

FY 2010 Annual Report

For the Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study
(NATS)



October 2010

Prepared by the
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INTRODUCTION

The Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS), through coordination and technical support of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC), provides an organizational structure to identify and guide local transportation planning activities. The SWMPC is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Michigan portion of the South Bend Urbanized Area.

The purpose of the annual report, which is a federally mandated activity, is to identify work activities that were approved in the FY 2010 Unified Work Program (UWP) and describes the progress and accomplishments that occurred during the twelve-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010. The UWP guides the NATS transportation planning activities for each fiscal year. During that time, program tasks that will benefit member agencies, the region, and the state are undertaken to improve the efficiency of the overall transportation system. This report also identifies revenue sources utilized from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), including the corresponding local match amounts.

During FY 2010, the NATS Committees, SWMPC, Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and the FHWA continued to identify and address relevant issues and refine various processes to maintain an effective and inclusive Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP) through 2035.

In FY 2010, the SWMPC revised the Fiscal Year (FY) 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); completed the FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); composed the UWP for FY 2011; composed the Transportation Participation plan; filled approximately 183 traffic count requests throughout the three-county area; implemented new public outreach methods; held eight bicycle safety events; and facilitated the distribution of remaining stimulus funds throughout the region.

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission wishes to thank the NATS participants for their time and commitment in maintaining a local and certifiable urban transportation planning process. We also gratefully acknowledge Ray Lenze of MDOT for his patience, understanding, and expertise in the transportation planning process. Through Lenze's assistance, NATS transportation planning efforts continue to evolve and improve into a program in which committee and community members can be proud.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD

Technical Advisory Committee

There are 20 members in the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The by-laws were amended at the March 23, 2010 meeting to add a voting seat for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians. Meetings were held as follows:

October 27, 2009	19 members attended (joint TAC and Policy Committee) + 2 public
November 17, 2009	11 members attended + 3 public
December 15, 2009	11 members attended + 2 public
January 26, 2010	13 members attended + 2 public
February 23, 2010	10 members attended + 4 public
March 23, 2010	14 members attended + 3 public
April 27, 2010	10 members attended
May 25, 2010	20 members attended (TAC and Policy Committee) + 2 presenters
June 22, 2010	14 members attended + 3 public
July 27, 2010	17 members attended + 6 public
August 24, 2010	13 members attended + 2 public
September 28, 2010	17 members attended + 1 public

Note: Two transportation planning staff members are in attendance at every meeting, in addition to the attendees listed above.

Policy Committee

There are 26 members in the Policy Committee. The by-laws were amended at the March 23, 2010 meeting to add a voting seat for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians. Meetings were held as follows:

October 27, 2009	19 members attended (joint TAC and Policy Committee) + 2 public
November 17, 2009	14 members attended + 2 public
December 15, 2009	13 members attended
January 26, 2010	14 members attended + 1 public
February 23, 2010	10 members attended + 4 public
March 23, 2010	16 members attended + 1 public
April 27, 2010	16 members attended
May 25, 2010	20 members attended (TAC and Policy Committee) + 2 presenters
June 22, 2010	11 members attended + 3 public
July 27, 2010	16 members attended
August 24, 2010	17 members attended
September 28, 2010	13 members attended

Note: Two transportation planning staff members are in attendance at every meeting, in addition to the attendees listed above.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Each year, the SWMPC is responsible for a variety of tasks under five categories: program management, database management, long range planning, short range planning and other planning. Accomplishments in each of these categories are described below.

Program Management

Ongoing tasks as outlined in 2010 Unified Work Program:

- General administration of the program including planning, travel, participation, follow up and dissemination of the results and outcomes of meetings, seminars, trainings, and conferences, as well as preparation of committee minutes, written and oral correspondence with federal, state, and local officials, quarterly progress reports and billings to the MDOT.
- Coordinated with MDOT on regional activities affecting transportation developments.
- Reported on NATS activities to the federal and state agencies and to the SWMPC, as appropriate.
- Provided staff support to the NATS TAC and Policy Committee.
- Prepared for, facilitated, and generated minutes for monthly NATS TAC and Policy Committee meetings.
- Actively implemented public involvement activities through community meetings, distribution of committee and planning information to radio, television and newspapers.
 - Communicated with the press monthly through press releases and via telephone about current transportation issues.
 - Was featured in 3 news articles in 2 different publications.
 - Maintained a database of strategies and outcomes of participation measures.
- Used appropriate visualization techniques to describe plans and perform other public participation activities as required by SAFETEA-LU.
- Maintained the SWMPC website for transportation information dissemination.
 - Changed the SWMPC website in the following ways: added Regional Rail pages, added Clean Air information, added a TIP page for NATS, added online surveys, and changed format of news headline and calendar updates on website
 - Started a Facebook page for NATS
- Consulted as appropriate with state, local, and private agencies, and Native American Tribes responsible for economic growth, land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, historic preservation, and human service transportation providers to enhance the transportation planning process.
- Participated in staff development training and educational opportunities.
 - Planning Michigan conference, Mt. Pleasant, September 30 to October 2, 2009
 - Traffic Safety Committee meetings, October 9 and December 16, 2009 and April 9, 2010

