

MINUTES
NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
Technical Advisory and Policy Committees
Joint Meeting
 August 28, 2007
 Niles City Council Chambers
 1:30 P.M.

Members Present:	Tim Batton, GNCDC Joe Bellina, Cass County Road Commission Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission Chuck Collins, Berrien County Road Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Township Neil Coulston, City of Niles & DPW/Airport Dick Fintze, Four Flags Chamber, BCPC Juan Ganum, City of Niles Planning John Gruchot, Berrien County Community Development Darrell Harden, MDOT, Southwest Region Ray Lenze, MDOT – Planning John Plevich, Niles Dial-a-Ride Cliff Poehlman, Cass County Road Commission (Chair) Joe Ray, City of Niles Art Reed, Berrien County Planning Commission Johnie Rodebush, Cass County Commissioner Don Ryman, Berrien County Commissioner
Members Absent:	Georgia Boggs, Niles City Council John Brielmaier, Ontwa Township Supervisor Fred Featherly, MDOT-Multi-Modal Debbie Johnson, Cass County Commissioner Sarah Koepke, Federal Highway Administration John LaMore, Berrien County Commissioner Mary Beth McAdams, MACOG (ex officio) Jane Mitchell, Buchanan Township John Monaghan, Village of Edwardsburg Public Works Meg Mullendore, City of Buchanan William Myers, Niles Township Sandra Naugle, City of Niles (Dial-A-Ride) Robert Rusch, MI Department of Environmental Quality/Air Quality Division Paul South, MDOT Coloma TSC Sharon Tyler, Southwestern Michigan Economic Growth Alliance/Cass Tim Whitfield, Milton Township Supervisor Sarah Woolcock, MDOT Coloma TSC
SWMPC Staff Present:	Kelly Getman-Dissette, SWMPC Rachael Tupica, SWMPC
Others Present:	Lisa Croteau, Niles DDA Main Street Rich Vavra-Musser, Citizen Dennis Hodges, Indiana High Speed Rail Association Dan Fette, Berrien County Community Development

1. Call to Order & Introductions

- Chairman Fintze called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM.

2. Minutes

- Motion by Berndt, seconded by Gruchot, to approve the minutes of the June 26, 2007 TAC meeting. Motion approved.
- Motion by Poehlman, seconded by Rodebush, to approve the minutes of the June 26, 2007 Policy meeting. Motion approved.

3. Staff Report

- **MTPA/MAR Conference** – Tupica and Getman-Dissette attended the annual conference hosted by the Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MTPA) and the Michigan Association of Regions (MAR). There were many helpful sessions on transportation-related topics. In addition, Tupica was chosen as the Junior Planner of the Year by the MTPA, and the SWMPC earned a best practices award from MAR for the 2006 I-94 Business Loop (BL) charette.
- **Construction Site Visits** – Woolcock invited Getman-Dissette and Tupica to visit several MDOT construction sites. The visits took place on August 17 and were a great opportunity to learn more about the construction process.
- **Asset Management** – Getman-Dissette announced that PASER data collection of the federal-aid eligible roads in the region for 2007 was complete.
- **I-94 BL Open House** – Getman-Dissette announced that there was an open-house scheduled for the 28th (this evening) from 6:00-8:00 pm for citizens to view the design for the reconstruction of the I-94 Business Loop (BL) in downtown Benton Harbor. The workshop will be held at Michigan Works.

4. Project Updates

- **Cass County Road Commission** – Bellina reported that work on Barron Lake Road has finished. The 2007 project has gone over budget, so the Road Commission will have to fund the difference in cost. The 2008 project was under budget, so there may be funds available for another project. In addition, Lake Street will go out to bid in November.
- **Berrien County Road Commission** – The West River project is nearing completion.

5. New Business

- **Rail Presentation** – Joe Schulz was present to offer a presentation on the possibility of developing high-speed commuter rail from Berrien to Chicago. His presentation focused on the economic benefits that such rail could provide to Berrien County. After the presentation, several questions were raised about the area's ability to handle additional population, residents who prefer the county to remain rural, retaining key personnel or at least institutional knowledge (especially at Amtrak) in order to complete the project, and getting legislators on board with the idea. Next steps required to move such a project forward were briefly discussed. Fette explained that if the group was willing, his department would work on text to further develop the discussion of rail in the LRP.
- **Website Tutorial** – The web tutorial will be moved to the September agenda.
- **MTGA Plan Endorsement** – Getman-Dissette explained that the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance (MTGA) launched the Connecting Michigan effort in 2006. Stakeholders divided into taskforces to cover a range of topics. Each task force developed a set of goals and action steps needed to implement a connected trail system in Michigan. The MTGA is now working to implement the taskforce recommendations, which are outlined in the Connecting Michigan plan. Endorsements of the plan are needed to build momentum for funding, legislative action, and advocacy. Endorsements do not commit groups to monetary support. Endorsing the plan is simply a pledge to support a statewide trail system and to collaborate with partners to achieve the vision of the plan. *A motion was made by Rodebush, supported by Ganum, to endorse the MTGA Connecting Michigan plan, provided that no commitment of funds is required. Motion approved.*
- **FY 2007 UWP Budget Amendment** – After examining the FY 2007 expenditures to date, it was discovered that more staff time has been spent on general program administration, including SAFETEA-LU compliance issues, preparing for and attending meetings, travel, website maintenance, and training, than was originally anticipated. In addition, less staff time has been spent on both long range and short range planning activities than was originally estimated. Therefore, based on year-to-date spending,

FHWA funds should be shifted from Long Range and Short Range Planning budgets into the Program Management budget.

A motion was made by Reed, seconded by Rodebush, to amend the Program Management, Long Range Planning, and Short Range Planning FHWA budgets within the FY 2007 UWP in order to more accurately represent expenditures to date and funding necessary for the remainder for the fiscal year. Specifically budget adjustments include:

- *Changing the Program Management budget from \$21,448 to \$34,200;*
- *Changing the Long Range Planning budget from \$24,072 to \$16,003; and*
- *Changing the Short Range Planning budget from \$9,553 to \$4,850.*

Motion approved.

6. Old Business

- **SAFETEA-LU Compliance** – Getman-Dissette reported that the NATS transportation documents have been deemed by FHWA to be compliant with SAFETEA-LU legislation.
- **Bylaws Membership Subcommittee** – There will be a Bylaws Membership Subcommittee meeting immediately following the joint meeting.

7. Public Comment

- None

8. Privilege of the Floor

- None

8. Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM – Next meeting September 25, 2007.

Minutes compiled by: Kelly Getman-Dissette, Transportation Planner, 8/30/07