

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Technical Advisory Committee

MINUTES

February 24, 2015

1:00 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

TAC Members Present:	Jason Auvil, Berrien County Planning Commission Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission Craig Bradfield, Howard Township Barbara Cook, Cass County Planning Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township John Gruchot, Berrien County Community Development Darrell Harden, MDOT Southwest Region Erin Jolivette, MDOT Coloma TSC LeRoy Krempec, Cass County Road Commission Melinda Michael, Four flags Area Council on Tourism Kim O’Haver, Buchanan Dial A Ride Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce Don Ryman, City of Buchanan Dennis Schuh, Berrien Bus
TAC Members Absent:	Joe Bellina, Cass County Road Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Melinda Michael, Four Flags Area Council on Tourism Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) Erin Jolivette, MDOT Coloma TSC Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg Fred Featherly, MDOT-Multi-Modal Juan Ganum, City of Niles Community Development John Klimek, Berrien County Board of Commissioners Joseph Kring, Bertrand Township Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region (Alternate) Paul Lott, MDOT Statewide Planning Bill Marx, City of Buchanan Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) John Monaghan, Village of Edwardsburg (Alternate) Joe Ray, City of Niles Brad Sharlow, MDOT Planning (ex officio) Joe Sobieralski, Southwestern Michigan Economic Growth Alliance Bob Sutton, Mason Township Planning Commission Kelly Sweeney, Milton Township Zach Dripps, MACOG Kris Welch, MDOT Statewide Planning
SWMPC Staff Present:	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani Patrice Rose

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting was called to order by Harden at 1:07 p.m and Mani led the group in the pledge of allegiance.

2. Minutes

A motion by Personette with support by Bradfield to approve the TAC Committee Meeting minutes from January 27, 2015. **Motion passed.**

3. Public Comment

Krempec said that he was the replacement on behalf of the Cass County Road Commission for Cliff Poehlman, who had retired.

4. Staff Report

▪ **Obligation Thermometer**

- Mani recapped the obligation thermometer that was introduced at the last meeting. This is a tool that MDOT provides to let local agencies know how much federal obligation authority is left over in the state at any given time. Mani said that as of February 3rd, MDOT had used up 43.3% of its available obligation authority that runs through May 31st. After May 31st, new transportation legislation would be needed in order for obligation authority to continue to be available. Mani said that even if reauthorization of MAP-21 happens right away, there would be a few week lag time in Michigan receiving that obligation authority. Therefore, project applicants that are looking to obligate in June may run into delays. As always, SWMPC encourages its local agencies to obligate early in the fiscal year.

The obligation thermometer is updated monthly and is available at http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9625_25885-339193--,00.html

▪ **Traffic Count Requests**

Mani noted that it was never too early to get count requests in for the 2015 season. Gallagher added that this was a free service that SWMPC provides to any city, village, or township in our three counties. Mani said that this year, a question had come up regarding how early or late in the year it was possible to do counts. Mani said that if you request that count be done anytime between May and October, you were probably safe. Our count team is usually able to get out into the field in April, and if there is no winter precipitation, they can sometimes do counts in November.

Mani said that this year, agencies may request counts specifically for National Functional Class Reclassification. NFC Reclassification requires current traffic counts. Mani said there was a box on the online form where agencies could mark whether a count was for proposed NFC reclassification. If we have a high number of count requests, those counts that are for NFC reclassification would take high priority.

The count request form may be found at <http://www.swmpc.org/trafficcountform.asp>.

▪ **Spring Asset Management Conference April 30**

Mani said that the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council was putting on the Spring Asset Management Conference on April 30 in Grand Rapids. This would be an all day event. Mani said it was an excellent opportunity to learn about the latest in pavement management practices and also emerging practices in gathering data. Mani said that the timing of this conference was also excellent, as it is less than one week before the transportation funding ballot measure is up for a vote.

That would almost certainly be a topic on the agenda. Elected officials and municipal engineers are strongly encouraged to attend. Public agency registration fees are deeply discounted.

- **MI Travel Counts Survey**

Mani said that MDOT was conducting a Travel Demand survey throughout the state in 2015, looking at the routes people use to travel, the modes of transportation they use, and the times of day that they travel. MDOT was currently sending out letters to pilot participants. Eventually, they will send out letters to 700,000 households, hoping to get 21,000 to participate. A subset of those households will be asked to fill out a travel diary, recounting all of their trips for one day between April and June. An even smaller subset would be asked to carry around GPS receivers tracking their activities.

Mani said that these data were extremely important for feeding the travel demand model for our MPO area in our long range plan. Mani said he anticipated that committee members might get questions from their residents regarding whether the survey is legitimate and whether their privacy would be protected if they participate. The answer to both questions is yes. Data from the diaries and GPS receivers would go to Westat and be stripped of identifying information before it goes to MDOT. There is also a very small financial incentive involved in participation, so residents should definitely be encouraged to fill out the survey.

Gallagher encouraged committee members to also check out the Facebook page for MI Travel Counts for the latest information.

