



The Quarterly

SWMPC
376 West Main Street,
Suite 130
Benton Harbor, MI 49022
Phone: (269) 925-1137
www.swmpc.org
www.facebook.com/swmpc

Call for Transportation Projects for 2017-2020

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is pleased to announce the Call for Transportation Projects for 2017-2020 for our metropolitan planning organizations in the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph area and the Niles-Buchanan area. This Call for Projects is intended to program federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STP) program dollars for projects that improve the transportation network. STP funds can be spent on a wide variety of activities including road repair and preservation, sidewalk installation and upgrading, bicycle route improvements, streetscaping elements, road beautification, and environmental mitigation activities.

The Benton Harbor-St. Joseph MPO is projected to receive approximately \$871,925 per year between 2017-2020, and the Niles-Buchanan-Cass MPO is scheduled to receive \$518,608 per year during that time. These funds pay for construction, with a local match equal to 18.15% of the construction cost required.

To apply for funds, an agency must qualify under Michigan's Public Act 51. Eligible entities include incorporated cities and villages, County Road Commissions, and public transit agencies. Townships must apply through its Road Commission. Members from every Act 51 agency have already received a copy of the application to fill out.

Over the next two months, your elected and appointed officials will be making decisions about which projects

to fund using these federal dollars from 2017-2020. Applications for the funding are due February 8, 2016. Funding decisions will be based on maximizing the value of investments, the readiness and commitment of local agencies, and improving the transportation system for all users.

This is your opportunity to let your community leaders and us know what improvements you would like to see to the transportation network; from more sidewalks and bike lanes to better roads and bridges; from public transit that takes you to more places to safety improvements on your roads. For contact information of your local officials, please contact Transportation Planner Gautam Mani at manig@swmpc.org or 269-925-1137 x1524.



We invite members of the public to participate in our MPO meetings on January 25th beginning at 9 AM at St. Joseph City Council Chambers, and January 26th beginning at 1:00 PM at the Niles City Council Chambers/Fire Station. SWMPC will be holding public engagement sessions in February and March.

For a funding application and other information pertaining to the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph area, please check the following link: www.swmpc.org/tcats1720tip.asp. For a funding application and other information pertaining to the Niles-Buchanan Area, please check the following link: www.swmpc.org/nats1720tip.asp. Stay tuned to these pages for more information as projects are selected and funding decisions are made.

Please contact Transportation Planner Gautam Mani at manig@swmpc.org or 269-925-1137 x1524 or Transportation Planner Kim Gallagher at gallagherk@swmpc.org or 269-925-1137 x1518.

Van Pool Grant Opportunity

Do you need or know someone that needs a reliable way to get to work?



What is a Vanpool Grant Opportunity?

A vanpool is a group of 4 to 15 people/employees who commute together on a regular basis in a van. The 2016 demonstration Vanpool program has been established to achieve one simple goal: to provide entry level workers who are enrolled in Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) programs with safe, affordable vans they can use to drive themselves and other DHS clients to their place of employment at no cost to them! This is a free program if you qualify!

What are the benefits of Vanpool?

Free reliable transportation to work! All fuel costs, maintenance costs, insurance costs and van rental costs for the van are covered by this grant! There is no cost to you! This is a great opportunity for a reliable way to get to and from work!

How do you learn if you qualify?

- 1) To qualify for the vanpool, riders must be an active member on an open DHS public assistance case – FAP, Medicaid, Cash Assistance, etc.
- 2) There needs to be a minimum of four vanpool members who meet the eligibility requirements to qualify for the grant.
- 3) Riders have to be 18 years of age or older to qualify.
- 4) Drivers must meet certain requirements (must have clean driving record, must be 25 years of age or older, must be a Michigan resident, & no more than one accident in past 12 months).
- 5) Have a volunteer driver that works at the same location (doesn't have to meet DHS requirements if no other driver qualifies)
- 6) The riders must live in close proximity to one another or along the route traveled to work.
- 7) Drivers/riders must work at the same/close locations and have similar work hours/shifts.

