

ANNUAL REPORT



*For the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
from January 1 to December 31, 2010*

July 2011

FROM THE CHAIR...

Clear vision and focused decision-making is the hallmark of leadership. But leaders do not tend to come to those characteristics by accident. In the words of President Kennedy; “the time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.” The season to plan is before challenges mature into major problems or controversies. Planning for a large category of challenges is possible. Similarly, good things often require concerted, systematic effort and application of resources before they can be brought to fruition. With resources at a premium, clarity of direction and efficiency in execution are essential. For all of these reasons, there is wisdom in sound planning. The SWMPC is an advocate for, and a source of, quality planning for the communities of southwest Michigan.

In 2010 the SWMPC began the committee work of rethinking its governance and bylaws. Is our Board structure appropriate for the SWMPC in the Twenty-First Century? As a three-county region we are among



the smallest planning regions in the State, yet we have one of the largest governing Boards, with forty-two members. It is the right time for us to be exploring this issue but to do so in light of our continuing focus on representing the interests of the entire region. Stay tuned in 2011 as we navigate through this important work.

This annual report is a brief compilation of our work in 2010. 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 a rewarding year for the Commission.

*Sincerely,
Linda Preston, Chair 2011*

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 about the SWMPC, please visit our website:

www.swmpc.org

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

METROPOLITAN

Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are responsible for a transportation planning process that is cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing (the 3 “C”s) and encompasses all modes of transportation. The SWMPC coordinates the two MPO areas shown at right in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and member municipalities.

In 2010, TwinCATS and NATS completed the following planning documents, which can be viewed at http://swmpc.org/twincats_docs.asp (TwinCATS) and http://swmpc.org/nats_docs.asp (NATS).

- **Unified Work Program** of planning tasks for fiscal year 2011
- **Annual Reports** of planning activities completed in 2009
- **Public Participation Plan** of policies and recommended practices for involving stakeholders and the general public in the transportation planning process (updated every four years and reviewed annually)
- **Transportation Improvement Program** of road and transit projects in the urbanized areas for fiscal years 2011-2014. The Transportation Improvement Program for 2008-2011 was continually amended and modified throughout the year.

Walk & Roll TwinCATS

Walk & Roll is an initiative of representatives of local governments and the public to determine the needs for pedestrian and bicycle transportation in the Twin Cities area. Stakeholder meetings and public outreach were conducted. More information is available at <http://swmpc.org/walkbiketwincats.asp>.

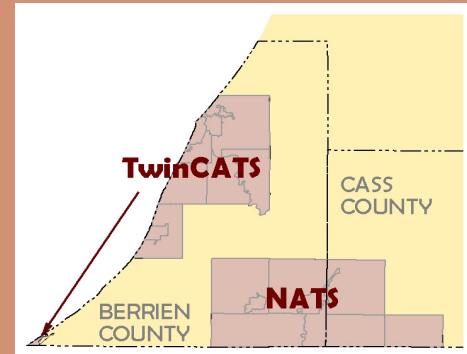
Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS)

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



RAIL

TwinCATS continued to advocate for high speed rail in the Twin Cities. Government representatives and the public participated in a Pere Marquette forum hosted by SWMPC in February and a Michigan By Rail forum hosted by the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers and Michigan Environmental Council in September in St. Joseph.

Pictured left, Amtrak Depot in St. Joseph, MI

New! Follow [TwinCATS](#) and [NATS](#) on [facebook!](#)

REGIONAL

Transportation Funding 101 Workshop

SWMPC hosted Transportation Funding 101 at Andrews University in November 2010. The workshop included a presentation by a Michigan House fiscal analyst on the state of Michigan transportation budget. A panel (*pictured right*) consisting of state representatives and policy experts answered questions from local governments and the public about potential solutions for funding transportation in Michigan.



Congestion Mitigation

SWMPC continued to facilitate the countywide selection of projects for federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds for Berrien County, including SWMPC's Go Rideshare program (www.gorideshare.org).

