

ANNUAL REPORT

For the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
from January 1 to December 31, 2008



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SWMPC 2008 STAFF

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Nickolas Musson,
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GIS Specialist

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Nancy Perry,
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Terri Moore,
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Patricia Bly,
Traffic Data Supervisor

FROM THE CHAIR...

The pace of change has increased significantly. A new economic reality has become the catalyst for important changes throughout our society. While revenue diminishes, many local governments have accelerated their search for ways to maintain services while cutting expense. At the state level through to the local governments, the search for efficiencies has led many to conclude that thinking regionally represents a powerful new way to approach their challenges. The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) is squarely in the center of this new focus on regional innovation. Nearly every project we do involves thinking beyond jurisdictional boundaries. Regional approaches regularly result in unique solutions that would not be otherwise possible.

The SWMPC is a not-for-profit professional planning resource for the region of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties in southwest Michigan. We are staffed with professional planners engaged in addressing challenges with natural resources, transportation, economic development, and numerous other areas. The result of our work means resources can be better utilized and communities have a clear blueprint for a better tomorrow.

Each year the SWMPC continues to develop its expertise and respond to needs in the region. This document reflects some of that work but is by no means an exhaustive list. We hope that if you are not familiar with the SWMPC, that this report will encourage you to get acquainted with us. For those of you who we can count as our collaborators and clients, we thank you for another excellent year.

Sincerely,
Victoria Chandler, Chair

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) is one of fourteen Planning and Development Regions in the State of Michigan and one of approximately five hundred in the United States. In Michigan, regions were created under a 1968 Executive Order by the Governor.

The SWMPC was officially organized in 1973 by resolutions of the Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren County Boards of Commissioners. The Commission was first staffed in 1974.

In addition to serving public and private entities within Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties by providing technical or management assistance, the SWMPC acts as an intergovernmental forum to address regional issues. The SWMPC addresses issues and administers programs which its membership deems appropriate and which are in keeping with locally established area-wide planning and development goals.

For more information about the SWMPC, please visit our website at: www.swmpc.org

LOCAL SERVICES PLANNING

The SWMPC provides outreach to build support for wise planning and awareness of vital regional development issues. These efforts regularly lead to program initiatives that address local needs.

Master Plans and Recreation Plans

- City of Bangor Recreation Plan *completed*
- Buchanan Master Plan *completed*
- Niles Township Recreation Plan *completed*
- Bloomingdale Village and Township Recreation Plan *continuing*
- Hamilton & Decatur Townships and Decatur Village Master Plan *continuing*
- Van Buren County Recreation Plan *continuing*

Other Plans/Studies

- Benton Harbor Kitchen Incubator Study *completed*
- Van Buren County Strategic Planning *completed*
- Berrien County Public Transportation System Study *continuing*
- Berrien County Birding Trail Map *continuing*
- Implemented Rideshare School Pool program

Education

- Hosted Community Media Workshop
- Implemented Bicycle Safety Program
- Quarterly newsletters
- Presented Session 6 Innovative and Best Practices for Planning and Zoning for Citizen Planner

Grant Writing

- Provided grant writing services to Southwestern Michigan Community Action Agency
- Assisted City of Bangor with waterfront recreation grant

2008 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Revenue has been calculated to match the SWMPC fiscal year (January 1 through December 31). Many SWMPC projects match the fiscal years of their grant source which vary from that of the SWMPC.

Revenues by Source:

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Federal | \$484,871 |
| State | \$196,342 |
| Fees | \$ 17,811 |
| Local-County | \$ 60,862 |
| Local-Other | \$ 64,172 |
| TOTAL REVENUES | \$824,058 |

Revenues by Theme:

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Transportation Planning | \$426,783 |
| Natural Resources Planning | \$103,655 |
| Economic Development Planning | \$119,922 |
| Heritage Route Planning | \$ 70,840 |
| Local Services | \$102,858 |
| TOTAL | \$824,058 |

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The SWMPC is an Economic Development District of the Economic Development Administration to:

- Give technical assistance and support others in planning and implementing economic development projects that diversify and strengthen the district's economy
- Maintain economic and demographic databases and respond to requests from public and private users
- Support a local economic development process capable of meeting the planning, coordination and implementation requirements of the district

Advisory Input

- Continued discussions with Berrien County economic development director, County Administrator, and rail consultant on extending commuter rail into the County
- Participated in Wingspread conference with Regional Planning Organization directors from Indiana (NIRPC), Chicago, Milwaukee (SEWRPC), and Michigan (SWMPC) meet to discuss emerging issues for our shared region
- Facilitated and attended Tri-County Planners meeting
- Participated in Lake Michigan Academy with Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin Regional Planning Agencies
- Facilitated regional economic group meetings "360 Group"
- Attended Economic Summit hosted by South Haven Chamber of Commerce
- Participation in Cities of Promise meetings in Benton Harbor with focus on master planning, economic development, Safe Routes to School