We need the employee or employer to contact us to learn more about this exciting free opportunity! For more information or to register for this service please call Alexis Vertalka at 248-470-8534 or email at alexis.vertalka@vride.com today to find out if you can start a free van pool today! To learn more visit: www.mywaythere.org/vanpoolgrant.asp

2015 Graham Woodhouse Award Nominations Due

Nominations for the 2015 Graham Woodhouse Award Nominations are due **April 1st, 2016**. 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. Printed material may be delivered in person or mailed. Download the application at: www.swmpc.org/gwhistory.asp

Send to:

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
376 West Main Street, Suite 130 Benton Harbor, MI 49022
Email: rosep@swmpc.org

Questions? Call Patrice Rose 269-925-1137 x 1520

Winter Water Quality Tips for Southwest Michigan

With the winter weather here it is a great time to stay indoors with family and enjoy the beauty of the season as the snow begins to fall. It is easy to forget about ways to protect our local waterways when it seems everything is frozen!

However, it is important to remember that streams and rivers continue to flow and the responsibility to maintain a healthy ecosystem does not end in the winter.

So, with winter here, consider the following tips to improve water quality in your local streams, rivers and Lake Michigan:

- ◆ Consider using **non-toxic de-icing substances** to control ice. Chemical de-icers can be hazardous to your pets, birds, fish, trees, shrubs, and the environment. Chemical de-icers on driveways can pollute surface waters and groundwater through the soil. Consider natural alternatives such as biodegradable cat litter, sand, or fireplace ash.
- ◆ To reduce your use of de-icer chemicals, use physical methods such as snow shovels, ice crackers, and brooms to clear snow from your sidewalk, porch, or driveway.
- ◆ **Winterize your vehicle** by checking your air filter, fluid levels, windshield wipers, and tires for tread wear and proper inflation. Fix any leaks as oil, antifreeze and other fluids can pollute our local waterways. Ensuring your vehicle is ready for winter weather will keep you safe on the road and our waterways clean.
- ◆ If you have a wood-burning fireplace, **save your ashes** in a tin instead of throwing them away. Cold wood ashes can be mixed in your compost heap to create a valuable soil amendment that provides nutrients to your garden.



Winter is a special time to enjoy Michigan's unique water resources. Do your part this winter to ensure wildlife in and around our local streams and lakes will thrive in years to come.

- Learn more at: www.swmpc.org/what_can_i_do.asp



Productive Lands, Cleaner Water Workshop

On Wednesday, January 27th, 2016 a free informative workshop, open to the public, will take place at the MTEC Building (Room 134), 400 Klock Road, Benton Harbor, Michigan from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm. Plan to attend if you farm or are interested in our local streams, rivers, and Lake Michigan. Each attendee will receive a free soil testing kit valued at \$16 and entered in a drawing for a door prize. Morning refreshments will be served. The event is free but **registration is required**. Call the Berrien Conservation District at 269-471-9111, x3 by Monday, January 25th, to reserve your spot!

Learn more at: www.swmpc.org/oxcreek.asp



Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

376 West Main Street, Suite 130 • Benton Harbor, MI 49022-3651
 www.swmpc.org • (269) 925-1137

*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 rosep@swmpc.org

Calendar of Events 2016

SWMPC

K. John Egelhaaf,
 Executive Director
egelhaafj@swmpc.org

Patrice Rose,
 Administrative Assistant
rosep@swmpc.org

Marcy Colclough,
 Senior Planner
colcloughm@swmpc.org

Kim Gallagher,
 Senior Planner
gallagherk@swmpc.org

Gautam Mani,
 Associate Planner
manig@swmpc.org

Kris Martin,
 Associate Planner
kmartin@swmpc.org

Jill Plescher,
 GIS Specialist
plescherj@swmpc.org

Onsite Consultant

Debra Panozzo,
 Mobility Consultant
panozzod@swmpc.org

January	February	March
18 th SWMPC Office Closed	15 th SWMPC Office Closed	21 st 9:00 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg**
25 th 9:00 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg**	22 nd 9:00 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg**	22 nd 1:00 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg*
26 th 1:00 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg*	23 rd 1:00 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg*	25 th SWMPC Office Closed in Afternoon
27 th 8:30 am Productive Lands, Cleaner Water		

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

**TwinCATS Meeting location: Kinexus , 499 W Main St, Benton Harbor, MI 49022
 Anchor Rooms A+B

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

SWMPC Board Meeting Schedule

SWMPC Full Commission Meetings	SWMPC Administrative Committee Meetings
<i>Location: Lake Township Hall, 3220 Shawnee, Bridgman, MI</i>	<i>Location: SWMPC Conference Room Benton Harbor, MI</i>
January 26, 2016 9:30 am	March 15, 2016 9:30 am
April 19th, 2016 Location TBA	June 14, 2016 9:30 am
	September 13, 2016 9:30 am