

Frequently Asked Questions

May 2023

Here are some FAQs about the Midland Business Alliance (MBA), the MBA Advisory Committee on Infrastructure, and our efforts to reduce the frequency and severity of flooding and to build greater resiliency.

Q. When you say “infrastructure,” does that mean you plan to build bridges and roads?

A. There are many kinds of infrastructure. When it comes to flood events, infrastructure improvements might include the development of natural wetlands and floodplains that could allow floodwater to spread out in a controlled manner. (These potentially could be used for recreation at other times.) It might be improving a county drain, for example. Or it could include ways to make communities more resilient to flooding, such as sanitary sewer system upgrades, new building designs, zoning and planning with flood reduction in mind, and so on. The results of the flood study and expert recommendations will point us in the direction of infrastructure ideas that could make a positive difference in Midland County and the region.

Q. Is this the same thing as the Four Lakes Task Force (FLTF) or the City of Midland’s 2017 Storm & Sanitary Sewer Study?

A. While there are several initiatives and projects underway, the MBA Advisory Committee on Infrastructure’s mission is broader and “covers more ground.” First, the MBA Board of Directors gave us a broad mandate to examine any infrastructure issue that impacts the quality of life and economic vitality of the Midland area. As our first task, we are focusing on reducing the frequency and severity of flooding across Midland County, building resiliency, and providing solutions to the sanitary storm water problems Midland residents have experienced all too often.

The [FLTF](#) is focused on rebuilding the dams and restoring the lakes. While we are supportive of their efforts to repair the dams, we have a different mission. Our efforts have benefited from the data that the FLTF engineers have provided on their area of the Tittabawassee River Watershed. We appreciate this data and knowledge sharing.

[Midland’s work](#) on its storm and sanitary sewer situation is ongoing. The purpose is to reduce the risk of basement backups by improving the overall sanitary sewer collection system. You may recognize the name: “Concept 5” Sewer Improvement Plan. We are encouraged by the efforts of the City of Midland, and we will all work together to find common solutions to the historical storm and sanitary sewer problems.

There are also many dedicated groups working to help people and businesses rebuild the communities affected by the 2020 flood. We support these heroes — individuals, businesses, and organizations — who have made a difference to so many.

Q. Why would the MBA be interested in getting involved with flood reduction?

A. The MBA is an organization that includes several functions, including the chamber of commerce and economic development efforts for Midland County. We live and work in mid-Michigan and want to see the region get the upper hand on these unrelenting floods. Flooding hurts citizens, businesses, jobs, tourism, agriculture, property values, and overall economic development. We certainly have the interest in this topic, like many others do.

We also have some unique attributes. We are able to advocate for the Great Lakes Bay Region with state and federal government officials, agencies, and legislators. We can help make sure that our region is not forgotten for project funding and other resources. The volunteers who make up this advisory committee have experience in infrastructure, construction, engineering, health systems, community service, as well as local, state, and national government. These committee members have networks to leverage when information and support are needed. We also know this could be a large project that crosses not just one but many county lines. We are prepared to collaborate outside of the lines.

Q. What does the “Tittabawassee River Watershed” mean?

A. A watershed is an area of land that contains a group of rivers and streams that all drain into a specific larger body. In this case, it would be the streams, creeks, and tributaries of the Pine River, Chippewa River, and Tobacco River that drain into the Tittabawassee River. (In turn, the Tittabawassee flows into the Saginaw River and then the Saginaw Bay.)

According to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources “Tittabawassee River Assessment,” the watershed covers 2,471 square miles, including all or even small parts of the following 13 counties: Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Gratiot, Isabella, Mecosta, Midland, Montcalm, Ogemaw, Osceola, Roscommon, and Saginaw. The main stem of the Tittabawassee River is more than 90 miles long, with more than 600 miles of contributing tributaries. Located in the center part of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula, this watershed is the fifth largest in the state.

In some areas, the Tittabawassee River’s floodwaters will back up into creeks and streams – adding to the flooding of those tributaries. In one area of Midland, for example, projects that prevent the Tittabawassee from overflowing and backing up into the Snake and Sturgeon Creeks and Inman Drain could improve resiliency for hundreds of homes and businesses.

Q. Some of the committee members are listed as “ex officio.” What does that mean?

A. Several committee members, including ones from the County of Midland, the City of Midland, and the FLTF are described as “ex officio.” In our case, that term means that they are part of the committee in their official roles, but they are not voting members. They are recognized as critical stakeholders, with invaluable knowledge and expertise. In some cases, recommendations from our committee may need to be considered by their respective governmental organizations.

Q. Are you collecting money?

A. Multiple local foundations and businesses made donations to the Midland Business Alliance Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, to support our efforts. This helps us have the necessary funds to operate, communicate, and support projects. (We used some of these funds to fulfill the 50% local cost-share requirement of the first study with the County of Midland and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, for example.)

The committee has a fiduciary role with any donations/funds, meaning that it must demonstrate the careful, responsible use of monies entrusted to the initiative. Committee expenditures follow normal budgetary protocols, with oversight from the MBA Board of Directors and the MBA President and CEO.

Review the “Return on Investment (ROI)” document on our [MBAmi.org/FloodStudy](https://www.MBAmi.org/FloodStudy) webpage.

Q. How long will this take?

A. Formed in early 2021, we are in the early stages but have made progress. The first Corps of Engineers three-year study (on the hydraulics/hydrology of the watershed) is scheduled to be completed in 2024. This will provide critical information for emergency preparedness and for future project engineering.

At the time of this writing, we are working toward a second study with the Corps. Called a General Investigations (GI) study, it would propose solutions and cost-benefit analysis. It would also be a three-year process. Overall, there are still many steps to take, but a significant hurdle was cleared: the GI study received Congressional authorization and the bill was signed by the President in late 2022. Because government budgeting processes are involved, there will be different dates when funding “windows” open and close. One thing is for sure, the studies, planning, funding, and execution of potential projects are a long-term process.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. We share information regularly with the local news media, on our webpage, and on social media. Watch for news here:

www.MBAmi.org/FloodStudy

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