5. Public Transit Updates

- **Transit Consolidation Study Updates and Countywide Service Plan Updates**

Gallagher said that the County was still discussing whether to form a new authority as part of the effort at transit consolidation in Berrien County.

Gallagher said that the main report that she had to share was that she had applied for a grant through MDOT to do a countywide service plan that would like at the viability of fixed routes throughout Berrien County. The total grant amount is \$200,000, 20% of which must come from local match. Gallagher said that she had secured commitments for the required local match from the Lakeland Health Foundation, Berrien Bus, and the Berrien County Manufacturers Association. The federal funds would come in the form of section 5304 funds from the Federal Transit Administration.

- **Agency Updates**

O'Haver said that MDOT's Triennial Review of Buchanan Dial-A-Ride had gone well. It was a highly cooperative process, and Buchanan Dial-A-Ride addressed concerns immediately. O'Haver is anticipating a good audit letter and funding application approval for her FY 2016 grants.

6. Land Use Updates

Auvil said that Berrien County Planning Commission had recommended that a draft update of the Berrien County Master plan be adopted by the County Board of Commissioners.

Gallagher presented articles of interest that were recently published, regarding a new coffee shop in Niles and icy sidewalks in Niles surrounding the high school. Gallagher said that she is looking into a targeted snow removal plan to clear sidewalks in areas that are commonly used by students.

She said that SWMPC had developed a template for a municipal sidewalk snow removal plan, and would be happy to share that. Gallagher also said that SWMPC could assist with mapping the number of students that live within a walking radius of the school, so that sidewalks that students actually walk along could be given priority for snow removal. These would be cluster maps, so no individual students would be identified.

Personette noted that in some cases sidewalks are not cleared on both sides of an intersection, and that people who do not clear the sidewalks ought to be fined. Personette said that ownership also needs to be determined for vacant properties so that the sidewalks get cleared.

7. Project Updates

Fiscal Year	Job Number	Agency	Project Name	Update Information	Date of last update	Bid Savings	Obligation Month	Bills Submitted
2013	118207	Berrien County	IN-MI River Valley Trail	Issue of railroad parcel ownership that was thought to be owned by the city. AACOA property purchase looks likely unless there is an environmental issue ; on a tight grant deadline	February 2015			
2014	104152	MDOT	M-139 CON phase Bridge replacement	Ongoing	January 2015			
		Niles DAR	Maintenance software					
		Niles DAR	Preventative maintenance					
		Niles DAR	Replacement computers	Purchase has been approved by City Council	January 2015			
		Niles DAR	Replacement bus	Awaiting end of axle shortage	January 2015			
		Niles DAR	Operating assistance					
		Cass County RC	Gumwood Road TAP project (Phase I)	In letting phase	January 2015			

2015		Berrien County RC	Range Line Road, Lake St and Main St Resurfacing	Obligation Requested on January 15	January 2015			
		Berrien County RC	North Main St	GI package will be submitted in March	February 2015			
		City of Niles	Broadway Avenue Resurfacing	April Construction (pending weather)	February 2015			
		Cass County	Adamsville Road Reconstruct	Still in design	January 2015			
		Buchanan Dial-a-Ride	Replacement Bus	Contract probably not coming until next September	October 2014			
		Niles Dial-A-Ride	Replacement Tires					

8. Old Business

None

9. New Business

- **FHWA Updates**

None.

- **State Transportation Legislation and May Ballot Initiative Updates**

Mani said that MDOT Finance had released a preliminary revenue estimate of how much each county, city, or village would receive if the ballot measure passes. Mani said it is important to convey to members of the public that while a certain portion of the revenue increase would go towards paying down debt that MDOT has on past transportation projects, the remaining funds would be distributed according to Act 51 formula, as they always have been. Mani said that information had been circulating that funds would be distributed according to some sort of different formula, and that was not the case.

Mani and Gallagher shared useful links on MDOT's website showing photos of current road conditions, a summary of current transportation funding, and documents and infographics related to common myths about transportation funding and MDOT's practices.

All of these links are housed in a central location now at : <http://www.swmpc.org/transfunding.asp>.

Krempec reported that there is concern in Cass and St. Joseph Counties that if the ballot initiative passes, the revenues that have come from the general fund to pay for transportation would go away--- in other words, there would not be any increase in revenue.

Bradfield said that many communities were worried that they might not be able to justify keeping their current local millages if the state's millage passes.

Gallagher suggested providing objective information about the ballot measure in senior newsletters.

Cook said that communicating information about the ballot measure was difficult in this area because we receive most of our news from Indiana.

10. Privilege of the Floor

Harden announced that Bobbi Welke has retired as the Region Engineer and is being replaced by Kimberly Avery, who was formerly the Deputy Region Engineer in the MDOT Metro Region.

Ryman states that Buchanan has applied for CMAQ funding for a traffic lights at Red Bud and Front St.

Michael said she was pleased with the effort of the MDOT crews handling the de-construction of the bridge. The process has gone smoothly.

11. Adjournment at 2:07 p.m.

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

Minutes compiled by: Gautam Mani, Associate Planner and Patrice Rose, Administrative Assistant.

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