

Minutes
Twin Cities Area Transportation Study
Joint TAC/Policy Committee Meeting
 September 21, 2009
 10:00 A.M.
 Southwest Michigan Regional Airport

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Mickey Bennett, Sodus Township Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission Bill Brown, NIRPC (ex officio) Bob Burkholz, Berrien County Road Commission Chris Cook, City of Benton Harbor Tim Fenderbosch, St. Joseph Charter Township Robert Judd, City of St. Joseph Jason Latham, MDOT, Southwest Region Ray Lenze, MDOT, Statewide Planning Larry Merritt, St. Joseph Charter Township Bill Purvis, Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority Lee Scherwitz, SW Michigan Regional Airport Donald Schlipp, Village of Stevensville Roger Seely, St. Joseph Charter Township Jim Soteriou, Royalton Township Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township Sarah Woolcock, MDOT - Coloma TSC Kevin Wordelman, Berrien County Commission Tim Zebell, City of St. Joseph
MEMBERS ABSENT:	Aaron Anthony, City of Bridgman Bill Boyd, Royalton Township Fred Featherly, MDOT - Multi-Modal Services (ex officio) Ron Ferguson, Benton Charter Township John Gast, Lake Charter Township Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Katie Montoya, Berrien County Community Development Debra Panozzo, Berrien County Commission Gloria Payne, Lake Charter Township Robert Rusch, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (ex officio) Mark Seaman, Village of Shoreham Brad Sharlow, MDOT Planning (ex officio) Terrie Smith, Lincoln Charter Township Paul South, MDOT- Coloma TSC Sarah Van Buren, Federal Highway Admin (ex officio) Representative, Cornerstone Alliance Policy Committee Representative, City of Benton Harbor
SWMPC STAFF PRESENT:	Nickolas Musson Anna Rahtz
OTHERS PRESENT:	Ralph Heibutzki, Herald Palladium

1. CALL TO ORDER:

- Policy Committee Chairman Judd called the meeting to order at 10:01 A.M.

2. MINUTES:

- *A motion was made by Berndt, seconded by Merritt, to approve the minutes of the August 17, 2009 Joint TAC and Policy meeting. Motion approved.*

3. STAFF REPORT:

- **ITS Meeting** – Musson announced that he and Rahtz attended a MACOG (Michiana Area Council of Governments) meeting about MACOG’s regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Plan. Woolcock pointed out that SWMPC has participated in MDOT’s development of a regional ITS plan. Musson said that in

case TwinCATS decides to develop a stand-alone regional ITS plan, it will be informative to attend MACOG's meetings to understand the process of developing such a plan.

- **We Can Healthy Berrien Coalition Meeting**

- Rahtz announced that she and Musson attended a meeting of the We Can Healthy Berrien Coalition, which SWMPC staff member Suzann Flowers also regularly attends. This was part of an effort to connect to health professionals and forge potential partnerships for complete streets and healthy communities.
- Rahtz also announced that Theresa Green from the Berrien County Health Department heads up the Building Healthy Communities subcommittee of the We Can Coalition. This subcommittee recently wrote a grant for a design charrette for a potential future reconstruction of Pipestone Road in the City of Benton Harbor as a "Complete Street." Theresa Green would also like SWMPC's help in approaching the Benton Harbor Master Plan contractors about including complete streets language in the master plan.

- **Training Wheels Workshop**

- Rahtz announced that she attended a workshop in Grand Rapids about the design of safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities based on AASHTO guidelines, and that she has the workshop materials available.

4. **PROJECT UPDATES:**

- **Empire Avenue** – Completed
- **Linco Road** – Under construction
- **Linco Bridge** – Anticipated completion by 11/26/09
- **Roosevelt Safe Routes to School** – Completed
- Stauffer raised an issue with Lincoln Township's Safe Route to School project – that he had been told by the State Police that cars have the right of way over pedestrians on county primary roads. Woolcock and Latham advised him to consult with an attorney to look into the possibility of a local ordinance that could mandate drivers to stop for children crossing the street near the school. Stauffer stated that he may be asking SWMPC staff in the near future to develop a letter of support.
- **Pipestone Road / Nickerson Avenue / Sodus** – Will set a bid date after 9/21/09 TwinCATS meeting; waiting for approval of TIP amendment
- **Calvin Britain Safe Routes to School** – Essentially completed
- **Seelye McCord Safe Routes to School** – Essentially completed
- **Park Street** – Under construction
- Purvis announced that federal Job Access and Reverse Commute funding had been awarded for the three TCATA (transit) projects being moved into 2009 in the TIP at this meeting: New Line Haul Route, New Expanded Hours, and Mobility Manager. He emphasized that the purpose of these projects is to increase the mobility of TCATA's current riders in reaching employment.