- MTPA meetings, Lansing, October 20 and November 17, 2009: January 19, February 16, March 16, April 20, May 18, June 15, July 15, August 17, and September 21, 2010
- MATAG Trail workshop, Kalamazoo, October 28, 2009
- Smart Code workshop, Detroit, November 3 to 4, 2009
- MAP Transforming Transportation workshop, Lansing, November 4, 2009
- DOT-HUD-EPA partnership webinar, November 9, 2009
- Transportation Technical Committee meeting on using Census data, November 10, 2009
- SMART sustainable transportation infrastructure conference, November 11, 2009
- We Can! Healthy Berrien Coalition meetings, January 6, 2010 and March 3, 2010
- Webinar about interjurisdictional planning relationships, January 8, 2010
- Meeting with MDOT staff to plan Context Sensitive Solutions presentation for NATS, January 12, 2010
- Midwest Regional Rail Initiative luncheon, January 29, 2010
- SMART nine-county trail plan Berrien County input meeting, February 4, 2010
- Three-county Rural Task Force meeting, February 22, 2010
- Webinar about Climate Change, March 31, 2010
- Sign Retroreflectivity Training, Kalamazoo, May 11, 2010
- Webinar on 9 Proven Safety Countermeasures from FHWA, June 24, 2010
- National Transit Institute Understanding ADA workshop, Casper, WY, June 24, 2010
- Webinar on HUD Sustainable Communities Community Challenge grants, June 30, 2010
- LIAA Website Training, Traverse City, August 5 and 6, 2010
- Michigan By Rail public input forum, New Buffalo, August 18, 2010
- Freight planning and supply chain logistics workshop, August 27, 2010

Completed tasks as outlined in 2010 Unified Work Program:

- Established a schedule of public meetings as an ongoing element of the planning process for public information and input.
- Wrote the Annual Report for FY 2009. This report documents the expenditures, work activities and products for the previous fiscal year.
- Wrote the UWP for FY 2011. This documents the projected expenditures, work activities, and products for the next fiscal year.
- Updated the Transportation Participation Plan as required by SAFETEA-LU, including community outreach to address air quality conformity, Title VI, and Environmental Justice requirements.

- Administered a public survey and a NATS member survey to assess effectiveness of public participation measures and presented results to NATS committees
 - Researched legislation governing public participation and added it into participation plan
- Published an Annual Listing of Obligated Projects.

Additional Completed Tasks:

- Conducted update of committee member representatives.
- Communicated with committee members and public about upcoming transportation-related events, such as Nine-county non-motorized plan input meetings, trails educational workshops, and rail public forums.
- Reached out to local communities for interest in hosting walkability audits or Training Wheels sessions facilitated by MDOT; submitted applications for two trainings to MDOT; and began developing the training materials.

Uncompleted Tasks:

- Review metropolitan planning organization (MPO) map boundaries to ensure that they reflect necessary representation. *This process has begun, and will be completed with availability of Census 2010 Data.*

Products of Program Management Tasks:

Status:

Meeting information, including agendas, minutes, and handouts	Completed and published
Public notice of annual meeting schedule	Completed and published
FY 2009 Annual Report	Completed and published
FY 2011 UWP	Completed and published
Public notices of various activities	Completed and published
Regularly updated website	Completed and published
Annual listing of projects	Completed and published
Updated Transportation Participation Plan	Approved by TwinCATS and NATS policy committees; awaiting approval from SWMPC board

Database Management

Ongoing tasks as outlined in 2010 Unified Work Program:

