

PLEASE NOTE

In an effort to gather additional comments and suggestions during the 2040 Long Range Transportation Planning process the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is making the working draft sections of the plan available to the public.

Additional data collection and analysis is still being conducted and this information will be included in the next draft which is to be released mid April 2013.

Questions or comments can be directed to:
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
185 E. Main Street Suite 701
Benton Harbor, Michigan 49022

TwinCATS MPO
Gautam Mani
269-925-1137 x 24
manig@swmpc.org

Introduction

History of the Region/County

René-Robert de LaSalle arrived in Berrien County in 1679 and built Fort Miami at the mouth of the St. Joseph River. This would become the base for many explorations into the Mississippi River Valley. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, subsequent French explorers built Fort St. Joseph up the river at the present city of Niles, Michigan. "Tis a spot, the best adopted of any to be seen, for the purpose of living;" French explorers stated in 1718 when observing the region. The French used Fort St. Joseph heavily until they left the area in 1763. The British held the fort until the Spanish captured it in 1781. Settlers began to enter Berrien County en masse in the early 1830s, when the County was officially organized and named for the sitting U.S. Attorney General. Settlers started to take advantage of the moderating effect of Lake Michigan on Berrien County's climate and its sandy soils, which provided a perfect environment for agriculture; in particular, the County became known for its breadth of fruits and vegetables. The first shipment of peaches from Berrien County to Chicago was sold in 1839. Berrien County's fruit production continued to grow as did its population. By the civil war in 1861-1865 the County's population stood at over 20,000.¹

