

## NATURAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES

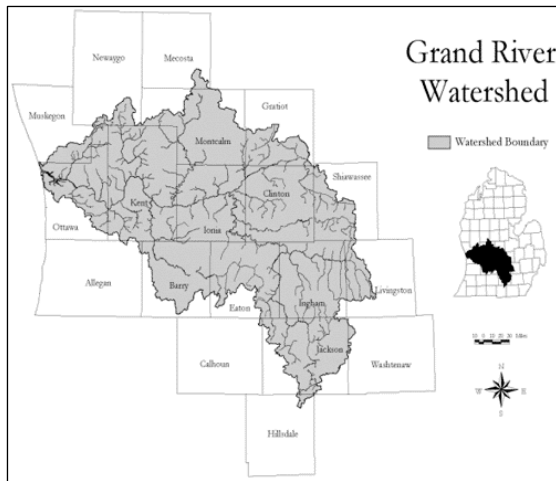
Spring Lake Township is located along Lake Michigan, at the mouth of the Grand River. It is home to an abundance of natural features including critical dunes, wetlands, and extensive riparian areas. A quick GIS analysis of the Township reveals that the Township contains approximately 25 miles of shoreline along the Grand River, Spring Lake, Little Black Lake and Lake Michigan.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES

### LAKES AND RIVERS

The Grand River and Spring Lake River are prominent natural features in Spring Lake Township. Spring Lake offers excellent recreational opportunities, residential locations and wildlife habitat. The Grand River corridor in Spring Lake Township is surrounded by numerous wetlands and bayous, offering serene views and an excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife.

**The Grand River and its Tributaries.** The Grand River is Michigan's longest river winding 256 miles from Jackson to Grand Haven spanning 19 counties with 12 major tributaries.<sup>1</sup> The Grand River forms the southern and western boundaries for a portion of the Township, and feeds into Lake Michigan just south of the Township in Grand Haven. Much of the Grand River within Spring Lake Township is bordered by large riverine wetland areas. These wetlands and the floodplain areas have helped to limit intense development in close proximity to much of the riverbank within the Township.



The City of Grand Rapids lies approximately 40 miles upstream on the Grand River. Historically, the Grand Rapids and Lansing areas were known for large-scale metal finishing and plating industries that contributed significant amounts of heavy metals to the environment<sup>2</sup>. While many of the wastewater treatment facilities have been improved, many of the contaminants still remain in the river system. The water quality is much better than in the past, however the

Grand River continues to be the largest tributary source to Lake Michigan for lead, DDT, atrazine, and second largest for mercury.

<sup>1</sup> Assessment of the Lake Michigan Monitoring Inventory; A Report on the Lake Michigan Tributary Monitoring Project, prepared by the Great Lakes Commission with assistance of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, August 2000.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Preliminary Investigation of the Extent of Sediment Contamination in the Lower Grand River. <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/sediment/GrandRiver/index.html>

**Spring Lake.** Spring Lake carves through the Township in a northeasterly direction into Muskegon County. It has an area of approximately 800 acres, and is surrounded by low-density lakefront residential development. There are two public lake access facilities located within the Township, and a park and a public beach are located within the Village of Spring Lake.

In 2003 and 2004, the Grand Valley State University's Annis Water Resource Institute performed water quality tests in Spring Lake with regard to phosphorus loading and concluded that Spring Lake had some of the highest total phosphorus concentration in West Michigan. The study further concluded that a significant amount of that concentration was the result of internal loading, and recommended methods to reduce internal loading. With regard to phosphorus and water quality, Spring Lake Township has taken steps to improve water quality, such as its ban on phosphorus-based fertilizers, wetland ordinance and storm water ordinance.

#### **WETLANDS**

Wetlands play a critical role in regulating the movement of water within watersheds. Wetlands are characterized by water saturation in the root zone, or above the soil surface, for a certain period of time during the year. The fluctuation of the water table above and below the soil surface is unique to each wetland type.

Wetlands store precipitation and surface water and then slowly release the water in associated water resources, ground water, and the atmosphere. They help maintain the level of the water table and may serve as filters for sediments and organic matter. They may also serve as a sink to catch water, or transform nutrients, organic compounds, metals, and components of organic matter. Wetlands have the ability to impact levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, carbon, sulfur, and various metals. Without them, water quality decreases, areas are prone to flash flooding and habitat for specialized plants and animals is reduced.

