

**NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY**

Technical Advisory Committee

**MINUTES**

October 27, 2015

1:00 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

<p>TAC Members Present:</p>	<p>Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission                  Craig Bradfield, Howard Township                  Barbara Cook, Cass County Planning Commission                  Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township                  Matthew Galbraith, MDOT Statewide Planning                  Kelly Getman-Dissette, Niles Dial A Ride                  Erin Jolivette, MDOT Coloma TSC                  Leroy Krempec, Cass County Road Commission                  Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region                  Melinda Michael, Four Flags Area Council on Tourism                  Kim O’Haver, Buchanan Dial A Ride                  Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce                  Joe Ray, City of Niles                  Don Ryman, City of Buchanan                  Dennis Schuh, Berrien Bus</p>
<p>TAC Members Absent:</p>	<p>Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg                  Joe Bellina, Cass County Road Commission                  Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio)                  Fred Featherly, MDOT-Multi-Modal                  Darrell Harden, MDOT Southwest Region                  Representative, Berrien County Community Development                  John Klimek, Berrien County Board of Commissioners                  Stephen LeClaire, Bertrand Township                  Bill Marx, City of Buchanan                  Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio)                  Brad Sharlow, MDOT Planning (ex officio)                  Joe Sobieralski, Southwestern Michigan Economic Growth Alliance                  Bob Sutton, Mason Township Planning Commission                  Kelly Sweeney, Milton Township</p>
<p>SWMPC Staff Present:</p>	<p>Kim Gallagher                  Gautam Mani</p>
<p>Others Present:</p>	<p>John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning</p>

**1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance**

Meeting was called to order by Ray at 1:00 p.m. and he led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Minutes**

A motion by Bradfield with support by Personette to approve the TAC Committee Meeting minutes, with corrections as noted by Ryman, from September 22, 2015. **Motion passed.**

### 3. Public Comment

None

### 4. Staff Report

#### ▪ **Project Selection Criteria Updates**

Mani presented points of agreement from the TwinCATS as a reference point to see if NATS committee members would be amenable to these points. These items deal with project readiness and coordination, rather than performance measures specifically.

- Projects on the same corridor that cross jurisdictional lines (township to city, etc.) but are bid together as a single project should be rewarded with greater weight in project selection.
- Projects that provide 30-40% match instead of the required 18.15% should receive greater weight in project selection. This is because greater local match indicates a clear local priority, and also enables the MPO to spread federal funds across more projects.
- In addition to the current practice of requiring a resolution of support in the fiscal year in which a project is scheduled, a resolution of support would now be required once a project is selected in the TIP stating local commitment to the project.
- Coordination with a planned sewer and water project (as identified in asset management or other plan) will give a project priority in terms of the fiscal year that it needs to go.

O'Haver said these factors seem logical based on TAP funding criteria that TwinCATS had laid out in the past.

#### ▪ **STP Call for Projects**

Mani said that a letter would be going out shortly to each city, village, township, transit agency, and road commission, and the Pokagon Band announcing the call for projects for Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds for 2017-2020. The Surface Transportation Program funds can be used for a whole host of activities, but was the largest source of funding available to NATS to allocate to road projects of all kinds. Mani said that given the state of legislation, MDOT had advised MPOs to keep their funding targets steady and not project any growth. If there is revenue growth, we can always add additional projects in later. The funding target for NATS will be \$518,608 per year for 2017-2020.

Ryman praised the hard copy format of the letter.

#### ▪ **Transportation Alternatives Call for Projects**

Mani shared that the Transportation Alternatives Call for Projects was now out, and that these funds could be used for pedestrian and bicycle facilities. NATS received its own allocation of these funds, but they amount to \$36,071 annually, which is not much money to do a project. However, MDOT had given NATS the opportunity to combine two years' worth of funding so that they could spend \$72,142 in federal money in 2017. This is still not a large sum, but does allow for a somewhat larger project. Mani said that agencies had the option of applying for one year's funding or both. A 20% local match is required. A formal letter would be going out for TAP funding as well.

Mani said that the application was once again being processed through the Michigan Grant system, and that SWMPC staff could assist agencies with using that system.

- **Attendance Reports Going Out Soon**

Gallagher announced that attendance reports for FY 2015 will be going out to agencies with representation on NATS, in order to ensure that agencies are aware of who their representatives are and that they are taking full advantage of their allotted representatives. The sending of attendance reports is a provision of the committee bylaws.