Asset Management

SWMPC coordinated pavement system evaluation rating (PASER) for 50 percent of federal aid eligible roads in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties. The annual reports for each county, including trends in pavement conditions, are available at http://swmpc.org/asset_mgmt.asp.

Traffic Counts

SWMPC conducted 183 traffic counts in 2010 upon request from local agencies. The count data is available at http://swmpc.org/traffic_counts.asp. SWMPC also gathered and processed data for MDOT for the Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS).

TRANSIT

Public Transit

In a partnership with Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA), SWMPC obtained a \$217,000 grant from FTA and MDOT to implement a new fixed transit route (the Red Route) to allow workers to reach jobs, including areas in St. Joseph and Lincoln townships, formerly without transit service. An additional \$172,000 was used to operate the Red and Blue routes' extended hours on weeknights and Saturdays.

See www.gorideshare.org for more information.

A \$184,000 statewide planning and research grant was also awarded by MDOT and the Consortium for Community Development, to conduct a Berrien County Transit Consolidation Feasibility Study, which will be completed by September 2013.

Mobility Management

With a \$75,000 grant obtained from FTA in a partnership with TCATA, two mobility managers were contracted to facilitate discussions between transit agencies and human service providers on the Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Coalition. They conducted outreach and provided travel training, with the goal of improving mobility for those who are transportation-disadvantaged.

NON-MOTORIZED

Nine-County Non-motorized Transportation Plan

SWMPC conducted public input sessions in each of the nine counties, as well as a final regional input session held in Kalamazoo in July. The project was conducted with a statewide planning and research grant from MDOT.

Bike Safety Programs



Pictured above: Rick Smiedendorf conducting a "bike rodeo" with young cyclists)

SWMPC conducted seven bicycle safety trainings for children and adults at public libraries. The DALMAC fund grant assisted with the purchase of safety supplies to distribute to participants.

SWMPC hosted a Training Wheels workshop, with funding assistance from MDOT, St. Joseph Today, and the Southwest Michigan Tourism Council. The event included national experts who discussed best practices for designing bicycle facilities and a bicycle tour. (*pictured right*)



HERITAGE ROUTE PLANNING

Created in 1993, the Michigan Heritage Route Program was formed to identify and designate scenic roadways for the enjoyment of the traveling public in Michigan. Heritage routes serve as natural, social, cultural, and economic resources for the visitors to the state of Michigan, the people of Michigan, and the local communities in which the roadways are located.

The Michigan Heritage Route Program is related to the National Scenic Byways Program, and is a voluntary, community-based program administered through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) since 1991 to recognize, protect, and promote America's most outstanding roads.

The Michigan Department of Transportation Heritage Route program contracts with SWMPC for planning activities with community partners along the routes to:

- Preserve scenic, cultural, and historic resources
- Increase cooperation among communities
- Foster community economic development
- Collaborate on available grants
- Manage route activities
- Educate visitors about history, nature, and culture of the area
- Increase visitor participation along the route

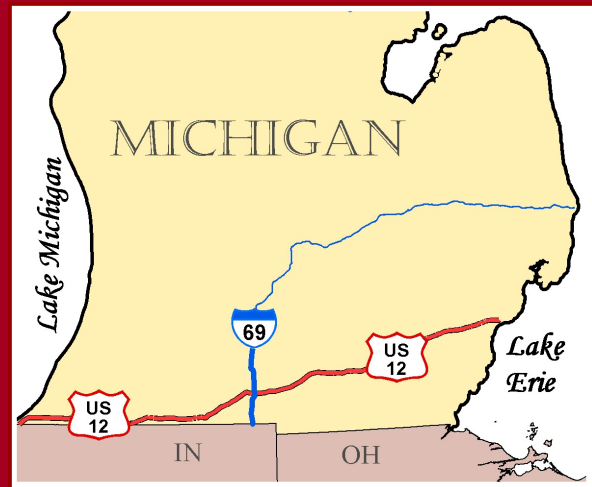
LOCAL IMPACT



The US 12 Heritage Trail website offers a place to upload stories about the US 12 Garage Sale from sellers and buyers.