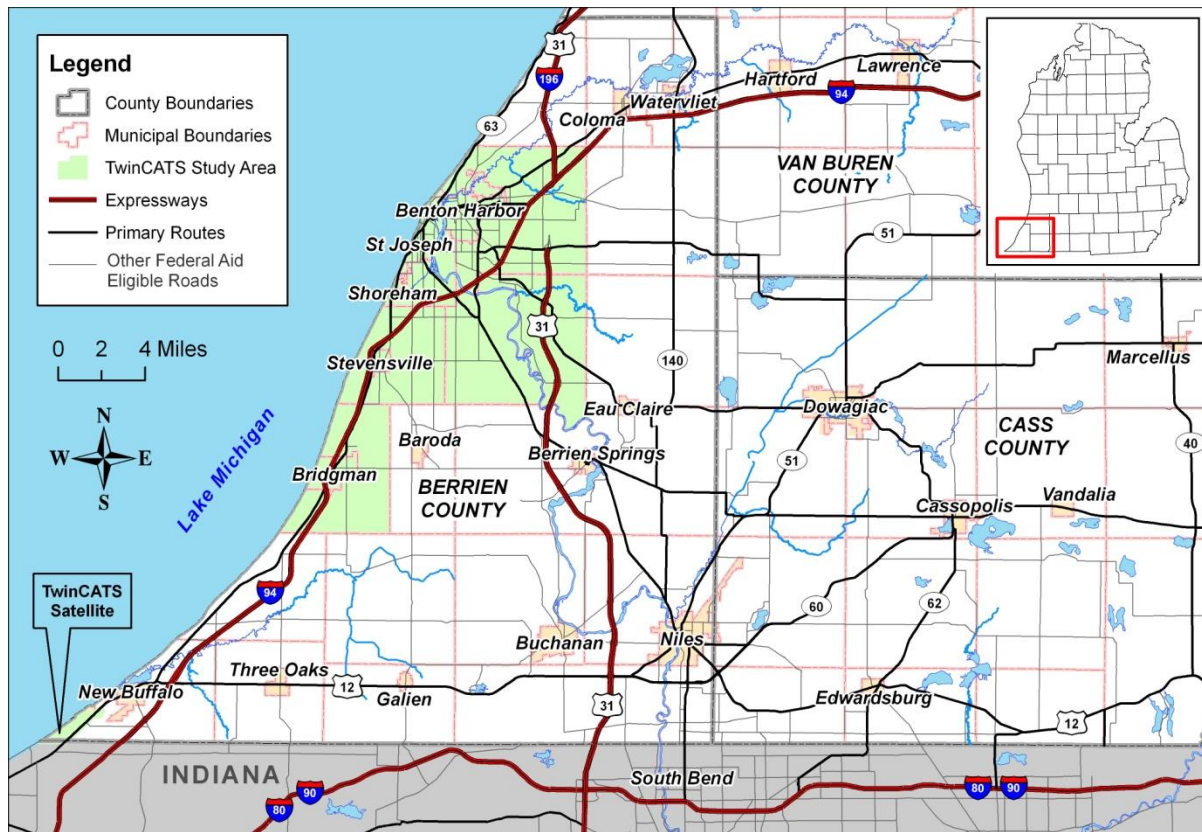
Geographical Area

Berrien County is located in Michigan's southwest corner. The southern border of the County abuts the northern Indiana State line. The Cities in the southern portion of the County are strongly influenced by the population and economics of the Indiana cities that lie in close proximity including South Bend, Mishawaka, and Michigan City. Chicago is also a powerful influence on many aspects of life in southwest Michigan as it shares a location within the Lake Michigan Watershed Basin with Berrien County. A few towns in the far Southwest portion of the County are even within the farthest reaches of the Chicago commutershed. It is widely accepted that a Chicago "Mega-Region" includes Berrien County.

Berrien County comprises total area 580.273 square miles and is bordered by Michigan's Cass County to the east and Van Buren County to the north and Indiana's LaPorte and St. Joseph Counties to the South. The western edge of the County comprises a portion of

¹ Southwest Michigan Business and Tourism Directory, July 2, 2008
http://www.swmidirectory.org/History_of_Berrien_County.html

Michigan’s Lake Michigan western “sunset” coastline. All told, Berrien County contains 42 miles of Lake coastline.



Agriculture

Today, Berrien County is part of the Michigan “Fruit Belt”, which runs along the western border of the Lower Peninsula along the eastern coast of Lake Michigan. Prevailing Lake Michigan breezes protect the fruit trees during the development of their buds in spring and the Lake’s moderating affect extends the growing season further into fall by diminishing the severity of the fall frost. The Lake also provides needed moisture in times of drought. In Michigan, Berrien County leads in the production of peaches, pears and grapes, is second in apples, plums and prunes, and is a respectable fourth in tart cherries. Berrien County’s grape production has led to the presence of an emerging winery industry. ²

Tourism

² History of Berrien and Van Buren Counties, Michigan, Philadelphia D.W. Ension & co 1880, XIX The Fruit Belt Chapter.

Tourism in Berrien County benefits from its proximity to Chicago, Lake Michigan, and eighty-six inland lakes. Capitalizing on this economic opportunity, there is a wealth of activities on land and on water ranging from wine festivals, golf, boating, and fishing. Berrien County also provides tourists with outstanding fresh water beaches, many of which are packed during the summer months.

Transportation Planning: How We Got Here

The increased usage of automobiles in the early 1900s was what first sparked the coordinated planning of motorized highways and the transportation system more broadly. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1927, the introduction of national roadway standards and funding allotments in the 1920s allowed highway construction to begin connecting the nation's population centers. This system expansion continued in earnest throughout the Depression, as highway construction provided a major source of employment.³

During World War II (1941-1945), highway expansion stopped, and transit system ridership across the country reached an all-time high. Streetcars, rail systems, and buses served as the primary means of travel for Americans. The post-war period saw a huge demand for new vehicles and space for homes as soldiers came home, settled down, and started families. The Federal-Aid Highway Acts of 1944 and 1956 significantly increased funds for road building. Bolstered by housing policies that promoted a move to the suburbs, automobile-oriented planning came to dominate American transportation.

As highways grew, so did the number of tools available to plan for their future expansion. Planners began to use travel surveys to study destinations of trips and basic factors affecting travel. Computer methods for forecasting future travel by using growth factors in origin-destination trips became popular among planners by the 1950s. In addition, organizations such as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Professionals (AASHO) published manuals on conducting cost-benefit analysis of transportation projects. Planners and engineers coordinated with business leaders to use transportation planning as a tool not just to move people, but to encourage economic development in target areas.

³ Urban Transportation Planning in the United States An Historical Overview, Revised Edition, November 1992, Edward Weiner

The 1960s saw a move towards an approach that better balanced highway and transit investments, and the urban, suburban, and rural location of infrastructure. In particular, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 mandated a continuous planning process that brings together stakeholders from the federal government, the state, and local communities to update transportation plans as conditions warrant. The Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 was the first federal effort to encouraging the planning and area-wide mass transportation systems.