- **CMAQ Call for Projects**

Mani announced that MDOT would in fact be issuing a call for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds for 2017-2020 to align with MPO TIP development cycles. These are funds each county in Southwest Michigan receives for being in non-attainment or attainment maintenance for certain pollutants. One new innovation that would make things easier for the MPO this year would be an online application. This application would be similar to the Transportation Alternatives application, but would require MDOT. Mani said that he expected to hear more about the CMAQ Call for Projects very soon, and that CMAQ meetings would be held on the same dates as Rural Task Force meetings in each county. The meetings would be happening earlier than usual, though not as much earlier as SWMPC had hoped.

## 5. Public Transit Updates

- **SWMPC Transit Updates**

Gallagher shared that the Request for Proposals for the Countywide Service Plan was under review by MDOT.

- **Agency Updates**

O’Haver reported that all three buses she was scheduled to order for FY 2015 have been purchased. Ryman pointed out that people are very satisfied with Buchanan Dial-A-Ride, and that we ought to be cautious with making changes to the transit agencies that might lead to a decline in satisfaction.

Getman-Dissette reported that Niles DAR finally had its FY 2015 contracts. Ridership continues to rise, meaning that not all rides can be accommodated. Getman-Dissette recommended calling in the day before, as people who call the day of may not be able to get a ride.

## 6. Land Use Updates

None.

## 7. Project Updates

- **Obligation Thermometer-** Mani said that he was unsure whether there was still obligation authority left at the state level, as MAP-21 expires on October 29th.

Fiscal Year	Job Number	Agency	Project Name	Update Information	Date of last update	Bid Savings	Obligation Month	Bills Submitted
		Berrien County	IN-MI River Valley Trail	TAP application sent in for next phase; Issues	October 2015			

				regarding routing and historical preservation, but should not hold up project				
2014	104152	MDOT	M-139 CON phase Bridge replacement	Mid December completion	October 2015			
		Niles DAR	Scheduling software	Still planning on it	October 2015			
		Niles DAR	Preventative maintenance	Part will be done in 2015, part in 2016	October 2015			
		Niles DAR	Replacement computers	Purchase has been approved by City Council	January 2015			
		Niles DAR	Replacement bus	Awaiting end of axle shortage	October 2015			
		Niles DAR	Operating assistance					
		Berrien County RC	North Main St	Advance Construct Conversion in 2015	October 2015			
		Cass County	Adamsville Road Reconstruct from May St to US-12	Scheduled for 2016	October 2015			
		Cass County	Gumwood Road Phase II	Unobligated	September 2015			
		Buchanan Dial-a-Ride	Replacement Bus	3 buses purchased	October 2015			
		Niles Dial-A-Ride	Replacement Tires	Purchased and delivered	October 2015			
		MDOT	M-139 from M-140 to Fairland Road Resurfacing	In progress				
		MDOT	Repaving US-12, Red Bud, and S 3rd St	Construction in September				
		MDOT	Concrete Patching on US-31	Under construction	September 2015			
		MDOT	M-62 from Hospital St to M-60 resurfacing	Will be finished this year				

Other ongoing project reports were shared:

The City of Buchanan has a resurfacing project on Red Bud Trail. Mani and Gallagher said they would follow up to ensure that the project was still proceeding. The City of Buchanan also has a traffic signal project at Front St. Galbraith said he would follow up to determine whether the project had been deemed eligible for CMAQ funds, as SWMPC had provided necessary information.

MDOT provided an update on its project to Restore and Rehabilitate the US-12 bridge over M-51. Ryman suggested eliminating the bridge and installing a traffic signal. The project is scheduled for Spring construction.

## 8. Old Business

### ▪ GPA Policy

Mani once again went over the General Program Accounts policy, which is designed to group projects together so that only major changes to the whole group trigger the full TIP amendment process. SWMPC staff had looked over the new guidance on GPAs, and had found that rail safety was simply grouped into a Trunkline Safety GPA. Likewise, there was no pre-construction GPA anymore, as GPAs were grouped by worktype. Mani said that the Policy would only set up GPAs for MDOT projects for now, and would leave the full public participation and TIP amendment process in place for larger scale reconstruction projects from MDOT. Mani said this would also mean a slight amendment to the TIP Amendment and Administrative Modification Policy.

A motion by O'Haver with support by Personette to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the General Program Accounts Policy and changes to the TIP Amendment and Administrative modification Policy. **Motion passed.**

### ▪ NFC Minor Revisions

Mani explained that the Village of Edwardsburg had applied for an NFC reclassification of Section St from US-12 to the dead end from a local road to a minor collector, hence making it eligible for federal aid. MDOT had said that it did not concur with the reclassification to the dead end, only from US-12 to Max St, and recommended that the Village revise its proposal with MPO approval. Mani reiterated that MDOT's concerns were not with the traffic counts, as the traffic counts warranted reclassification as a minor collector.

