan county line .

In Allegan County , I @-@ 196 / US 31 passes a pair of golf courses and continues northward through farm fields . Near the community of Glenn , A @-@ 2 crosses over the freeway and runs parallel to it on the east . They trade places again when I @-@ 196 / US 31 turns northeasterly on the south side of the twin cities of Saugatuck and Douglas . The freeway crosses over a section of Kalamazoo Lake , a wider section of the Kalamazoo River that flows between the two towns . A @-@ 2 crosses back to the eastern side of the freeway north of Saugatuck , and I @-@ 196 / US 31 continues north @-@ northeasterly toward Holland .

= = = Holland to Grand Rapids = = =

On the south side of Holland , the two highways split apart ; US 31 separates from I @-@ 196 at a partial interchange near the West Michigan Regional Airport ( formerly the Tulip City Airport ) . At this interchange , northbound traffic may follow a left exit to continue on the BL I @-@ 196 / US 31 freeway or continue along I @-@ 196 which turns more eastward ; the LMCT departs I @-@ 196 at this point as well . Signage along I @-@ 196 changes after this interchange . Up to this point , it had been signed north ? south , but from the US 31 split onward , the directions are now signed east ? west . The freeway passes to the south side of the airport , and it crosses a rail line owned by CSX Transportation and used by Amtrak 's Pere Marquette train before curving northeasterly through the interchange with M @-@ 40 . The freeway crosses into Ottawa County south of the Macatawa River before meeting the other two interchanges for Holland , the second of which is the northern end of the business loop in Zeeland .

Continuing past Zeeland , I @-@ 196 runs more east @-@ northeasterly as it parallels M @-@ 121 ( Chicago Drive ) . The freeway passes to the south side of Hudsonville and intersects A @-@ 37 . About two miles ( 3 @. @ 2 km ) past Hudsonville , the trunkline has an interchange with M @-@ 6 , a freeway that runs along the south side of the Grand Rapids area . Just past this interchange , the freeway crosses into Kent County at the Kenowa Avenue overpass . Now in the city of Grandville , I @-@ 196 turns northward to run parallel to the county line . The freeway has an interchange for 44th Street , which provides access to the RiverTown Crossings mall and other retail and restaurant establishments in the area . At exit 69 , I @-@ 196 crosses Chicago Drive and the rail line and turns northeasterly next to Jenison , an unincorporated community opposite the Kent ? Ottawa county line . The Ford Freeway name is now prominently used on the freeway signage as I @-@ 196 follows a section of the Grand River . Past the interchange for M @-@ 11 ( 28th Street ) , the freeway crosses into the suburb of Wyoming .

In Wyoming , the freeway runs along the river , passing Millennium Park on the opposite banks in Walker and Hopewell Indian Mounds Park on the near banks . To the south of the freeway , the business spur for Wyoming and Grand Rapids departs to follow Chicago Drive near an industrial area . After the interchange for Market Avenue , I @-@ 196 crosses the Grand River and enters the city of Grand Rapids . The freeway meanders northward past the transmission antennas for radio stations WJRW and WFUR and around the west side of the John Ball Zoological Garden . The trunkline has an interchange with M @-@ 45 ( Lake Michigan Drive ) on the north side of the zoo before I @-@ 196 runs downhill turning eastward .

At the bottom of the hill , I @-@ 196 enters the urban core of Grand Rapids . The freeway runs eastward through residential neighborhoods on the city 's west side as it approaches the

interchange with US 131 . This complex structure is adjacent to the Grand River north of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum . The carriageways for I @-@ 196 run through the interchange on different levels , with the eastbound traffic carried down near river level and the westbound lanes above the criss @-@ crossing carriageways of US 131 's freeway . I @-@ 196 crosses the river on the opposite side of the interchange and both directions return to the same level . The freeway picks up an additional lane at this point as the median is replaced by a concrete barrier .

As the freeway runs eastward , it passes the area of Grand Rapids known as the " Medical Mile " , a district anchored by the Van Andel Institute , Helen DeVos Children 's Hospital , a campus of the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine and the Butterworth Hospital campus of Spectrum Health . The Ford Freeway jogs slightly to the northeast as it crosses a line of the Grand Rapids Eastern Railroad between College and Eastern avenues . It then passes to the south of the offices buildings that house the Kent County Health Department , the Sheriff 's Department and the animal shelter . A little over a mile and a quarter ( 2 @. @ 0 km ) east of those offices , I @-@ 196 meets its parent highway , I @-@ 96 on the east side of the city . This interchange marks the eastern terminus of the Ford Freeway and I @-@ 196 .

= = History = =

= = = Previous designation = = =

In the first tentative Interstate numbering plans , the freeways in Michigan now numbered I @-@ 96 and I @-@ 196 were supposed to be part of the I @-@ 94 corridor , and the freeway between Muskegon and Grand Rapids was to be I @-@ 94N . Later , the initial approvals by the federal government routed I @-@ 96 from Benton Harbor north to Grand Rapids and then east to Detroit , and I @-@ 196 was the spur route from Grand Rapids to Muskegon . The first segment of freeway built was a relocated section of US 16 near Coopersville and Marne . The freeway opened at the end of 1957 or in early 1958 , and the first markers for I @-@ 196 were erected in 1959 . The full Grand Rapids ? Muskegon I @-@ 196 freeway was completed and opened to traffic in December 1962 , connecting to an I @-@ 96 freeway that led east toward Lansing ; the US 16 corridor was a continuous freeway with two different Interstate designations . Before the Grand Rapids ? Benton Harbor segment was completed , the Michigan State Highway Department ( MSHD ) , predecessor to the modern MDOT , petitioned federal highway officials to switch the Interstate designations west of Grand Rapids . Permission for this switch was granted in 1963 . Consideration was also made to name the Grand Rapids ? Benton Harbor freeway I @-@ 67 . The previously completed I @-@ 196 was redesignated as an extension of I @-@ 96 , and the completed freeway segments southwest of Grand Rapids were redesignated I @-@ 196 ; I @-@ 67 was rejected by the American Association of State Highway Officials .