Professional Services

- Maintained website pages devoted to economic development
- Submitted application for EDA supplemental funds
- Researched and replied to information requests
- Prepared Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Researched Census/LUCA assistance requests from local units of government throughout the region
- Solicited projects for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
- Met with People and Land representatives
- Participated in Michigan Association of Regions activities
- Toured *Staring Block*, an EDA funded kitchen incubator
- Assisted Partnership for Change representatives related to I 94 Corridor Development Project
- Attended National Association of Regional Councils Executive Director's Conference
- Attended MSU Land Policy Institute
- Participated in Michigan Economic Development Association seminars
- Served as the "Single Point of Contact" for Regional Clearinghouse review of grant applications of less than statewide impact

Planning that is

Credible,

Credentialed &

Connected.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Federal legislation requires State Departments of Transportation, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and public transportation operators in metropolitan areas to plan together. As the designated MPO for the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) and the Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS), the SWMPC, in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and member municipalities, develops and refines transportation plans and policies by analyzing social, economic, environmental, health, safety, welfare, and mobility impacts.

Member municipalities of TwinCATS include: the Cities of Bridgman, Benton Harbor, and St. Joseph, Villages of Shoreham, Stevensville, Michiana, and Grand Beach (satellite), and Townships of Benton, Lake, Lincoln, Royalton, Sodus, and St. Joseph.

Member municipalities of NATS include: the Cities of Buchanan and Niles, Village of Edwardsburg, and Townships of Bertrand, Buchanan, Howard, Milton, Niles, and Ontwa.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Fiscal Years 2008-2011

- Monitored funding and status of FY2008-2011 TIP projects and amendments
- Prepared and published FY08 Obligated Funds list

Unified Work Program (UWP)

- Developed and approved FY09 Unified Work Program (UWP)

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP) 2009-2035

- Submitted socioeconomic data to MDOT for travel demand model
- Met with MDOT staff and TwinCATS and NATS subcommittees to review network deficiencies
- Presented network deficiencies to TAC and Policy Committees
- Created Long Range Plan Goals and Objective subcommittee
- Presented Goals and Objectives to TAC and Policy Committees
- Public meetings for input on Goals and Objectives
- Presented draft goals and objectives to the public
- Created Table of Contents for 2009-2035 Plan
- Wrote text of the 2009-2035 LRP

Traffic Data

- Previewed and purchased traffic count database software
- Outreach to region to solicit traffic count data sites
- Collected traffic count data
- Populated SWMPC traffic count database with 2008 data

Asset Management

- PASER rated 50% Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren County Federal aid eligible roads
- PASER rated City of St. Joseph, Village of Baroda local roads and additional Van Buren roads

Staff Training

- Training on a range of topics including: Context Sensitive Solutions, Designing Healthy Livable Communities, Travel Demand Forecasting, TransCAD, Asset Management
- Participated in Michigan Transportation Planning Association

HERITAGE ROUTE PLANNING

The SWMPC provides expertise to two of Michigan's vital planning corridors. Because they are resources in heritage tourism, transportation, recreation, landscape preservation, and economic development, US-12 and I-69 corridors each engage in unique, collaborative planning processes. SWMPC provides direct planning assistance to both programs through coordination of projects and activities in the areas of interpretive planning, conservation, preservation tourism and economic development.

Statewide Heritage Trail Activities

- Preliminary planning for statewide Heritage Route website
 - Attended People, Land, and Stories conference at U of M
- Presentations:*

- Michigan Statewide Heritage Route conference
- Michigan Downtown Association
- Buchanan, Three Oaks & Niles Chamber of Commerce
- Buchanan Foundation meeting

US-12 Heritage Trail

- Articles published in *Motor Coach Magazine*, *Grand Rapids, Detroit Free Press*, *Great Guide Southwest Michigan*
- Completed, distributed and uploaded tri-fold brochure & Garage Sale rack card
- Produced video on becoming a historic heritage trail
- Attended Developing Destinations conference and Developing Stories workshop
- Explored partnership with Edward Lowe Foundation
- Researched funding matches for Scenic Byway Grant Award
- Developed tool for public to upload video, images and narrative to website
- Updated website content including video
- Partnered with Travel Michigan to utilize Michigan.Org
- Provided Google Analytics Report

I-69 Recreational Heritage Trail

- Purchased www.discoverI69.org & www.discoverI69.com
- Developed website content with video, audio, photography
- Organized, promoted and facilitated *Creating the I-69 Recreational Heritage Trail Story* Conference
- Presented Whole Measures planning tool to I-69 Team
- Created, distributed and tabulated survey on local support
- Researched green infrastructure projects for I-69 corridor
- Proposed process for documenting and interpreting restoration of Tekonsha Truck Stop property
- Created & produced video describing I-69 project
- Presented three new logos for consideration to I-69 Team
- Created and distributed CD's of I-69 Management Plan and Tekonsha Rest Area Plan

TRANSPORTATION *continued*

Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ)