A motion by Krempec with support by Galbraith to recommend that the Policy Committee approve Section St NFC reclassification to a minor collector from a local road so that it runs from US-12 to Max St, rather than the dead end.

There was further discussion on the motion. Ray said that he was concerned about some of the industrial areas along Max St and at points further south, and that as a federal aid road without truck prohibitions, truck traffic might increase over current levels. Ray said he knew that the road was already struggling to handle school traffic and maintain safety. He felt that encouraging more truck traffic as a connector to US-12 was not a wise decision on the part of the MPO. Bradfield concurred strongly with this assessment. Ryman and Personette said that increasing truck traffic on roads with a

school did not make sense. Personette also suggested that there may be an issue with enforcement if trucks that were already using Section St. were not being ticketed.

Personette asked what would happen if the Village of Edwardsburg does not reclassify the road. Ray said that the Village would need to continue to only use its Act 51 money to maintain and make improvements on the road; it could not use federal funds such as those available through the NATS MPO.

Mani reminded and clarified for committee members that they had voted to approve the reclassification of Section St two months ago based on the limits of US-12 to the dead end, and that now they were voting on reclassification again based on new limits. Ray clarified for all that because MDOT did not concur with that request, the earlier motion was moot.

**A voice vote was conducted. There were no “aye” votes and the remainder of the votes were “nays.” There were no abstentions. Motion fails.**

## **9. New Business**

### **▪ MPO Wide Local Safety Initiative**

Mani said that SWMPC had the opportunity to speak to Tracy Leix, who until now had been running the Local Safety Initiative, a free MDOT service where engineers come out to your community and examine safety issues with specific roadway segments or intersections and propose low cost solutions. Mani said that MDOT supported the entire MPO making a coordinated request for this process, so that MDOT could use its resources most efficiently. Gallagher said that agencies that go through the Local Safety Initiative process will gain extra points when applying for federal safety funds from MDOT. Gallagher said that SWMPC would be seeking the signature of engineers or supervisors from each Act 51 agency in order to make a coordinated request of MDOT.

### **▪ FHWA Updates**

There were no members of FHWA present.

### **▪ MDOT Updates**

Galbraith shared that the Michigan House had passed a transportation bill that would generate \$600 million in new revenue from increased gasoline taxes, diesel taxes, registration fees, and surcharges. This bill was passed after a bill to generate \$800 million in new revenue and \$400 million from the general fund had failed. Galbraith said it was now up to the Senate and the Governor to see whether this was an acceptable deal. Bradfield said that he was very concerned about money coming out of the general fund, and specifically revenue sharing, as there is barely enough money that meets the needs of revenue sharing agencies right now. Ryman wondered it was worth contacting state representatives to convey these concerns.

Latham said that while the provisions of the bill provide, in theory, \$1.2 billion per year in new revenue, there are some estimates that suggest that the needed revenue to improve roads so that they are mostly in “decent shape” is much much higher now. It is possibly as high as \$3 billion per year.

Gallagher asked whether there was a fact sheet on the new transportation bill and revenue needed. Galbraith said he would look into fact sheets from TAMC and the House Fiscal Agency.

Mani said that on the federal side, a House committee had passed a six year transportation bill. Mani said that House leaders were looking for a bit more time to reconcile that bill with the Senate version, and therefore would be giving a three-week reauthorization of MAP-21. Mani added that as part of the three week extension, a provision was added in that would postpone the deadline for railroads to comply with requirements for Positive Train Control, a device for managing train speeds automatically. The deadline was supposed to be December 31 of this year, and most railroads in the United States were struggling to comply. This would have meant a shutdown of most Amtrak routes and the South Shore Line soon. The deadline has been extended to 2018, however, averting that issue. Bradfield said that the reason they were struggling to comply was the lack of number of suppliers of the Positive Train Control equipment.

- **News Items of Interest**  
None.

#### **10. Public Comment**

None.

#### **11. Privilege of the Floor**

Personette commended the City of Niles on replacing a large number of pieces of sidewalk as well as the road work they have done. Bradfield also praised this work, but asked why the manhole covers could not be raised to the level of the street. Ray said that it was a challenge to comply with standards such as ADA, purchase asphalt, and still afford the necessary funds for iron.

Jolivette shared that Dan Burns who was the Local Agency Programs engineer at the MDOT Coloma TSC, had accepted a position in Lansing. Jolivette said that they may be filling his position soon, depending on how the restructuring of the Kalamazoo and Coloma offices proceeds. Latham said that Kenton McAndrew, who formerly worked for Abonmarche, is now the LAP engineer at the Kal

#### **12. Adjournment at 2:18 p.m.**

- The next meeting will be November 24 at 1:00 PM.

*Minutes compiled by: Gautam Mani, Associate Planner, 2015*