

2011 ANNUAL REPORT



*For the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
from January 1 to December 31, 2011*

July 2012

FROM THE CHAIR...

From the perspective of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, the work of building for the future always begins with a thorough analysis of where we are and where we have been. Whenever new US Census data becomes available the SWMPC gets to work to understand what the new data says about southwest Michigan. In 2011 we have taken a deep dive into the 2010 Census data and are building a new profile of the region. The product of this work will be graphically rich and will seek to translate the stories that the data is telling us. We look forward to the release of our regional report in 2012.

In 2011, the SWMPC continued to diversify our work as we responded to the needs of our region. This annual report is a brief compilation of our work in 2011. If you are not familiar with the SWMPC, we hope that this report will encourage you to get acquainted with us. For those who are already familiar with us, we appreciate your collaboration and we thank you for the part you played in another rewarding year for the Commission.

*Sincerely,
Jeff Radtke, Chair 2012*

SWMPC 2011 STAFF

K. John Egelhaaf Executive Director	Christina Pippin Mobility Consultant
Marcy Colclough Senior Planner	Anna Rahtz Associate Planner
Kimberly Gallagher Senior Planner	Trevor Thomas Associate Planner
Jill Plescher GIS Specialist	Nancy Perry Business Manager
Matt Aslesen Associate Planner	Terri Moore Administrative Assistant
Suzann Flowers Associate Planner	Mark Gallagher Traffic Data Supervisor
Kris Martin Program Assistant	Linda Douglas Traffic Data Assistant

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. A 1968 order by then-governor George W. Romney enabled planning regions in Michigan.

Resolutions of the Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren County Boards of Commissioners officially formed the SWMPC in 1973. 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 discuss regional concerns. The SWMPC addresses issues and administers programs that its membership deems appropriate and which are in keeping with locally established area-wide planning and development goals.

For more information: www.swmpc.org

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Federal Funding Requirements

SWMPC developed a Title VI Non-Discrimination Plan which describes the actions taken in support of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, as well as procedures in place if a complaint ever be filed. Specifically, Title VI provides that "no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Amendments have been added to include sex, age, creed, and disability. Although initially requested by MDOT, the SWMPC document serves to cover all our currently federally funded programs and is a general guideline to compliance:

www.swmpc.org/transportation.asp

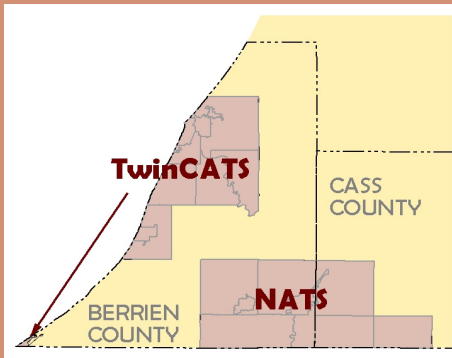
Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS)

Cities: Bridgman, Benton Harbor, St. Joseph

Townships: Benton, Lake, Lincoln, Royalton, Sodus, St. Joseph

Villages: Shoreham, Stevensville, Grand Beach, Michiana

(Satellites, part of Michigan City Urbanized Area)



Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS)

(Michigan portion of the South Bend Urbanized Area)

Cities: Buchanan, Niles

Townships: Buchanan, Howard, Milton, Niles, Ontwa, Bertrand

Village: Edwardsburg

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are responsible for a process that is cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing and that encompasses all modes of transportation. The SWMPC coordinates the two MPO areas shown **at left** in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and member municipalities.

TwinCATS and NATS completed the following documents, which can be viewed at www.swmpc.org/twincats_docs.asp and www.swmpc.org/nats_docs.asp:

- Unified Work Programs of tasks for the year ahead
- Annual Reports of activities completed
- Public Participation Plan of policies and practices to involve the public in the transportation development process (updated every four years and reviewed annually)
- Conducted NATS member survey evaluating progress of public participation efforts and presented results

Long Range Transportation Plan

Work continued on the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) which provides a region-wide vision to meet transportation needs for over twenty years in advance. There are many aspects of this document that are updated on a regular basis. Two public input meetings were held regarding the development of the 2013-2040 LRTP. Outreach included engaging high school students and teachers in this process. Participation is welcome at www.swmpc.org/2013lrp.asp.

