

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

MINUTES

December 15, 2009

Niles City Council Chambers

3:00 P.M.

Policy Members Present:	Paul Boggs, Milton Township Chuck Collins, Berrien County Road Commission Irving Frost, Howard Township Darrell Harden, MDOT, Southwest Region Debbie Johnson, Cass County Commissioner Joseph Kring, Bertrand Township John LaMore, Berrien County Commissioner Ray Lenze, MDOT Planning John Plevich, Niles Dial-A-Ride Cliff Poehlman, Cass County Road Commission Johnie Rodebush, Cass County Commissioner Don Ryman, Berrien County Commissioner Tracy Vines, Berrien County Planning Commission Sarah Woolcock, MDOT Coloma TSC
Policy Members Absent:	Georgia Boggs, Niles City Council Richard Cooper, Niles Township John Egelhaaf, SWMPC (ex-officio) Dick Fintze, Four Flags Chamber Jim Kidwell, Niles Charter Township Stewart McKenzie, FTA (ex-officio) Jane Mitchell, Buchanan Township Jessica Mitchell, MACOG (ex-officio) John Monaghan, Village of Edwardsburg Meg Mullendore, City of Buchanan Sandra Naugle, City of Niles Finance Office Helen Parsons, Ontwa Township Paul South, MDOT Coloma TSC Sarah Van Buren, FHWA –Michigan Division (ex-officio)
SWMPC Staff Present:	Nickolas Musson Anna Rahtz
Others Present:	Jason Auvil, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Melinda Michael, Four Flags Area Council on Tourism

1. Call to Order

- Chairman Rodebush called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M. and led all attendees in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Minutes

- *Motion by Vines, supported by Johnson, to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2009 Policy Committee meeting. Motion approved.*

3. Staff Report

- **MTPA question regarding distribution of federal funds**
 - Rahtz announced that at the last Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MTPA) meeting, Marsha Small from MDOT (Michigan Department of Transportation) had asked if any local agencies had suggestions for how federal transportation funding could be reformulated and distributed better. Any suggestions will be passed on to Marsha Small.
- **2009 Traffic Counts**
 - Musson gave a summary of the 2009 traffic count activities completed. Musson reported that traffic counts were taken until early December when it began snowing, and will be resumed in March or April. In 2009, 250 traffic counts were submitted, and 190 were completed. 15 HPMS (Highway Performance Monitoring System) counts were also completed. A link to a portal of traffic count information is available on the SWMPC website. The portal has downloadable pdf documents for every traffic count.
 - Vines commented that she had tried to access traffic count information on the website but was not able to understand the pdf document. She was concerned that others who may try to access the information, such as township employees, will not be able to understand the data either, and asked for an example "cheat sheet" on the website as well as a presentation at the next meeting explaining how to read the pdf. Musson agreed to prepare a "cheat sheet" handout with an example and present it at the next meeting.

4. Old Business

- **By-law change**
 - Musson announced that since SWMPC and the Pokagon Band have different population numbers for the tribe (because the tribe has internal data that differs from Census data), the numbers need to be resolved before the proposal is made before the tribal council to add Pokagon as a voting member of NATS. The total population of a jurisdiction goes into a formula to determine its membership dues for the MPO. Musson stated that he would bring the issue back up on the agenda under Old Business at a future meeting when it has been resolved. *Motion by Vines, supported by Poehlman, to table the by-law change until a population number for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians is agreed upon that is acceptable to both parties (the Band and the SWMPC). Motion approved.*
- **Transportation importance survey and project ranking system**
 - Rahtz presented the revised survey, along with a display poster, a handout explaining how the survey results can be used to influence TIP project selection, and a public outreach plan/schedule for the implementation of the survey.
 - Woolcock explained that in the TwinCATS survey results, a lot of respondents had rated every item as the highest possible score, which invalidates their responses (the survey is meant to prioritize the items against one another). Rahtz stated that because of this, the TAC had voted to use the force-ranking system. The Policy Committee members agreed that this would be the better method. Collins stated that because the TwinCATS survey contained the same eight "goal areas" as the NATS survey, the TwinCATS and NATS survey results could be compared for accuracy.
 - Rahtz stated that the TAC had voted to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the transportation importance survey, with the alteration from a 1-5 scale to a force-ranking system.
 - Rahtz stated that the TAC had voted to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the survey display poster, with the addition of a sentence in Spanish explaining that Spanish

versions of the survey are available.