- Assisted MDOT by providing the requested data and information for the development of the projections of Travel Demands in the NATS area in preparation for Long Range Transportation Plan 2040.
- Reviewed and directed the urban traffic count program, including the following tasks:
 - Processed 183 traffic counts for the three-county area and uploaded them to the SWMPC website.
 - Produced traffic counting reports for the City of Niles, the City of Buchanan, Niles Township, Berrien County, and Cass County.
 - Continued refining traffic count database for SWMPC website.
 - Conducted traffic counts for the HPMS program.
- Collaborated with local entities in meeting the goals of the Asset Management Council established under P.A. 499. Activities include:
 - Scheduled, coordinated, and attended Investment Reporting Tool training, February 18, 2010.
 - Attended PASER webinar and PASER training, March 16, 2010.
 - Wrote manuals for asset management and traffic counting.
 - Sent out a reminder to local communities about investment report for TAMC; answered their questions about the reporting process.
 - Conducted PASER rating on all federal aid eligible roads in the northern half of Berrien County.
 - Assisted local communities with information about local road rating eligibility and local asset management plans.
 - Rated Weesaw Township and The Village of Three Oaks local roads, October 12, 2009.
 - Prepared an Asset Management plan for Weesaw Township and presented it to the township trustees.
- Analyzed and upgraded computing capabilities and training in support of transportation planning process.
- Maintained and updated critical management documents (i.e., LRP, TIP, UWP) on SWMPC website.
- Continued to upload regional data to the SWMPC website.

Completed tasks as outlined in 2010 Unified Work Program:

- Continued to collect, compile, analyze, and maintain socioeconomic (SE), land use, transportation and transit data and information necessary for planning in the region.
 - Obtained data from Berrien County Economic Development department.

- Solicited data updates from chambers of commerce and municipality representatives.
- Made phone calls to employers to verify their locations and number of employees.
- Continued to update employer socioeconomic data from news articles and phone calls to major employers.
- Updated TransCAD software and attended training on using TransCAD software.
- Compiled employment data updates into maps and spreadsheets and facilitated TwinCATS member employment data review.

Additional Completed Tasks:

- Compiled and presented to NATS committees a report on the opinions of Berrien County businesses on their transportation infrastructure.

Uncompleted Tasks:

- Use traffic count data to begin to model critical areas within the metropolitan area. *A two-year program of traffic counts was developed for streets on which traffic counts are still needed. New traffic counts for travel demand model will be completed in FY 2011.*
- Monitor and update functional road classifications. *This will be addressed with the release of Census 2010 data.*
- Continue to receive and analyze transit data from Niles DAR and to work with Niles DAR to facilitate cooperative arrangements with local entities and organizations for improving equitable and effective access to public transportation. *No data has been received from Niles DAR.*

Products of Database Management Tasks:

Status:

Updated SE data

In progress

Traffic count data

In progress

PASER results (report and maps)

Reports completed and published. *PASER maps no longer being completed due to duplication of TAMC online maps.*



Long Range Planning

Ongoing tasks as outlined in 2010 Unified Work Program:

- Cooperated with MDOT in encouraging public input in the planning of MDOT-managed transportation projects. Provided internet links to MDOT websites and announcements. Communicated MDOT activities in SWMPC quarterly publications.
- Participated in regional and local planning initiatives for non-motorized paths. Provided information and regional coordination to local interests.
- Worked closely with local officials and stakeholders to monitor freight related issues within the metropolitan area.
- Continued to monitor member activities and/or projects that need to be implemented into the LRP.
- Collaborated with relevant partners in the areas of rail and public transportation as described below:
 - Rail – collaborated with Berrien and Cass Counties to develop strategies to maintain and improve passenger rail service in the NATS area.
 - Gave update on status of high-speed rail in Michigan.
 - Encouraged committee members and public to submit comments to MDOT for State Rail Plan update.
 - Public Transit – continued partnership with Niles Dial-a-Ride to advance public transportation as a viable alternative that meets the needs of residents, especially under-represented groups, in the urban area.

Completed tasks as outlined in 2010 Unified Work Program:

- Worked closely with state and federal transportation partners to further integrate freight planning into the transportation planning process.
 - Began work on a freight needs assessment for Berrien County.
- With the assistance of the Interagency Work Group (IAWG), assessed the air quality conformity of proposed projects from the LRP and the corresponding TIP.

Additional Completed Tasks:

- Created and administered “What’s Important to You in Transportation Projects?” survey amongst the committee members and the public, with the purpose of prioritizing the goals in the Long Range Transportation Plan.
- Began a grant application for HUD Sustainable Communities grant and contacted potential partners.
- Participated in Livability and Climate Change scans conducted by FHWA.

