

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
Policy Committee

MINUTES

Tuesday, April 26, 2011
Niles City Council Chambers
3:00 P.M.

Policy Members Present:	Georgia Boggs, City of Niles Chuck Collins, Berrien County Road Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Irving Frost, Howard Township Darrell Harden, MDOT, Southwest Region Erin Kercheval, MDOT – Coloma TSC Joseph Kring, Bertrand Township Don Kronewitter, Milton Township John LaMore, Berrien County Commissioner Ray Lenze, MDOT Planning Dale Lowe, Cass County Commissioner Jane Mitchell, Buchanan Township Zach Perkins, Berrien County Commissioner Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce John Plevich, Niles Dial-A-Ride Cliff Poehlman, Cass County Road Commission Johnie Rodebush, Cass County Commissioner Don Ryman, City of Buchanan Rachael Tupica, Federal Highway Administration (ex-officio) Tracy Vines, Berrien County Planning Commission
Policy Members Absent:	Jason Auvil, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Betty Arndt, City of Niles Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg John Egelhaaf, SWMPC (ex-officio) Stewart McKenzie, FTA (ex-officio) Jessica Mitchell, MACOG (ex-officio) Representative, Buchanan Dial-a-Ride Representative, Ontwa Township
SWMPC Staff Present:	Suzann Flowers Anna Rahtz Trevor Thomas
Others Present:	Sue Kronewitter, Milton Township resident

1. Call to Order & Introductions

- Chairman LaMore called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M. and led the group in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Chairman LaMore led the group in introductions.

2. Minutes

- *Motion by Vines, seconded by Rodebush, to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2011*

Policy Committee meeting. Motion approved unanimously with no corrections.

- There were questions about the amounts shown for the Niles Dial-A-Ride Transit TIP amendments not matching the amounts that were given at the meeting. Rahtz and Pleveich noted that the TIP amendment amounts had come from Kelly Getman-Dissette and were correct to her knowledge. There had been an error on the TIP amendment handout during the meeting.

3. Staff Report

• Transportation and Environment Workshop – Update

- Thomas stated that 50 people had attended the workshop at Andrews University, and had learned about how transportation projects can be coordinated with watershed planning to try to prevent problems like flooding deteriorating the pavement or runoff from the pavement impacting the water quality. He mentioned that the presentations from the workshop are available on the SWMPC website (www.swmpc.org/trans_water.asp).
- Collins noted that the information from the workshop had influenced a decision made by the drain commissioner regarding a drain in Oronoko Township the next day after the workshop. The design was changed to include on-site retention.
- Poehlman noted that he had reported on the workshop to the Cass County Road Commission. He stated that some of the designs shown in Ann Arbor were too expensive and elaborate to be practical in this area, but that absorptive blacktop could be beneficial in some places. It was added that such blacktop does not have to be plowed. It was noted that it was used at Panera Bread, and could be applied in large new developments such as colleges with large expanses of blacktop in their parking lots.

• Upcoming Workshops

- Rahtz encouraged those present to attend an upcoming workshop on Complete Streets being put on by MSU Extension in Benton Harbor on May 3rd, which would cover what municipalities need to know about the statewide complete streets legislation and how to get started on a community complete streets policy.
- Rahtz noted that the SWMPC/WMTGA trails workshop series has been cancelled due to lack of attendance.
- Rahtz announced that the Berrien County Transit Consolidation Feasibility Study will kick off with the consultant on June 1, 2011 at Michigan Works!.

• Non-motorized Updates

- Flowers gave an update on the workshop she had attended in Kalamazoo on April 19th about how to design streets in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. She emphasized what a good learning experience it was to go out in a wheelchair and understand how the details of design affect people with disabilities. She offered to share the powerpoints and other materials with the committee if they were interested, and passed around a guidebook.
- Flowers announced that SWMPC has been encouraging communities throughout Southwest Michigan to pass resolutions in support of Bike to Work Week, May 16th through May 20th. She stated that the Van Buren County Road Commission and the Cass County Road Commission have passed the resolution, and she passed out a sample copy. She noted that it is a simple way to show support of other modes of transportation besides cars.

- Ryman noted that he had seen a gentleman who is the head of the Three Oaks Spokes bicycle group riding down US-12, and added that most people would not feel comfortable riding on highways like US-12 no matter how much bicycling is promoted.
- Sue Kronewitter added that a bicycling club from the South Bend area regularly comes up to Milton Township and rides on busy roads, taking up the whole lane. She added that it would be a good idea for future bicycling events to inform municipalities when a large number of cyclists will be on their roads.
- Flowers responded that she has contacted every municipality regarding Bike to Work Week, and that she had been made aware of the large number of riders in Milton Township. She noted that it is legal for the cyclists to ride two abreast in the road.
- Rodebush noted that many children do not seem to know which side of the road to ride on. Flowers responded that she has been administering a Bicycle Safety program for the past four years, in which she holds bicycle safety training events for children and parents in six or seven communities throughout the three-county area every summer. She instructs them to wear a helmet and reflective gear and to ride on the right side of the road.
- Ryman noted that bicyclists are not paying a gas tax, and LaMore responded that a lot of bicyclists also have cars and thus are contributing to the funding of the roads.
- Collins noted that bicyclists visiting a community should be spending money in that community. Rahtz responded that Kim Gallagher, another planner at SWMPC, operates the US-12 Heritage Route program, and frequently promotes businesses in communities along US-12 to travelers using that corridor, including bicyclists.
- Thomas noted that an economic impact report recently released by the Rails to Trails Conservancy has shown large economic benefits for retailers near recreational bike routes.

