

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

MINUTES

July 27, 2010

Niles City Council Chambers

3:00 P.M.

Policy Members Present:	Betty Arndt, City of Niles Jason Auvil, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Paul Boggs, Milton Township Chuck Collins, Berrien County Road Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Township 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 Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce Cliff Poehlman, Cass County Road Commission Don Ryman, Berrien County Commissioner Paul South, MDOT – Coloma TSC Tracy Vines, Berrien County Planning Commission
Policy Members Absent:	Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg John Egelhaaf, SWMPC (ex-officio) Jim Kidwell, Niles Charter Township Stewart McKenzie, FTA (ex-officio) Jane Mitchell, Buchanan Township Jessica Mitchell, MACOG (ex-officio) Meg Mullendore, City of Buchanan John Pleveich, Niles Dial-A-Ride Johnie Rodebush, Cass County Commissioner Rachael Tupica, Federal Highway Administration (ex-officio) Representative, Buchanan Dial-a-Ride Representative, Ontwa Township
SWMPC Staff Present:	Anna Rahtz Trevor Thomas
Others Present:	Melinda Michael, Four Flags Area Council on Tourism

1. Call to Order& Introductions

- Vice-chair LaMore called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M. and led the group in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Rahtz announced that Personette is now the appointed representative for the Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce.

2. Minutes

- *Motion by Poehlman, seconded by Vines, to approve the minutes of the June 22, 2010 Policy Committee meeting. Motion approved.*

3. Staff Report

• **Michigan Transportation Planning Association Conference**

- Thomas gave a summary of the topics that the staff had learned about at the conference, and mentioned that the powerpoints/notes can be made available to anyone who is interested in any of the particular sessions.
- LaMore asked the difference between high speed rail and light rail, and the committee discussed that light rail is commuter-type rail that typically runs in a street right of way.
- Vines asked if anything had been brought up at the conference about sinkholes causing fatalities of truck drivers. Harden suggested that this would be more of an engineering issue than planning. The group discussed that these sinkholes have been caused by getting large amounts of rain at one time that cannot be handled by the drainage systems along the roadways.
- Personette asked what the status is of the high speed rail between Chicago and Detroit. Rahtz responded that the frequency of that Amtrak line was recently increased, and that MDOT is currently using a federal high speed rail grant awarded earlier this year to work on increasing the speed of that line.
- The committee discussed the problems of: conflicting freight and passenger rail needs; and the train bottleneck in Northern Indiana leading into Chicago. Rahtz added that the State of Indiana also was awarded a federal high speed rail grant to add side tracks and reduce the congestion in the Northern Indiana rail corridor.
- Rahtz noted that she could gather more details and present more information about it at a future meeting.

• **PASER Rating update**

- Thomas mentioned that the Cass County and Berrien County road ratings are completed and the Van Buren County rating is in progress July 26-30. The ratings are being done on the federal aid eligible roads in the northern half of each county.

• **TIP & UWP submission**

- Rahtz announced that the Transportation Improvement Program and Unified Work Program had been approved by the SWMPC Board of Commissioners and submitted to MDOT. She stated that both final documents are available on the Transportation Documents page under the NATS section of the SWMPC website, and that approval by MDOT can be expected by October 1, 2010.

4. Old Business

- None.

5. New Business

• **TIP Amendments (to FY 2008-2011 TIP)**

○ **Administrative Modification**

- Modify in FY 2010, the project named Lakeshore Drive. The federal cost was modified from \$75,200 to \$68,475 and the county cost was modified from \$18,800 to \$17,125 to reflect cost savings.

○ **Project to Use Remaining ARRA and STUL funds**

- Rahtz explained that there is \$66,000 of ARRA money remaining to be used in the South Bend urbanized area, as well as \$6,725 of STUL money from bid savings from the above Lakeshore Drive project. She explained that the Berrien County Road Commission and the Cass County Road Commission had each submitted a project to use the entire amount, and

that the Technical Advisory Committee had voted to add the BCRC project. The committee had discussed the traffic counts, road ratings, and length of both projects. Based on the fact that BCRC had three projects in FY 2010 and CCRC had six (because of projects BCRC had to give up for lack of local match availability), the committee had decided the funds should go to BCRC.