Asset Management

SWMPC Traffic Engineering Staff inventoried and rated approximately 900 miles of federal aid eligible roads throughout the region, and the complete ratings of local roads in Benton Harbor, Berrien Springs, Buchanan, New Buffalo, and St. Joseph. Local asset management plans have begun with the cities of Benton Harbor and New Buffalo, with the goal of streamlining their road maintenance efforts and becoming more cost effective.

Staff conducted approximately 120 **traffic counts**, uploaded the data to the SWMPC website and reported to MDOT.



TRANSPORTATION MODE FOCUS: BIKING AND WALKING

SWMPC continues to advance transportation options as part of an integrated network of bike lanes, trails, sidewalks and rails.

Walk & Roll Twin CATS is an initiative of local governments and the public to determine the needs for pedestrians and cyclists in the Twin Cities area. The final plan is included in the current Long Range Transportation Plan, and it is now in the implementation phase. Find out more at www.swmpc.org/walkbiketwincats.asp.

Southwest Michigan Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and Map

Funded by MDOT, this project built on public input to create a comprehensive vision in support of non-motorized transportation in nine SW Michigan counties. The data gathered during the plan development process was used to revise the 2005 map and the new publication is available at local bike shops and at www.swmpc.org/smart_plan.asp.

Non-Motorized policy and infrastructure planning included the following activities:

- Coordinated with Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance on **Complete Streets** workshops.
- Drafted a **Bike to Work Week** resolution and attained the approval of 20 municipalities.
- Held seven **Bicycle safety workshops**
- Researched impacts and developed strategies for addressing **climate change** in the area.



SWMPC participated in the West Michigan Passenger Rail Collaborative (**Westrain**) in support of continued access and promotion of passenger rail.



TRANSPORTATION MODE FOCUS: TRANSIT PLANNING AND MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

SWMPC fosters livable communities by ensuring public transportation and mobility options are accessible, integrated and efficient. SWMPC continued implementation of the Berrien County Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan. Working with the Berrien County Transportation Coalition, SWMPC staff developed the following solutions to barriers that were identified in the plan:

MyWayThere:

Created and launched an accessible “One Stop” website called www.MyWayThere.org. The site offers mobility resources and tools for travel within and outside the region. The site is targeted to seniors, people with disabilities, people with low income, veterans, and Tribal citizens.

Travel Training Video:

Partnered with the Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) to create a video that was released in October 2011 to various media outlets – Comcast, YouTube, MyWayThere.org and Facebook.

Regional Reduced Fare Card:

Staff led an effort to create and launch a Regional Reduced Fare Card Program to provide people with disabilities and seniors a more seamless travel experience in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties.

Ridership Analysis: Partnered with TCATA and conducted a detailed ridership analysis to improve performance, availability and accessibility of transportation for seniors and people with disabilities.

Transit Development Studies:

Staff assisted in the development of the Niles-Dial-a-Ride Transportation Development Plan by providing consultants with data and recommendations for the long term sustainability of the service.

Berrien County Consolidation Feasibility Study:

SWMPC staff continued to work with KFH consultants and local stakeholders by facilitating meetings and providing data and technical assistance for the study.

