



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate College

Announcement of Doctoral Oral Examination

Candidate:	Jack Alan Klee
For the degree of:	Doctor of Philosophy
Department:	Public Affairs and Administration
Title:	Transparency and Accessibility in State Transportation Performance Reporting: A Systematic Examination of State Department of Transportation Websites Under MAP-21
Committee:	Dr. Daniela Schröter, Chair Dr. Matthew Mingus Dr. Kevin Corder
Time/Place:	Friday, January 30, 2026 1 to 3 p.m. 3303 Friedmann Hall

In the United States, all 50 State Departments of Transportation (DOTs) rely on federal funding as a key revenue source for roadway preservation programs. The 2012 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act introduced a performance-based framework for transportation policy, establishing seven national goal areas that require state DOTs to report performance outcomes. As MAP-21 reaches its ten-year milestone, this body of work investigates the extent to which state DOTs demonstrate transparency and accessibility in reporting federally mandated performance management results. Despite the centrality of performance

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reporting to accountability and public trust, systematic evaluations of these dimensions remain limited in transportation policy and public administration scholarship.

This study employs a convergent mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative scoring and qualitative content analysis to assess transparency and accessibility across all 50 State DOTs. A distinctive feature of the methodology is the partial incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to support structured data collection and enhance the rigor and efficiency of content analysis. AI-assisted techniques were applied to extract, classify, and evaluate reporting elements from state DOT websites, enabling a more scalable and replicable approach to analyzing large volumes of public-facing performance data.

Findings reveal significant variation among states: only a small subset consistently delivers clear, comprehensive, and user-friendly performance information across all MAP-21 goal areas. Transparency and accessibility, while conceptually related, do not consistently co-occur, suggesting that compliance-oriented reporting may fail to translate into accessible public communication. Correlation analysis indicates modest to moderate associations between transparency and accessibility scores, highlighting the influence of organizational and structural factors beyond funding levels or statutory compliance. This study addresses a critical gap by offering the first nationwide, systematic comparison of state DOT reporting practices against uniform federal expectations. The conclusions underscore the need for federal and state transportation agencies to move beyond procedural compliance toward more intentional, user-centered performance communication, with implications for accountability, public trust, and the future design of performance management frameworks.