

# NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

## MINUTES

October 27, 2015

2:30 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

Policy Members Present:	Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg Dawn Bolock, Ontwa Township Craig Bradfield, Howard Township Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township William Hodge, Berrien County Planning Commission Erin Jolivette, MDOT – Coloma TSC John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning Serita Mason, City of Niles Jess Minks, Berrien County Road Commission Kim O’Haver, Buchanan Dial A Ride Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce Don Ryman, City of Buchanan Robert Ziliak, Cass County Board of Commissioners
Policy Members Absent:	Georgia Boggs, City of Niles Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex-officio) Darrell Harden, MDOT, Southwest Region John Klimek, Berrien County Board of Commissioners LeRoy Krempec, Cass County Road Commission Steve LeClaire, Bertrand Township David Newell, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Representative, Buchanan Township Stewart McKenzie, FTA (ex-officio) Brad Sharlow, MDOT Planning (ex-officio) Representative, Niles Dial-A-Ride Joe Sobieralski, Southwest Michigan Economic Growth Alliance Bob Sutton, Mason Township
SWMPC Staff Present:	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani
Others Present:	Matthew Galbraith, MDOT Statewide Planning

### 1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting was called to order by Cooper at 2:32 p.m. and Personette led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 2. Minutes

A motion by Ziliak with support by Mason to approve the Policy Committee Meeting minutes from September 22, 2015, as amended. **Motion passed.**

### 3. Public Comment

None.

#### 4. Staff Report

##### ▪ **Project Selection Criteria Updates**

Mani presented points of agreement from the TwinCATS as a reference point to see if NATS committee members would be amenable to these points. These items deal with project readiness and coordination, rather than performance measures specifically.

- Projects on the same corridor that cross jurisdictional lines (township to city, etc.) but are bid together as a single project should be rewarded with greater weight in project selection.
- Projects that provide 30-40% match instead of the required 18.15% should receive greater weight in project selection. This is because greater local match indicates a clear local priority, and also enables the MPO to spread federal funds across more projects.
- In addition to the current practice of requiring a resolution of support in the fiscal year in which a project is scheduled, a resolution of support would now be required once a project is selected in the TIP stating local commitment to the project.
- Coordination with a planned sewer and water project (as identified in asset management or other plan) will give a project priority in terms of the fiscal year that it needs to go.

Ziliak expressed concern that rewarding a 30-40% local match would mean that jurisdictions with less cash would automatically be disadvantaged when it came to project selection. Gallagher countered by saying that the additional local match would have only a very small weighting in project selection; jurisdictions that can only provide the required local match would still be very much in the running for funding.

##### ▪ **MPO STP Allocation Call for Projects Begins Now**

Mani said that a letter would be going out shortly to each city, village, township, transit agency, and road commission, and the Pokagon Band announcing the call for projects for Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds for 2017-2020. The Surface Transportation Program funds can be used for a whole host of activities, but was the largest source of funding available to NATS to allocate to road projects of all kinds. Mani said that given the state of legislation, MDOT had advised MPOs to keep their funding targets steady and not project any growth. If there is revenue growth, we can always add additional projects in later. The funding target for NATS will be \$518,608 per year for 2017-2020.

Ziliak said that meetings were taking place between the road commissions and the townships to determine priorities for both federal-aid and non federal aid projects.

Bellaire said that she was really struggling to figure out how to pay a design engineer to do the necessary work on a project. She wanted to know where she could start, since it would take many years of Act 51 funding to pay for a small section of road to be done, and the Village of Edwardsburg only has one federal aid road that is under its ownership.

##### ▪ **Transportation Alternatives Call for Projects 2016-2020**

Mani shared that the Transportation Alternatives Call for Projects was now out, and that these funds could be used for pedestrian and bicycle facilities. NATS received its own allocation of these funds, but they amount to \$36,071 annually, which is not much money to do a project. However, MDOT had given NATS the opportunity to combine two years' worth of funding so that they could spend \$72,142 in federal money in 2017. This is still not a large sum, but does allow for a somewhat larger

project. Mani said that agencies had the option of applying for one year's funding or both. A 20% local match is required. A formal letter would be going out for TAP funding as well.

Mani said that the application was once again being processed through the Michigan Grant system, and that SWMPC staff could assist agencies with using that system.

