

Minutes
Twin Cities Area Transportation Study
Policy Committee Meeting
 January 25, 2010
 10:30 A.M.
 Southwest Michigan Regional Airport

POLICY MEMBERS PRESENT:	Robert Judd, City of St. Joseph Ray Lenze, MDOT Planning Bill Purvis, TCATA Lee Scherwitz, SW Michigan Regional Airport Roger Seely, St. Joseph Charter Township Jim Soteriou, Royalton Township Paul South, MDOT Coloma TSC Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township
POLICY MEMBERS ABSENT:	Aaron Anthony, City of Bridgman Mickey Bennett, Sodus Township Bill Brown, NIRPC (ex officio) Bob Burkholz, Berrien County Road Commission John Egelhaaf, SWMPC Tim Fenderbosch, St. Joseph Charter Township Carolyn Fowler, Benton Charter Township John Gast, Lake Charter Township Jason Latham, MDOT Regional Planning Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Debra Panozzo, Berrien County Commission Mark Seaman, Village of Shoreham Representative, Cornerstone Alliance Sarah Van Buren, FHWA (ex officio) Ron Carter, City of Benton Harbor Sarah Woolcock, MDOT Coloma TSC Kevin Wordelman, Berrien County Commission
SWMPC STAFF PRESENT:	Nickolas Musson Anna Rahtz
OTHERS PRESENT:	Ralph Heibutzki, Herald-Palladium Rich Vavra-Musser, Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

1. CALL TO ORDER:

- Chairman Judd called the meeting to order at 10:47 A.M.

2. MINUTES:

- *A motion was made by Scherwitz, seconded by Stauffer, to approve the minutes of the December 21, 2009 Policy Committee meeting, with one correction of a TIP amendment that says "CMAQ" and should say "ARRA." Motion approved.*

3. STAFF REPORT:

• **TIP Applications**

- Musson announced that all TIP new project applications were due January 25, 2010. These would be applications for FY 2014 projects, or any new projects that were not applied for when the FY 2010-2013 TIP was being created.
- He also announced that the TIP project selection meeting will be at Michigan Works! in the Shoreline Room at 2:00pm on Friday, February 19, 2010.
- **"Jobs for Main Street"**
 - Musson also announced that a new economic stimulus package similar to ARRA just passed the

US House of Representatives and is headed to the Senate. The same funding levels as ARRA are anticipated. 50 percent of the funds will have to be contracted within 90 days. The funding could be used to cover engineering costs for the projects that are funded after the first 90 days of the legislation.

- Musson emphasized that although it is not known what will happen with this bill, TwinCATS has to be prepared for it, and so an illustrative list of projects needs to be compiled. This will be done at the TIP project selection committee meeting on February 19th.
- Stauffer asked if non-motorized projects would be eligible for Jobs for Main Street funding, and Dingman responded that yes, anything that is Title 23-eligible (including CMAQ projects) can use JFMS funding.
- Dingman also commented that the House only passed the legislation by four votes, and that so far the Senate has been reluctant to pass it.
- Judd remarked that there is an added complication with the federal treasury being reluctant to release money for current projects.

- **CSS Presentation**

- Rahtz announced that she had met with Paul South and Brad Peterson from MDOT about the Context Sensitive Solutions presentation, which will happen at the March meeting. It will be a joint meeting. It will cover the basics with an example of BL94 and an interactive activity. Brad Peterson would like to know if any of the committee members have any specific questions or topics they would like him to cover.
- South remarked that the joint meeting would begin at 10:00am.

5. **OLD BUSINESS:**

- **Traffic Count Presentation**

- Musson went over a handout explaining how to access traffic count data online, as well as how to interpret the pdf reports.
- Judd asked how annual average daily traffic (AADT) is calculated. Musson replied that the software SWMPC uses takes the average of the days for which the traffic was counted and then factors in some seasonal factors. Lenze remarked that SWMPC does not have true AADT counts because the counts are only collected for one time period out of the year. He said that some regions take four or five counts throughout the year for one geographical point and then normalize the counts.

- **Regional Rail Update**

- Musson announced that since he and Rahtz had not been able to reach Tim Hoeffner at MDOT, they were working on a persuasive letter with John Egelhaaf, which will be circulated and sent to state and federal elected officials for the Pere Marquette area. John is putting together an advocacy group.
- Vavra-Musser (from the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers) commented that there are three issues that need to be addressed:
 1. It needs to be acknowledged that a rail connection between Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo is going to happen. The train from St. Joseph to Chicago has to be addressed separately. The argument should be that because ridership from St. Joseph has increased by six percent in the last six months, it does not make sense to take away rail service from St. Joseph.
 2. The Amtrak Pere Marquette line is not currently funded past June 2010.
 3. There is currently no morning train from Chicago to St. Joseph. Increased frequency of service gives an increased benefit to riders. Another line that added a second train saw an increase in ridership of 71 percent.

- **Preliminary Freight Needs Assessment**

- Rahtz went over a handout explaining the results of data that had been compiled from 230 interviews conducted by Kim Fedison of Berrien County Economic Development and Pat Moody of the Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce. It shows what Berrien County businesses think of their transportation infrastructure, on four criteria: public transportation, local road network condition, interstate highway system condition, and airports. Overall, there were very high opinions on all aspects except public transportation. She clarified that, as Scherwitz had stated at the TAC meeting, the largest industrial base is in Benton Township, not in the City of Benton Harbor.