5. **OLD BUSINESS:**

- **Amtrak Budget Cut Letter Response**

- Musson read over a letter received from Governor Granholm's office, as well as a newspaper article from the Herald Palladium, regarding potential Amtrak budget cuts. While Governor Granholm's letter stated that the budget cuts would be painful but necessary, the article that was later published in the Herald Palladium indicated that the Governor would likely have to reinstate the Amtrak funding. This would be necessary to demonstrate to the federal government a commitment to rail, in order to be in the running for federal high-speed rail funding.
- Musson and Rahtz also announced that they had made contact with Steve Bulthuis, the chair of the WesTrain Collaborative, which is in support of the Mid-West Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI). Bulthuis had said that the realignment of the Pere Marquette rail line was supported in order to make the rail trip time from Grand Rapids to Chicago competitive with driving times. He said that MWRRI had not been discussed at WesTrain since 2002, and since then the increase of ridership at Bangor could be an influential factor. He also said that in MWRRI it was planned to use a feeder bus route to connect St. Joseph into the high-speed rail line in Phase 5. Rahtz also mentioned that Pat Moody from Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce is the WesTrain representative for the St. Joseph-Benton Harbor

area. Woolcock commented that the alignment proposed in MWRRRI re-routes passengers out of their way southeast in order to go southwest to Chicago. Musson stated that he and Rahtz plan to attend the next meeting of the WesTrain Collaborative, and that they will inform TwinCATS members when they find out the date and location.

- Rahtz also announced that SWMPC staff are working on developing a regional rail webpage as a clearinghouse for up-to-date information about regional rail, and that they are looking for contacts from whom they can obtain current and accurate information. Judd suggested contacting the City of New Buffalo, which just built a new rail depot on the Wolverine Amtrak line. Stauffer suggested keeping track of the hits on the webpage when it is developed.

- **Non-Motorized Subcommittee**

- Rahtz went over a handout outlining potential goals and strategies for the new non-motorized subcommittee, and asked for discussion regarding who would like to be on the subcommittee and what its agenda would be.
- Volunteers for the subcommittee were requested, and it was decided that the subcommittee would consist of five members: Chris Cook representing the City of Benton Harbor; Dick Stauffer representing Lincoln Charter Township; a representative of the City of St. Joseph; Michelle Bennett representing Sodus Township; and Larry Merritt representing St. Joseph Charter Township. It will be a subcommittee of the Technical Advisory Committee. Musson and Rahtz were asked to send out an email to the subcommittee members to schedule a date for an initial meeting.
- Judd remarked that one of the suggestions in the memo – to map “goat trails” showing where there is already a high level of pedestrian and bicycle activity without constructed facilities available – is a good idea to understand where efforts need to be focused for developing new non-motorized facilities in the Twin Cities area. Bennett asked about the regional nine-county non-motorized map, and Rahtz explained that SWMPC staff Suzann Flowers and Marcy Colclough have been holding county-wide public input meetings to update the original non-motorized map created in 2005 and to develop a regional plan with priorities for connecting non-motorized facilities. This map is on a larger regional scale and does not show the details that the non-motorized subcommittee will need for the Twin Cities area. Fenderbosch asked if it would be possible to create a map similar to the nine-county map for only Berrien County, and Rahtz responded that could be a potential strategy of the non-motorized subcommittee.
- *A motion was made by Fenderbosch, supported by Woolcock, to establish a non-motorized transportation subcommittee chaired by Cook. Cook accepted the nomination.*