Three Oaks:

"My husband, my girlfriend and her husband set up two booths in Three Oaks at the elementary school. We had about 250-300 people come through on Friday, so much fun to talk with people and exchange stories. We both sold a lot. There were also 4 or 5 other booths near us. There were buyers from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, etc. They all seemed to be having a great time."



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.

Niles:

"These sales are giving people the opportunity in the tough times we're facing right now. It's a chance to come out and pick-up those items that people can use. This is my fourth year participating in the U.S. 12 Garage Sale. Although I could turn a profit with my sales, I donate my earning to homeless veterans in Niles".

Visitor:

"It was fantastic. We are already planning our trip next year. We do several sales like this. One being the 127 a weekend earlier. This sale was better than that even. The prices were perfect. There were so many sales we could not stop at all of them. Great job guys!!!"

2011 US 12 Garage Sale Dates
August 12th-14th



www.us12heritagetrail.org/

Marketing and Education Highlights

- 430 percent increase in traffic on the US 12 Heritage Trail website from the same time period in 2009. The site saw nearly 10,000 visitors, almost 75 percent of which were new visitors.
- Additional interactive elements were added to the US 12 website to encourage interaction between visitors and community members hosting garage sales. Community members entered key information about their garage sales into an online form, which staff uploaded to an interactive online map and a printable list of sale addresses for the event. Over 350 people entered sale information onto the site, which helped organically grow interest in the sale.
- Print publications, television stations, websites, social media and word of mouth contributed to awareness of the US 12 Garage Sale. Attention from traditional media saw an increase in 2010 including coverage from the following new sources: AnnArbor.com, the Niles Daily Star, the South Michigan Tribune, WNDU, WSBT, the Livingston County Daily Press, the Heritage Newspaper, and the Sturgis Journal.



- Contributed to editorial content for five page article highlighting US 12 in Michigan Travel Ideas

Strategic Planning

Discussions were held with the following organizations to build support for an increase in non-motorized traffic and electric vehicles:

- DTE regarding future charging stations
- Michigan International Speedway to discuss partnerships in their green initiatives and new events to support track during slower periods.
- US Bike Route System and presentations to key stakeholders on feasibility of US 12 becoming part of the official US Bike Route System.



www.discoveri69.org

Marketing and Education Highlights

Contracted with travel writer to create four press ready articles featuring attractions along the I-69 Recreational Heritage Route that supported the following topics:

- **Locavore Tour** — highlighting farm stands, U-picks, meat producers and processors, Amish farms and restaurants featuring local fare.
- **Amish Tour** — highlighting Amish working farms, trades, retail outlets, and bakeries.
- **Michigan Heritage Routes** — overview of attractions and experiences in Branch and Calhoun counties that are along I-69, US 12, and Marshall Heritage Routes.
- **Recreation** — Overview of the best outdoor experiences in golf, fishing, boating, camping, and hiking.

Designed, created, printed and distributed brochure highlighting the top experiences and attractions along the I-69 Recreational Heritage Route. Created a complimentary poster to be displayed in Michigan Travel centers and visitor centers.

Strategic Planning

Held a workshop in Coldwater, Michigan, called "Maintaining our Rural Natural Heritage", which gave attendees the opportunity to learn about a variety of conservation easement programs.



Formed working groups and held meetings to create and prioritize projects along the route that addressed the following:

- Creating and promoting experiences that build awareness and value of resources.
- Planning and promoting economic development strategies that capitalize on and enhance quality of life.
- Recognizing, protecting, and maintaining resources along the corridor.