The wetlands in Spring Lake Township are found primarily along the Grand River corridor, various bayous, and in the vicinity of Spring Lake. Wetland Areas are also found in the northwest portion of the Township, near Little Black Lake. Mapped wetland information is based on geographic information from the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI). Creation of this map involved a variety of federal government agencies, which involved the consolidation and interpretation of aerial photographs, land cover maps, and soil maps. NWI wetlands are intended to illustrate the general location of wetlands and the exact location of any wetland should be determined through a field site inspection by a qualified specialist.

#### **CRITICAL DUNES**

Michigan sand dunes are the largest assemblage of fresh water dunes in the world. There are about 250,000 acres of sand dunes in Michigan, and about 70,000 acres are classified as critical sand dune formations. The Michigan Legislature has found that the critical dune areas of this state "are a unique, irreplaceable, and fragile resource that provides significant recreational, economic, scientific, geological, scenic, botanical, educational, agricultural,

and ecological benefits to the people of this state and to people from other states and countries who visit this resource”<sup>3</sup>.

Approximately 367 acres of Critical Dunes are found in Spring Lake Township. Areas defined by the State of Michigan as critical dunes are subject to State regulation pursuant to Act 451 of 1994, Part 353. In 2005, the Ottawa County Parks department acquired approximately 580 acres of land in Spring Lake Township, and the sand dunes are a part of this area. The County began a Master Plan for this parkland in 2006.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION POLICIES

In the interest of protecting and improving the quality of its natural features, Spring Lake Township has enacted a number of ordinances to protect them from potential degradation. These policies balance the desires of the community in terms of housing, recreation and economic development with the desire among many residents to protect the natural environment for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

**Wetland Ordinance.** Wetlands are defined in Michigan as "land characterized by the presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, wetland vegetation or aquatic life, and is commonly referred to as a bog, swamp, or marsh."<sup>4</sup> Spring Lake Township contains approximately 5,000 acres of wetlands, the bulk of which is in the Township's riparian areas and bayous.

Based on analyses of pre-1800s settlement records and 1978 aerial photography, the Michigan DNR estimates that Ottawa County has lost approximately 65% of its wetlands since the 1800s. In recognition of this, and the fact that wetlands play a critical role in maintaining healthy lakes, rivers and riparian areas among other functions, Spring Lake Township adopted a Wetland Ordinance in 2003. The overarching goal of this ordinance is to protect and preserve non-contiguous wetlands that are not afforded any protection from the State of Michigan, and to achieve no net loss of wetlands in the Township. Wetlands less than 5 acres in size are regulated by Part 303 of PA 541 of 1994. The ordinance also establishes a Wetland review board, whose duties include deciding contested issues relating to wetland mitigation and serving as an advisory board in wetland-related issues.

**Fertilizer Ordinance.** Adopted in 2005, the goal of the fertilizer ordinance is to protect the water quality in Spring Lake Township through the prohibition of fertilizers containing phosphorus (specifically, anhydric phosphoric acid) in the Township. Studies have shown that when most manufactured fertilizers containing phosphorus enter the water, it results in an acceleration of the growth of algae and aquatic plants.

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<sup>3</sup> Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

<sup>4</sup> Michigan DEQ Website [http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3313\\_3687-10175--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3313_3687-10175--,00.html)

**Stormwater Ordinance.** Stormwater picks up oil, metals and salts, pet waste, fertilizer, grass clippings and other materials left on sidewalks and streets before it enters a catch basin. In most areas with storm sewer systems, this polluted runoff washes from the catch basins straight into the nearest lake or river without being treated.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the purpose of Spring Lake Township’s Stormwater ordinance is, among others, to encourage groundwater recharge, prevent nonpoint source pollution, to reduce erosion and to reduce the overall impact of new development on bodies of water.

The goals of the ordinance are achieved by the establishment of storm water management requirements to which developers must adhere before development of the property is approved by the Township.

**Critical Dune Areas.** While Spring Lake Township does not have an ordinance regarding the critical dune areas in the western portion of the Township, those areas are protected under the National Resources and Environmental Protection Act (Act 451 of 1994). Part 353 of PA 451, which addresses critical sand dunes, establishes a set of standards that must be met for all development in an area that is designated as a critical dune area. In addition, approval from the State Land and Water Quality Management Division of the DEQ requires a permit for “Any developmental, silvicultural, or recreational activity done or caused to be done by a person that significantly alters the physical characteristic of a critical dune area or a contour change done or caused to be done by a person, but does not include sand mining.”

