Editors' note: The Executive Summary that follows is excerpted from a 125-page proposal submitted for a 2011 Students Reinventing Government competition.

Executive Summary

Problem 1

Lack of access of mass transportation in Michigan

Proposed Solutions:
1. Implement HOV/HOT lanes in Major Metropolitan Regions.
2. Implement Regional Bus Rapid Transit.
3. Revise Michigan's Complete Streets policy.

HOV/HOT Lanes

Michigan's major metro areas face a problem shared with many other cities across the country. The morning and afternoon "rush hour" creates crippling slowdowns on many major highways in and around metropolitan areas. Since building new lanes for cars to fill up further is not a terribly efficient means of dealing with traffic congestion, the answer must come in the form of higher efficiency in the lanes. HOV/HOT lanes provide this higher efficiency.

HOV/HOT lanes operate at efficiencies, measured in people moved per hour, much higher than general traffic lanes. This means that more people can be moved to and from their destination during the same time frame, without increasing the size of the roads themselves. HOT lanes are vastly preferable to HOV lanes. HOT lanes allow for an even greater efficiency to be reached by allowing single passenger vehicles to utilize the lane for a fee. This prevents the lane from sitting idle as much as a traditional HOV lane might.

HOT lanes also facilitate the implementation of mass transit, especially traditional bus, and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) operations. In addition to this, HOT lanes when fully utilized, are cost neutral and may even offset the cost of the general purpose lanes as well. Public support for HOV/HOT lanes is sometimes hard to gain due to the negative stigma surrounding them and their success; however, there are many criteria that can be used to identify corridors with a high likelihood for successful implementation of HOV/HOT lanes.

Bus Rapid Transit

In order to fix Michigan's infrastructure, Michigan needs to create Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems that will be environmentally friendly and cost effective. These BRT systems would support tourism because they will give each citizen a convenient and comfortable way to travel throughout the state. These BRT systems should be created in Detroit, Ann Arbor, Lansing, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Muskegon, Traverse City, and the Great Lakes Bay Region. This proposal also encourages creating a private-public partnership (P3) with the Greyhound Bus Company to provide transportation between the nine cities.

This proposal describes how BRT can be implemented in Detroit, Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Ann Arbor. For example, in order to begin the process for Bus Rapid Transit in Detroit, the city needs to consolidate their two current busing systems, the SMART bus and the Detroit Department of Transportation, in order to have one county transportation authority that can be held responsible for all transportation needs. Like in Detroit, creating a BRT in Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Ann Arbor would benefit the citizens by decreasing the amount of travel time. For instance, the "Silver Lane" BRT that is being planned for the city of Grand Rapids will use High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) lanes, which decreases the travel time for passengers from the current 53 minutes to 27 minutes ("Phase").

Bus Rapid Transit systems would also benefit the state of Michigan by influencing property development. Areas like Boston, Massachusetts and Ottawa, Canada have experienced an increase in property development around the BRT routes. In Boston, for example, $650 million in property development have occurred along their routes and bus platforms ("Phase"). Like Boston, Ottawa has experienced a $700 million investment in property development. With these nine different cities creating BRT systems, Michigan's economy would benefit