



The Quarterly

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Planning that is Credible, Credentialed, and Connected

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BL-94 CONSTRUCTION COMPLETE: ROUNABOUTS-A USERS' GUIDE

With the completion of the BL-94 (Main St.) construction project from Paw Paw Ave. to Riverview Dr., two new roundabouts and striped bicycle lanes have come to downtown Benton Harbor. A roundabout is a circular intersection at which all traffic travels counter-clockwise, always to the right around a center island. Roundabouts are useful for several reasons, roundabouts:

- Keep traffic moving; and this decreases emissions and improves fuel economy
- Increase safety because there is no stopping in a roundabout, no left turns across opposing traffic lanes, and all vehicles must maintain similar speeds
- Force vehicles to slow to a safe speed for the intersection

How do I drive in a roundabout?

Roundabouts can be tricky to navigate when you have never encountered one. These simple tips below can ensure that the roundabouts are used properly and safely by all multi-modal users in our community.

1. Before entering the roundabout, slow to the listed speed, in Benton Harbor the speed is 15 mph.
2. Vehicles entering from each leg of the intersection must yield to the traffic already in the roundabout.
3. When an appropriate gap in traffic appears, enter the roundabout and merge with the flow of the other vehicles.
4. Stay to the right of the center island.
5. Yield to all pedestrians crossing the roundabout.
6. Never stop in a roundabout for emergency vehicles. Exit the roundabout before pulling over to the side of the road.
7. Indicate your exit by using your turn signal.



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TRANSPORTATION



The new intersection at Main St. and 5th Street in downtown Benton Harbor, now features pedestrian crossing signs, bicycle lanes, and a roundabout. For more information about roundabouts please visit www.michigan.gov/mdot and in the search bar type the word roundabout.

Call to Improve Berrien County Air Quality

The SWMPC will hold a public meeting to offer comments on projects selected for the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program for Berrien County for the years 2012-14. The meeting is on Wednesday, February 3, 2010 at 1:00 pm at the Berrien County Road Commission located at 2860 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor, MI. The public is encouraged to attend the meeting and offer comments on the projects. Comments are also welcome after the meeting on the projects themselves and their prioritization.

What is (CMAQ) funding?

This program provides a flexible funding source for state and local governments to fund transportation projects and programs to help meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act (CAA) and its amendments. CMAQ funding supports transportation projects that reduce mobile source emissions in areas designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as “nonattainment” or “maintenance” of national ambient air quality standards.

To learn more about CMAQ please visit:

www.swmpc.org/cmaq.asp

New Fixed Bus Routes In Twin Cities

Twin Cities Area Transit Authority (TCATA) began operations for two new fix routes for the residents of Benton Harbor on December 14th, 2009. The Red route goes from downtown Benton Harbor to St. Joseph, St. Joseph Charter Twp, and Stevensville. The hours of operation for this route are Monday-Friday (M-F) 6 am-10 pm and Saturdays 8 am-10 pm. The Green Route makes a loop through Benton Harbor and Benton Township. The hours of operation for this route are M-F 8 am-5 pm. The Red and Green routes run every hour and cost \$1.00 each way, even if a transfer to another bus route is necessary. The Blue route, the Benton Charter Township/retail loop, started extended hours on November 1, 2009 and runs M-F 6 am-10 pm and Saturdays 8 am-10 pm.

For more detailed route information please visit:
www.swmpc.org/fixedroutes.asp

Training for Communities: Assessing the Quality of Your Roads

The Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council would like to announce an Investment Reporting Tool (IRT) Workshop to be held at the Van Buren Conference Center on February 18, 2010 from 12:30pm-3:00p.m. in Lawrence, MI. This reporting tool is useful for communities to help assess and update the quality of Michigan roads. These trainings will provide new participants with a solid understanding of the IRT and reporting process. If you would like to sign up for this training please contact Nick Musson at mussonn@swmpc.org or (269) 925-1137 x 24.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENT

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

As a U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) regional planning district, the SWMPC must complete a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) every three years. The CEDS is a regional plan to guide the SWMPC and its members in making economic development planning decisions that benefit the region. Based on committee input, the 2009 CEDS action plan reflects a strong interest in regional collaboration, entrepreneurialism and the link between education and economic development. Goals, objectives, and performance measures address these topics:

- Collaboration within Southwest Michigan
- Land Use: The Natural and Built Environments
- Social, Physical and Cultural Health
- Education and Workforce Development
- The Regional Economy: Industrial Retention, Sustainability, Development, and Diversification

Each category addresses the future of the region's economy from a different perspective, creating a holistic approach to regional economic development that seeks to build on the strengths of the region's residents, workforce, employers, and the natural and built environments to improve the quality of life for southwest Michigan's residents.

