

ANNUAL REPORT

For the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
from January 1 to December 31, 2007



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SWMPC 2007 STAFF

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Nancy Perry,
Business Manager

Terri Moore,
Administrative Assistant

George Tabbert,
Traffic Data Supervisor

Roger Pickell,
Traffic Data Supervisor

FROM THE CHAIR...

This report contains a brief summary of the activities carried out by the staff of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC). The SWMPC is a not-for-profit professional planning resource for the region of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties in southwest Michigan. The array of expertise within the SWMPC annually yields a broad spectrum of work products. This report barely scratches the surface. We hope that if you are not familiar with the SWMPC, that this report will encourage you to get acquainted with us. For those of you who we can count as our collaborators and clients, we thank you for a very good year.

In 2007 the SWMPC continued to explore new ways to understand southwest Michigan and apply those findings to our planning for the region. We have become increasingly active in watershed planning and education as well as green infrastructure planning. The Commission is in a unique position to study techniques for regional public transportation coordination. We are working in new ways to understand the region's human service organizations and their linkages. This work has broad applications across many of the areas where we plan. The further our research takes us, the more we find how interconnected transportation, economic development, natural resources, recreation, and all our planning themes tend to be. The SWMPC is no longer an office where expertise is segregated. Knowledge and expertise is liberally shared and all our planning is made richer by it.

The SWMPC board undertook the task of updating its Bylaws and Personnel Policies and Procedures this year. I want to express my appreciation to the subcommittee that devoted so much of their time and energy to such a successful result. John Newcomer in particular deserves special mention. His years of dedicated service to the SWMPC and his great work with the subcommittee this year were irreplaceable. He was a richly gifted man and the Commission will genuinely miss him.

Sincerely,
Victoria Chandler, Chair

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) is one of fourteen Planning and Development Regions in the State of Michigan and one of approximately five hundred in the United States. In Michigan, regions were created under a 1968 Governor's Executive Order.

The SWMPC was officially organized in 1973 by resolutions of the Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren County Boards of Commissioners. The Commission was first staffed in 1974.

In addition to serving public and private entities within Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties by providing technical or management assistance, the SWMPC acts as an intergovernmental forum to address regional issues. The SWMPC addresses issues and administers programs which its membership deems appropriate and which are in keeping with locally established area-wide planning and development goals.

For more information about the SWMPC, please visit our website at: www.swmpc.org

LOCAL SERVICES PLANNING

The SWMPC provides outreach to build support for wise planning and awareness of vital regional development issues. These efforts regularly lead to program initiatives that address local needs.

Master Plans and Recreation Plans

- City of Bangor Recreation Plan *continuing*
- Buchanan Master Plan *continuing*
- Pipestone Twp Master Plan *completed*

Other Plans/Studies

- Benton Harbor I-94 Business Loop Charrette
- Benton Harbor Kitchen Incubator Study *continuing*
- Berrien County Public Transit Study *continuing*
- CRE grant/Van Buren public transit coordination *continuing*
- Wrote Weesaw Twp Recreation Grant *received*
- Wrote St. Joseph Charter Township MNRTF Grant for Eaton Park *received*
- Implemented Rideshare School Pool program
- GIS digital mapping services to the Southwest Michigan Association of Realtors
- City of Bangor CDBG Downtown Infrastructure Improvement Project *completed*
- Participated in the Berrien County Disaster Committee

Education

- Made presentation to Pokagon Band Council and Staff about land use planning
- Presented on sustainable development at Michigan Municipal League Region 2 meeting in South Haven
- Presented and assisted Bloomingdale Township and Village with parks, land use planning, museum development
- Presented Session 6 Innovative and Best Practices for Planning and Zoning for Citizen Planner

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The SWMPC is an Economic Development District of the EDA to: 1) give technical assistance and support others in planning and implementing economic development projects that diversify and strengthen the district's economy; 2) maintain economic and demographic databases and respond to requests from public and private users; and 3) support a local economic development process capable of meeting the planning, coordination and implementation requirements of the district.

Education

- Developed Master plan assessment tool for local plans
- Organized and co-hosted regional seminar on library funding.
- Hosted two meetings on Chicago to Berrien Commuter Rail initiative.
- Educated local officials on balancing development with water quality and natural resource protection.