These two Acts placed an emphasis on coordinating transportation planning with land use, adopting a regional approach, and taking into account the environmental and social costs that highway and transit projects impose on communities. It was during this time period, then, that the framework for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) came into being.

Despite these attempts to establish a multi-modal, regional transportation system, private automobile infrastructure continues to dominate transportation planning. In recent years, however, mounting concerns about the impacts of the automobile on climate change and air quality, as well as an aging national population have led transportation planners to renew their focus on balancing automobile infrastructure with planning for transit and non-motorized facilities. As U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood said in 2010, "This is the end of favoring motorized transportation at the expense of non-motorized."⁴ This new call for a system that supports all modes, all abilities, and all types of land use is particularly timely for the Southwest Michigan region, where an aging, dispersing population requires a diverse array transportation options.

Current Transportation Assets

Roadways

As of 2013, Berrien County has 749 miles of federal-aid eligible roads. In particular, Interstate 94 plays a prominent role in connecting the TwinCATS region to the rest of Michigan and the nation. I-94 connects the TwinCATS area with Detroit and Ontario, Canada to the East, and Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, and Minneapolis-St.Paul to the West. I-196 also splits off from I-94 and connects the Benton Harbor-St.Joseph area with Holland and Grand Rapids. In addition, US-31 is a divided highway that connects South Bend with Benton Township. US-12 provides an East-West connection across the state in the southern portion of the County. In addition M-139, M-63, and Red Arrow Highway serve as North-South connectors and business corridors in the County. More detailed information about roadways can be found in the Intermodal Considerations section of the plan.

Rail

The Pere Marquette route on Amtrak once daily service in each direction between Grand Rapids and Chicago, with stops in St. Joseph and New Buffalo. To head eastward on Amtrak, passengers can go to Niles and board either the Blue Water or Wolverine routes towards Detroit and Port Huron. In addition, the South Shore Line provides commuter service to Chicago, with 14 daily departures from Michigan City and 7 from South Bend. Each of these departure points is just a few miles from the Berrien County line in Indiana. More details about rail service can be found in the Intermodal Considerations section of the plan.

Transit

The TwinCATS region continues to observe a dispersing, aging population. Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) provides fixed-route and demand-response services in a 14-mile portion of the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph Urbanized area. The Berrien County Board of Commissioners operates the Berrien Bus, a demand-response service for all Census-designated rural areas within Berrien County. More details about transit service can be found in the Intermodal Considerations section of the plan.

Non-motorized Facilities

TwinCATS supports major regional efforts to improve facilities for non-motorized transportation and trails. TwinCATS is part of the MDOT Southwest Region 9-County Non-Motorized Plan, the Southwest Michigan Alliance for Recreational Trails (SMART). In addition, jurisdictions within TwinCATS are a part of the Northern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)'s trail network planning. In 2012, TwinCATS formally adopted a Complete Streets Policy, pledging that as an MPO, it would promote roadway design that adequately supports the needs of all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists. More information about non-motorized facilities can be found in the Intermodal Considerations section of the plan.

Aviation

Southwest Michigan Regional Airport is the only public airport in the TwinCATS region. The airport has runways capable of handling jets. The airport handles executive travel, air courier, the Coast Guard, and some freight activity. In 2011, the airport completed safety upgrades to further lengthen the runways and accommodate more aircraft. More information about non-motorized facilities can be found in the Intermodal Considerations section of the plan.

Marinas

The St. Joseph River Harbor provides both recreational and commercial activity for the TwinCATS region and the broader Lake Michigan watershed. TwinCATS has always recognized the Harbor as a potential revenue source for the region through boat and slip rental fees, as well as revenues from supply sales. There are currently seven active marinas

in the TwinCATS region. More information about Marinas can be found in the Intermodal Considerations section.

Purpose of the Plan

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“What Moves You Berrien County,” the 2040 Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) Long Range Transportation Plan is an update of the 2035 Long Range Plan. The Plan explains how the communities in the planning area will address their transportation needs over the next 25 years, how they will prioritize improvements, and how federal, state, and local dollars will be used to further a system that supports highways, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, airports, and harbors.