The entire CEDS report will be available for comment beginning on December 17, 2009 through January 18, 2010. For more information about this plan for southwest Michigan, contact Elizabeth Luther at luthere@swmpc.org or at (269) 925-1137 x 13.

View the document at:

www.swmpc.org/ceds.asp

360 Group

Look for the next 360 Group meeting in February. Our 2010 focus will stress the region's "asset map"; networking opportunities; and top-notch speakers and panelists. Contact Elizabeth Luther (luthere@swmpc.org) with questions, and explore the SWMPC's website in January.

Van Buren County Passes Phosphorus Ban

Background

The Paw Paw River Watershed Management Plan authored by the SWMPC recommended the passing of a countywide phosphorus ban. The SWMPC thanks the County Board of Commissioners for taking this important step to protect inland lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and Lake Michigan. These water resources provide many benefits to the general health and welfare of the public.

Van Buren County has recently joined the Lake Michigan shore counties of Allegan, Muskegon and Ottawa, in adopting an ordinance that requires the use of phosphorous free fertilizers on all residential, commercial, and golf course lawns beginning January 1, 2010. The ordinance exempts agriculture, gardens, flowers, trees, shrubs, new lawns, and lawns with soil tests indicating phosphorous is required. This new ordinance will be enforced by the County Drain Commissioner's Office.

Why ban phosphorus?

Plants need phosphorous to grow, however, most soil types have enough naturally occurring phosphorous to sustain healthy lawn growth. When excess phosphorus is applied it can enter nearby waterways causing pollution of our water resources. One pound of phosphorous can support the growth of 750 pounds of algae!

What do those numbers mean?

The Two Rivers Coalition, Van Buren Conservation District, and the County Drain Commissioner are partnering to educate residents about the phosphorus ban and proper lawn care. Their new campaign is called "Zero In The Middle." When purchasing fertilizer, the numbers on a bag represent the three main nutrients: Nitrogen (N), Phosphorous (P), and Potassium (K). When you purchase fertilizer look for a "0" in the middle of the ingredients.



Visit <http://vanburencd.org/trc> to learn more.



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Calendar of Events 2010

www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp

| January | February | March |
|--|---|---|
| <p>13th 7:00 p.m. Two Rivers Coalition (Geneva Twp. Hall) 14th 6:30 p.m. Branch Co. Trails Input Meeting (Coldwater) 18th SWMPC Offices Closed 21st 6:30 p.m. Allegan Co. Trails Input Meeting (Allegan) 25th 9:30 a.m. TwinCATS 26th 1:30 p.m. NATS 28th 11:30 a.m. FOSJR Meeting (Three Rivers) 28th 6:30 p.m. St. Joseph Co. Trails Input Mtg. (Centreville)</p> | <p>3rd 1:00 p.m. 2012-2014 CMAQ Call for Projects (Berrien Co. Road Commission) 4th 6:30 p.m. Berrien Co. Trails Input Meeting (Berrien Springs) 10th 7:00 p.m. Two Rivers Coalition (Geneva Twp. Hall) 18th 1:00 p.m. IRT Workshop (Lawrence) 22nd 9:00 a.m. TwinCATS 23rd 1:30 p.m. NATS 25th 11:30 a.m. FOSJR Meeting (Three Rivers)</p> | <p>10th 7:00 p.m. Two Rivers Coalition (Geneva Twp. Hall) 15th 9:00 a.m. TwinCATS 23rd 1:30 p.m. NATS 25th 11:30 a.m. FOSJR Meeting (Three Rivers)</p> <p>NATS=Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study meets in Niles TwinCATS=Twin Cities Area Transportation Study meets in Benton Harbor FOSJR=Friends of the St. Joseph River Watershed</p> |

2010 Board Meeting Schedule

SWMPC Full Commission Meeting

*Location: Southwestern Michigan College
 Mathews Room West-Dowagiac, MI*
 February 2, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.
 April 20, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.

Location: Southwestern Michigan College-Tentative
 July 20, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.
 October 19, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.

SWMPC Administrative Committee Meeting

Location: Vincent Place Conference Room-Benton Harbor, MI
 March 16, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.
 June 15, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.
 September 21, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.
 December 21, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.