NATURAL RESOURCES PLANNING

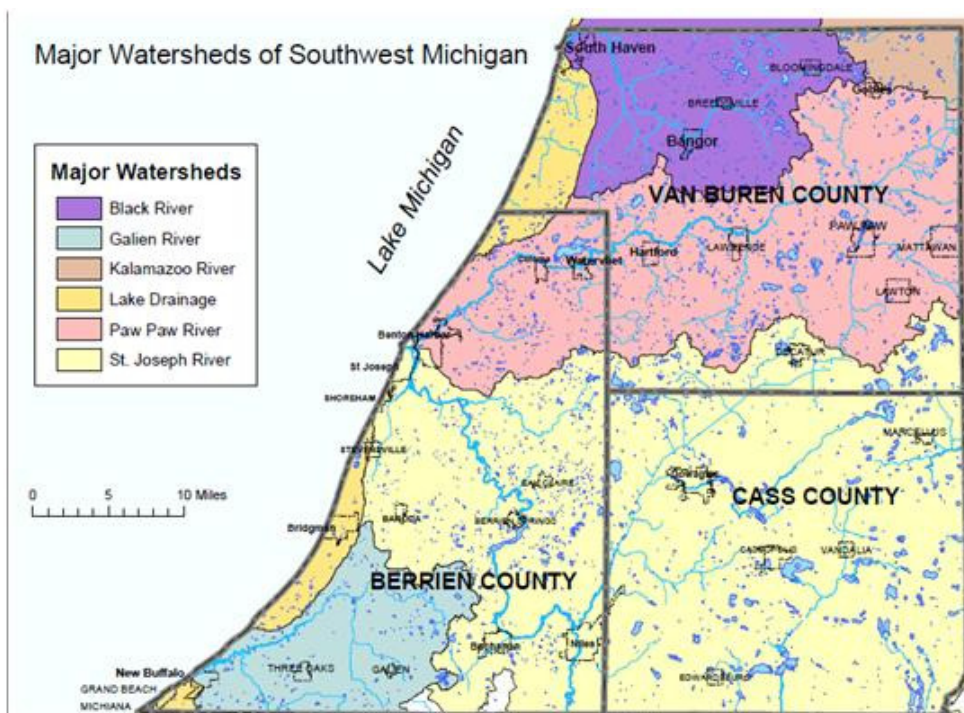
The natural beauty, wildlife, rivers, lakes, farmland, and recreational opportunities in southwest Michigan make it a wonderful place to live and work while also attracting many visitors. A clean supply of water is needed for farming, industry, and residential use. Our water and natural resources are of major environmental, social, and economic value, but they face enormous threats from pollution and sprawling development.

For years, SWMPC has been bringing local, state, and federal partners together to address water and natural resource issues. SWMPC has partnered with many to bring in hundreds of thousands of grant funds every year to increase recreational opportunities and to protect and improve water and natural resources.

WATERSHEDS

St. Joseph River Watershed Projects

SWMPC is working on several projects to protect and improve water quality and wildlife habitat in the St. Joseph River Watershed. SWMPC was instrumental in securing a \$115,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for advancing efforts to protect and restore wetlands. SWMPC along with other local, state, and federal partners throughout the watershed (Indiana and Michigan) are participating in a Wetland Partnership to implement the EPA funded project. www.fotsjr.org/WetlandPartnership



Michigan have ranked at the top: Watervliet Dam on the **Paw Paw River**, Pucker Street Dam on the **Dowagiac River**, and Buchanan Dam on **McCoy's Creek**.

SWMPC assisted Berrien County in securing over \$1 million in funding from Michigan Department of Natural Resources, USFWS, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to remove the Watervliet Dam. SWMPC will be responsible for the public outreach associated with the project.

SWMPC is assisting EPA to increase stakeholder involvement in the **Ox Creek** Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) project. This study will identify pollutant reductions which are needed for Ox Creek to meet water quality standards.

www.swmpc.org/oxcreek.asp



As part of the fish passage initiative, SWMPC wrote a \$150,000 USFWS grant for Berrien County Road Commission to replace a failing culvert for fish passage.

