

MINUTES
NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
Policy Committee

January 22, 2008
Niles City Council Chambers
3:00 P.M.

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

1. Call to Order & Introductions

- Chairman Fintze called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM.

2. Minutes

- *Motion by Fintze, to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2007 Policy meeting contingent upon the addition of the Bus Replacement table. Motion approved.*

3. Staff Report

- **New Transportation Planner – Nick Musson**

Hello, my name is Nickolas Musson and I am excited to be your new transportation planner. I am from central Wisconsin where I was born and raised. I recently graduated from the University Wisconsin Stevens Point

with majors in Geography, Public Administration and Philosophy. I have minors in Geographic Information Systems and Environmental Studies. I am a member of Association of American Geographers (AAG) and the Wisconsin Land Information Association (WLIA). It is truly an honor to start my career here and to be of service to you.

- **Asset Management Training Session**

Investment Reporting Tool Training Session

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is hosting an investment reporting tool training session on Tuesday March 4 in Lawrence at 9:30 am to noon. This training session is open to all participants in the investment reporting process, such as road agencies, MPOs, regional planning agencies, and contractors for the jurisdiction. This training session will focus on version 2.0 of the online investment reporting tool to be released this month. There will be a live demo where participants can input their feed back and suggest any improvements and ask questions.

Musson stated that if the location does not work he will give you another prior to the March 4th date. Fintze encourages members to attend so that they can gain the necessary knowledge for the committee.

- **MACOG Certification Review** – The Michiana Area council of Governments (MACOG) will be reviewed by the FHWA and FTA on February 11 to 13, 2008. SWMPC is working with MDOT to determine how involved we should be in this process. There is a public meeting that will be held Monday February 11, 2008 from 6 to 7 pm.

Lenze states that because of MACOG we are a MPO because the NATS area overlaps into MACOG. Lenze also stated that what happens at the MACOG certification review will indirectly affect what happens here.

- **TIP/STIP**

The TIP has been submitted, but needs to be approved. This is because MDOT is trying to solve internal TIP problems. This means that nothing is official until the TIP is approved. It is likely that in February we will be working to integrate all the amendments we have into the approved TIP. Musson will be attending TIP training at the end of this month. The TIP should be approved by January 31, 2008.

4. Old Business

- **SE data approval**

The NATS socioeconomic data has been updated and reviewed by Jennifer Osborne and waits approval. Musson explained that we had issues with the numbers for Milton Township and the socioeconomic data was approved contingent upon the verification of the Milton Township numbers.

A motion was made by Lenze, supported by Myers, to recommend approval of the socioeconomic data, contingent upon the attempt confirmation of Milton's Township numbers. Motion approved.

Lenze explained that the new data from the model will be sent to them soon and will need to be verified because it will be approved at the next meeting.

5. New Business

- **Transit Presentation – Kim Gallagher**

Kim gave an overview of transit in Berrien County and Niles Dial A Ride. There are 4 public transit systems in Berrien County providing 36,630 trips per month and over 439,568 trips annually. There is no typical public transit system in Berrien County. Two are small urban areas, while two are in rural areas of the county. They all range in sizes from 3 employees at Buchanan Dial A Ride to 31 employees at the Twin Cities Dial Ride in Benton Harbor. Niles Dial A Ride is considering putting in fixed routes with ¼ mile buffers for route deviation. Pleveich noted that the Niles Dial A Ride coverage area was not correct and pointed out the actual boundary lines. New technology can make the process easier for the customers to understand and easier for

the transit systems to manage their data. The use of technology to get to know your customers and their habits can increase efficiency.

Discussion –

Fintze asked how far away we are from this technology. Gallagher explained that we are not very far. Gallagher also explained that it wouldn't take very many more people to run this technology. Collins mentioned that this technology is already out there and this kind of information can be accessed through a telephone number. Pleveich explained that he used something similar to the technology that Gallagher is talking about and it would take a money and staff, which they don't have. Gallagher stated that the demand for this service is only going to go up. Collins stated that the public has to plan ahead. Johnson gave an example of her grandma who just needs to get out and go some place so they call Dial A Ride. Fintze asked about emergency calls and Pleveich said because of liability reasons they won't transport anyone for emergency purposes.

Gallagher noted the 6% sales tax on fuel does not go to transportation. Niles public input meeting will be held on February 4 at 9:00 AM and February 6 at 6:00 PM at the Niles City Council Chambers.

- **Act 51 Legislative Action: Needs Study**

Transportation Funding Task Force-

A task force is being created in response to the public Act 221 of 2007 to “review the adequacy of surface transportation and aeronautics service provision and finance” in Michigan. This would apply to roads, transit, and aviation.

The Big Issue Is FUNDING!

We are encouraged to put forth our views on funding solutions. We should consider putting together some kind of formal action that identifies our needs, wants and where to get the funding. If any individual or you know of an individual that would like to make a contribution they can submit their name on the governor's website to be part of the citizen advisory committee. The committee is made up of 19 governor appointed citizens comprised of 18 organizations, agencies, associations in transportation, the construction sector and then one member of the general public.

Musson suggested that the members think about our needs, wants and possible funding options for the fuel tax. Fintze explained that Musson should investigate and bring possible solutions to the meeting to discuss. Collins suggested that Musson look to the prior task force about two years ago for more information.

6. Public Comment

- *Fintze questioned whether the millage from Berrien County could be used to help Cass County. Poehlman was going to look into it and see what can be done.*

7. Privilege of the Floor

- *Harden stated that the US 31 business signs are going to be removed. There is a transportation work authorization in works to have them removed. Old 31 is supposed to be renumbered to M139 taking all the way to Niles and Main street. The acceleration lane on east US 12, West River has inadequate geometry and would not be able to be striped because it would have to be lengthened and repaved and there is not enough money to do that. TSC has not heard of Main and Broadway project, but are checking into it.*
- *Discussion - LaMore questioned the timing on the south 11th street. to help with traffic flow. LaMore also explained that there are a lot of accidents at South 11th street with no left turn light. Harden explains that there needs to be a traffic study. LaMore also mentioned that he feels that the 11th street. should be flashing red lights. Harden explained that Michigan doesn't do flashing red or yellow lights anymore.*

Fintze mentioned that the US 12 turn signal lights are still unfamiliar to some people. There is a similar light at 5th and main in Niles that says no right turn on red. Fintze wants to know why there is no right turn on red sign on US 12.

Lamore wants the drains on m-51 state line blue star hwy. vacuumed out.

9. Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 4:35 PM. The next meeting is February 26, 2008 at 3:00 PM.
- *Motion by Johnson, seconded by Pleveich, to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved.*

Minutes compiled by: Nickolas Musson, Transportation Planner, 01/25/08