Advisory Input

- Began discussions with Berrien County economic development director, County Administrator, and rail consultant on extending commuter rail into the County
- Nine County HSCC Meeting for regional collaborative effort among human service organizations
- Hosted Quad State Directors meeting
 - Regional Planning Organization directors from Indiana (NIRPC), Chicago, Milwaukee (SEWRPC), and Michigan (SWMPC) meet to discuss emerging issues for our shared region.
- Attended Tri-County Planners meeting (meeting of planners throughout three county area)
- Attended regional economic group meetings "360 Group"
- Attended Van Buren County Economic Development Summit
- Participation in Cities of Promise meetings (and subcommittee meetings) in Benton Harbor
 - Focus on master planning, economic development, safe routes to school
- Attended planning sessions in Cleveland, OH to prepare for EDA summer conference
 - Follow-up conference calls and other research on topics, agenda preparation and speaker confirmations.
- Attended Economic Summit in South Haven - November

Professional Services

- Updated website pages devoted to economic development
- Submitted application for EDA supplemental funds
- Proposed project to develop new traffic count database and searchable web interface
- Green Infrastructure mapping and presentations to local planning entities
- Researched and replied to information requests
- Map prepared for Branch County Tourism Bureau and Midwest Living Magazine
- Researched Census/LUCA assistance requests from local units of government throughout the region.
- Developed a smart growth assessment tool for local units of government to promote sustainable development.
- Met with WMSRDC (Muskegon) to discuss EDD role in region
- Provided Grant writing assistance to Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency (SMCAA) and Continuum of Care

2007 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Revenue has been calculated to match the SWMPC fiscal year (January 1 through December 31). Many SWMPC projects match the fiscal years of their grant source which vary from that of the SWMPC.

Revenues by Source:

Federal	\$275,885
State	\$231,253
Fees	\$ 15,480
Local-County	\$ 60,862
Local-Other	\$ 82,734
TOTAL REVENUES	\$666,214

Revenues by Theme:

Transportation Planning	\$346,219
Natural Resources Planning	\$ 68,668
Economic Development Planning	\$ 93,638
Heritage Route Planning	\$ 22,985
Local Services	\$134,704
TOTAL	\$666,214

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Federal legislation requires State Departments of Transportation, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and public transportation operators in metropolitan areas to plan together. As the designated MPO for the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) and the Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS), the SWMPC, in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and member municipalities, develops and refines transportation plans and policies by analyzing social, economic, environmental, health, safety, welfare, and mobility impacts.

Member municipalities of TwinCATS include: the Cities of Bridgman, Benton Harbor, and St. Joseph, Villages of Shoreham, Stevensville, Michiana, and Grand Beach (satellite), and Townships of Benton, Lake, Lincoln, Royalton, Sodus, and St. Joseph.

Member municipalities of NATS include: the Cities of Buchanan and Niles, Village of Edwardsburg, and Townships of Bertrand, Buchanan, Howard, Milton, Niles, and Ontwa.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Fiscal Years 2006-2008

- Monitored funding and status of FY2006-2008 TIP projects and amendments
- Prepared and facilitated local public meetings and workshops for the TIP and other transportation-related issues
- Prepared and published FY06 Obligated Funds list

TIP FY 2008-2011

- Developed and approved FY2008-2011 TIP
- Inter-Agency Work Group meeting regarding projects in FY2008-2011 TIP
- Developed and approved new TIP applications and amendment forms

Unified Work Program (UWP) 2007

- Developed and approved FY08 Unified Work Program (UWP)

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP) 2009-2035

- Continued collection and verification of socio-economic data preparation
- Tour of NATS MPO Area with MDOT to verify transportation network attributes
- Organized high-speed rail presentation to Committee members
- Worked with MDOT staff in developing timelines, parameters, criteria, and needs for the Travel Demand Model

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) Compliance

- Began work on Environmental Mitigation and Consultation plans for SAFETEA-LU compliance
- Develop GIS data set for SAFETEA-LU compliance
- Consulted with Michigan Natural Features Inventory to complete natural features inventory of Southwest Michigan
- Completed Environmental Mitigation and Consultation documents to ensure SAFETEA-LU compliance of the LRP, UWP, and TIP

Staff Training

- Training on a range of topics including: Context Sensitive Solutions, Designing Healthy Livable Communities, Travel Demand Forecasting, High Output LED Lighting, Asset Management

HERITAGE ROUTE PLANNING

The SWMPC provides expertise to two of Michigan's vital planning corridors. Because they are resources in heritage tourism, transportation, recreation, landscape preservation, and economic development, US-12 and I-69 corridors each engage in unique, collaborative planning processes. SWMPC provides direct planning assistance to both programs through coordination of projects and activities in the areas of interpretive planning, conservation, preservation tourism and economic development.

US-12 Heritage Trail

- Attended International Heritage Development Conference
 - Researched and created guidebook for IHDC regional lab for US-12 Heritage Trail
 - Facilitated motor coach site tours for the IHDC Best Practices Lab
- Researched and wrote grant to National Scenic Byways Program to create a Visitor Experience Strategy for US-12 Heritage Trail.
- Redesigned, printed and distributed rack cards to US-12 outlets
- Continued to research content and graphics for US-12 sites
- Finalized and went live with new US-12 Heritage Trail website (www.us12heritagetrail.org)
 - Continued work with web developer to improve audio and video capabilities of new website
 - Tracked website traffic and reported back to council
- Created new email account to request general information
- Finalized new bylaws for submission to obtain a 501(c)(3)
- Researched matching funds for National Scenic Byways Grant