- o Rahtz stated that the TAC had voted to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the project ranking system, with the note that "TwinCATS" at the bottom of the ranking system handout should say "NATS."
- o Rahtz stated that the TAC had voted to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the public outreach plan/schedule, with two amendments: 1) the survey will be translated into Spanish but not Arabic; 2) the decision of where and when to hold the TIP project selection subcommittee meeting will be left up to the subcommittee members.
- o *Motion by Woolcock, supported by Lamore, to approved all four above-named documents with the revisions supplied by the Technical Advisory Committee. Motion approved.*

5. New Business

• American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Updates

- o Musson and Lenze explained the important dates in the statewide redistribution process for unused stimulus funds.
 - **December 30, 2009** – All projects already approved in the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) for ARRA funds must have their GI (grade inspection) packages submitted to MDOT.
 - **January 8, 2010** – The remaining ARRA funding within the State of Michigan will be redistributed to the regions.
 - **January 15, 2010** – GI packages must be submitted for any project using the redistributed funds.
- o Any project using the redistributed funds must have a total project cost of at least \$100,000. MPOs (metropolitan planning organizations) must have a prioritized list of projects ready and in the TIP to use the redistributed funds.
- o It was decided that since the Berrien County Road Commission cannot make the local match to utilize its STP (Surface Transportation Program) funds for the resurfacing of Stateline Road and Third Street in fiscal year 2010, this project will be the next in line for ARRA funds if they become available. The total project cost is \$590,000. ARRA funding does not require a local match. *Motion by LaMore, supported by Poehlman, to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the resurfacing of Stateline Road and Third Street as the highest priority project to receive redistributed ARRA funds. Motion approved.*

• TIP Amendments

- o **Berrien County Road Commission**
 - Musson stated that the BCRC's amendments are being **tabled** until information is received on whether BCRC can use remaining ARRA funding for the resurfacing of Stateline Road and Third Street.
 - Lamore commented that this project was on the TIP three years ago and was postponed for other projects, and so he is in agreement with making it the "first-priority project" at this point. Vines also commented that it is important to use the 100% federal ARRA funding for this project instead of changing the project because Stateline Road and Third Street desperately need drainage work.
- o **Cass County Road Commission**
 - The 2011 project called Gumwood Road, for the resurfacing of Gumwood Road from Bertrand Road to US-12 is being **deleted**.
 - Ryman asked why the project is being deleted, and Musson responded that the reason is because the project is already finished, so it is no longer a 2011 project.
 - *Motion by Frost, supported by Woolcock, to approve the amendment to the FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program to delete the above-named project. Motion approved.*

- **Niles Dial a Ride**
 - Niles Dial a Ride became aware that they are allowed to use 10% of ARRA funding for operating costs, which is greatly needed. Thus, the 2009 project called Facility Rehabilitation is being reduced from \$380,402 to \$339,402. Musson stated that this cannot be officially changed on the 2009 TIP, but he wanted to explain that this is where the money is coming from to add the new project in FY 2010.
 - A 2010 project is being **added** called "Public Transportation Operations" in the amount of \$41,000 (from ARRA funding) for public transportation operations. *Motion by Woolcock, supported by Harden, to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the amendment to the FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program to add the above-named project.*
 - Discussion: Lamore asked what was involved with "Public Transportation Operations," and Plevich explained that it includes all non-capital expenditures such as fuel, labor, utilities, and anything else involved with day-to-day operations. He explained that almost all state and federal transit funding only covers capital costs, and so day-to-day operations have to be covered by rider fares and local contributions. This has caused NDAR to severely cut back its staff hours. *Motion approved.*
 - Rahtz pointed out that all new projects being added to the TIP should have a new project application being turned in so that the projects can be run through the proper evaluation before being voted on.

- **CMAQ Call for Projects Meeting**
 - Musson announced that the Call for Projects meeting for the 2012-2014 CMAQ projects will be held on February 3, 2010 at 1:00pm at the Berrien County Road Commission. He stated that any new project ideas to reduce congestion and improve air quality are welcome at the meeting.

6. Public Comment

- None

7. Privilege of the Floor

- Lamore stated that he found a book from the mid-1800s that contains an index of all road projects completed in Niles Township between 1831 and 1853. He has scanned in the book, and the original is being kept in Niles Township. Ryman suggested donating it to the Berrien County Historical Association.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Vines to dismiss the meeting. Motion approved.

- The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 P.M. The next meeting is December 15, 2009 at 3:00 P.M.

Minutes compiled by: Anna Rahtz and Nickolas Musson, Transportation Planners, 12/16/09