- **Freight Next Steps**

- Rahtz went over a handout summarizing possible next steps regarding freight planning, and asked for discussion about whether a freight subcommittee should be formed and what its agenda would be.
- Judd commented that a freight plan could be a good way to develop support for the completion of US-31, which would benefit the area by reducing emissions from trucks idling on Napier Avenue trying to reach US-31 from I-94. He also commented that it was important, and difficult, to get participation from the private sector. Musson stated that relationship-building with the private sector and with other stakeholder organizations would be an important part of the freight planning process.
- Latham volunteered to serve on a freight planning subcommittee but not to chair it. Fenderbosch nominated Scherwitz to chair such a subcommittee, and Scherwitz declined. Discussion was brought up regarding the lack of enthusiasm for freight planning, and whether further action should be taken. Lenze stated that freight planning is an area of emphasis for the Federal Highway Administration, and Judd pointed out that it would be important for obtaining harbor and US-31 funding. Scherwitz added that funding is a continual obstacle in freight planning, as well as is the lack of space for dumping materials dredged from the harbor. Judd stated that the structure for the freight planning subcommittee should be rewritten to include the demand for, and benefits of, freight planning for the area. Scherwitz suggested that Musson and Rahtz arrange a meeting with Wendy Dant-Chessler and Pat Moody from Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce so that TwinCATS is not duplicating the efforts of the business community.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

- **TIP Amendments** – The following TIP amendments were discussed:

The Twin Cities Area Transit Authority requested the following administrative modifications to the TwinCATS FY 2008-11 Transportation Improvement Program:

- Move to 2009, the 2010 project named New Line Haul Route with a federal cost of \$140,000 and state cost of \$140,000.
- Move to 2009, the 2010 project named New Expanded Hours with a federal cost of \$88,000 and a state cost of \$88,000.
- Move to 2009, the 2010 project named Mobility Manager with a federal cost of \$60,000 and a state cost of \$15,000.
- Musson explained that this modification is being made because the Federal Transit Administration requires that projects are placed in the TIP under the year for which the funding is applied rather than the year in which the project will be completed.

The Berrien County Road Commission requested the following administrative modifications to the TwinCATS FY 2008-11 Transportation Improvement Program:

- Modify in 2009, the project named Empire Avenue for resurfacing from City of Benton Harbor limits to Crystal and adding a three-foot paved shoulder from M-139 to Crystal. The federal cost changed from \$144,000 to \$97,401 and the local cost changed from \$36,000 to \$21,598. Musson explained that the change in cost is due to a bid savings, and the cost is being modified in the TIP so that the remaining monies can be moved to another project.
- Modify in 2009, the project named Pipestone Road for Advance Construct Conversion. The federal cost changed from \$230,000 to \$276,000.
- Modify in 2010, the project named Pipestone Road for Advance Construct Conversion. The federal cost changed from \$230,000 to \$184,000. Musson explained that monies are being moved from 2010 to 2009 for the same project so that the extra dollars from the Empire Avenue project can be used on another project in 2010.

The Berrien County Road Commission requested the following amendments to ARRA (stimulus) projects in the TwinCATS FY 2008-11 Transportation Improvement Program:

- Amend in 2009, the project named Glenlord / John Beers Road for Chip and Seal Coat. The federal cost changed from \$90,000 to \$75,560. Musson explained that this change was to account for a bid savings, so that the extra monies could be used for another project.
- Amend in 2009, the project named Park Street for reconstruction. The federal cost changed from \$398,000 to \$211,000. Musson explained that this change was to account for a bid savings, so that the extra monies could be used for another project.
- Amend in 2009, the project named Pipestone Road / Nickerson Avenue / Sodus Parkway / Red Arrow Highway for microsurfacing. The year changed from 2009 to 2010, and the federal cost changed from \$455,340 to \$657,680. Musson explained that the cost was changed to utilize the extra funds from the bid savings from above-named projects. The cost increased to account for the actual construction cost of the project; the original cost had been a misestimate.

The Berrien County Road Commission requested the following amendments to the ARRA (stimulus) Illustrative List of Projects:

- Amend the project named Kingsley Avenue for reconstruction from South State Street to Niles Avenue. The federal cost changed from \$513,500 to \$167,000. Zebell explained that the cost changed because the reconstruction will now involve a smaller cross-section of the street; utility lines will not be replaced.
- Add to the illustrative list, the project named South State Street for reconstruction from Wallace Avenue to Granada Avenue and Kingsley Avenue for 200 feet east of South State. The federal cost is \$572,000.
- Add to the illustrative list, the project named Broad Street for resurfacing from Lake Boulevard to

Wayne Street (except from State Street to Main Street). The federal cost is \$226,800.