This document provides guidance to the area’s local officials as they plan for present and future development of their communities. The plan contains necessary information and the framework to assist sound decision-making for the improvement of local transportation systems. It is revised every four years for a look at the anticipated issues and needs of the TwinCATS Federal Aid Urban Area. The Plan will also reference other local or regional agency plans as part of the TwinCATS region’s effort to coordinate multi-modal services community-wide.

There are two primary reasons to develop a comprehensive transportation plan.

1. The 3 C’s of Transportation Planning: Cooperative, Continuing, and Comprehensive

Decisions are better when the decision makers, working in cooperation, have as much information as possible, and base their policy choices on a comprehensive analysis. Although the process of gathering information for analysis is always beneficial, it becomes even more important when investment decisions are expensive and the consequences long-lasting. Such is the case in transportation system improvements; a great deal of money is spent on various transportation system improvements such as adding lanes to roads, repaving or reconstruction, or building pedestrian/bicycle facilities. These are expensive projects but are necessary to the economic and social life of a community.

2. Federally-Mandated Transportation Planning Process for Urbanized Areas

TwinCATS was established in 1983, following benchmarks for concentration of population within a geographic area and the expectation of urban development. The MPO is charged with

maintaining a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process. At a minimum, the jurisdictions within the defined planning boundaries shall collaborate to set regional priorities for all modes of movement in the transportation system and determine formulas for producing the local, non-federal match required for federal assistance in planning and transportation-related activities.

Legislation

Moving Ahead for the Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) is the governing legislation for transportation planning and decision making. New concepts and requirements are based on this legislation, and therefore, the MPO will be held responsible for implementing the changes. MAP-21 was signed into law by President Barack Obama on July 6, 2012. MAP-21 is a 27 month authorization that ends on September 30, 2014. MAP-21 continues the MPO and statewide transportation planning process established in previous federal transportation legislation. Some notable changes include the following:

- **Restructuring of Core Program-under MAP-21 there are 5 program areas**
 1. National Highway Performance Program
 2. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program
 3. Surface Transportation Program
 4. Highway Safety Improvement Program
 5. Metropolitan Planning
- **Programs Eliminated**
 1. National Scenic Byways
 2. Transportation Enhancements
 3. Transportation, Community and System Preservation
 4. High Risk Rural Road Program
 5. Safe Routes to School
 6. Joint Access and Reverse Commute
 7. Railway-Highway Crossing Hazard Elimination in High Speed Rail Corridors
- **Performance Based Planning**-Continues the 3C process (continuing, cooperative and comprehensive) and establishes a performance-based approach to decision making.

- **National Highway Performance Program**-Supports the National Highway system by reviewing the condition and performance of the system, makes progress towards performance goals, and tracks new facility construction.
- **Transportation Alternatives**-Consolidates Transportation Enhancements, Safety Routes to school and Recreation Trails Programs. It can also fund environmental mitigation and minor road construction. MPOs must run a competitive process for this funding source.
- **Transit**-Formula grant programs include urban areas, rural areas, elderly and disabled populations, bus and bus facilities, state of good repair and high density.
- **National Freight Policy**-Establishment of a national Freight Policy of mainly highway assets and creates a national freight network designated by critical rural freight corridors.
- **Environmental Streamlining Processes**- Expediting delivery of surface transportation projects by substantially reducing the average length of the environmental review process.

A summary of MAP-21 can be found by visiting:

FHWA's <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/summaryinfo.cfm>

FTA's http://www.fta.dot.gov/legislation_law/about_FTA_14937.html

The Committees

TwinCATS Technical Advisory Committee

The TwinCATS TAC is comprised of planners, engineers, managers, and operators of transportation agencies, local units of government, the MDOT, and the FHWA. As its name implies, the TAC provides technical assistance to SWMPC staff on transportation issues and makes recommendations on actions to the Policy Committee. Membership as of January 2013 is as follows:

Agency	TAC Member
Federal	
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Andrea Dewey
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)	Stewart McKenzie
State	
MDOT	
*Lansing	Ray Lenze (Brad Sharlow ex-officio)
*Southwest Region	Jason Latham
*Coloma TSC	Erin Jolivet/Sarah Woolcock