- Rahtz asked the committee what the next steps should be for studying freight. She mentioned that at the TAC meeting Scherwitz had talked about the importance of keeping the harbor dredged for commercial shipping.
- Rahtz asked Purvis to repeat the remark he had made about transit at the TAC meeting, and he commented that a countywide transit authority would struggle in this economic climate because the bulk of funding for regional transit seems to go to larger urban areas.
- Scherwitz commented that it would be good to have a map of the exact addresses of the businesses that were interviewed, so that the committee members could see if there were any major commercial areas that had been missed by this study.
- South added that a good additional study could be done by going back to the 230 companies that had already been interviewing and asking them where their freight trips were generated from, as well as what freight mode they typically use. Then it could be seen whether freight trips are avoiding certain areas of the county.
- Scherwitz said that instead of doing a detailed study, the staff could interview a few key freight companies. He added that the Lake Michigan College bookstore may be a good company to interview about freight, since they ship a large tonnage of books regularly.
- Judd remarked that if a large view of the study is taken, it becomes clear that public transportation is much more of an issue for TwinCATS than freight, and so perhaps transit should be the primary focus first.
- South and Judd both commented that a countywide discussion of transit is necessary because the fact that there are four different transit providers operating in the county makes it very difficult to provide the transit service needed by residents across the county. Judd added that a countywide millage for transit is necessary.
- **Transportation Importance Survey Results**
 - Rahtz went over a handout explaining the final results of the Transportation Importance Survey. 257 surveys were received from the public. The public and TwinCATS answers came out fairly close, and neither group had a strong preference of one category over another. By any method used to analyze the results, the highest priority category is Safety, and Environment is the lowest ranking.
 - There were also open-ended responses, which overwhelmingly wanted regional public transit and non-motorized transportation options to connect the county.
 - Rahtz went over another handout illustrating how the survey results will be used to rank the projects according to the method approved by the committees.
 - Stauffer asked the meaning of the word "multimodalism." Rahtz responded that a widespread confusion about what it is may have been the reason that it did not rank higher in the survey. She explained that multimodalism means taking into account various modes of transportation and how they connect together. Some examples are goods being shipped by water or rail and then transferred to a truck, or a person riding a bicycle and then getting on a bus.
 - There was discussion about how multimodalism should be addressed in the TwinCATS region, and Rahtz added that she had been discussing this idea of "connecting the dots" in a recent meeting with Vavra-Musser. She plans to advertise TCATA's new Red Route at the Indian Trails bus station and the Amtrak rail station, so that riders of those modes know they can use the bus to get to their final destination. It was asked whether the Red Route would be helpful to Amtrak riders, since the only Amtrak from Chicago arrives in St. Joseph at 8:00pm. Purvis answered that the Red Route runs until 10:00 pm.
 - Vavra-Musser added that he had developed a schedule for a Red Arrow shuttle to connect the three rail stops in the area (St. Joseph, New Buffalo, and Michigan City) with hotels and tourist attractions. He is currently trying to find funding and an operator for such a service.
 - Judd commented that the survey results may have turned out differently if the categories had been force-ranked, since so many respondents ranked all of the categories very high. Rahtz responded that in theory the same thing could have happened even if it had been force-ranked, because people think so differently that some people score a category high and some score it low and they cancel each other out. She also added that the NATS area surveys were done with force-ranking, and so it will be interesting to compare the results for TwinCATS and NATS.

- **CMAQ Call for Projects** – Musson reminded the committee that the Call for Projects meeting for 2012-2014 CMAQ projects in Berrien County would be February 3, 2010 at 1:00pm at the Berrien Road Commission.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

- **TIP Amendments**

- **TCATA**

- Modified in FY 2011, project named Public Transportation for operations the Federal cost changed from \$610,104 (5307) to \$704,000, the State cost changed from \$616,896 (CTF) to \$619,000 and the local cost changed from \$405,000 (TRAL) to \$442,000.

- **MDOT**

- Deleted in FY 2010, project named I-94 (JN 107176) to construct concrete deep overlay, beam end repair, full paint, pier repair, and approaches to the bridge at Benton Center Road over I-94 and Blue Creek, 3.0 miles east of Benton Harbor. The Federal cost is \$1,739,662 (BHI) and State cost is \$193,295 (M).
- Add in FY 2010, project named I-94 (JN 107161) to construct concrete deep overlay, beam end repair, full paint, pier repair, and approaches to the bridges at 44th Avenue (CR 376) over I-196, Benton Center Road over I-94, and 46th Street over I-94. The Federal cost is \$1,739,661 (BHI) and the State cost is \$193,296 (M). This is a three bridge project and only one bridge is within the MPO boundaries. The Federal and State cost reflect only the bridge that is located within the MPO boundaries.
- Add in FY 2010, project named EPE/PE/ROW Trunkline GPA for a Federal cost of \$5,990 (ST) and State cost of \$665 (M).
- Add in FY 2010, project named CPM CSM Bridge Trunkline GPA for a Federal cost of \$16,337 (ST) and State cost of \$1,815 (M).
- *Motion by South, with support from Scherwitz, to approve the above amendments of MDOT projects in the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program. Motion approved.*

- **Investment Reporting Tool Training** – Musson announced that the Investment Reporting Tool (IRT) Training will take place on February 18th at the Van Buren ISD. Representatives of all municipalities are encouraged to attend.

- **Trails Input Meeting for Berrien County** – Rahtz announced that, as part of SWMPC's SMART nine-county non-motorized planning project, a public input meeting will be held on Thursday, February 4th from 6:30pm to 8:30pm at Andrews University Chan Shun Hall.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT:

- None

8. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

- None

9. ADJOURNMENT: 11:45 a.m.

- Next meeting is February 22, 2010 at 10:30 a.m., chaired by Scherwitz.

Compiled by: Nickolas Musson and Anna Rahtz, Transportation Planners, 1/27/10