SWMPC is also a partner in a U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) funded project to inventory and rank fish passage barriers in the St. Joseph River Watershed. Barriers include dams and road crossings (failed or undersized culverts). Three dams in southwest

WATERSHEDS *continued*

Black & Paw Paw River Watersheds Projects

SWMPC provides Two Rivers Coalition, a newly formed non-profit working to improve and protect the Black and Paw Paw River Watersheds, with capacity building, strategic planning, grant writing, and project implementation assistance.

SWMPC assisted the Berrien and Van Buren Conservation Districts with securing a grant to conduct volunteer trash cleanups in each county.

SWMPC secured a \$22,000 grant for the Van Buren County Road Commission and Drain Commission to replace a culvert and complete stream bank stabilization in Covert Township which will serve as a demonstration site for showcasing how road stream crossings projects can improve water quality and reduce sedimentation.

EDUCATION

SWMPC provides services for the **Berrien and Cass Counties** stormwater public education plan. In 2010, SWMPC hosted two workshops, Lawn Care for Water Quality and Green Infrastructure/Low Impact Development. www.swmpc.org/gi.asp

SWMPC presented to the **St. Joseph River Harbor Authority** about the causes and sources of sedimentation and initiatives to reduce sediment in the St. Joseph River.

SWMPC is working with Stevensville Village to convene stakeholders and facilitate efforts to protect and improve water quality and habitat in the **Hickory Creek Watershed**. www.swmpc.org/hickory.asp

TRAILS

SWMPC has been working with Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan stakeholders to develop a **Great Lakes Water Trail** for canoeing and kayaking along the shores of Lake Michigan.

SWMPC has supported efforts of a corridor committee to plan and implement **US Bike Route 35** which will be part of a national bike route system. US BR 35 will come into Michigan at New Buffalo and follow Lake Michigan to Sault St. Marie. www.swmpc.org/usbr35.asp

Galien River Watershed Projects

SWMPC worked with a consultant to complete a build-out analysis for the Galien River Watershed. This same analysis has been done for the Paw Paw and Black River Watersheds. The analysis presents expected impacts to water quality as land use changes according to local land use plans. In 2011, SWMPC will work with municipalities to incorporate strategies into master plans based on the analysis's results to encourage compact and low impact development techniques.

www.swmpc.org/grw.asp

Lake Michigan Projects

SWMPC is a member of the Lake Michigan Watershed Academy (LMWA) along with other regional planning commissions with watersheds contributing to Lake Michigan. SWMPC received a \$10,000 grant from LMWA to support watershed efforts in southwest Michigan. The Lake Michigan Watershed Academy's website highlights regional projects. www.lakemichiganacademy.org



SWMPC partnered with the Van Buren Conservation District on a Wetland Wonders Tour for local officials in celebration of World Wetlands Day.



SWMPC Planner Marcy Colclough with IMRVT team

SWMPC has supported several local trail planning efforts including:

- **Harbor Country Hike and Bike Plan**

(New Buffalo, Three Oaks, and Chikaming Townships)

- **Blue Star Trail** (South Haven to Saugatuck) www.swmpc.org/bluestar.asp

- **Indiana–Michigan River Valley Trail**

(Niles, MI to Mishawaka, IN) www.swmpc.org/inmitrail.asp

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) has designated the SWMPC as an Economic Development District (EDD) serving Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. This funding covers coordinating regional and local business and industry planning processes, providing technical assistance, maintaining economic and demographic databases, and information dissemination.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Building on goals of regional collaboration, entrepreneurialism and the links between education and economic development; SWMPC and our regional partners continued the work started in 2009 as part of the CEDS. The 2009-2011 document identified the need for a group to act as a regional steward of regional economic development. The existing **360 Group** has made strides to become that group. SWMPC utilized a **People and Land Institute Grant** to originate this concept group with the technical assistance of the **Land Information Access Association and the Michigan Association of Planning**. The 360 Group held five meetings throughout the year in a variety of locations. Topics ranged from agricultural entrepreneurialism to CEDS action plan prioritization of objectives. Three subcommittees focusing on agricultural innovation, regional economic vision, and entrepreneurial education have grown out of the 360 Group to sponsor specific interests in the region.