- Add in FY 2010, the project named Pucker St and Dayton Rd to resurface 4.05 miles on Pucker St (Ullery to Niles Twp Line) and Dayton (Buffalo to State Line). Project description is "Seal coat to preserve the pavement." Phase is CON. Federal amount is \$72,993 (\$66,268 ARUL and \$6,725 STUL). County cost is \$1,681, and total cost is \$74,674.
- *Motion by Collins, seconded by Vines, to amend the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program to add the above BCRC project.*
- *Discussion:* Lamore asked if that money could be used for the drainage work on South Third Street in Niles Township, which BCRC had had to give up due to lack of local match funds. Several committee members responded that this was not feasible with this particular pot of money because of the timing; the Third Street project had already been completed.
- *Motion approved (16-1).*

- **Draft Public Participation Plan**

- Rahtz stated that the SWMPC Transportation Public Participation Plan has to be revised every four years, and so is due for revision in FY 2010. After the approval of the draft, there is a 45-day public comment period, and once all public comments are taken into consideration, the final draft can be approved by the TAC and Policy committee, and then it goes to the full SWMPC.
- Rahtz asked if everyone had read the document and if there were any questions about it, and stated that the staff were hoping for a motion to approve the draft document.
- Rahtz noted that Collins had submitted some grammatical corrections.
- Johnson stated that she had read through the document and had been impressed by it.
- *Motion by Vines, seconded by Johnson, to approve the draft of the Transportation Public Participation Plan, with the addition of Collins' grammatical corrections.*
- *Discussion* Collins asked about the irregular boundaries on the map of the South Bend Urbanized Area. Several committee members commented that the map was too small and hard to read, and the colors needed to be clearer. Thomas responded that he would update the map.
- *Motion approved.*
- The committee requested that Rahtz keep them informed on the public comments that are received, and she responded that she would.

6. Public Comment

- Betty Arndt stated that she will now be representing the Niles City Council because Rahtz had informed the City that they were missing a representative.

7. Privilege of the Floor

- **HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant**

- Thomas announced that the SWMPC is applying for a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. This grant would allow SWMPC to integrate transportation planning, economic development, and environmental planning while adding new elements like housing, climate change planning, and scenario planning. Individual NATS member agencies will be more heavily involved with data gathering and technical expertise.
- Thomas mentioned that the Technical Advisory Committee had passed a motion in support of the grant, and would be providing a letter of support signed by the chair.
- *Motion by Vines, seconded by Ryman, to approve that Chairman Rodebush sign a letter of support on behalf of the NATS Policy Committee for the grant. Motion approved.*
- Personette asked what types of nonprofit organizations can support the grant, and Rahtz responded that any organization can support it. Personette added that she would distribute the

summary to other nonprofits that she works with.

- Collins stated that he had seen a Niles Dial-a-Ride bus stopped in the street waiting for a passenger to come outside, and that it had been unsafe to pass the bus. Additionally, the bus had used its hazard lights. Collins asked Rahtz to pass along the suggestion to Niles Dial-a-Ride that on future bus purchases they include a light or electronic sign on the rear of the bus that indicates when passengers are loading and unloading.
- Johnson mentioned that she had received several complaints from constituents about the unsafe conditions on Barron Lake Road at Corn Road in Cass County, caused by drivers passing other drivers near the intersection. She suggested that the county road commission change a small segment near the intersection to "No Passing."
- Another committee member mentioned that the intersection of M-60 and Daly Road is in need of a traffic light, as it has no visibility for turning. It was mentioned that engineering work may need to be done to determine whether the intersection should be changed to 90 degrees.
- Another committee member mentioned that Airport Road and South Third Street have loose stones caused by the chip and seal work. South commented that loose stones are the negative outcome of chip and seal work, which is why MDOT no longer does it.
- Vines noted that the drainage on South Third Street between Fulkerson and Bertrand is still an issue. Rahtz noted that she had discussed with Vines the fact that there could be other grant funding sources available for alternative flood prevention / drainage work, such as wetland restoration. The Berrien County Drain Commission and the Township would have to take the lead on such a project. Cooper mentioned that he had been in conversations with the county regarding the issue.
- Boggs noted that he had seen on the news that Calvin Township is levying a millage for roadwork. If the millage does not pass, the Township plans to grind up certain roads and convert them back to gravel.

8. Adjournment

- Vice-chair LaMore adjourned the meeting at 3:50 P.M.
- The next meeting is August 24, 2010 at 3:00 P.M.