

= Interstate 296 =

Interstate 296 (I @-@ 296) is a part of the Interstate Highway System in the US state of Michigan . It is a state trunkline highway that runs for 3 @. @ 43 miles (5 @. @ 52 km) entirely within the Grand Rapids area . Its termini are I @-@ 96 on the north side of Grand Rapids in Walker and I @-@ 196 near downtown Grand Rapids . For most of its length , the Interstate is concurrent with U.S. Highway 131 (US 131) , which continues as a freeway built to Interstate Highway standards north and south of the shorter I @-@ 296 . The highway was first proposed in the late 1950s and opened in December 1962 , but the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has since eliminated all signage for I @-@ 296 and removed the designation from their official state map . The designation is therefore unsigned , but still listed on the Interstate Highway System route log maintained by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) .

= = Route description = =

I @-@ 296 begins at the I @-@ 196 interchange west of the Grand River and downtown Grand Rapids . For a short distance , the three northbound lanes are on the left and the three southbound lanes are on the right , contrary to the normal traffic arrangement in the US . This anomaly is reversed north of the ramps for I @-@ 196 as the southbound lanes go over the northbound lanes . Running parallel to the Grand River on the west bank , the freeway designation begins across the river from the 6th Street Bridge Park and Belknap Hill north of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum and the DeVos Place Convention Center . The west side of the freeway faces residential neighborhoods and the east side borders commercial businesses and the river . South of the Ann Street interchange , the highway crosses a line of the Grand Rapids Eastern Railroad . After crossing both the railroad and Ann Street , the highway widens to allow for a grassy median . The freeway leaves Grand Rapids and enters Walker north of Ann Street .

Approaching I @-@ 96 from the south , the freeway passes east of the DeltaPlex Arena , and its median widens further across the river from Comstock Riverside Park in Walker . An extra lane is added on the left , widening the freeway to four lanes . Unsigned I @-@ 296 occupies the left two lanes that form the left exit for I @-@ 96 from US 131 . At the split between I @-@ 296 and US 131 , I @-@ 296 curves northwest , and US 131 curves northeast to follow a bend in the Grand River . Once I @-@ 296 diverges from US 131 , the highway crosses a rail line owned by CSX Transportation and passes over West River Drive . To the northwest of these crossings , exits emerge on the right for eastbound I @-@ 96 and the left for northbound M @-@ 37 (Alpine Avenue) . Past these exits , I @-@ 296 merges into westbound I @-@ 96 and terminates . Southbound unsigned I @-@ 296 begins where the ramps to US 131 southbound split from eastbound I @-@ 96 at the Alpine Avenue overpass , merging with southbound US 131 north of Ann Street .

= = History = =

The development of a freeway along the modern @-@ day I @-@ 296 / US 131 corridor was proposed in the 1950s . The 1955 General Location of National System of Interstate Highways , an early platform for what would become the Interstate Highway System , contained an inset of the proposed freeways in and around the Grand Rapids area including a north ? south freeway near the downtown area . Designated as part of the Interstate Highway System in 1957 , I @-@ 296 's construction was funded by the federal government .

The US 131 freeway was officially opened at 10 a.m. on December 17 , 1962 , between Pearl Street and (at the time) the I @-@ 196 / US 16 freeway north of downtown . This freeway section encompassed all of I @-@ 296 , which would connect I @-@ 196 north of town with I @-@ 96 downtown . (The I @-@ 96 and I @-@ 196 designations were later flipped west of Grand Rapids .) M @-@ 37 was relocated in Grand Rapids to utilize I @-@ 96 around the northeast side of town instead of I @-@ 296 / US 131 in 1969 .

At the end of the 1970s , MDOT took part in a FHWA @-@ backed initiative called the Positive

Guidance Demonstration Project , and the two agencies audited signage practices in the vicinity of the I @-@ 96 / M @-@ 37 and I @-@ 296 / US 131 interchange in Walker . MDOT determined that usage of the I @-@ 296 designation was " a potential source of confusion for motorists . " FHWA agreed with the department 's proposal to eliminate all signage and public map references to the designation in April 1979 . MDOT then petitioned the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) on June 22 , 1979 , for their permission to make the change , saying " it is felt that the I @-@ 296 designation serves no useful purpose other than to designate an Interstate routing . " AASHTO approved the request on October 13 . On October 24 that year , MDOT also requested formal permission from the FHWA to remove all signage and map references to I @-@ 296 . The FHWA granted permission on December 3 , 1979 , on the condition that MDOT would continue to use the designation on official documents . The approval explicitly retained the highway in the Interstate system for funding and other purposes . The last state map to show the I @-@ 296 designation was published in 1979 , as the 1980 map lacks any reference to the designation . Other maps , like the one published by the Kent County Road Commission , occasionally show I @-@ 296 , and FHWA includes the designation in their Route Log and Finder List for the Interstate Highway System .

= = Exit list = =

The entire highway is in Kent County .