A 2010 update of the CEDS was completed and is available for viewing on the SWMPC website.

Michigan's Great Southwest Sustainable Business Forum

SWMPC has been assisting with the development and promotion of Michigan's Great Southwest Sustainable Business Forum. Founded by a partnership of Indiana Michigan Power, Chemical Bank, Lake Michigan College, Michiana Recycling and Disposal Services, Reliable Disposal, Whirlpool Corporation, and Wightman & Associates, Inc. to promote environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic vitality. Sustainable businesses create profits for shareholders while protecting the environment and improving the lives affected by their activities. www.mgssbf.org



Throughout 2010, SWMPC partnered with Berrien County's Community Development Office, Cass County's Economic Development Corporation, Edward Lowe Foundation, and Van Buren County's Economic Development Corporation in the development of Venture Quest, Southwest Michigan's business plan competition. Organization of the contest has gone forward with the aim to reward business plans and new businesses located in Southwest Michigan that are poised for growth and job creation.

Updated Grant Submission Process

The EDA provides funding for public works projects, economic development planning, technical assistance, and economic adjustment planning at the local and regional levels. In the past, the SWMPC has worked with the EDA's Chicago regional office to submit grant applications on a rolling basis. During 2010 a new framework was developed. Going forward, applicants will work with SWMPC staff to submit grant applications based around a quarterly schedule. The new process will provide continuous technical assistance and customer service; quarterly rounds of funding; and enhanced responsiveness within the EDA

Facilitating Growth in 2010

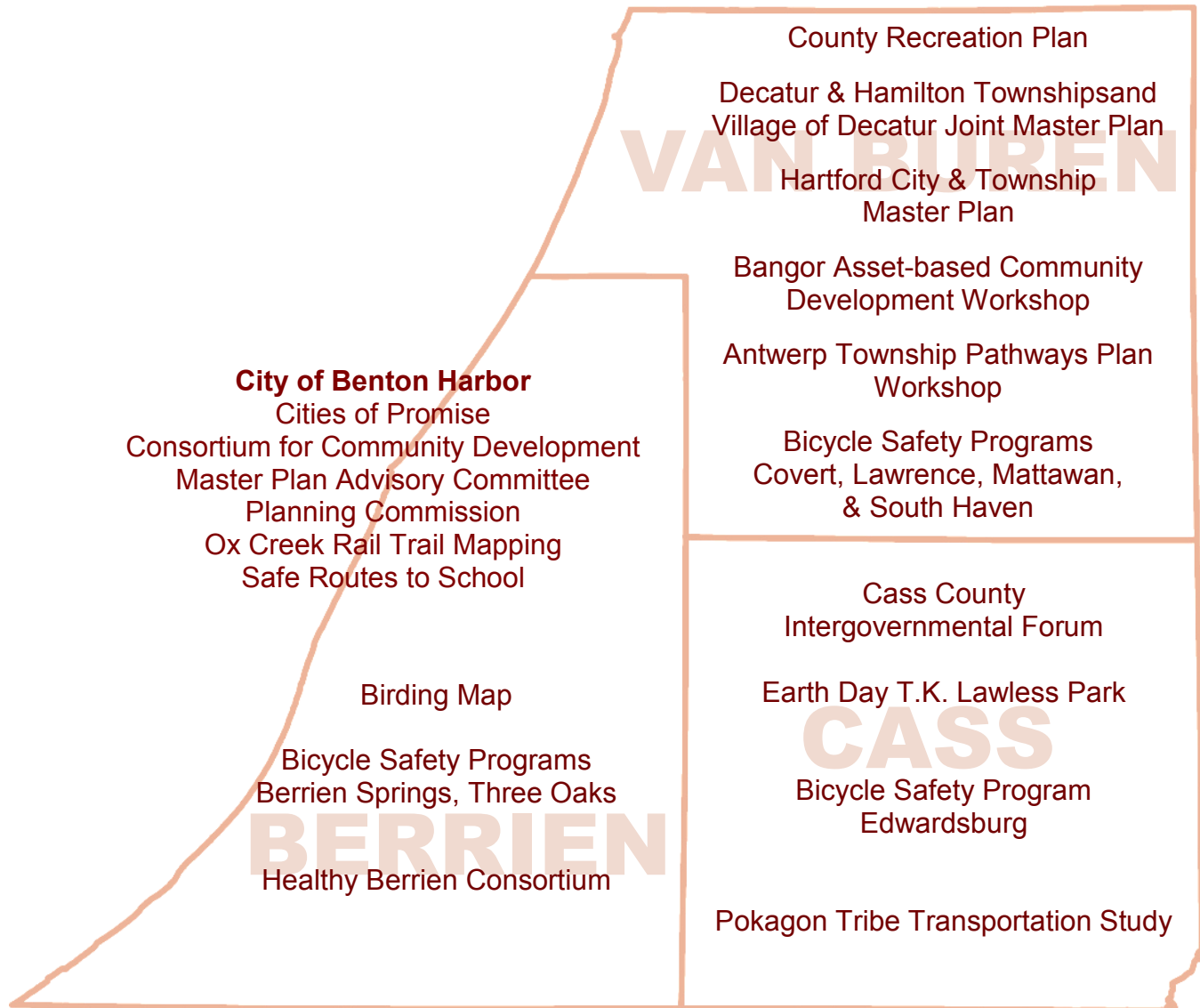
SWMPC planners were involved in conferences and seminars to promote agribusiness and tourism, sustainable and livable communities, and development of a regional foodshed.

