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[Small Cities Can't Manage the High Cost of Old Infrastructure.](#)

Without federal help, cities in the Northeast and Midwest face heavy cost burdens to upgrade aging roads, bridges and water systems. Younger municipalities in the South and West are beginning to have similar problems.

Woodward Avenue is the most storied roadway in Michigan, and arguably in America. This 27-mile stretch of asphalt runs from central Detroit through its northwestern suburbs and up to the city of Pontiac. In 1909, a single mile of it in the city, between Six Mile Road and Seven Mile Road, became the first stretch of paved street in the U.S.

For Ferndale Mayor Melanie Piana, however, her two miles of Woodward Avenue are a constant source of concern. The eight-lane roadway slices through her downtown, and she constantly hears from residents who feel endangered when they cross this thoroughfare in her otherwise pedestrian-friendly town.

“The No. 1 reason people move to Ferndale is because of our walkability,” says Piana, “and the No. 1 complaint I get from residents is they feel uncomfortable and unsafe getting across this eight-lane corridor.”

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