- CMAQ process management and meeting preparations
- Compose CMAQ call for projects
- CMAQ mailings & program research

Public Transportation

- Conducted meetings with transit agencies from five counties, to purchase and implement a software product to assist in improving operations and coordination among transit and human service providers

SWMPC 2008 MEMBERS

OFFICERS

Chair: Victoria Chandler,

Berrien Citizen Representative

Vice Chair: Linda Preston

Cass Townships Representative

Secretary: Frances Sage,

Van Buren Citizen Representative

Treasurer: Donald Gast,

Berrien Citizen Representative

Alternate Treasurer: Yemi Akinwale,

Berrien Citizen Representative

BERRIEN COUNTY

Janet Clark, Citizen Representative

Agnes Conway, Supervisor, New Buffalo Township

Wilce Cooke, Mayor, City of Benton Harbor

Marge Durm-Hiatt, Alternate Supervisor, Niles Township

Tim Fenderbosch, Alternate Supervisor,

St. Joseph Township

Ron Ferguson, Benton Charter Township Supervisor

Richard Fintze, Citizen Representative

Juan Ganum, Alternate Mayor, City of Niles

Ron Griffin, St. Joseph Charter Township Supervisor

Walter Heritz, Citizen Representative (Planning)

Jon Hinkleman, County Commissioner

John Hodgson, Alternate Mayor, City of St. Joseph

Jesse Minks, Citizen Representative

Paul Pantaleo, Alternate Supervisor, Oronoko Township

Gloria Payne, Townships' Representative

Richard Remus, Citizen Representative

Donald Ryman, County Commissioner

Marletta Seats, County Commissioner

Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township Supervisor

Tracy Vines, Citizen Representative (Planning)

CASS COUNTY

Barb Wood Cook, Citizen Representative (Planning)

Alice LaHaie, Citizen Representative

Walter Lehmann, Townships' Representative

Robert Powers, Citizen Representative

Linda Preston, Townships' Representative

Johnie Rodebush, County Commissioner

James Sayer, Citizen Representative

James Snow, Alternate Mayor, City of Dowagiac

Robert Ziliak, County Commissioner

VAN BUREN COUNTY

Dorothy Appleyard, Mayor, City of South Haven

David Bly, Townships Representative

Dave Foerster, Citizen Representative

Don Hanson, County Commissioner

Dale Lewis, Citizen Representative

Jeff Radtke, Citizen Representative (Planning)

James Ray, County Commissioner

Daniel Ruzik, Supervisor, Antwerp Township

Mike Toth, County Commissioner

John Tapper, Townships Representative

POKAGON BAND OF POTAWATOMI INDIANS

John Miller, Tribal Chairman

NATURAL RESOURCES PLANNING

Natural resources have no particular regard for political borders.. Watershed boundaries, surface water run-off, critical habitat, are a few examples of these kinds of regional issues. The SWMPC is fundamentally regional and thus in a unique position to apply planning expertise to natural resources planning.

Education

- Produced Low Impact Development (LID) News for Galien, Paw Paw, Black, and Gun River Watersheds
- Provided educational materials to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II communities (fact sheets, newsletter articles, presentations, radio spots, etc)
- Spoke at Grand Rapids Water Festival on Watersheds and Water Quality
- Presented on Green Infrastructure, Water Quality and Low Impact Development at St. Joseph River Basin Commission Annual Meeting, Farming for the Future Workshop, Cass County Conservation District Board, Southwest Michigan Realtors Association Board, Berrien County Board of Commissioners, Lake Michigan Academy Forum, Pine Grove Township, Watervliet Township

Advisory Input

- Served on advisory committee for Friends of the St. Joe River to assist with strategic planning and board development
- Participated on the steering committees for Galien River Watershed and Black River Watersheds
- Participated on Statewide Low Impact Development Manual Development Committee
- Facilitated Paw Paw River Watershed steering committee and competed management plan
- Assisted with the creation of the Two Rivers Coalition—Alliance for the Black River and Paw Paw River Watersheds
- Partnered with Van Buren Conservation District on a Joint Information and Education Plan for the Black and Paw Paw River Watersheds
- Assisted with the adoption of a phosphorus fertilizer ban in Van Buren County
- Assisted Clyde Twp, Arlington Twp, Bangor City, Columbia Township, South Haven Township with master plan and zoning ordinance language to better protect water quality and natural resources

Professional Services

- Partnered with The Conservation Fund on Galien River Watershed Implementation project
- Partnered with the Friends of the St. Joe River on Green Infrastructure grant from AEP Heart of Cook
- Facilitated SMART (Southwest Michigan Alliance for Recreational Trails) covering 9 counties
- Partnered with Van Buren Conservation District on grant proposal for the Paw Paw River and Black River Watersheds
- Convened and facilitated IN-MI trail task force
- Assisted with grant writing for removal of the Watervliet Dam on the Paw Paw River

JOHN NEWCOMER

2008 WELCH-LACKEY AWARD