Uncompleted Tasks:

- Delineate linkage between local land use policies and activities and the transportation system. *In progress. Will be addressed in more detail in FY 2011.*
- Work closely with local officials and interests to inventory and monitor freight routes and intermodal facilities within the metropolitan area. *This task was begun and will be addressed in more detail in FY 2011.*
- Gather input from freight stakeholders and integrate freight planning into existing transportation planning processes. *This will be addressed in FY 2011.*
- Collaborate with relevant partners in the areas of air and water transportation as described below:
 - Air Transportation – provide planning assistance in the development of long and short-range strategies.
 - Water Transportation – provide planning assistance to the St. Joseph River Harbor Authority on passenger and freight services being planned.
 - *Note: SWMPC staff were involved with planning in these areas within the TwinCATS MPO but there was no activity in these areas within the NATS MPO during FY 2010. SWMPC was involved with trail planning activities, including planning water paddling trails in Berrien County.*

Products of Long Range Planning Tasks:

Status:

Updated Participation Plan

Approved by TwinCATS and NATS policy committees;
awaiting approval from SWMPC board

Updated socioeconomic data

In progress

Short Range Planning

Ongoing tasks as outlined in 2010 Unified Work Program:

- Monitored local initiatives and legislative actions that have possible impacts on non-automobile oriented means of transportation, such as rail, air and bicycle trails.
- Coordinated regional transportation strategies with community transportation needs, development and land uses and assisted in the development of local plans, strategies and actions to integrate regional goals and local goals.
- Provided data, technical assistance and planning services to local initiatives for incorporating non-motorized system(s) into the transportation system.
- Worked with MDOT, the Berrien County and Cass County road commissions, and the local units of government on the development of local inputs to the State “Asset Management Plan.”
- Continued to coordinate, monitor, and follow up on transportation issues with transportation studies such as corridor studies, local traffic impact studies, and/or site plan review.
- Monitored projects for the TIP and LRP for air conformity.

Completed tasks as outlined in 2010 Unified Work Program:

- Developed the FY 2011-2014 TIP document.
 - Updated and improved the NATS TIP application, creating a separate application for transit projects.
 - Announced FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program Call for Projects.
 - Collected applications from local agencies.
 - Scheduled, advertised, and facilitated project selection meeting for the FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program.
 - Created new environmental justice maps for TIP.
 - Compiled an Illustrative Projects list for future federal stimulus funding.
 - Finalized draft TIP project list and Illustrative list for FY 2011-2014 TIP and presented to committees.
 - Drafted TIP document and presented to committees.
 - Developed and sent out consultation materials for TIP; collected public comments on TIP.
 - Wrote and submitted legal notices to newspapers for TIP public comment period.
 - Conducted virtual InterAgency Work Group meeting for TIP air quality conformity.
 - Filled out TIP e-File.
 - Informed Technical Advisory Committee members of new schedule for TIP amendments.

- Gathered total project costs for new FY 2011-2014 TIP e-File and revised TIP project application to include total project cost.
- Performed the following activities related to the FY 2008-2011 TIP:
 - Published 2009 annual listing of obligated projects.
 - Facilitated ARRA distribution process through NATS.
 - Tracked progress of projects in TIP.
 - Monitored the financial constraint document for FY 2008-2011 TIP.
 - Monitored the status of FY 2010 TIP projects as they affect the FY 2008-2011 TIP.
 - Monitored and revised the FY 2008-2011 TIP in accordance with the current LRP to address changes in local circumstances and local priorities in transportation.
 - Processed the following amendments in the FY 2008-2011 TIP:
 - Amended two local road projects in FY 2010 and one in FY 2011.
 - Added seven local road projects in FY 2010 and one in FY 2011.
 - Processed one administrative modification to a local road project in FY 2010.
 - Deleted five local road projects in FY 2011.
 - Added one MDOT project in FY 2010.
 - Added two MDOT projects in FY 2010 and one in FY 2011.
 - Added three general program accounts in FY 2010.
 - Amended one general program account in FY 2010.
 - Added one SWMPC project in FY 2010.
 - Deleted two transit projects in FY 2010.
 - Added one transit project in FY 2010.
 - Processed four administrative modifications to transit projects in FY 2010.
 - Added five transit projects in FY 2011.
 - Deleted one transit project in FY 2011 and amended one transit project in FY 2011.

Additional Completed Tasks:

- Administered Berrien County CMAQ funds, including the following tasks:
 - Submitted FY 2011 CMAQ project applications.
 - Coordinated a CMAQ 2012-14 call for projects meeting.
 - Submitted FY 2012-2014 CMAQ project applications.
 - Announced another CMAQ call for projects for FY 2010 remaining funds.
 - Assisted local agencies with CMAQ applications.

Uncompleted Tasks:

- None.