HERITAGE ROUTE PLANNING

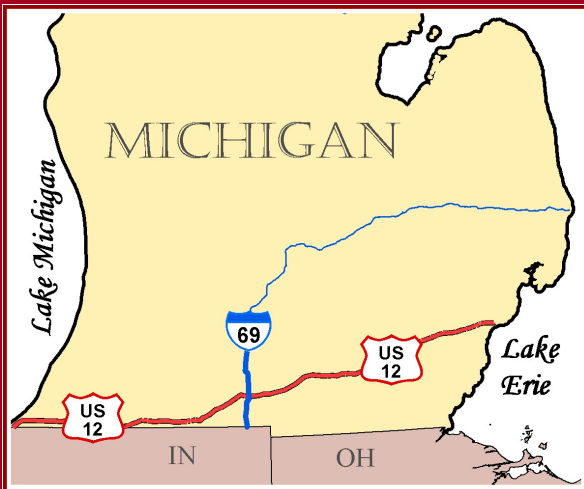
US 12 Heritage Trail

The website was enhanced to encourage interaction between visitors and community members. Website traffic increased by 12% to 21,200, of which more than half were new or unique visitors.

www.us12heritagetrail.org



US 12 Garage Sale participants entered key facts into an online form, which staff uploaded to an interactive online map and a printable list of addresses for the event. Over 435 people posted sale information on the site, which helped develop interest. Print publications, television stations, other websites, social media and word of mouth also contributed to spreading the word about "Michigan's Longest Garage Sale."



Heritage Routes Administered by SWMPC

- **US-12 Historic Heritage Route**

A 212 mile network of interdependent communities whose concerted actions reflect their commitment to protect and conserve the unique and inherent natural, historic and cultural resources that are the foundation upon which they will build and maintain a diverse, prosperous and sustainable economy.

- **I-69 Recreational Heritage Route**

A two-county, eighty-mile storybook telling stories about the connections between people and the land.

Among stories uploaded to the website:



I was thoroughly surprised Friday when SO MANY people stopped at our farm in Saline and said they were "doing the whole 212 miles". Several said it was part of their vacation. Some said they do the trek

every year. One couple drove from the west side of the state the day before, stayed in a motel and worked their way back home starting with our sale.

Other US 12 Activities:

Efforts to add US 12 to US Bike Route system continued.

Saline partnered with *Michigan Main Street* to organize a downtown revitalization campaign called "Historic Route 12 to Main Street"



Information on bike trails, waterways and traffic data for communities along US 12 and I-69 was collected to assist in production of the Southwest Michigan Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and Map.

I-69 Recreational Route

Press ready articles were developed and distributed to various media outlets promoting these experiences:

Locavore Tour features local sources of food including farm stands, U-picks, meat producers & processors, and restaurants.

Amish Tour features cultural sites such as farms, woodworkers, bulk food & grocery and bakeries.

Michigan Heritage Routes

(Branch and Calhoun Counties)

- I-69 (highlights between Coldwater & Marshall)
- US 12 (Coldwater)
- BL 94/Territorial Road (Marshall)
- Recreation opportunities: golfing, boating, fishing, hiking, camping

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Economic Development District

The US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) has designated SWMPC as an Economic Development District (EDD). The EDA Planning and Local Technical Assistance Program calls for regional collaboration, entrepreneurialism, and maintaining a worker pipeline. In addition to the 2011 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update, SWMPC advocated for the region in a variety of larger economic development initiatives:

Southwest Michigan First Regional Partners

With emphasis on regional partnership from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Governor Rick Snyder, area planning professionals improved coordination with the counties of Berrien, Cass, Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Branch, St. Joseph, and Calhoun Counties. Meeting monthly, goals and objectives have been created to prioritize aspects business growth.

Stronger Economies Together

This program is led by Cornerstone Business Alliance and Michigan State University Extension to target Southwest Michigan with a more inclusive view of developing our regional economy, fully embracing tourism and supporting other emerging sectors.

Manufacturing Forum

Lake Michigan College and Michigan Works! Created a training plan to increase qualified tool and die workers. SWMPC has participated in the Forum in anticipation of new public infrastructure needed to support Southwest Michigan's manufacturing cluster.