Staff monitored the US Census 2010 in anticipation of utilizing the new data to assist in future planning.

Projects to increase connectivity throughout the southwest Michigan region were researched.

LOCAL SERVICES PLANNING

The SWMPC provides customized planning and information services to local governments and organizations including comprehensive and land use planning, research and analysis, GIS mapping, surveys, recreational planning, grant writing and grant administration. Outreach to build support for wise planning and awareness of vital regional development issues leads to program initiatives that address local needs.



BEYOND OUR BORDERS

PARTICIPATION

American Planning Association
Great Lakes Association of Regional Councils
Lake Michigan Watershed Academy (Delta Institute)
Michigan Association of Planning
Michigan Association of Regions

Michigan Business Incubator Association
Michigan Economic Developers Association
Michigan Transportation Planning Association
Quad State Directors
Wingspread Accord

PARTNERS

Community Media Workshop
Land Information Access Association
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians

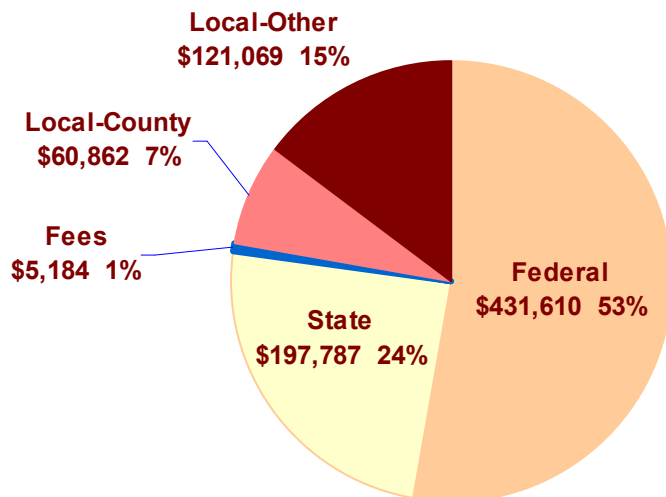
Michigan Economic Development Corporation
Michigan State University
University of Michigan