4. Old Business

- None

5. New Business

• TIP Amendments

○ Buchanan Dial-A-Ride Transit

- Add in FY 2011, the project named Rural Operating funds for transit operations in the Buchanan area. Federal cost is \$24,115 (5311 funds).
- Add in FY 2012, the project named Rural Operating funds for transit operations in the Buchanan area. Federal cost is \$22,449 (5311 funds).
- *Rahtz clarified that Buchanan had this funding before; she had just received instructions from FTA that they need to start being included in the Transportation Improvement Program.*
- *Motion by Rodebush, seconded by Vines, to approve the addition of the above two Buchanan Dial-A-Ride Transit projects into the FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program, pending the confirmation that the correct amount of local match is shown. Motion approved unanimously.*

○ Cass County Road Commission

- Modify in FY 2011, the project named Redfield St and Bertrand Rd for resurfacing from Berrien County line to Ironwood Rd. Federal cost is modified from \$77,000

- (STU) to \$56,247 (STU) and county cost is modified from \$19,000 to \$12,473.
- Modify in FY 2011, the project named Redfield St for resurfacing from Kline Rd to Conrad Rd. Federal cost is modified from \$68,000 (STU) to \$65,457 (STU) and county cost is modified from \$17,000 to \$14,515.
- Modify in FY 2011, the project named Pine Lake St for resurfacing from M-60 to Anderson Rd. Federal cost is modified from \$65,577 (STU) to \$63,111 (STU) and county cost is modified from \$19,423 to \$13,995.
- Modify in FY 2011, the project named Beebe Rd for resurfacing from Runkle St to Leet Rd. Federal cost is modified from \$68,000 to \$60,849 (STU) and county cost is modified from \$17,000 to \$13,493.
- *Motion by Vines, seconded by Rodebush, to approve the modification of the above Cass County projects in the FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program. Motion approved unanimously.*
- **Michigan Department of Transportation**
 - Add in FY 2011, the project named US-12 for resurfacing from M-60 to Edwardsburg. Federal cost is \$5,811,350 (ST) and state cost is \$1,288,650.
 - Add in FY 2011, the project named US-12 for acquiring right of way. Federal cost is \$4,093 (ST) and state cost is \$907.
 - Add in FY 2011, the project named M-139 for bridge replacement of Main Street bridge over St. Joseph River. Sub phase. Federal cost is \$387,280 (BRT) and state cost is \$96,820.
 - Add in FY 2011, the project named M-139 for bridge replacement of Main Street bridge over St. Joseph River. Preliminary Engineering phase. Federal cost is \$160,000 (BRT) and state cost is \$40,000.
 - Add in FY 2011, the project named M-60 for weigh station at US-12 interchange. Federal cost is \$45,018 (ST) and state cost is \$9,982.
 - *Harden and Kercheval explained that this project is really construction of a trench with a concrete pad where police officers who pull over trucks for inspection can set their scales to weigh each axle of the truck, rather than having to put it up on blocks. This will make it more efficient for the law enforcement officers and the truck drivers to do their jobs.*
 - Add in FY 2011, the project named M-51 for slope stabilization, shoulder reconstruction, guardrail replacement, and other restore and rehabilitate work on M-51 near Pucker Street. Federal cost is \$1,096,790 (ST) and state cost is \$243,210.
 - *Vines asked whether this would address the long-term flooding problems on the road. Kercheval and Harden responded that the project involved more permanent slope stabilization, not just road work, and that the fix would be expected to last a long time.*
 - Modify year from 2012 to 2011, the project named M-139 for bridge replacement over Dowagiac River near north limit of Niles. Federal cost is modified from \$1,869,568 to \$1,963,594 (BRT) and state cost is modified from \$467,392 to \$490,899. Total project cost is modified from \$2,496,604 to \$2,454,493.
 - *Lenze asked whether the construction phase of the M-139 bridge replacement over the St. Joseph River is in the TIP, and Harden replied that it is in the TIP in FY 2013, for FY 2014 construction.*
 - Modify in FY 2013, the project named M-139 for bridge replacement of the Main Street bridge over the St. Joseph River, construction phase. Federal cost is modified

from \$4,453,720 (BRT) to \$4,531,200 (BRT), and state cost is modified from \$1,113,430 to \$1,132,800.