Data Extract

Since its inception, SWMPC has created a Data Extract of regional information following each US Census. With 2010 Census information now available, SWMPC staff began work on a new edition with an added emphasis on presenting important regional information in an easily understandable format. It will contain visualizations and carefully selected comparisons drawing on additional sources such as the American Community, the IRS, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the US Department of Agriculture, the Center for Disease Control, and the US Geological Survey.

OF NOTE —

- *SWMPC serves on the Board for the Michigan's Great Southwest Sustainable Business Forum.*
- *SWMPC food hub activity included collaboration with practitioners in 6 states, the City of Chicago, MI Dept. of Ag. and the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems.*
- *SWMPC presented an EDA Community Economic Adjustment Program (CEAP)*



In early 2011 the SWMPC took a major lead in Venture Quest 2011. The business plan competition held its award ceremony in on May 31st. First place went to the team building consulting firm Horse Play. Second place went to local web content producers 80/94 Media. Retro RV manufacturer Paradise Coast received third place.

LOCAL SERVICES PLANNING

- Van Buren County Senior Services Strategic Plan
- Secured the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant for North Lake Park in Lincoln Twp and Lakeshore Rotary for improvements.
- Technical assistance to Benton Charter Township and Solar Systems Incorporated, a solar panel manufacturer hoping to relocate in SW Michigan.
- Technical services to Van Buren County Shared Services Study
- Review complete streets policy for Berrien County Health Department/ City of Benton Harbor draft of complete streets ordinance
- Participation in the Niles 11th Street Corridor Steering Committee

NATURAL RESOURCES PLANNING

Water and natural resources are of major environmental, social and economic value and SWMPC brings local, state and federal partners together to address these issues.

WATERSHEDS

St. Joseph River

SWMPC continues to serve on a bi-state **Wetland Partnership** which was formed to increase wetland protection and restoration in the St. Joseph River Watershed. This project is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency. Outreach and education efforts to landowners and municipalities are planned for 2012.



35 workshop participants, from both Indiana and Michigan, visited road/stream crossings to discuss solutions.

In partnership with the Friends of the St. Joe River and others, SWMPC co-hosted ***Reducing the Impacts of Road Stream Crossings & Dams in the St. Joseph River Watershed*** workshop. The results of a fish migration barrier inventory and prioritization process for the watershed were presented. The negative effects of dams and road/stream crossings have on local stream ecology and hydraulics were explored. SWMPC presented funding options and building partnerships to improve water quality by repairing road stream crossings and removing dams. SWMPC assisted the Van Buren and Berrien County Road Commissions to secure funding to replace problem road stream crossings and improve water quality.

SWMPC is facilitating the **Hickory Creek Watershed Partnership**, which includes representatives from Stevensville, Lincoln Township, St. Joseph Township, St. Joseph City and more. The Berrien County Drain Commissioner and Road Commission have been involved in this effort. The group has conducted a creek clean-up and future plans involve high school students testing for pollutants.

Over 600 acres of wetlands have been protected preventing 73,560 pounds of total suspended solids, 67 pounds of phosphorus and 1,338 pounds of nitrogen from entering the Paw Paw and Black Rivers every year.

Paw Paw River and Black River

SWMPC assisted the Van Buren Conservation District with a Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) grant funded project to protect and restore wetlands in the Paw Paw and Black River Watersheds.

SWMPC secured an MDEQ grant to monitor bacteria levels in the Black River and Pine and Mill Creeks (subwatersheds of the Paw Paw River Watershed). A local committee will work with SWMPC to raise awareness about E.coli from urban and agricultural sources and what can be done to eliminate this dangerous pollution in our rivers and lakes.

SWMPC also secured a grant to work with agricultural producers to reduce sediment to the Paw Paw River. The implementation of agricultural best management practices in 3 sub-watersheds near Watervliet and Hartford (Mud Lake Drain, Mill Creek and Pine Creek) will result in a significant reduction of sediment loading improving conditions in the St. Joseph River harbor and Lake Michigan.

