



The Quarterly

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Planning that is Credible, Credentialed, and Connected

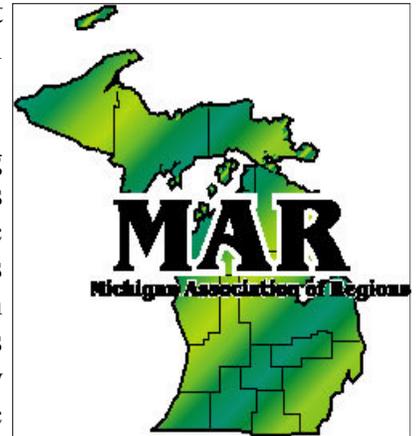
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Revisiting Region Statutes

The Michigan Association of Planning's Law Committee has been drafting Regional Planning Commission legislation since 2010 in an effort to refine the statutory support for agencies like the SWMPC. Why is it the right time to revisit Michigan's regulations for this level of government?



Intergovernmental service sharing among neighboring communities is one option for continuing vital public services at a lower cost. Governors past and present have focused on intergovernmental service sharing as an important underutilized opportunity for lower cost, more effective public service provision. There is great potential for the provision of more public services by regional planning commissions to some or all of their member communities. The two statutes, generally relied upon to provide shared services (the Regional Planning Act, 1945 PA 281, and the County or Regional Economic Development Commission Act, 1966 PA 46) offer very little guidance on how a region should be structured to assist multiple jurisdictions. Presently, it is very cumbersome to achieve this objective.

Alignment of regional service delivery boundaries used by state agencies and departments represents an opportunity to improve consistency and uniformity in communication, planning, and coordination. Today's circumstances lend themselves to reexamining the critical role that regional planning commissions can play between state and local governments on delivery of other regional services.

Regional planning commissions have been able to adapt, evolve, and survive in widely changing circumstances over time. This demonstrates their basic utility to local governments. To be more globally competitive, Michigan must seriously explore service sharing and coordinated state, regional, and local planning by revisiting and modernizing this current outdated institutional structure.

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TRANSPORTATION

What Moves You Berrien County?



ATTENTION - Berrien County Residents! What should our transportation system look like over the next 25 years? Should we have more access to trains, buses, and bikes? Where should we focus our transportation efforts in the region? The SWMPC would like to encourage anyone with an interest in TRANSPORTATION to attend either of the upcoming public input meetings being held to discuss transportation goals within the St. Joseph/Benton Harbor metro area and the Niles/Buchanan metro area. The public input meetings are an opportunity for people to help in the development of goals, objectives, and strategies regarding the direction of where transportation investments should occur over the next 25 years.

If you walk, ride a bike, drive a car, or take a bus, train, or airplane you are impacted by transportation planning. Almost all of the items you buy at a store are delivered by trucks, trains, barges, or air cargo. The transportation network in our region should be a reflection of our shared vision. This vision can only be understood if you get involved, learn how transportation planning works and **voice your opinion**.

Transportation planning helps set priorities for projects to be funded, determines how much money will go to transit and roads, and sets standards that will impact mobility for decades to come. Every urban area with a population of 50,000 people or more must have a metropolitan planning organization (MPO). The SWMPC is the designated MPO for the St. Joseph/Benton Harbor metro area (know by the acronym TWINCATS) and the Niles/Buchanan metro area (know by the acronym NATS) and is responsible for creating and writing the Long Range Transportation plan for both of the study areas. The purpose of developing the plan is to provide a management tool that guides local, regional, and state decision-makers in their development of strategies to meet identified transportation needs. These strategies address future land uses, economic development, traffic demands, public safety, health, and social needs.

Please share your thoughts with Suzann Flowers and Trevor Thomas at the public input meeting most convenient for you:

Wednesday, October 12, 2011

5:30 - 7:00pm

Michigan Works - Benton Harbor

499 W. Main St

Benton Harbor, MI 49022

Wednesday, October 19, 2011

6:00 - 7:30pm

Niles District Library - Community Room

620 E. Main St.

Niles, MI 49120

*If members of the public cannot attend either meeting, you can also give comments at the regularly scheduled Twin CATS (October 17, 2011) and NATS (October 25, 2011) Committee Meetings. Visit us on the web at www.swmpc.org/2013lrp.asp

9-County Non-Motorized Project Update

The SWMPC is completing the final stages of the 9-County Non-Motorized Transportation Project. The plan document is available for download at www.swmpc.org/smart_plan.asp. The mapping portion of the project is almost complete with graphic design work and final edits in process. SWMPC will make an announcement when the map is printed and ready for distribution. This project could not have been possible without the support of agencies throughout the 9-county region. If you would like to join the SMART email list please contact Suzann Flowers at flowerss@swmpc.org.

