



The Quarterly

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN PLANNING COMMISSION

Planning that is Credible, Credentialed, and Connected

SWMPC

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Citizens Share Their Input on Conservation and Recreation in Southwest Michigan

In 2008, Michigan State University conducted a mail survey to gauge residents' opinions on conservation and recreation in the Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren county area. These results will be utilized by the SWMPC's Green Infrastructure program, **Growing Greener in Southwest Michigan**, to foster increased awareness of the connection between Green Infrastructure and prosperity.

The report, available on the SWMPC website, demonstrates the public's connection to the region. Residents have an appreciation for many natural areas and rural landscapes in the area. These places and landscapes have long been part of the area's rich agriculture and natural resource history. Residents expressed deep concern for the loss of these legacies brought on by residential and commercial development, the sale of farmland and declining quality of air, water, and resources for animals, birds, fish and other resource dependent wildlife.

*Learn more about
Growing Greener
in Southwest Michigan*

www.swmpc.org/growgreen.asp

Based on study results, the recommendations for action follow:

1. Ensure the incorporation of conservation and recreation issues into municipal planning processes and public outreach efforts.
2. Enhance marketing and communication of conservation and recreation issues by municipal and nonprofit conservation and recreation organizations.
3. Brand agricultural conservation and local food production and distribution, so residents and visitors are aware of the significance of this industry.
4. Move toward more recycling and energy efficient programs that reduce the human impact on green and open spaces (littering), water (fuel discharge), and air (carbon emission).
5. Market non-motorized transportation using trails and bike pathways. Continue to add trails and make connections to places where people live, work, and play.

SWMPC AWARDS



Susan Newcomer and family receive the Welch-Lackey award.

Regional Planners Honor Mr. John Newcomer

The SWMPC has selected John Newcomer as the 2008 Welch-Lackey Leadership Award recipient.

Chair Victoria Chandler honored Newcomer with the award *in memoriam* presented to his widow, Susan Newcomer. The SWMPC board recognized him as a member who exhibited a sense of service, leadership, and intergovernmental cooperation during his fourteen-year involvement with the Commission. Prior to his passing, in October 2007, Newcomer served as a Berrien County Citizen Representative to the SWMPC as well as a Baroda Township planning commissioner.

John Egelhaaf, SWMPC Executive Director, commented, "John raised the level of quality discourse among the entire Board. He was always intelligent, engaging, and good humored. We miss him dearly and can only imagine how much more those who were closest to him must feel about his passing. We are gratified that John dedicated so much of his valuable time to the Commission."

Susan Newcomer accepted the plaque in the company of her sons and other family members. She expressed appreciation for the recognition of her husband's service to the community.

The SWMPC presents the Welch-Lackey Leadership Award each year in honor of former Commissioners George A. Welch and William F. Lackey.

**For more information about these awards and past recipients please visit
www.swmpc.org/board.asp**

I-94 Development Corridor Partners Lauded for Cooperative Efforts

The SWMPC announced the selection of the I-94 Development Corridor Project for the 2009 Graham Woodhouse Intergovernmental Cooperation Award.

Chair Victoria Chandler presented award plaques to representatives of the four local units of government in two counties that share a common interest in the development of property along I-94. The City of Hartford, Hartford Township, the City of Watervliet, and Watervliet Charter Township, in Berrien and Van Buren counties, are cultivating a common development vision for 2,100 acres.

This process has achieved two major benchmarks. **First**, a Corridor Plan has been developed that captures the vision. **Second**, a First Steps Grant was applied for and awarded by the Partnerships for Change. The First Steps Grant has allowed the group to begin to explore the nuances of their partnership. When the First Steps process is complete, the next step is to create legally binding agreements and standards for the implementation of their vision.

Accepting plaques on behalf of their communities were Mayor Ted Johnson, City of Hartford; City Manager Michael Hart, City of Watervliet; Hartford Township Trustee Kurt Dowd, and Watervliet Charter Township Planning Commission and project consultant Cynthia LaGrow.

This award was established in 1987 to honor former Dowagiac Mayor, Graham Woodhouse and is presented annually for projects that exemplify cooperation by local units of government.