- *Motion by Vines, seconded by Personette, to approve the above MDOT amendments in the FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program. Motion approved unanimously.*
- Boggs followed up on the concern she had raised at the previous meeting about unsafe passing on US-12 near Gumwood. She noted that school buses often turned out of Gumwood onto US-12 and it could be dangerous if cars were passing them without being able to see oncoming traffic as they came over the hill.
- Kercheval responded that the traffic safety engineer, Gary Loyola, had looked at the crash data for that area, and no crashes had occurred due to the road conditions. They had all been the fault of the driver or weather-related. However, the traffic safety engineer is looking into options for different striping or signage when the roadwork is done there this fall. He had not told her what the exact plan would be yet.
- Collins suggested giving his phone number to Boggs so they could talk in more detail, and suggested that Kercheval give further updates at the future meetings.

- **Rail letters**

- Rahtz passed out two draft letters that staff are working on in coordination with the Westrain Coalition. She noted that each agency on Westrain is seeking board approval for signing off on the letters. She stated that the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study and the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission board have already signed off on the letters, and that she was also hoping for a signature from NATS.
- She passed out the first letter, which is to MDOT in response to their draft statewide rail plan, which shows the realignment of the Pere Marquette Amtrak line through Kalamazoo. It documents the communications with MDOT regarding the realignment, emphasizes the importance of the St. Joseph and Bangor Pere Marquette stops, and urges MDOT to reopen the alternatives study of the Pere Marquette line using intensive stakeholder engagement. Rahtz noted that although the Pere Marquette route does not stop in the NATS area, the letter argues for its importance to the regional economy.
- *Motion by Vines, seconded by Personette, to approve signing the letter. Motion approved unanimously.*
- Rahtz passed out the second letter, which is to Congressman Upton and other legislators emphasizing the importance of investing in rail and public transit for economic development.
- *Motion by Vines, seconded by Rodebush, to approve signing the letter. Motion approved unanimously.*

- **2010 Census Data**

- Thomas presented on the changes in population in NATS communities seen from the 2000 to 2010 Census.
- Thomas noted that some variables such as income and household vehicle ownership are available from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey five-year data; they are not going to be a part of the decennial census anymore.
- Collins asked whether the changes would affect redistricting, and LaMore responded that the county commissioners had had a meeting about that topic that morning. His district had gained people, and so some neighborhoods would be redistributed to Perkins' district.

- **Travel Demand Model data**
 - Thomas reminded the committee that he had requested corrections on roadway information for the travel demand model, such as number of lanes and signal locations. He thanked anyone who had given him information and asked anyone who hadn't to get that to him by the end of the month.
- **Transit Consolidation Feasibility study – consultant selection**
 - Rahtz passed out a handout explaining the selection committee's process and reasoning behind choosing KFH to conduct the Berrien County Transit Consolidation Feasibility Study.
 - It was asked where the funding was coming from to pay the consultant, and Rahtz responded that it was a Statewide Planning & Research grant through MDOT, with local match from the Consortium 4 Community Development in Benton Harbor.
 - Vines noted that at the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission board meeting, Dick Stauffer had stated that he had sat on the selection committee and that KFH Group had been well above the rest as far as all of their team members' qualifications. Rahtz added that they had written the national research publications on transit coordination and consolidation best practices that the other consultants use.
 - *Motion by Gruchot, seconded by Getman-Dissette, to approve the selection of KFH to conduct the Berrien County Transit Consolidation Feasibility Study. Motion approved unanimously.*
- **Unified Work Program development**
 - Rahtz announced that SWMPC is beginning to develop the Unified Work Program, or schedule of planning tasks, for fiscal year 2012. The draft will be presented for approval by the committees at the June meeting. She reminded the committees to let her know as soon as possible if there is anything that she should include in the UWP.

6. Public Comment

- None

7. Privilege of the Floor

- Pleveich stated that Niles Dial-A-Ride will be holding public meetings on April 27th regarding their transit development plan. The meetings will be held at 10:00am at the Niles City Council Chambers and at 6:00pm at Niles High School, room 62. He passed out flyers with the web address for the survey that is being collected for the study, which is <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/nilespublicsurvey>.
- Vines noted that Thomas had been featured in an article in the Herald Palladium, and thanked the staff for bringing more exposure to what the group is doing. Rahtz added that the article is available at www.swmpc.org, under the About Us tab under In the News. LaMore asked if she could bring hard copies to the next meeting.
- Harden stated that he will be attending the first meeting of the governor's Complete Streets Advisory Council in Lansing on April 27th. These meetings are a way for MDOT to figure out its direction with implementing the statewide complete streets legislation.

8. Adjournment: 4:07 P.M.

- The next meeting is **June 28, 2011 at 3:00 P.M.**

Minutes compiled by: Anna Rahtz, Transportation Planner, 4/27/11