MORE ABOUT SWMPC



The July 20, 2010 SWMPC Full Board Meeting was held at the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians' Tribal Council Lodge located in Dowagiac, MI. The agenda included a Michigan Prosperity Initiative presentation by planner Elizabeth Luther with small group discussions to prioritize goals and objectives following *(above)*. After the close of business, Doris Higgins, Executive Director of the Volunteer Center of Southwest Michigan, led a Board training session with staff and Board members. The event ended with an outdoor picnic lunch with SWMPC charter member Johnie Rodebush providing fresh corn.

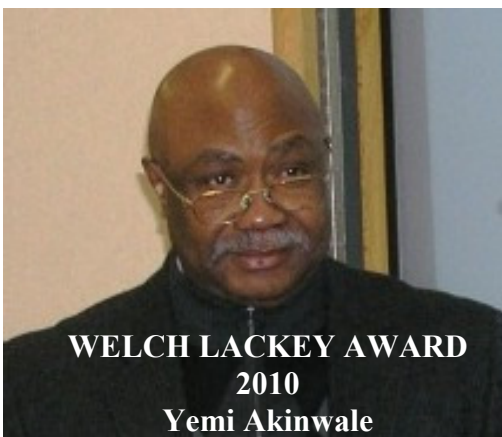
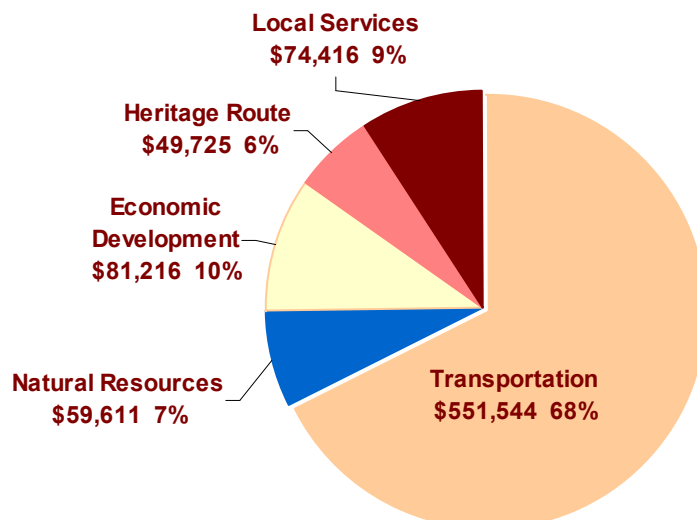
Revenue By Source



Mission Statement:

The mission of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is to promote a sustainable high quality of life through facilitation of sound planning and decision making.

Revenue by Theme



2010 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
Jon Hinkleman, County Commissioner
John Hodgson, Mayor's Alternate, City of St. Joseph
John Klimek, County Commissioner
Jesse Minks, Citizen Representative
Paul Pantaleo, Supervisor's Alternate,
Oronoko Township
Gloria Payne, Townships' Representative
Richard Remus, Citizen Representative
Donald Ryman, 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)

CASS COUNTY

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

VAN BUREN COUNTY

Robert Burr, Mayor, City of South Haven
Tom Erdman, 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

SWMPC 2010 STAFF

K. John Egelhaaf
Executive Director

Matt Aslesen
Associate Planner

Nickolas Musson
Associate Planner

Nancy Perry
Business Manager

Marcy Colclough
Senior Planner

Suzann Flowers
Associate Planner

Anna Rahtz
Associate Planner

Terri Moore
Administrative Assistant

Kimberly Gallagher
Senior Planner

Elizabeth Luther
Associate Planner

Trevor Thomas
Associate Planner

Mark Gallagher
Traffic Data Supervisor

Jill Plescher
GIS Specialist

Christina Pippin
Mobility Manager

Linda Douglas
Traffic Data Assistant

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

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