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The natural and cultural features of Spring Lake Township make it an attractive place to live and play. However, these features may be threatened by the very development they attract, an observation has become apparent in many communities in west Michigan. However, Spring Lake Township has recognized this trend and has adopted several ordinances intended to protect the environment. Protecting these features will be an on-going effort to enhance the quality of life for future generations of Township residents.

Yet, as outlined in previous chapters, as the population of the community continues to expand, there will likely be serious threats to natural features. Clearly, it will be incumbent on the Township and its residents to arrive at the appropriate balance to protect the natural features they currently enjoy while welcoming development at a sustainable level and in appropriate patterns.

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<sup>5</sup> Michigan Department of Environmental Quality: *A Citizen’s Guide to Stormwater*

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Community facilities play a fundamental role in augmenting civic engagement, sponsoring cultural events, and promoting community pride. High quality recreational opportunities are quality of life indicators and such opportunities characterize Spring Lake Township. In addition to recreational facilities, public schools provide local spaces for interaction, learning, and community building, and safety services provide a compulsory service to the community.

The ability to enjoy the outdoors is a top priority for Spring Lake Township residents. Providing quality places for recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors makes Spring Lake Township an attractive place for both residents and visitors. Many residents hope that in the future the Township will utilize more of the waterfront for recreation, mixed-use developments, and entertainment in the form of restaurants and shopping. Lastly, continued residential growth fueled by the demand for waterfront living should be balanced with the addition of geographically distributed Township-owned park and recreation facilities.

The relationship of the Township and Spring Lake School District is very close and the shared recreation services are invaluable and cost-effective to both groups. Much of the summer recreation program is provided for using school property and is utilized by many Township residents.

This chapter discusses open space and recreational opportunities within the Township, and parks and recreation areas are catalogued. This chapter discusses future recreational opportunities that may enhance the quality of life in the Township.

### PARKS

**Rycenga Park.** Rycenga Park is located just outside the Township boundaries along Hemlock Road in Fruitport Township. The park was developed by Spring Lake Township on 40 acres gifted to the Township by John Rycenga, and the other 40 acres of the park are leased to the Township by Fruitport Community Schools<sup>1</sup>. It is a beloved park in the community and receives a substantial amount of use from residents of both Spring Lake and Fruitport Townships. Facilities at Rycenga Park include baseball and softball diamonds, picnic areas and soccer fields. Rycenga Park also hosts a variety of events for children such as the Great Lakes Soccer League and high school Cross Country trail runs.

Although the Park is located outside the boundaries of Spring Lake Township, it is maintained by the Spring Lake Township parks department. The Township's investment in Rycenga Park demonstrates a commitment to enhancing the recreational opportunities for Township residents.

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<sup>1</sup> Fruitport Charter Township 2002-2022 Master Plan

**P.J. Hoffmaster State Park.** P.J. Hoffmaster State Park features forest-covered dunes along nearly three miles of Lake Michigan shore. Its sandy beach is one of the finest anywhere. Hoffmaster State Park is owned and operated by the State of Michigan.

Attractions at Hoffmaster State Park include E Genevieve Gillette Sand Dune Visitor Center, which is recognized as one of the top attractions in the Midwest. The center has a variety of programs to help visitors enjoy and understand the unique environment of the sand dunes of the Great Lakes. The center features an exhibit hall depicting the ecological zones of the unique dune environment, multimedia presentations and seasonal exhibits. Throughout the year, the visitor center offers lectures, guided hikes and special events through its interpretive program.<sup>2</sup>

Most the of the park, including the entrance lies within in Muskegon County, but a portion extends south into Spring Lake Township, near Lake Michigan.

**North Ottawa Dunes.** In December 2005, Ottawa County acquired the 500-acre North Ottawa Dunes. Just off the Lake Michigan shoreline, between the Grand River and the southern boundary of P.J. Hoffmaster State Park, this tract is one of the largest wooded dune assemblages remaining in the central West Michigan area. The property is uniquely situated between state, county and city parks and is adjacent to township-owned undeveloped land. This acquisition will protect high quality coastal dunes and establish trails linking P.J. Hoffmaster State Park, Ottawa County’s North Beach Park, Ferrysburg’s Coast Guard Park and undeveloped land owned by Spring Lake Township.

The property features tremendous topography with an elevation change of 185 feet in the parabolic dune formations. Eight distinct dunes in the rugged landscape exceed 750 feet in height.<sup>3</sup> The County began the planning process for this site in summer of 2006.

