

NILES BUCHANAN CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (NATS)

Joint Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) & Policy Committee Minutes

March 23, 2021, via Zoom

NATS MEMBER ORG./POSITION	MEMBERS (2019)	TAC	POL	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Berrien Co. Board of Commissioners (1)	Michael Majerek		x	P		P									
Berrien Co. Board of Commissioners (2)	(vacant)		x												
Berrien Co. Community Dev. Dept.	Evan Smith	x		A		A									
Berrien Co. Planning Commission	Eric Lester, M.D.		x	P		P									
Berrien Co. Road Dept. (Policy)	(vacant)		x												
Berrien Co. Road Dept. (TAC)	Kevin Stack	X		A		P									
Bertrand Township	Butch Payton	x	x	P		A									
Buchanan Dial-A-Ride		x	x												
Buchanan Township	Lynn Ferris	x	x	A		A									
Cass Co. Board of Commissioners (1)	Robert Benjamin		x	P		A									
Cass Co. Board of Commissioners (2)	Roseann Marchetti		x	P		P									
Cass Co. Planning Commission	(vacant)	x													
Cass Co. Road Comm. (Policy)	Sandra Seanor		x	P		P									
Cass Co. Road Comm. (TAC)	Joe Bellina (TAC Chair)	x		P		P									
City of Buchanan	Don Ryman	x	x	P		P									
City of Niles (1)	Georgia Boggs		x	P		A									
City of Niles (2)	Serita Mason		x	A		P									
City of Niles (3)	Jessica Nelson		x	A		A									
City of Niles Community Dev. Director	(vacant)	x													
City of Niles Dial-A-Ride Transit	Kelly Getman-Dissette	x	x	P		P									
City of Niles Public Works Dir./Airport	Joe Ray	x		P		A									
Howard Township	Bill Kasprzak	x	x	A		P									
Kinexus	(vacant)	x													
Mason Township	Doug Fetters	x	x	A											
MDOT - Bureau of Trans. Planning	Jim Sturdevant	x	x	P		P									
MDOT - Southwest Region	Brian Sanada	x	x	P		P									
MDOT - Southwest Region (Alternate)	Amy Lipset	Alt	Alt	A		A									
MDOT - Transportation Service Center	Jonathon Smith	x	x	P		P									
Milton Township	Susan Flowers	x	x	P		A									
Niles Charter Township	Richard Cooper (P. Ch.)	x	x	P		P									
Ontwa Township	Dawn Bolock	x	x	P		P									
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians	(vacant)	x	x												
Village of Edwardsburg	Dennis Peak	x	x	A		A									
Federal Highway Administration	Andy Pickard	NV	NV	A		A									
Federal Transit Administration	Susan Weber	NV	NV	A		A									
EGLE - Air Quality	Breanna Bukowski	NV		A		A									
MDOT - Modeling	Jon Roberts	NV		A		A									
MDOT - Office of Passenger Trans.	Fred Featherly	NV		P		P									
Michiana Area Council of Governments	Caitlin Stevens	NV	NV	A		A									
Southwest Michigan Planning Comm.	Kim Gallagher	NV	NV	P		P									
Southwest Michigan Planning Comm.	Brandon Kovnat	NV	NV	P		P									

P. Ch.: Policy Chair; Alt: Alternate; NV: Non-voting; P: Present; A: Absent.

Others present: Anita Boughner, MDOT Statewide Planning

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**

Technical Advisory chair, Joe Bellina, called the meeting to Order at 1:30 pm. Brandon Kovnat led roll call.

2. **Changes to the Agenda**

None.

3. **Public comment**

None.

4. **Approval of the Minutes from the April 21, 2020 NATS Meeting**

Motion to approve the minutes from the January 26, 2021 joint Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Committee meeting. Made by Sand Serita Mason and seconded by Roseann Marchetti. **Motion approved.**

5. **SWMPC Staff Report**

FY 2022 Unified Work Program: Gallagher mentioned that SWMPC had met with a wide range of MDOT, Federal Highway, and Federal Transit staff to discuss the NATS FY 2022 work program. She said that the major focus for the next year would be the developing the 2023-2026 transportation Improvement program (TIP). The FY 2022 Unified Work Program will be presented for approval at the May TwinCATS meeting. Gallagher discussed the timeline for developing the 2023-2026 (TIP) with the call for project being sent after the NATS May meeting. Gallagher highlighted how the call for projects would be coordinated with all of the other federal programs SWMPC manages.

