

= M @-@ 63 (Michigan highway) =

M @-@ 63 is a state trunkline highway in the US state of Michigan that runs from M @-@ 139 at Scottdale through the cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph to Interstate 196 / US Highway 31 (I @-@ 196 / US 31) at exit 7 just outside Hagar Shores . The trunkline runs through residential areas south of St. Joseph and through the central business districts of the twin cities . Further north , M @-@ 63 runs along the Lake Michigan shoreline .

All of M @-@ 63 's routing was part of US 33 before that highway 's truncation south of Niles in 1986 . A previous designation of M @-@ 63 was used farther north in Lake and Osceola counties from 1919 until 1961 . Since the current designation was created , the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has worked on reconfiguring parts of the roadway in the early part of the 21st century . The bridge M @-@ 63 uses to cross the St. Joseph River , the Blossomland Bridge , has been identified as an historic structure using a rare design . The bridge itself dates back to the late 1940s .

= = Route description = =

M @-@ 63 begins at the intersection of Niles , Scottdale and Miners roads southwest of St. Joseph in Royalton Township . M @-@ 139 runs on Niles Road northwest from Berrien Springs to this point and on Scottdale Road north of the intersection . M @-@ 63 follows Miners Road west and then Niles Road northwest of the junction , parallel to the St. Joseph River through residential areas on the outskirts of the twin cities . The highway meets Interstate 94 (I @-@ 94) at the latter 's exit 27 and continues through St. Joseph Township to the city of St. Joseph . In the city , after Washington Avenue , Niles Road becomes Niles Avenue and turns north . As part of its maintenance duties , the MDOT tracks traffic volumes on the state highways in a metric called average annual daily traffic (AADT) , which is a calculation of the average traffic level for any day of a year . The roadway segment along Niles Avenue north of the Napier Avenue intersection in 2009 had the highest traffic levels along all of M @-@ 63 at 22 @,@ 263 vehicles .

At Main Street , Niles Avenue ends , and M @-@ 63 joins Business Loop I @-@ 94 (BL I @-@ 94) on Main Street into and through the downtown business district . The two highways continue together running concurrently to Ship and Port streets . These two streets form a one @-@ way pair running east to carry BL I @-@ 94 to and from a separate bridge over the St. Joseph River . M @-@ 63 continues along Main Street across the river into Benton Harbor , Michigan where it follows the Lake Michigan shoreline along a short expressway segment . The trunkline exits Benton Harbor near the headquarters of the Whirlpool Corporation . North of town , the highway provides access to many lakeshore properties north of Benton Harbor as it continues northeasterly along the shoreline to the community of Lake Michigan Beach . When the highway meets Hagar Shore Road , M @-@ 63 turns east along that roadway to an interchange with I @-@ 196 / US 31 . The shoreline roadway continues northeast as A @-@ 2 (Blue Star Highway) while M @-@ 63 terminates at an interchange with I @-@ 196 / US 31 . This northernmost segment of the highway had the lowest AADT measurement in 2009 when calculated by MDOT at 2 @,@ 855 vehicles .

Various highways in the United States are listed as a part of the National Highway System (NHS) , a system of roads important to the nation 's economy , defense , and mobility . M @-@ 63 has been listed as a part of the NHS from its southern terminus to the northern junction with BL I @-@ 94 in St. Joseph . As the closest state highway to Lake Michigan in the area , M @-@ 63 from the southern junction with BL I @-@ 94 to its northern terminus has been used as a part of the Lake Michigan Circle Tour , a tourist route that circles Lake Michigan .

= = History = =

= = = Previous designation = = =

M @-@ 63 originally ran from Peacock in Lake County west through Luther to M @-@ 13 (later US 131) in Osceola County on July 1 , 1919 . This highway was extended in 1930 along US 131 to Tustin and then to a terminus with M @-@ 66 in Marion . At the same time , M @-@ 37 was extended north from Baldwin to meet M @-@ 63 east of Peacock . This eastern extension was truncated in 1932 when it was redesignated as part of M @-@ 61 . A short connector roadway , M @-@ 179 , was designated in 1935 between M @-@ 63 and US 131 , forming a small triangle of highways . The western end was shortened in 1939 so that M @-@ 63 ended at M @-@ 37 instead of continuing west to Peacock . The M @-@ 179 designation was decommissioned in 1959 or 1960 , removing that short highway from the state trunkline highway system . M @-@ 63 was decommissioned in 1961 when the roadway was transferred back to local control .

= = = Current designation = = =

The current designation of M @-@ 63 was created in 1986 . Before the designation , US 33 ran north into Michigan south of Niles . From there it followed US 31 north to Scottdale and ran alone to St. Joseph and Benton Harbor . When US 33 was truncated back to Niles , M @-@ 63 was commissioned in its place along the route it now follows .

The expressway portion of M @-@ 63 is a relic of a now revised plan of a freeway corridor through the St. Joseph ? Benton Harbor area . The highway was significantly reconfigured in 2000 ? 2002 , with the overpass over the industrial access road to Whirlpool 's warehouse in Benton Harbor and a rail line removed and rebuilt in late 2000 through early 2001 , and one of the two grade @-@ separated interchanges , at Klock Road , demolished and downgraded to an at @-@ grade intersection in 2002 . Today , there are only two overpasses over smaller roads existing on this stretch of expressway .

= = = Blossomland Bridge = = =

The Blossomland Bridge over the St. Joseph River is eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places . The span is a Scherzer rolling @-@ lift bascule , a type of moveable bridge . The bridge was built as part of a 1940s plan to relocate US 31 through St. Joseph and Benton Harbor . Those plans were delayed by World War II . The bridge was completed in late 1948 using the rare design prepared by a firm from Chicago that specialized in bascule bridges . The state paid a total of \$ 1 @.@ 3 million for what was called " the largest bridge ever built under the auspices of the State Highway Department " .

= = Major intersections = =

The entire highway is in Berrien County .