Multi-modal	Fred Featherly
Modeling	Brad Sharlow
MDEQ	Bob Rusch
Regional	
SWMPC	Staff
NIRPC	Bill Brown
County	
Berrien County	
*Planning Commission/Community Development Department	Bill Hodge/John Gruchot/Catherine Montoya
*Road Commission	Brian Berndt
Area wide	
*Cornerstone Alliance	Thad Rieder
*Southwest Michigan Regional Airport Board	Lee Scherwitz
*Harbor Authority	Vacant
Local	
*City of Benton Harbor	Chris Cook/Kenton McAndrew
*City of Bridgman	Aaron Anthony/Alan Smaka
*City of St. Joseph	Tim Zebell
*Village of Grand Beach	Vacant
*Village of Shoreham	Brian Shutts
*Village of Stevensville	Jae Guetschow
*Benton Charter Township	Nora Jefferson
*Lake Charter Township	Gloria Payne
*Lincoln Charter Township	Terrie Smith/Dick Stauffer
*Royalton Township	John Olson
*St. Joseph Charter Township	Vacant
*Sodus Township	Mickey Bennett

* Voting members

TwinCATS Policy Committee

The TwinCATS Policy Committee is primarily composed of elected officials of local government, board members of transportation-related agencies, and designated officials from MDOT and the FHWA. These officials are responsible for establishing local transportation policies, overseeing the planning process, and providing a forum for cooperative decision-making. The Policy Committee is provided technical advice and recommendations by the TAC. Policy Committee membership as of 2013 is as follows:

Agency	Policy Member
Federal	
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Andrea Dewey
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)	Stewart McKenzie
State	
MDOT	
*Lansing	Ray Lenze (Brad Sharlowe ex-officio)
*Southwest Region	Jason Latham/Darrell Harden

*Coloma TSC	Erin Jolivet/Sarah Woolcock
*Multi-modal	Fred Featherly
Regional	
SWMP	Staff
NIRPC	Bill Brown
County	
Berrien County	
*Board of Commissioners	Deb Panozzo
*Planning Commission/Community Development Department	Bill Hodge/John Gruchot/Catherine Montoya
*Road Commission	Michael Kastner
Area wide	
*Cornerstone Alliance	Vacant
*Southwest Michigan Regional Airport Board	Lee Scherwitz
*Harbor Authority	Vacant
*TCATA	Bill Purvis
Local	
*City of Benton Harbor	Darwin Watson
*City of Bridgman	Aaron Anthony
*City of St. Joseph	Bob Judd
*Village of Grand Beach	Vacant
*Village of Shoreham	Bruno Trapikas
*Village of Stevensville	Jae Guetschow/Don Schlipp
*Benton Charter Township	Carolyn Fowler/Nora Jefferson
*Lake Charter Township	John Gast
*Lincoln Charter Township	Dick Stauffer
*Royalton Township	Jim Soteriou
*St. Joseph Charter Township	Tim Fenderbosch/Roger Seely
*Sodus Township	Mickey Bennett

* Voting member

Amendment Procedures

At times, circumstances warrant changes to an approved plan. If a change is considered to be major, including, but not limited to, goals and objectives, data updates, air quality conformity, and major project changes or additions (as described in Appendix A, *Amendments Procedures*), a formal amendment is required. This procedure requires that public notice of the proposed amendment be distributed at least seven days prior to the respective Policy Committee meeting, TAC and Policy Committee reviews, formal action on the amendment, and submission to both MDOT and FHWA.

If changes are minor or administrative in nature, then the LRTP may be amended administratively following procedures as described below. LRTP amendment procedures will

be decided on a case-by-case basis, and at its discretion, SWMPC staff may elect to follow a full amendment process or engage in consultation to determine the process that should be followed in any given situation.

Administrative amendments by staff are expressly permitted in the following cases:

- There are minor project changes, as described in *Amendment Procedures* (see Appendix A).
- If the TIP has been administratively amended, the LRTP may be correspondingly administratively amended.

Administrative amendments are to be reported to the TAC and Policy Committee at the regularly-scheduled monthly meeting following the administrative action.

These general policies may be reviewed and amended from time to time and are intended to be flexible to accommodate special circumstances not foreseen at this writing. When doubt exists about the circumstances in any given case, a consultation process should be used to obtain guidance on interpreting the circumstance.