2021 PASER Ratings: Gallagher discussed the PASER ratings for the upcoming summer. No ratings were done in 2020. In previous years the Transportation Asset Management Council (TAMC) required 50% of the federal aid eligible road to be rated each year by a team of at least three trained raters (SWMPC, County Road Agency, and MDOT). In 2021, TAMC wants 100% of the federal aid roads to be rated. In addition, due to COVID, MDOT will not be participating in the PASER ratings, and the rating team can consist of two raters. Gallagher also let members know that SWMPC can do local (non-federal aid) PASER ratings on request. She said because of the 100% requirement for federal aid roads she cannot guarantee how many local roads can be rated this year.

Bellina raised a concern that for safety, during PASER rating, the driver should be able to focus on driving and asked if it is possible to get a third person for PASER ratings. Boughner added that, even without an MDOT vehicle the rating should be done in another official vehicle in order to be more visible to other drivers.

Safety Grant: Kovnat reminded the committee members about the 2023 Highway Safety Improvement program (HSIP) call for projects. He reminded the committees that the grant was targeted toward reducing fatal or serious injuries on any public road. He also gave a demonstration of the updated crash map on SWMPC's website.

TEDF Category B: Kovnat mentioned that MDOT's had released a call for project for the transportation Economic Development Fund Category B grant. This grant is for cities or villages with a population less than 10,000 and it can be used on any public road; not limited to federal aid eligible roads. Kovnat highlighted that the TEDF category B was targeted towards funding projects that do not typically qualify for federal grants.

Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP): Gallagher announced that congress had authorized \$12 Billion in HIP funds in the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, of which Michigan was apportioned \$311 to Michigan. This funding is split between the normal HIP fund which requires a 81.85/18.15 split and a special authorization for COVID Relief [because it was authorized in the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, FHWA is referring to this as HIP-CRRSA] that does not require any local match. NATS will receive \$269,598 combined in HIP funds, which must be obligated in FY 2022. In addition, the HIP funds must be used within the census designated urban area, which is a different boundary than the MPO planning boundary where the Surface Transportation funds (STP) can be used.

Gallagher presented the NATS 2020-2023 approved illustrative list, which contains projects that were submitted for the 2020-2023 NATS Transportation Program but were not selected (See 1.1 attached). Gallagher further explained that only three of the six projects in the illustrative list were eligible for HIP funding because of the requirement to be within the census designated urban boundaries (see attached 1.2). Gallagher added that two of the illustrative projects outside the urban boundary had already been funded by rural STP funds.

Bellina asked if there was a discussion about issuing a new call for projects for the HIP-CRRSA since it was 100% federal funded and not identical to the STP which is what the current Illustrative projects had applied for.

Gallagher said that she felt that because the amount was low she wanted to keep a requirement for a local match to stretch the funding. Kovnat added that he did not think it was worthwhile to separate the HIP and HIP-CRRSA because the HIP, which requires a local match, is only \$34,396. Gallagher also said that because of the quick need to get a project obligated in 2022 she did not think there was time for a new call for projects and added that only one MPO in Michigan was issuing a new call (because that MPO does not have project on an illustrative list).

Bellina said he did not think needing to obligate a project in 2022 would be an issue. He added that if agencies had known there could be a funding source that did not require a local match he believes the illustrative would have been much bigger.

Seanor said that she did not believe a call for project would be difficult and could use the same application and scoring system as the original 2020-2023 call for projects. She added the she was confident of increased federal funding in the future and wanted agencies to be ready with a list of projects.

Boughner clarified that while FHWA does not require a local match for HIP-CRRSA many MPOs were imposing a requirement for a local match so that all projects were still treated equally.

Bellina said he didn't object to a scoring system that rewarded projects with higher local match, but also didn't want to require more match than necessary. He did added that he feels points for combining a project with water/sewer work benefited more urban areas since this didn't apply to rural areas Bellina added that the point system was just a guideline anyway and do not dictate which projects are chosen.

Gallagher said she wanted a project selected at the May meeting. This would mean applications are submitted by late April. Bellina wanted to hold a review meeting in early May to make recommendations. It was requested that a call for projects be sent on March 30, with a due date of April 27.

Motion by the Technical Advisory Committee to recommend that the Policy Committee require SWMPC staff to issue a call for projects for the Highway Infrastructure Program funds. Further, no requirement for additional local match above the FHWA minimum will be placed on the funding. Made by Kevin Stack and seconded by Kelly Getman-Dissette. **Motion approved**

Motion for the Policy Committee to approve the recommendation from the Technical Advisory Committee. Motion made by Sandra Seanor and seconded by Kelly Getman-Dissette. **Motion approved**

Metropolitan statistical Areas: Kovnat gave a presentation about a proposed rule change to redefine metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) from containing an urban area with a population of 50,000 to an urban area of 100,000. Kovnat discussed how this could affect a variety of federal programs. He noted that the US DOT does not use MSA designation for funding and there was no identified direct effect on transportation funding.