The Watervliet Dam Removal Project presented several opportunities to educate local officials and residents about water quality and watershed issues. In conjunction with the dam removal, SWMPC hosted a fish monitoring observation day and a VIP event in Watervliet. www.swmpc.org/watervlietdam.asp



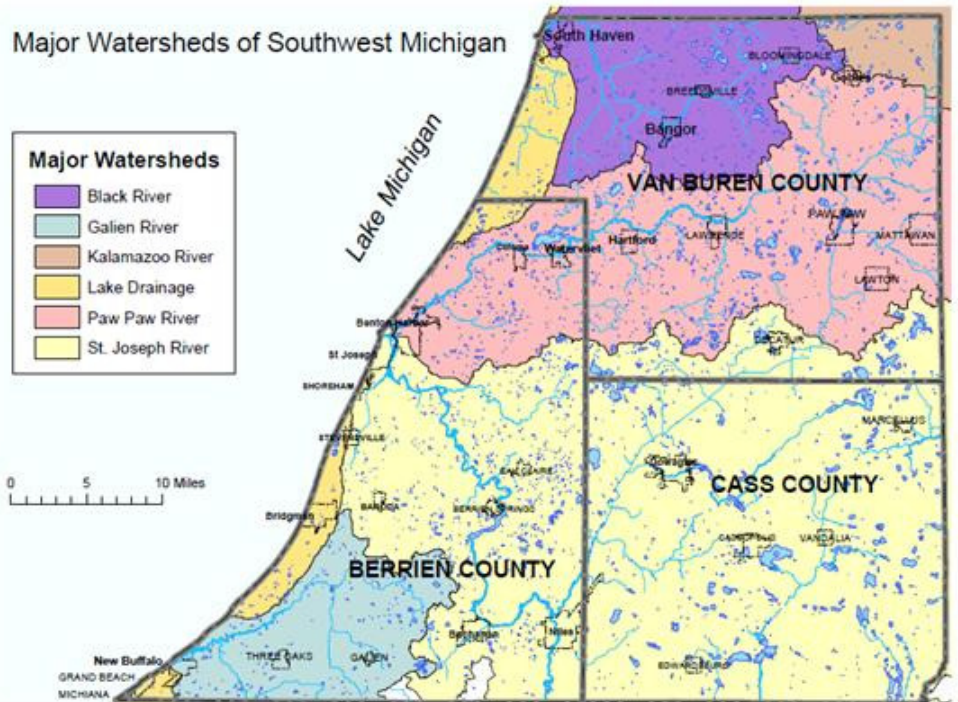
Galien River Watershed

SWMPC and partners continued an educational campaign on septic system maintenance in the Galien River Watershed. A summer intern went door to-door to talk with residents about septic systems. At a well water testing night, residents of the New Troy area learned about proper maintenance of septic systems. A natural features inventory workshop was held to map special places in the Galien River Watershed with results being incorporated into local land use plans. SWMPC participated in the Galien River Watershed Tour and discussed the connection between land use and water quality. This watershed has lost over 65% of the wetlands in the last 200 years, so a major focus has been on wetland protection and restoration.

www.swmpc.org/grw.asp

Lake Michigan

SWMPC continues to serve on the Lake Michigan Watershed Academy and collaborates with EPA and other regional planning agencies around Lake Michigan. SWMPC has also been participating in the process to develop the Lake Michigan Biodiversity Plan with The Nature Conservancy.



The watersheds in southwest Michigan have lost over 50% of their wetlands in the last 200 years.

EDUCATION

Presentations

Wetlands, water quality protection, business practices to reduce polluted runoff, land use, and Green Communities were covered in presentations to:

- Southwest Michigan Drain Commissioners Region
- Michigan's Great Southwest Sustainable Business Forum
- Exchange Club of Benton Harbor/St. Joseph
- Stewards of Southwest Michigan – Cornerstone Alliance
- Lakeshore Rotary Club
- Three Oaks Village



Stormwater Public Education Plan (PEP)

SWMPC revised the PEP for Berrien and Cass counties for submission to Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. The PEP outlines efforts to increase awareness of the connection between individual actions and the health of the watershed.