MASTER PLANS

City of South Haven & Ontwa Township

Master Plans are the fundamental documents outlining the future of communities across southwest Michigan. As is legally required, the SWMPC receives notice when a community's plan is available for public comment. The City of South Haven in (Van Buren County), and Ontwa Township in (Cass County), have recently made their draft plans available for public comment. We encourage each of our regional partners and board members to spend time with these plans. To aid you, the planners at the SWMPC have briefly described the goals and objectives of each of the new Community Master Plans below.

The City of South Haven's goals and objectives are divided into three sections.

-The first is a wide ranging vision that outlines many of South Haven's strengths and catalogues some of the specific programs and assets that have benefited from South Haven's proactive planning.

-The second section is a collection of goals and objectives with action steps. The eight goals of economic development, growth management, high quality city management, maintaining the small town character, strengthening the downtown area, and providing recreational opportunities that appeal to both local residents and tourists alike, and natural resources project, are accompanied by objectives that are too numerous to address in this newsletter.

-The final section addresses city policies and provides concrete policies to enact the vision and goals of the plan. A future land use map is included in the plan.



City of South Haven

Ontwa Township has three goals relating to the use and protection of green spaces in their community. Support for sustainable and profitable agricultural practices is one. The identification of prime farming areas to be protected from future development is another. The third is to protect the valued woodlands, open lands, drainage network, healthy wetlands and lakes, natural character, and wildlife habitat areas. The plan endorses strategies to improve these features. Water quality preservation is emphasized with objectives to safeguard the township's water resources. Residential, commercial, and industrial land uses are addressed separately and land owners are urged to use buffer zones along roads and streams. The township promotes the protection of existing building stock with active code enforcement. Market studies are advocated to determine what businesses the community can support. Funding opportunities for public amenities like recreational trails and parks are a priority. The desire to work with the Corridor Improvement Authority and other planning efforts with near-by municipalities are also expressed. A future land use map is also provided in the plan.

Please take some time and review the master plan documents. These plans are the framework for development in our region and regional input is encouraged.

Ontwa Township's Master Plan:

<http://www.swmpc.org/ontwatownship.asp>

City of South Haven's Master Plan:

<http://www.swmpc.org/southhaven.asp>

2012 Graham Woodhouse Nominations

The SWMPC is seeking nominations for the 2012 Graham Woodhouse award due December 1, 2011. The award is presented annually for projects that exemplify intergovernmental cooperation by local units of government. Download the application at:

www.swmpc.org/board.asp



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*The SWMPC Mission is to promote a sustainable high quality of life through
 facilitation of sound planning and decision making*

Save Paper By Receiving Our Newsletter Electronically: email mooret@swmpc.org

Calendar of Events 2011

October

- 12th** 5:30 p.m. TwinCATS/NATS Long Range Goal Development Workshop (Benton Harbor)
- 12th** 7 p.m. Two Rivers Coalition Meeting (Bangor)
- 14th** 8 a.m. Friends of the St. Joe River Workshop (Elkhart, IN)
- 17th** 9:30 a.m. TwinCATS monthly meeting**
- 19th** 6 p.m. TwinCATS/NATS Long Range Goal Development Workshop (Niles)
- 25th** 1:30 p.m. NATS monthly meeting*

November

- 8th** Election Day
- 9th** 7 p.m. Two Rivers Coalition Meeting (Bangor)
- 11th** SWMPC Offices Closed
- 21st** 9:30 a.m. Twin CATS monthly meeting**
- 22nd** 1:30 p.m. NATS monthly meeting*
- 24-25th** SWMPC Offices Closed

*NATS Meeting 1345 E. Main Street, Niles, MI

December

- 1st** Graham Woodhouse Award nominations due
- 14th** 7 p.m. Two River Coalition Meeting (Bangor)
- 19th** 9:30 a.m. Twin CATS monthly meeting**
- 23rd & 26th** SWMPC Offices closed
- 27th** 1:30 p.m. NATS monthly meeting*
- 31st** SWMPC Office closes at noon

**TwinCATS 1123 Territorial Road, Benton Harbor, Michigan 49022

For more information on events visit: www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp

2011 SWMPC Board Meeting Schedule

SWMPC Full Commission Meeting

*Location: Southwestern Michigan College
 Mathews Room West-Dowagiac, MI
 October 18, 2011 9:30 a.m.*

SWMPC Administrative Committee Meeting

*Location: Vincent Place Conference Room
 Benton Harbor, MI
 December 20, 2011 9:30 a.m.*