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Contents

**Pg. 2– Regional Data & US 12
Garage Sale**

**Pg. 3– Transportation Meeting
& Award Nominations
Due**

The Quarterly

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Planning that is Credible, Credentialed, and Connected

New Websites Support Healthy Choices!

Find great local fresh food and places to be active with these two new websites! Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and the Be Healthy Berrien partnership launched two new websites, www.EatLocalBerrien.org and www.BeActiveBerrien.org, this past month. These websites will provide the community with the resources to encourage buying locally grown produce and physical activity in all shapes and forms.

The two websites are a free internet source for users to find fresh produce and places to exercise near their home. Users are able to view a map with all the locations in the County for local produce and physical activity areas, as well as an option to search by distance from any address. The search capacity includes the ability to search by anything from blueberries to whether the location has handicap accessibility to u-pick farms.



The www.EatLocalBerrien.org website home page.

Behind both these websites are two extensive inventories containing information on each location, such as hours, seasons available, what produce is available at a farm stand, or what physical activities you can do at a certain park. You can also make a “Shopping List” on Eat Local Berrien, and a “To-Do List” on Be Active Berrien. These lists can include any or all of the locations the user chooses as a place they want to visit. The user can then print, email, save or share their list on social media.

The State of the Region

Executive Director John Egelhaaf reported on what current data means for Southwest Michigan during a forum at Fernwood Botanical Garden. The presentation that took place on August 23, 2013 was sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Berrien and Cass Counties.

The State of Region Report compares Southwest Michigan to other parts of the state and country on benchmarks such as population density, economic strength, personal prosperity, community well-being, lifelong learning, and the role of the government.

Since 2000 Southwest Michigan has seen an overall decline in population as did the rest of the state. Cass county is the exception with a small increase. The movement of our population was studied in the Report. Data was provided to help understand where

our new residents came from and where departing residents migrated to.

The area's economic vitality was another focus of the presentation. The area has suffered from the same recessionary forces as the rest of the country when it comes manufacturing and housing, he said. Even with that, manufacturing is still the largest employment sector in Cass and Van Buren Counties. It is second behind the health care industry in Berrien County.

Agricultural data suggest we are doing well in terms of the amount of farm acreage and the overall value of crops. However, there are significant opportunities to rebuild the agricultural value chain within the region.

The Commission's full Report will be released soon and will be offered to local governments and the general public.

US 12 Heritage Route Garage Sale

Another great US 12 Garage Sale took place August 9th-11th, 2013. Many homes, organizations and businesses across US 12 participated in Michigan's Longest Garage Sale.

US-12, the nation's second oldest highway, stretches along an old Native American trail from Detroit to New Buffalo on the state's southwest coast. It is one of 16 Michigan State Scenic Byways, designated by the State Legislature to preserve the state's historic highways. Since the sale started in 2003, it has taken place every August during the second weekend.

Michigan's Longest Garage Sale continues to grow in popularity with people in Michigan and the surrounding states. "This sale has become a destination with people from around the Midwest," says Kim Gallagher Project Manager of the US 12 Heritage Trail Project. "Everyone involved in this sale is helping to create a unique travel experience for people interested in history, bargains, scenery and making connections with real people who live in the towns that dot Michigan's US 12 Heritage Trail."

For more information about Michigan's Longest Garage Sale and other attractions visit the US 12 Heritage Trail website at www.us12heritagetrail.org and like us on [Facebook US 12 Heritage Trail](#)



A garage sale located in Buchanan just off US-12 hwy.



We would like to thank our contract employee Carolyn Sundquist

As a contract employee with SWMPC and the Be Healthy Berrien Initiative, she created the two websites featured on the first page. She is a graduate of Michigan State University where she studied Journalism and Environmental Studies. We thank her for her hard work on this important project! You can contact her at csundquist4@gmail.com.

A Joint NATS and TwinCATS MPO Meeting

The usual monthly meetings for the two Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) were combined when members of the Niles/Buchanan Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS) and the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) met on Monday, September 30th at the Berrien Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) in Berrien Springs, MI. The purpose of holding the joint meeting was to facilitate collaboration between committee members and to learn about region-wide transportation issues.



John Egelhaaf presenting to the group.

The meeting kicked off with SWMPC Executive Director John Egelhaaf presenting an award to Robert Judd of the City of St. Joseph in recognition for his years of service to the TwinCATS Policy Committee.

Robert Judd is retiring from his TwinCATS duties at the end of October.

Dan Dalton of the KFH Group presented on progress in the ongoing study to figure out ways that the four Berrien County transit agencies can coordinate to provide more reliable and efficient service. Dalton responded to many questions and concerns from members of the group.

Mark Harbison of MDOT Local Agency Programs presented on the project application process and gave many helpful tips to the agencies present on how to ensure that they receive the funds they programmed and anticipated. In particular, agencies were instructed on how to get their project plans submitted early!

Finally, Chris Dingman of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) presented on freight movements in Michigan. FHWA is compiling a great deal of new data in response to requirements of the current transportation bill, MAP-21. The data will be accessible to MPOs. Dingman also showed how businesses are using their own data to help them make more cost-effective decisions when it comes to freight. In the Southwest Michigan Region, for example, Daltile and Whirlpool are sharing freight containers so that both companies save on transportation expenses. For more information, please visit www.swmpc.org/nats.asp or www.swmpc.org/twincats.asp.

Adapting to Climate Change and Variability. A report for the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study 2013



TwinCATS TAC & Policy met jointly with a special topic on the Climate Change Final Report presented by Michigan State University. This took place on August 19th, 2013 in Benton Harbor, MI. To view the Final report or to learn more visit www.swmpc.org/climatechange.asp.

2013 Graham Woodhouse Award Nominations Due

Nominations for the 2013 Graham Woodhouse Award Nominations are due **December 1, 2013**. The award is presented annually for projects that exemplify intergovernmental cooperation by local units of government. Anyone may nominate a project which includes at least two government agencies with any number of non-profits and/or other businesses also involved. The project should be completed, or at least some phase of a multi-stage program completed.

Nominations may be sent by email or fax. Printed material may be delivered in person or mailed. Download the application at:

www.swmpc.org/gwhistory.asp

Send to:

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Questions? Call Terri Moore 269-925-1137 x 20



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

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Calendar of Events 2013

<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>December</u>
10-11th GreenTown Michiana Conference, Located in South Bend. 21st 9:30 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg** 22nd 1:30 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg*	11th SWMPC Office Closed 18th 9:30am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg** 26th 1:30 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg* 28-29th SWMPC Office Closed	1st Graham Woodhouse Award Nominations Due 16th 9:30am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg** 17th 1:30 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg* 24-25th SWMPC Office Closed 31st SWMPC Office Closed (afternoon only)

*NATS Meeting 1345 E. Main Street, Niles, MI **TwinCATS Meeting 1123 Territorial Road, Benton Harbor, MI

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

2013 SWMPC Board Meeting Schedule

SWMPC Full Commission Meetings
*Location: Van Buren Conference Center
 490 South Paw Paw Street, Lawrence, MI*

October 15, 2013 9:30 a.m.

SWMPC Administrative Committee Meetings
*Location: Vincent Place Conference Room
 185 East Main St. Benton Harbor, MI*

December 17, 2013 9:30 a.m.