Watershed Workshops

SWMPC hosted a well attended Transportation and Water Quality workshop which included representatives from both the Berrien and Cass County Road Commissions. SWMPC has worked with Berrien and Van Buren County Road Commissions to secure grants to replace road/stream crossings improving water quality and habitat.

2011 BOARD MEMBERS

OFFICERS

Chair: Linda Preston,
Cass Townships Representative

Vice Chair: Jeff Radtke,
Van Buren Citizen Representative (Planning)

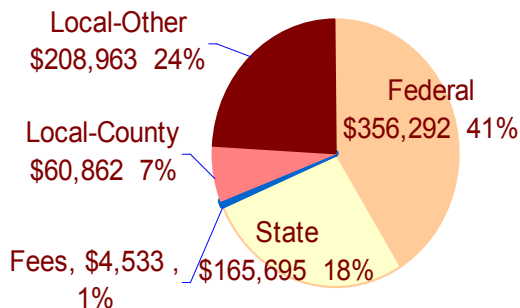
Treasurer: Donald Gast,
Berrien Citizen Representative

Alternate Treasurer: Yemi Akinwale,
Berrien Citizen Representative

Secretary: Frances Sage,
Van Buren Citizen Representative

BERRIEN COUNTY

Victoria Chandler, Citizen Representative
Janet Clark, Citizen Representative
Wilce Cooke, Mayor, City of Benton Harbor
Marge Durm-Hiatt, Supervisor's Alternate,
Niles Township
Nora Jefferson, Supervisor's Alternate,
Benton Charter Township
Juan Ganum, Mayor's Alternate, City of Niles
McKinley Elliott, County Commissioner
John Hodgson, Mayor's Alternate, City of St. Joseph
Zach Perkins, County Commissioner
Jesse Minks, Citizen Representative
Paul Pantaleo, Supervisor's Alternate,
Oronoko Township
Gloria Payne, Townships' Representative
Richard Remus, Citizen Representative
Cathy Thieneman, County Commissioner
Marletta Seats, County Commissioner
Roger Seeley, St. Joseph Charter Township
Supervisor (Tim Fenderbosch, Alternate)
Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township Supervisor
Tracy Vines, Citizen Representative (Planning)



Revenue By Source



CASS COUNTY

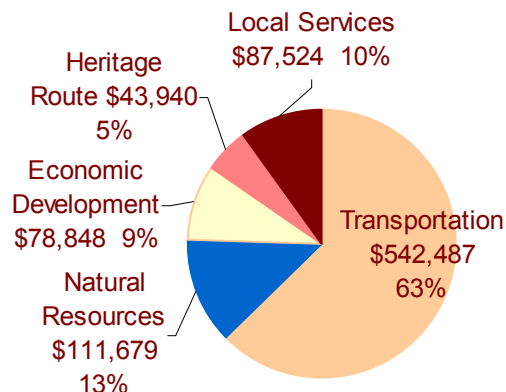
Barb Wood Cook, Citizen Representative (Planning)
Walter Lehmann, Townships' Representative
Robert Powers, Citizen Representative
Johnie Rodebush, County Commissioner
James Sayer, Citizen Representative
Joseph Silvia, Citizen Representative
James Snow, Mayor's Alternate, City of Dowagiac
Robert Ziliak, County Commissioner

VAN BUREN COUNTY

Robert Burr, Mayor, City of South Haven
John "Mike" Henry, County Commissioner
Dave Foerster, Citizen Representative
Don Hanson, County Commissioner
Dale Lewis, Citizen Representative
Daniel Ruzick, Supervisor, Antwerp Township
Ron Sefcik, Townships Representative
Mike Toth, County Commissioner
John Tapper, Townships Representative

POKAGON BAND OF POTAWATOMI

Jason Auvil, Tribal Chair's Alternate



Revenue by Theme