= = = Current designation = = =

In 1962 , a section of freeway along US 31 was opened between I @-@ 94 and the Berrien ? Van Buren county line . This section was originally designated as part of I @-@ 96 / US 31 . After the designation switch in 1963 , an additional 35 miles ( 56 km ) was opened from the northern end of I @-@ 196 near Benton Harbor to Holland as I @-@ 196 . An additional section of freeway was opened between Grandville through downtown Grand Rapids to meet I @-@ 96 at the end of 1964 . M @-@ 21 was moved to the freeway from its previous surface @-@ street routing . The final link in the freeway was completed in November 1974 along the Holland ? Grandville segment , completing I @-@ 196 for a second time . At the same time , M @-@ 21 was removed from the freeway , truncating that highway designation to end in Grand Rapids .

In 2009 , access to Jenison was improved by the addition of a partial interchange with Baldwin Street . The section through downtown Grand Rapids east of the Grand River was rebuilt during 2010 in a project MDOT dubbed the " Fix on I @-@ 196 " . The project added a third travel lane in

each direction with weave @-@ merge lanes between interchanges and rebuilt several of the overpasses in the area .

= = Exit list = =

= = Business routes = =

There are currently two business loops ( BL I @-@ 196 ) and one business spur ( BS I @-@ 196 ) along I @-@ 196 . A BS I @-@ 196 in Muskegon was designated along what is now Bus . US 31 before the Muskegon ? Grand Rapids freeway was redesignated I @-@ 96 .

= = = South Haven = = =

Business Loop I @-@ 196 ( BL I @-@ 196 ) is a loop that runs in South Haven for 3 @.@ 572 miles ( 5 @.@ 749 km ) . The loop begins at exit 18 on I @-@ 196 / US 31 and runs due north along La Grange Street . It then turns onto Phillips Street and merges into Broadway Street . BL I @-@ 196 follows Phoenix Street eastward where the trunkline ends at exit 20 on I @-@ 196 . The entire length is a part of the LMCT . A bypass of downtown was built during World War II ; the former route of US 31 through downtown was designated Bus . US 31 at that time . When I @-@ 196 was built outside of South Haven in 1963 , the former US 31 bypass was redesignated BL I @-@ 196 . In 1972 , the loop was shifted to follow the pre @-@ war routing through downtown .

Major intersections

The entire highway is in Van Buren County .

= = = Holland = = =

Business Loop I @-@ 196 ( BL I @-@ 196 ) is a loop that runs for 11 @.@ 649 miles ( 18 @.@ 747 km ) in Holland and Zeeland . The loop starts at a connection with I @-@ 196 / US 31 at exit 44 and continues concurrently along the freeway into Holland . BL I @-@ 196 / US 31 has an interchange for A @-@ 2 ( Blue Star Highway ) and Washington Avenue before the freeway ends in the southern reaches of Holland . The trunkline then runs as a divided highway northward , bypassing downtown Holland to the east and intersecting M @-@ 40 . Northeast of downtown , BL I @-@ 196 leaves US 31 and the LMCT at an interchange to follow an expressway along the route of Chicago Drive . The loop follows this expressway through Zeeland and back out to I @-@ 196 at exit 55 .

The loop was created in 1974 when I @-@ 196 was completed south of the city of Holland . From that point , the old route of M @-@ 21 inside the cities to US 31 was redesignated as a business loop of I @-@ 196 with the state taking control of Washington Avenue to the downtown area . Then from downtown looping back up to Chicago Drive , the business loop used the old M @-@ 21 . Along Washington Avenue and Chicago Drive between junctions with US 31 , the highway bore a concurrent Bus . US 31 designation . The concurrent trunkline inside the downtown area of Holland was transferred to the City of Holland in 2005 , and BL I @-@ 196 was rerouted to follow US 31 .

Major intersections

All exits are unnumbered .

= = = Grand Rapids = = =

Business Spur I @-@ 196 ( BS I @-@ 196 ) is a spur that serves the Godfrey ? Lee area of Wyoming and the Roosevelt Park neighborhood of Grand Rapids . It starts at the partial interchange for exit 72 on I @-@ 196 and then moves onto the surface street Chicago Drive for the majority of the distance in Wyoming , running through an industrial area . After about a mile ( 1 @.@ 6 km ) , the highway runs through residential areas . Upon crossing the Grand Rapids city limits , it turns

northerly onto Grandville Avenue where it runs until turning onto Franklin Street . The spur then ends at the interchange with US 131 . Its total length is 3 @. @ 631 miles ( 5 @. @ 844 km ) . It can only be accessed from eastbound I @- @ 196 on the western end .

In 1953 , the state highway department completed enough of the Grand Rapids beltline to reroute M @- @ 21 to it . The former routing of M @- @ 21 was then redesignated Bus . M @- @ 21 . With the completion of I @- @ 196 from Holland to Grand Rapids in 1974 , the highway was truncated to its current format and renamed BS I @- @ 196 .

Major intersections

The entire highway is in Kent County .