- **Attendance Reports**

Gallagher announced that attendance reports for FY 2015 will be going out to agencies with representation on NATS, in order to ensure that agencies are aware of who their representatives are and that they are taking full advantage of their allotted representatives. The sending of attendance reports is a provision of the committee bylaws.

- **CMAQ Call for Projects**

Mani announced that MDOT would in fact be issuing a call for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds for 2017-2020 to align with MPO TIP development cycles. These are funds each county in Southwest Michigan receives for being in non-attainment or attainment maintenance for certain pollutants. One new innovation that would make things easier for the MPO this year would be an online application. This application would be similar to the Transportation Alternatives application, but would require MDOT. Mani said that he expected to hear more about the CMAQ Call for Projects very soon, and that CMAQ meetings would be held on the same dates as Rural Task Force meetings in each county. The meetings would be happening earlier than usual, though not as much earlier as SWMPC had hoped.

## 5. Public Transit Updates

- **SWMPC Transit Updates**

Gallagher shared that the Request for Proposals for the Countywide Service Plan was under review by MDOT.

- **Agency Updates**

O'Haver said that she had executed the contracts to purchase three replacement buses for Buchanan Dial-A-Ride. O'Haver also shared that ridership had increased significantly on Buchanan Dial-A-Ride recently.

Mani said that in the previous meeting, Niles Dial A Ride had reported extremely high demand as well, and was requesting the riders schedule at least one day in advance. Mason said that they are busy because they do not have enough drivers, and that part of the reason why they are having trouble recruiting drivers was the pay rate. O'Haver agreed, but said that transit agencies could pay drivers more if they received more funding.

Ryman asked whether millenials might be accounting for the high ridership in Niles and Buchanan. O'Haver said that most riders were in the older demographic, but there were homeless students who use Buchanan Dial-A-Ride for life-sustaining trips.

Mason said that state representatives should ride the buses to see what riders go through in terms of wait times and on-board experience. O'Haver said that a representative for Cass County had been on board a bus to learn more about transit, but he was the first in a very long time to show an interest.

Gallagher suggested that local governance such as city commissions and councils needed to be aware of the conditions of transit before trying to build the case on a state or federal level.

## 6. Land Use Updates

None.

## 7. Project Updates

- **Obligation Thermometer-** Mani said that he was unsure whether there was still obligation authority left at the state level, as MAP-21 expires on October 29<sup>th</sup>.

Fiscal Year	Job Number	Agency	Project Name	Update Information	Date of last update	Bid Savings	Obligation Month	Bills Submitted
		Berrien County	IN-MI River Valley Trail	TAP application sent in for next phase; Issues regarding routing and historical preservation, but should not hold up project	October 2015			
2014	104152	MDOT	M-139 CON phase Bridge replacement	Mid December completion	October 2015			
		Niles DAR	Scheduling software	Still planning on it	October 2015			
		Niles DAR	Preventative maintenance	Part will be done in 2015, part in 2016	October 2015			
		Niles DAR	Replacement computers	Purchase has been approved by City Council	January 2015			
		Niles DAR	Replacement bus	Awaiting end of axle shortage	October 2015			
		Niles DAR	Operating assistance					
		Berrien County RC	North Main St	Advance Construct Conversion in 2015	October 2015			
		Cass County	Adamsville Road Reconstruct from May St to US-12	Scheduled for 2016	October 2015			
		Cass County	Gumwood Road Phase II	Unobligated	September 2015			

		Buchanan Dial-a-Ride	Replacement Bus	3 buses purchased	October 2015			
		Niles Dial-A-Ride	Replacement Tires	Purchased and delivered	October 2015			
		MDOT	M-139 from M-140 to Fairland Road Resurfacing	In progress				
		MDOT	Repaving US-12, Red Bud, and S 3rd St	Construction in September				
		MDOT	Concrete Patching on US-31	Under construction	September 2015			
		MDOT	M-62 from Hospital St to M-60 resurfacing	Will be finished this year				

Other ongoing project reports were shared:

The City of Buchanan has a resurfacing project on Red Bud Trail. Mani and Gallagher said they would follow up to ensure that the project was still proceeding. The City of Buchanan also has a traffic signal project at Front St. Galbraith said he would follow up to determine whether the project had been deemed eligible for CMAQ funds, as SWMPC had provided necessary information.