I-69 Recreational Heritage Trail

- Researched green infrastructure projects to incorporate into I-69 corridor
- Reviewed I-69 management plan
- Suggested process for documenting restoration of Tekonsha property
 - Toured Tekonsha truck pull off
- Started planning process for 2008 community meetings
- Continued to research content and graphics for new website
- Distributed I-69 management plan to board members as requested

TRANSPORTATION *continued*

- Attended monthly Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MTPA) meetings

Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ)

- CMAQ process management
 - Compose CMAQ call for projects
 - CMAQ mailings & program research
 - Meeting preparations

Traffic Data

- Outreach to region to solicit traffic count data sites
- Collected traffic count data
- Populated SWMPC traffic count database with 2007 data

Public Transportation

- Conducted meetings with transit agencies from five counties, to select a software product that will assist in improving operations and coordination among transit providers and human service providers

NATURAL RESOURCES PLANNING

SWMPC 2007 MEMBERS

OFFICERS

Chairman: David Bly,

Van Buren Townships Representative

Vice Chair: Victoria Chandler,

Berrien Citizen Representative

Secretary: Frances Sage,

Van Buren Citizen Representative

Treasurer: Donald Gast,

Berrien Citizen Representative

Alternate Treasurer: Yemi Akinwale,

Berrien Citizen Representative

BERRIEN COUNTY

Janet Clark, Citizen Representative

Agnes Conway, Supervisor, New Buffalo Township

Wilce Cooke, Mayor, City of Benton Harbor

Marge Durm-Hiatt, Alternate Supervisor, Niles Township

Ron Ferguson, Benton Charter Township Supervisor

Richard Fintze, Citizen Representative (Planning)

Juan Ganum, Alternate Mayor, City of Niles

Ron Griffin, St. Joseph Charter Township Supervisor

Jon Hinkleman, County Commissioner

John Hodgson, Alternate Mayor, City of St. Joseph

Jesse Minks, Citizen Representative

John Newcomer, Citizen Representative

Paul Pantaleo, Alternate Supervisor, Oronoko Township

Gloria Payne, Townships' Representative

Richard Remus, Citizen Representative

Donald Ryman, County Commissioner

Marletta Seats, County Commissioner

Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township Supervisor

CASS COUNTY

Barb Wood Cook, Citizen Representative (Planning)

Edward Goodman, County Commissioner

Alice LaHaie, Citizen Representative

Walter Lehmann, Townships' Representative

Robert Powers, Citizen Representative

Linda Preston, Townships' Representative

Johnie Rodebush, County Commissioner

James Sayer, Citizen Representative

James Snow, Alternate Mayor, City of Dowagiac

VAN BUREN COUNTY

Dorothy Appleyard, Mayor, City of South Haven

Louise Engle, Citizen Representative

Don Hanson, County Commissioner

Harold Johnson, County Commissioner

Jason Jones, Citizen Representative

Jeff Radtke, Citizen Representative (Planning)

Daniel Ruzik, Supervisor, Antwerp Township

Mike Toth, County Commissioner

John Tapper, Townships Representative

POKAGON BAND OF POTAWATOMI INDIANS

John Miller, Tribal Chairman

Natural resources have no particular regard for political boundaries. Watershed boundaries, surface water run-off, critical habitat, are a few examples of these kinds of regional issues. The SWMPC is fundamentally regional and thus in a unique position to apply planning expertise to natural resources planning.

Education

- Co-hosted 5 workshops: "Landscaping for Water Quality," "Filling the Gaps Workshop (local government's role in protecting natural resources)," "Wetlands", "Low Impact Development," "Introduction to Lakes"
- Produced Low Impact Development (LID) News for Galien, Paw Paw, Black, and Gun River Watersheds
- Provided educational materials to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II communities (fact sheets, newsletter articles, presentations, radio spots, etc)
- Developed Growing Greener webpages and fact sheets
- Presented "Growing Greener" to Southwest MI Association of Realtors, Cass County Parks Board and Conservation District Board
- Land use planning presentation to Pokagon Band Council and staff
- Presented on sustainable development at Michigan Municipal League Region 2 meeting in South Haven

Advisory Input

- Served on advisory committee for Friends of the St. Joseph river to assist with strategic planning and board development
- Participated on the steering committees for Galien River Watershed and Black River Watersheds
- Participated on Statewide Low Impact Development Manual Development Committee
- Participated in development of a SW/West Michigan Conservation Committee with Ducks Unlimited
- Facilitated Paw Paw River Watershed steering committee and worked on management plan development (identifying priority areas using GIS and modeling)
- Participated in The Nature Conservancy's Paw Paw River Conservation Planning

Professional Services

- Developed resource maps for the Paw Paw Lake Foundation
- Partnered with The Conservation Fund to write Galien River Watershed Implementation grant
- Worked with South Haven City on zoning ordinance language for porous pavement (Low Impact Development)
- Reviewed all current recreation plans in Cass, Berrien, and Van Buren Counties
- Wrote and received a grant from MDEQ Coastal Management Program in cooperation with Michigan State University
- Participated in Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance's statewide trail website development

LINDA PRESTON

2007 WELCH-LACKEY AWARD