6. Agency and Project Updates

6.1. **Niles Dial A Ride:** Gettman-Dissetee said she attended the annual funding meeting with the other South Bend Urban transit agencies to split the FY 2021 transit funds. The funding split will be similar to 2020. She also mentioned that transit ridership is still down from pre-pandemic levels.

Berrien Bus: Featherly said he was going through the annual applications for transit agencies and proposed budgets. He said projecting budgets is currently difficult for agencies.

Cass County Public Transit: Gallagher said that Cass County Public Transit has selected the consultant KFH to conduct a countrywide service study.

6.2. Local Road Agencies

Gallagher announced that the urban funding statewide (obligation authority) was completely expended. This is earlier than is typical, but luckily all of the NATS projects were already obligated and no funding was lost.

Cass County Road Commission: Bellina said the Barron Lake Road project should be bid on April 2nd. He said the design for Mason Street project was approved by MDOT.

Berrien County Road Department; Stack said that the Portage Road project was expected for a May bid letting. The Walton Street Bridge project was obligated. He is working on timing because this project is combined with the Napier Avenue Bridge in the Benton Harbor area for a single contractor bid. Stack added that the Walton Bridge estimate was 50% higher than the original programmed amount because during design they identified increased work on one of the piers.

6.3. MDOT

Smith said he did not have anything to add about the project included in the packet. He said there were a few non-federally funded project to mention. This summer MDOT will resurface the shoulders on M-60 from the US-12 interchange east to where it stop being a divided roadway. There will be a road safety audit of the M-60 & US-12 area. He said the audit is about a weeklong process and will be completed before the next NATS meeting.

7. New Business

None.

8. Privilege of the Floor or Public Comment

Boughner asked about the continuation of remote meetings because the Open Meetings Act provision allowing for virtual meetings ends March 31st, unless there is a declared state of emergency. Gallagher replied that Berrien County has declared a countywide state of emergency and Marchetti added that Cass County has done this as well. This will allow NATS to continue holding virtual meetings.

Ryman asked to clarify that NATS had voted to ignore the current illustrative list and instead issue a new call for projects for the HIP funding and will require agencies to reapply for any project that is currently on the illustrative list.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for April 27, 2021 at 1:30 to be conducted via zoom

Minutes compiled by Brandon Kovnat, SWMPC Associate Transportation planner

Link to the full [March 23 2021 meeting packet](#)

DRAFT

1.1 Approved 2020-2023 Illustrative List

Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP)

NATS Approved 2020-2023 TIP Illustrative List

City or Township	Project Name	Project Limits	Length (miles)	Project Description	STBG (Federal)	Local	Total Cost	PASER Rating	Drainage	Increase in RSL	Current Daily Traffic Count	Total Score
City of Buchanan	River Street	Wastewater Treatment Plant to the west side of the St. Joseph River.	0.3	Mill 3" and resurface with HMA	\$204,711	\$45,394	\$250,105	1 to 2	Adequate	7 to 9	2,000 to 5,000	19
City of Niles	Lake Street	N 5TH ST to RR Viaduct	0.36	Mill 2" and resurface with HMA	\$120,769	\$26,780	\$147,549	1 to 2	Minor problems	7 to 9	2,000 to 5,000	22
Ontwa Township	May Street	Conrad Road to Brizandine Road	0.52	Mill & Resurface	\$82,669	\$18,332	\$101,001	3 to 4	Adequate	7 to 9	2,000 to 5,000	23
Milton Township	Conrad Road	May Street to US12	0.71	Mill & Resurface	\$112,462	\$24,938	\$137,400	3 to 4	Adequate	7 to 9	2,000 to 5,000	16
Buchanan Township	Red Bud Trail	Miller Road to Hills Haven Road	1.02	HMA overlay	\$280,000	\$62,089	\$342,089	5 to 7	Adequate	15 to 20	2,000 to 5,000	24
City of Buchanan	Red Bud Trail Reconstruction	Front Street to 4th Street	0.25	Full reconstruction of the roadway with sewer work	\$815,949	\$180,934	\$996,883	1 to 2	Inadequate	15 to 20	5,000 to 10,000	34

Urban Area 1.2

