

**MINUTES**  
**NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY**  
*Policy Committee*

September 23, 2008  
Niles City Council Chambers  
3:00 P.M.

Policy Members Present:	Chuck Collins, Berrien County Road Commission Dick Fintze, Four Flags Chamber, BCPC Darrell Harden, MDOT, Southwest Region Debbie Johnson, Cass County Commissioner Ray Lenze, MDOT Planning Johnie Rodebush, Cass County Commissioner Don Ryman, Berrien County Commissioner Richard Cooper, Niles Township Jane Mitchell, Buchanan Township Georgia Boggs, Niles City Council Paul Boggs, Milton Township Cliff Poehlman, Cass County Road Commission John Pleveich, Niles Dial-A-Ride
Policy Members Absent:	John Brielmaier, Ontwa Township Supervisor Fred Featherly, MDOT UPTRAN Richard Gerbeth, Milton Township Supervisor Sarah Koepke, Federal Highway Administration John LaMore, Berrien County Commissioner Mary Beth McAdams, MACOG (ex-officio) Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Jessica Mitchell, MACOG (ex-officio) Meg Mullendore, City of Buchanan Paul South, MDOT Coloma TSC Sarah Woolcock, MDOT Coloma TSC Mike Sutherland, Howard Township Art Reed, Berrien County Planning Commission William Myers, Niles Charter Township
SWMPC Staff Present:	Kelly Getman-Dissette Nickolas Musson
Others Present:	Erin Kercheval, MDOT Coloma TSC

**1. Call to Order & Introductions**

- Chairman Fintze called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Minutes**

- *Motion by Rodebush, supported by Pleveich, to approve the minutes of the July 22, 2008 meeting. Motion approved.*

**4. Staff Report**

- **November 13 Trail Workshop** – SWMPC is organizing a half day trails workshop, to be held on November 13, 2008 from 1-4:00 PM at the Thornapple Township Emergency Services Building. Workshop topics include state/local funding sources, urban/rural trail development, promotion of trails, water trail development,

trail maintenance and trail vision and planning. There will be a Paul Henry walking tour following the workshop.

- **MARP/MWHSRA (rail) meeting** – Musson attended the August 16, 2008 Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers (MARP) meeting, where guest speaker Rich Harnish, Midwest High Speed Rail Association, presented on high speed rail in the Midwest. Harnish used the high speed rail system in Europe as an example of what Berrien County’s rail system could be. Harnish discussed barriers and opportunities to make high speed rail a reality in Berrien County. Some things that NATS could do to help the cause include:
  - Advocating for high speed rail and speak with legislators.
  - Considering the resulting needs if the number of trains is increased.

## 5. New Business

- **Network Deficiencies** – Getman-Dissette explained that a subcommittee met to review deficiencies (congested areas) that resulted from the travel demand model. Subcommittee members determined whether or not they agreed with the deficiency, what was the likely cause of the deficiency, and what, if anything should be done to resolve the issue. In addition, members discussed whether or not there were deficient areas that were missed by the model. Findings of the subcommittee were distributed. The deficiencies represent 24 hour traffic volume averages and they do not take into account peak hour congestion, which is something that we will likely do for the next model. In addition, the model does not consider problematic intersections. Intersections of interest should be identified and studied separately. Committee members reviewed and discussed the deficiencies, which will be included in the LRP. Committee expressed concern about 3<sup>rd</sup> St. from US-12 to Bell. There is an intersection problem at US-12. There was also discussion about United Federal Dr., across from WalMart, as well as difficulty turning out of the SMC Niles campus.
- **Non-motorized facilities for LRP** - Getman-Dissette distributed the local non-motorized information contained in the 2004 LRP as well as a non-motorized facility update survey. Committee members were asked to begin working on the survey. During the next month, SWMPC staff will follow up with each road agency/local unit of government to obtain updated information for the 2009 LRP. Anyone who would like to meet in person should contact Getman-Dissette.
- **2009 Meeting Dates** - The Policy typically meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at 3:00 p.m. at the Niles City Council Chambers. Due to holidays, November and December meetings will be moved to the third Tuesday. *A motion was made by Johnson, supported by Rodebush, to approve the remaining calendar year 2008 and calendar year 2009 meeting dates. Motion approved.*
- **MDOT Financial Presentation** - Lenze gave a presentation on the federal and state transportation financial difficulties. In addition to the federal insolvency, the state and federal governments are facing funding shortfalls. Even if federal funding levels are corrected, the state will be unable to match federal dollars beginning in 2010. A state Transportation Funding Taskforce was formed to identify solutions to the transportation funding shortfalls, and a report to the legislature is due October 31. In addition, it is important for locals to contact the state Transportation Commission, as well as their state representatives, to explain what transportation funding cuts mean to their communities. At the MPO level, it is important to identify local revenue gaps, identify local projects that are coordinated with trunk line projects, and prioritize local projects. MPOs will be notified of their FY 2009 funding reductions in the coming weeks.
- **Niles Township Trails**- Niles Township is collaborating with the City of Niles as well as relevant local units of government in Indiana extend a trail that would connect the City to the trail system in South Bend. A couple of different routes are proposed, and safety in crossing roads such as US-12 is a primary concern.

## 6. Old Business

- None

## 7. Public Comment

- None

## 8. Privilege of the Floor

- Johnson inquired about steps taken to address unwanted activity at the abandoned East Gate Shopping Center. Myers noted that some “squatters” were arrested additional law enforcement is needed to patrol the grounds.
- Lenze requested that an amendment involving the US-31 projects be made to the FY 2008-11 TIP. The US-31 projects (FY 2009 and 2010) have increased slightly in cost, but the primary reason for the amendment is to

separate the preliminary engineering (PE) phases from the construction phases because the project costs exceed \$5 million. In addition, both projects will now be completed in the 2009 FY. *A motion was made by Rodebush, supported by Pleveich, to amend the FY 2008-2011 TIP to separate the preliminary engineering (PE) phases from the construction phases of the FY 2009 and 2010 US-31 projects (JN 50757 and JN 87343, respectively) because both projects cost more than \$5 million, to adjust the project totals to reflect the latest information from MDOT, and to list all projects in FY 2009. Project totals are adjusted as follows:*

- *US-31 NB, JN 50757, construction phase: \$7,700,000 state BI06 funds and \$7,700,000 total funding*
- *US-31 NB, JN 50757, PE phase: \$700,000 state M funds and \$700,000 total funding*
- *US-31 SB, JN 87343, construction phase: \$5,524,000 federal NHS funds, \$1,165,000 state M funds, and \$6,890,000 total funding*
- *US-31 SB, JN 87343, PE phase: \$480,866 state M funds and \$480,866 total funding*

*Motion approved.*

## **9. Adjournment**

- *The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 pm.*
- *The next meeting is October 28, 2008 at 3:00 P.M.*

Minutes compiled by: Nickolas Musson/Kelly Getman-Dissette, Transportation Planners, 09/24/08