- Musson clarified that the illustrative list is the official list of projects that will be next in line for stimulus money if more becomes available. It was unanimously agreed that the project named Broad Street is number 1 on the illustrative list, and the project named Kingsley is number 2 on the illustrative list. Musson explained that if more stimulus money becomes available, these projects can be moved to the TIP without further approval by the TwinCATS TAC and Policy committees.

TAC Motion by Woolcock, seconded by Berndt, to recommend that the Policy committee vote to approve the above modifications and amendments to the FY 2008-11 Transportation Improvement Program and ARRA Illustrative List.

Policy Motion by Scherwitz, seconded by Stauffer, to approve the above modifications and amendments to the FY 2008-11 Transportation Improvement Program and ARRA Illustrative List.

Lenze requested that in the future the TIP amendment handouts show all funding sources as well as make clear the agency requesting the amendment.

- **FY 2011-2014 TIP Application and TIP Amendment Application form**

- Musson went over the new TIP Amendment Application form, TIP Project Application form, and TIP Transit Project Application form that he and Rahtz had created and asked for feedback. The new forms aim to streamline the application process while evaluating the most important aspects of the project according to the Long Range Transportation Plan. There is a new section in the TIP application regarding environmental justice.
- A suggestion was given that a question should be included in the TIP Project Application form regarding legal mandates for coordinating with utilities. It was also suggested that applicants should attach to the applications the materials used to publicly advertise meetings attempting to involve the public in the planning process.
- Musson explained the Paired Comparison chart he had created, which would allow the TwinCATS members and the public to weight various criteria by which the projects would be evaluated, such as Environment, Safety, Environmental Justice, and Public Participation. There was discussion on whether these criteria were needed in addition to the criteria previously used for selecting projects, and the argument was made by SWMPC staff and several TwinCATS members that it is important to evaluate the projects according to criteria of importance from the Long Range Transportation Plan to ensure that the principles from the plan are being carried through and implemented. Musson explained that this is an extension of the ranking system he had used in the FY 2010-13 TIP; the only difference is that the criteria are being weighted by their importance to the TwinCATS members and the public.
- It was unanimously agreed that an example was needed to understand how a project would be assigned weighted rankings according to the answers to the questions in the TIP Project Application. It was suggested that the TIP project selection committee meet to go over the project criteria ranking system in more depth, and that more time be given for all TwinCATS members to give feedback on the application forms before they are approved. It was also agreed that all TwinCATS members should have an understanding of which criteria are given which weights prior to the Call for Projects. The idea of the weighted criteria is to help local agencies understand what the areas of focus should be in their project planning so that they can work toward the goals agreed upon in the Long Range Transportation Plan.

- **Next Year Calendar**

- *Motion by Woolcock, seconded by Zebell, to approve the 2010 calendar year dates for TwinCATS meetings, with the amendment of the February meeting date to avoid President's Day.*
- The 2010 TwinCATS meeting dates will be: January 25, February 22, March 15, April 19, May 17, June 21, July 19, August 16, September 20, October 18, November 15, and December 20.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT:

- None

8. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

- Lenze announced that in the SAFETEA-LU legislation, Congress had built in a rescission of funds from the states that is set to happen when SAFETEA-LU expires (September 30, 2009). The State of Michigan must give back \$262 million to the federal government by this deadline. Lenze explained that the difference between this and past rescissions is that this rescission mandates states to give back money in the same program-to-program proportions outlined in SAFETEA-LU, so they cannot use only unspent dollars for the rescission as they have in the past. Thus, if Congress does not pass an appropriations bill for transportation by September 30, 2009, the State of Michigan could have very little money left to spend in certain transportation programs in FY 2010.

9. ADJOURNMENT: 11:46 a.m.

- Next meeting is October 19, 2009 at 9:30 a.m. (TAC) and 10:30 p.m. (Policy).

Compiled by: Nickolas Musson and Anna Rahtz, Transportation Planners, 9/23/09