**TRAILS**

Spring Lake Township and the Village of Spring contain nearly twenty miles of recreational trails linking the region. Most of these trails accommodate bicycles as well as pedestrians, providing Township residents with a safe and healthy alternative to driving a car. Table 4.1 below lists the trails currently located in the Township or Village.<sup>4</sup>

TABLE 4.1. LOCATIONS OF TOWNSHIP TRAILS		
Location / Segment	Municipality	Length
Hickory Road (North Holiday Hills to 180 <sup>th</sup> Ave)	Township	0.6 Miles
180 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (Hickory to Township Boundary)	Township	1.2 Miles
Taft (180 <sup>th</sup> to 174 <sup>th</sup> Avenues)	Township	0.8 Miles
174 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (Taft to Township Boundary)	Township	0.5 Miles
Spring Lake Road	Township	1.8 Miles

<sup>2</sup> Michigan Department of Natural Resources

<sup>3</sup> Ottawa County Parks Department

<sup>4</sup> Based on information from Ottawa County Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Fruitport Road (Village Limits to Township Boundary)	Township	3.2 Miles
State Road (Fruitport Road to 148 <sup>th</sup> Avenue)	Township	1.1 Miles
148 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (State Road to Leonard)	Township	1.8 Miles
Kreuger Street/152 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue ( M-104 to Leonard)	Township	1.2 Miles
Pruin Street ( Leonard to 152 <sup>nd</sup> )	Township	0.8 Miles
Leonard (Township Boundary to Lake Avenue)	Township	2.6 Miles
Lake Avenue (Leonard to Lakeside Beach)	Village	0.8 Miles
Savidge (Village Limits to Park Street)	Village	0.8 Miles
Spring Lake Lakeside Trail (Cutler Street to Lake Street)	Village	1.3 Miles
Jackson Street ( M-104 to Spring Lake )	Village	0.3 Miles

## TOWNSHIP FACILITIES

### SPRING LAKE SCHOOL DISTRICT

During the visioning sessions that were held in support of the planning process, Spring Lake Township residents indicated that they were proud of their excellent school system. The majority of the Township is within Spring Lake School district, which contains a high school, middle school and two elementary schools.

**Spring Lake High School.** Spring Lake High School was recently built near the corner of 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Leonard Street at a cost of approximately \$24 million. The school is situated on approximately 70 acres and contains a pool, track, football, soccer and baseball fields.

The high school also boasts a media center, the latest technology, and a variety of challenging courses for students.

**Jeffers Elementary** and **Holmes Elementary** are located within the Township. Jeffers Elementary is located on approximately five acres, and has a playground and a basketball court. Holmes Elementary is located on approximately seven acres and also contains a playground, basketball court and a small ballfield.

### OTHER COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The unique location of Spring Lake Township places it in proximity to a variety of recreational resources that are outside the Township Boundaries. Other facilities, such as Spring Lake Country Club, are privately owned facilities that offer recreational opportunities, such as golfing, to Township residents.

**Central Park.** Central Park is located within the Village of Spring Lake, but maintenance and operating expenses are shared with the Township. The park is located on approximately 8 acres, and contains a variety of equipment including basketball courts,

tennis courts, a playground, picnicking equipment and a picnic shelter. This park also contains a fitness trail, part of which is located on land owned by the Township cemetery.<sup>5</sup>

**Public Lake Access.** Spring Lake Township contains several places at which one can access the Township's many lakes. A public boat launch site is located in Petty's Bayou at the Fruitport Road Bridge, which provides access to Spring Lake.

Another boat launch site is located at the east end of Lloyd Bayou, off of 153<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. Lloyd Bayou connects to the Grand River, and Spring Lake can also be accessed from the Grand.

**Lakeside Beach** is located at the southern end of Spring Lake, near the border between the Spring Lake Village and Spring Lake Township. Lakeside beach contains approximately 125 feet of bathing beach, restrooms, a bike rack, footwash, pier and breakwall, lifeguard services. It is owned and operated by the Village of Spring Lake.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

High quality recreational opportunities and community facilities are quality of life indicators and such facilities characterize Spring Lake Township. The health and leisure benefits of the Township's trail network, parks and other recreation land extend beyond the Township. In addition to recreational facilities, public schools provide local spaces for interaction, learning, and community building, and safety services provide a compulsory service to the community.