Products of Short Range Planning:

Revised TIP application

Amendments and administrative changes to the TIP, as needed

Regularly updated TIP and Fiscal Constraint tables

Public participation notices

FY 2011-2014 TIP document

Status:

Completed and published

Completed and submitted

Published

Completed

Completed and submitted



Other Planning Activities

Ongoing tasks as outlined in 2010 Unified Work Program:

- Assisted local communities in researching grant opportunities for funding transportation-related projects.
- Identified opportunities to initiate safety data information collection and to conduct and/or coordinate outreach activities among interested parties. Expanded efforts to establish safety as a priority element in the transportation planning process. Continued participation in the Berrien Transportation Safety Committee.
 - Planned bicycle safety workshops at 8 public libraries for summer 2010, including: reaching out to libraries, scheduling workshops; ordering supplies; creating flyer and permission slip, and creating curriculum
 - Wrote and obtained a grant for bicycle safety from the DALMAC fund and gave a report on the project at a grantees' meeting in Lansing, May 27th
 - Passed out information about bicycle safety to parents and children at Tri-County Head Start Fun Fair at Berrien County Fairgrounds, May 14th
- Assisted local partners in planning short-term activities that have potential impact on the transportation system.
- Provided staff assistance in identifying transportation/land use issues in the urban area.
- Responded to requests regarding ride-sharing, as resources permitted, and disseminated existing, available materials to those expressing interest.
- Provided input and planning to non-motorized activities, multi-modal initiatives and educational opportunities regarding transportation planning.
- Provided assistance to public transit to improve efficiency.
 - Collected and sent in letters of support to MDOT for the 5304 SPR grant application for a transit consolidation study for the county

Completed tasks as outlined in 2010 Unified Work Program:

- Partnered with regional transit and human services providers to implement findings of the Berrien County Transit Study
- Continued to implement technology in transit grant.

Additional Completed Tasks:

- Wrote and submitted ESRI mobile governments grant.
- Participated in Michigan Association of Planning Social Equity committee conference calls.
- Compiled survey questions / focus group questions about public transit for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to use at a public input forum.

Uncompleted Tasks:

- Work in partnership and coordinate with other stakeholders and community groups as part of community Safe Routes to School teams. *There were no Safe Routes to School initiatives in the NATS MPO area in FY 2010.*

Products of Other Planning Tasks:

Berrien County Transit Study Implementation Plan

Status:

Completed

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Below is a summary of transportation planning revenues and expenditures from FY 2010. Figures are not final and are subject to audit.

Federal Highway Funds

Program Element	Budgeted in UWP	Spent	Under/(Over)
Program Management	34,740	37,565	(2,825)
Data Management	20,850	18,515	2,335
Long Range Planning	17,373	4,943	12,430
Short Range Planning	8,687	8,996	(309)
Other Planning	5,214	4,600	614
Totals	86,864	74,619	12,245

Federal Transit Authority Funds

Program Element	Budgeted in UWP	Spent	Under/(Over)
Program Management	11,140	12,125	(985)
Data Management	7,425	7,389	36
Long Range Planning	5,229	1,979	3,250
Short Range Planning	2,361	1	2,360
Other Planning	1,352	380	972
Transit Pass Through	6,250	6,250	0
Totals	33,757	28,124	5,633

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

Web page views:

The following table shows web page visits in fiscal year 2010 for the transportation pages on www.swmpc.org. (This does not include the transportation information on partner site www.gorideshare.org).

A unique page view represents a new visitor to the page. This indicator was used rather than page views in order to eliminate repeat visits.

Page	Unique page views in FY 2010	Percent change from FY 2009	Average time spent on page
Transportation Planning	600	14.07%	0:37
Traffic Counts <i>(links to Traffic Count Database page below)</i>	554	0.54%	0:40
NATS	549	46.01%	00:52
NATS Meetings in 2010	456	N/A	3:22
Traffic Count Database <i>(launches to an external portal website)</i>	342	103.57%	4:13
Public Transit	253	48.82%	0:39
CMAQ	250	11.11%	2:22
Regional Rail	204	N/A	1:06
What's Important to You in Transportation? survey <i>(survey open for one month)</i>	200	N/A	4:36
Asset Management	129	-28.73%	0:59
NATS Documents	129	-3.01%	3:42
Rail News	102	N/A	2:18
NATS 2014 TIP Projects	98	N/A	3:15
How to Get an Amtrak Stop in Your Community	82	N/A	2:37
Transportation Participation	79	-7.06%	1:43
NATS TAC	79	75.56%	1:13
Asset Management Berrien County	71	-1.39%	2:49
NATS TIP Application	70	40%	2:33

Other measurable indicators:

Number of Facebook fans	23
News articles	<u>3</u>
Niles Daily Star / Leader Publications	2
South Bend Tribune	1
Public comments/responses gathered	<u>183</u>
What's Important to You in Transportation? Survey	162
TIP	5
How Can We Involve You? Survey (combined TwinCATS/NATS)	16