MDOT provided an update on its Restore and Rehabilitation project on the US-12 bridge over M-51. Ryman suggested eliminating the bridge and installing a traffic signal. The project is scheduled for Spring construction.

## 8. Old Business

### ▪ GPA Policy

Mani once again went over the General Program Accounts policy, which is designed to group projects together so that only major changes to the whole group trigger the full TIP amendment process. SWMPC staff had looked over the new guidance on GPAs, and had found that rail safety was simply grouped into a Trunkline Safety GPA. Likewise, there was no pre-construction GPA anymore, as GPAs were grouped by worktype. Mani said that the Policy would only set up GPAs for MDOT projects for now, and would leave the full public participation and TIP amendment process in place for larger scale reconstruction projects from MDOT. Mani said this would also mean a slight amendment to the TIP Amendment and Administrative Modification Policy.

A motion by Personette with support by Ziliak to approve the General Program Accounts Policy and changes to the TIP Amendment and Administrative Modification Policy. **Motion passed.**

### ▪ NFC Minor Revisions

Mani explained that the Village of Edwardsburg had applied for an NFC reclassification of Section St from US-12 to the dead end from a local road to a minor collector, hence making it eligible for federal aid. MDOT had said that it did not concur with the reclassification to the dead end, only from US-12 to Max St, and recommended that the Village revise its proposal with MPO approval. Mani

reiterated that MDOT's concerns were not with the traffic counts, as the traffic counts warranted reclassification as a minor collector.

Mani said that the TAC committee had voted against approval of this revised proposal because of concerns about directing truck traffic from US-12 onto a road that is already struggling with traffic for the school complex.

Bellaire said that she understood the concern about truck traffic in the area, but recognized that trucks were already using the route and federal funds would also assist the Village of Edwardsburg with coping with that truck traffic as well as planning safety improvements.

Personette suggested that greater enforcement of ordinances banning trucks on Section St was the first step before considering reclassification of the roads.

Mani and Gallagher said that an NFC request could be submitted at any time, so this was by no means the last opportunity to submit a request. Galbraith said that in fact, processing time for an NFC reclassification request may be faster once the statewide review was done. Mani said that they could gather some more data to understand the situation better.

A motion by Bolock with support by Bellaire to table action on the NFC reclassification request on Section St. until another meeting. **Motion passed.**

## 9. New Business

- **MPO Wide Local Safety Initiative**

Gallagher said that she had the opportunity to speak to Tracy Leix, who until now had been running the Local Safety Initiative, a free MDOT service where engineers come out to your community and examine safety issues with specific roadway segments or intersections and propose low cost solutions. Gallagher said that MDOT supported the entire MPO making a coordinated request for this process, so that MDOT could use its resources most efficiently. Gallagher said that agencies that go through the Local Safety Initiative process will gain extra points when applying for federal safety funds from MDOT. Gallagher said that SWMPC would be seeking the signature of engineers or supervisors from each Act 51 agency in order to make a coordinated request of MDOT.

- **FHWA Updates**

There was no one present from the Federal Highway Administration to give updates.

- **MDOT Updates**

Lanum shared that the Michigan House had passed a transportation bill that would generate \$600 million in new revenue from increased gasoline taxes, diesel taxes, registration fees, and surcharges. This bill was passed after a bill to generate \$800 million in new revenue and \$400 million from the general fund had failed. Lanum said it was now up to the Senate and the Governor to see whether this was an acceptable deal.

Lanum said that on the federal side, a House committee had passed a six year transportation bill. Lanum said that House leaders were looking for a bit more time to reconcile that bill with the Senate version, and therefore would be giving a three-week reauthorization of MAP-21. Mani added that as

part of the three week extension, a provision was added in that would postpone the deadline for railroads to comply with requirements for Positive Train Control, a device for managing train speeds automatically. The deadline was supposed to be December 31 of this year, and most railroads in the United States were struggling to comply. This would have meant a shutdown of most Amtrak routes and the South Shore Line soon. The deadline has been extended to 2018, however, averting that issue. Personette said that the reason they were struggling to comply was the lack of number of suppliers of the Positive Train Control equipment.

▪ **News Items of Interest**

None.

**10. Public Comment**

None.

**11. Privilege of the Floor**

None.

**12. Adjournment at 3:55 p.m.**

- The next meeting will be November 24 at 2:30 PM.

*Minutes compiled by: Gautam Mani, Associate Planner, 2015*