Many Spring Lake Township residents have indicated that they are pleased with the quality of recreational areas in Spring Lake Township. The ability to enjoy the waterfront areas of the Township has been expressed as a high priority in the Township, and the Township's partnership with the Spring Lake School District has provided additional recreational opportunities. Continuing to provide high-quality recreational opportunities to Township residents is a challenge that the Township will face as it continues to attract new residents.

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<sup>5</sup> Spring Lake Township 1991 Master Recreation Plan

## TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

A transportation network links activities within a community to those in surrounding municipalities, and the larger region as a whole. Transportation plays a critical role in determining the nature and intensities of land uses that occur throughout a community. Spring Lake Township has a wide variety of land uses and in turn a rather diverse transportation network, providing its residents with a mixture of transit experiences, from scenic waterfront roads to congested thoroughfares.

The segmented geography of the Township created by Spring Lake and the Grand River; coupled and the lack of a second bridge crossing over the Grand River, result in traffic congestion and highway network inefficiencies. Street ends and cul-de-sacs, which are frequently used in the Township decrease and in some cases prevent connectivity between residential developments and neighborhoods, resulting in increased to traffic and trip generation on major streets and arterials. As the Spring Lake Township community evolves, opportunities for other modes of transportation and the need for streets to be more “walkable” will be important elements for a successful community.

### FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

One approach to gaining a better understanding of transportation networks has been to classify the roads that make up these networks into groups based on the role or function that they play. One such classification scheme is that devised by the Federal Highway Administration, referred to as the National Functional Classification (NFC). Classes relevant to Spring Lake Township are described below:

- ***Principal arterials*** are at the top of the NFC hierarchical system. Principal arterials generally carry long distance, through-travel movements. They also provide access to important traffic generators, such as major airports or regional shopping centers.
- ***Minor arterials*** are similar in function to principal arterials, except they carry trips of shorter distance and to lesser traffic generators.
- ***Collectors*** tend to provide more access to property than do arterials. Collectors also funnel traffic from residential or rural areas to arterials.
- ***Local roads*** primarily provide access to property. Examples could include residential streets or lightly-traveled country roads.

The following table contains a breakdown of Principal Arterial, minor arterial and collector roads in Spring Lake Township. Roads not listed in Table 5.1 can be assumed to be local roads.

<b>Table 5.1</b>	
<b>Spring Lake Township</b>	
<b>Road Function Classifications</b>	
<b>PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL ROADS</b>	
US-31	
M-104 (Cleveland in the Twp., Savidge in the Village)	
<b>MINOR ARTERIAL ROADS</b>	
Fruitport Road (north of M-104)	
174 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	
168 <sup>th</sup> / Hemlock	
<b>COLLECTOR ROADS</b>	
180 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (south of Palm)	
Apple Drive	
Buchanan Street (from Liberty south to River)	
Lake Street (from Leonard north to Beach)	
Leonard Street	
Prospect Road	
Christman Street	
School Street (from M-104 south to Exchange)	
State Road	

## **TRAFFIC VOLUME**

According to the 2000 United States Census, 87.5% of the 6,972 people over the age of 16 in the labor force drive to their job alone, and only 6.8% indicated that they carpooled. Additionally, census data indicates that the average time needed to travel to work was almost 22 minutes, which suggests that a large portion of Spring Lake Township’s workers are traveling outside the Township boundaries to their jobs. This results in a substantial number of the Township’s working residents having to utilize the regional transportation network while traveling to places of employment. The automobile is overwhelmingly the most popular form of transportation, with 94% of residents either driving or riding to work. Table 5.2 contains traffic counts for a number of roads in Spring Lake Township, collected by Ottawa County Road Commission.

Table 5.2. Traffic Counts for Selected Township Road Segments					
ROUTE	LOCATION	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Fruitport Road</b>					
	N. of M-104	7,407		7,650	
	N. of State Rd.	5,629		5,783	
	S. of Kelly St.	4,161		4,494	
	N. of Kelly St.	3,342		3,485	
	W. of 148th Ave.	3,628		3,261	
<b>Leonard Street</b>					
	W. of 144th Ave.	2,350		2,635	
	W. of 152nd Ave.	2,859		2,425	
	W. of Vinecrest St.	5,244		4,386	
<b>W Spring Lake Road</b>					
	S. of Van Wagoner St.		1,989		1,950
	N. of Van Wagoner St.		2,280		2,406
	S. of Hemlock St.		1,698		2,009
<b>174th Avenue</b>					
	N. of Van Wagoner St.	7,784		9,810	
	S. of Hickory St.	7,033		7,124	
	S. of Wilson St.	7,075		8,105	
<b>148th Avenue</b>					
	S. of Leonard St.		299		353
	S. of M-104		1,841		2,625
	N. of M-104		3,994		4,131
	N. of State Rd.		4,167		3,973
	S. of Fruitport Rd.		5,061		3,843
<b>US-31</b>					
	Savidge to Pontaluna			37,600	
<b>M-104</b>					
	Fruitport Rd to 144th			15,200	
	US-31 to Fruitport Rd			19,700	