TRANSPORTATION

Nationally Recognized Speaker Coming To Kalamazoo

The 33rd annual Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MTPA) conference will be held July 14-17, 2009 at the Radisson Hotel in Kalamazoo, MI. Keynote speaker **Mark Fenton** will be featured on Thursday, July 16. Mr. Fenton is known as an energetic walker and talker. He is now a transportation, planning, and public health consultant and nationally recognized expert on walking for well-being. He is a vocal pedestrian advocate and authority on public health issues and the need for community, environmental, and public policy initiatives to encourage more walking and bicycling. He will present a morning keynote address to the conference, an after-lunch session about working with the media, and will then conduct a “walkabout” in the afternoon. The hands-on walk will illustrate what works and does not work in making a community more “Activity Friendly”.

Be a part of this exciting day by taking advantage of a special keynote speaker one-day option that the conference is offering. For only \$50.00, you will participate in all three Mark Fenton sessions and enjoy lunch with conference participants. Conference materials can be found at **www.mtpa-mi.org** or you may contact the SWMPC directly for registration information at (269) 925-1137 x 17.



Reconstruction crews have been working hard rebuilding Main Street/BL-94 in downtown Benton Harbor.

Road Ratings Happening in July

The SWMPC will be conducting road ratings during the month of July for Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties.

The ratings are based upon the monitoring of the surface defects along a road segment while driving the segment. The segment is assigned a rating between 1 to 10, with a value of 10 representing a new road and a 1 representing a failed road.

Representatives from SWMPC, MDOT, and county Road Commissions will conduct these ratings. If you would like to observe this process contact Nickolas Musson.

The dates for the ratings in each county are:

Cass July 7-10

Van July 13-17

Berrien July 27-31

Long Range Transportation Plans Approved

The Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS) and Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) Long Range Plans (LRP) have been approved. The Southwest Michigan Commission (SWMPC) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the NATS and TwinCATS regions. The MPO is responsible for convening the communities within the study areas and engaging them in a comprehensive transportation planning process.

The jurisdictions involved within the defined study areas collaborate to set regional priorities for all modes of movement in the transportation network. The Long Range Transportation Plan covers a twenty-five year period and is revised every four years.

For more information about the LRP please visit:

www.swmpc.org/nats.asp

www.swmpc.org/twincats.asp



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July

3rd SWMPC Offices Closed
8th 7:00 p.m. Two Rivers Coalition
 (Geneva Township Hall)
14th-17th MI Transportation Planning
 Association Conference (Kalamazoo)
20th 9:30 a.m. TwinCATS
21st Trails Webinar: "Bike Parking,
 Going Beyond Hoops"
23rd FOSJR Board Meeting
 (Three Rivers Library)
28th 1:30 p.m. NATS
31st 8:30 a.m. "How They Work:
 Maximizing Federal, Michigan
 Enhanced Rehab Tax Credits"
 (Buchanan)

August

4th Election Day
12th 7:00 p.m. Two Rivers Coalition
 (Geneva Township Hall)
17th 9:00 a.m. TwinCATS
25th 1:30 p.m. NATS
27th FOSJR Board Meeting
 (Three Rivers Library)

FOSJR=Friends of the St. Joe River
NATS=Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area
 Transportation Study meets in Niles
TwinCATS=Twin Cities Area
 Transportation Study meets in Benton Harbor

September

7th SWMPC Offices Closed
9th 7:00 p.m. Two Rivers Coalition
 (Geneva Township Hall)
15th 9:00 a.m. TwinCATS
15th Trails Webinar: "Taking Your Trail
 to the Next Level"
16th 12:00 p.m. Planning & Zoning
 Essentials (Benton Harbor)
23rd 1:30 p.m. NATS
24th FOSJR Board Meeting
 (Three Rivers Library)

www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp

2009 Board Meeting Schedule

SWMPC Full Commission Meeting

Location: Van Buren Conference Center-Lawrence, MI
 July 21, 2009 at 9:30 a.m.
 October 20, 2009 at 9:30 a.m.

SWMPC Administrative Committee Meeting

Location: Vincent Place Conference Room-Benton Harbor, MI
 September 15, 2009 at 9:30 a.m.
 December 15, 2009 at 9:30 a.m.