Source: Ottawa County Road Commission

## KEY STREET SEGMENTS

**US-31** is an important route both locally and regionally. One end is just south of Holland, where it terminates at I-196. It runs north and south along Lake Michigan and terminates at the Mackinac Bridge. US-31 has become an important route in West Michigan, connecting the metropolitan areas of Holland, Grand Haven and Muskegon and forming an important piece of the regional transportation network. Locally, US-31 serves as the major north/south connection between Grand Haven and Muskegon. Approximately 1.5 miles of US-31 are contained within Spring Lake Township, and this segment experiences nearly 40,000 vehicle trips per day.

US-31 also contains one of only three bridges that cross the Grand River in Ottawa County. Aside from US-31, the nearest bridge across the Grand is some 17 miles upstream, at 68<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Eastmanville, in Allendale Township. As a result, a significant number of people within the western portion of Ottawa and Muskegon Counties, as well as those who live in the immediate area, are required to use US-31 to cross the Grand River as they travel within the region. This results in very high traffic volumes and congestion, especially during peak travel times.

**M-104** runs in an east-and-west direction in the Township. It connects to US-31 to the west of the Township and is the one of the most heavily traveled street segments in the Township, experiencing approximately 15,000 to 20,000 vehicle trips per day. Traffic congestion on M-104 was cited as an area for improvement in the Visioning Workshops held in support of the Master Plan in June 2006. There are a variety of land uses on M-104 within the Township, including commercial, industrial, residential uses and wetlands. The M-104 Access Management and Corridor Study, published in 2004, analyzed the current condition of M-104 including traffic counts, crash analysis and others. The study recommended a variety of access management techniques for certain segments of the Township.

The M-104 Access Management Study also examined crash data and concluded that "...the majority of crashes are related to animals, bad weather or driver error. The crash rate on M-104 is not high in comparison to other state trunk lines. In other words, crashes on M-104 are not caused by actual roadway design, but by drivers." The study also revealed that most crashes that occur on M-104 do not occur at intersection, but at major driveway locations. This is explained by the fact that "...the average motorist expects and prepares for potential conflicts when approaching a crossroad, yet is taken by surprise at a driveway location."

## MASS TRANSIT

The City of Grand Haven operates Harbor Transit, a mass transit service that serves the City of Grand Haven, Ferrysburg and the Village of Spring Lake. Harbor Transit offers limited fixed-route service in the summer months and demand-response service during the rest of the year. Fares for the bus are \$1.50 for adults and \$0.75 for seniors and children



**Harbor Transit operates in Grand Haven, Ferrysburg and the Village of Spring Lake**

under the age of eighteen. While Harbor Transit’s system currently does not serve Spring Lake Township residents or businesses, given the Township’s proximity to Grand Haven, and the proximity of services along M-104 to population centers in the City of Grand Rapids, a public transportation need in the

Township may develop in the future. In addition, the Themes and Objectives portion of this plan discusses mass transit, recommending working with Harbor Transit to provide extended services in Spring Lake Township and the Village of Spring Lake.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

As Spring Lake Township continues to grow, the Township’s roads will continue to see increased traffic. A primary challenge for accessibility and interconnections within Spring Lake Township and its neighbors are the many natural barriers. While a second local bridge crossing over the Grand River is likely to be an important topic within the area, such bridges are extremely expensive and difficult to develop, especially given the extensive wetland and riparian areas along the river near the Township.

Preliminary planning efforts have also been undertaken between Spring Lake Township, Crockery Township, Polkton Township and the City of Coopersville to convert an abandoned rail right-of-way into a bicycle trail from Spring Lake Township to Coopersville. While this “rail-trail” is still in the preliminary planning stages, it demonstrates a commitment to expanding transportation options and enhancing recreational opportunities for Township residents.