

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

MINUTES

October 28, 2014

2:30 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

Policy Members Present:	Georgia Boggs, City of Niles Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex-officio) Erin Jolivette, MDOT – Coloma TSC Serita Ann Mason, City of Niles Jess Minks, Berrien County Road Commission Kim O’Haver, Buchanan Dial A Ride Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce Cliff Poehlman, Cass County Road Commission Don Ryman, City of Buchanan Kris Welch, MDOT Statewide Planning Robert Ziliak, Cass County Commissioner
Policy Members Absent:	Jason Auvil, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Dawn Bolock, Ontwa Township Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg Craig Bradfield, Howard Township John Egelhaaf, SWMPC (ex-officio) Representative, Howard Township John Gruchot, Berrien County Community Development Darrell Harden, MDOT, Southwest Region John Klimek, Berrien County Board of Commissioners Joseph Kring, Bertrand Township John Lanum, MDOT Planning Jason Latham, MDOT-SW Region Paul Lott, MDOT Planning Bill Marx, City of Buchanan Jane Mitchell, Buchanan Township Stewart McKenzie, FTA (ex-officio) Brad Sharlow, MDOT Planning (ex-officio) Joe Sobieralski, Southwest Michigan Economic Growth Alliance Bob Sutton, Mason Township Planning Commission Representative, MACOG (ex-officio)
SWMPC Staff Present:	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani

1. Call to Order & Introductions

Meeting was called to order by Cooper at 2:34 p.m and Mason led the group in the pledge of allegiance.

2. Minutes

A motion by Poehlman with support by Ziliak to approve the Policy Committee Meeting minutes from August 26 with

corrections to the attendance. **Motion passed.**

A motion by Personette with support by Poehlman to approve the Joint MPO meeting minutes from September 25th. **Motion passed.**

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Staff Report

▪ Feedback from Transportation Presentation

Mani said that feedback from Bill Hamilton's presentation on Transportation Funding had generally been good. Mani encouraged committee members to share topics they were interested in learning more about, particularly regarding funding. Bill Hamilton had given an overview of transportation funding, but there were many more specific topics that could be covered, including materials costs.

▪ NFC Review Coming Up

Mani said that a statewide review process of National Functional Classifications was underway, and that the Southwest Region was being asked to review its urban Other Principal Arterials and rural Major Collectors to see if any of these now function as Minor Arterials and Minor Collectors, respectively. This is because the state has certain targets it must hit in terms of mileage in each classification category. Mani noted that changes need to be based on current traffic counts, rather than projections for development or a desire to have more traffic in an area.

Poehlman said that Cass County had shifted some of its roads around in functional class in order to have funding that focused on the most critical areas. Personette asked whether rural areas had a similar meetings process to the MPO. Mani and Gallagher clarified the Rural Task Force process.

Mani said that those meetings would take place sometime in the next 2-3 months, and that there would likely be 2-3 meetings.

▪ Local Safety Initiative and Safety Projects

Mani reminded committee members that in the meeting packets, there was a sheet discussing the Local Safety Initiative (LSI). LSI is a service that MDOT provides to local Act 51 agencies for FREE. MDOT engineers will assess crash data and road design to identify particularly problematic areas for safety in a community. They will propose solutions, many of which will be low cost. Going through this audit process will help your community be competitive for the statewide safety project grant application process, and help gain access to other sources of funding.

O'Haver said that there was an MDOT training on transit safety next Thursday. Ryman asked whether CMAQ projects that did have some safety elements might better use safety funds. Jolivette clarified that the programs do have some overlap, and in a lot of cases, it comes down to which program's forms pertain better to a specific project.

• Transportation Alternatives Call for Projects 2015-2017- Ends November 11th

Mani said that the Call for Projects for NATS Transportation Alternatives funds ends. This is the small allocation (around \$45,000) that NATS gets to implement pedestrian and bicycle improvements. A link to the project application information was sent in an email, and is available here:

<http://www.swmpc.org/tapfunds.asp>. SWMPC will be using MDOT's application system. Mani said that provided there was at least one project application, the TAP project selection subcommittee would meet to discuss the application process. Mani said that he would strongly prefer it if projects were proposed for

2015-2017, so that we did not have to reissue a Call for Projects again next year.

▪ **CMAQ Meeting November 13th at Berrien County Road Commission at 1 PM**

Mani said that Berrien County would be holding a CMAQ meeting at the Road Commission on Thursday November 13th at 1 PM. The main purpose of the meeting was to reprogram an unobligated project from FY 2014. However, MDOT's Call for Projects for 2016-2020 has gone out, and Berrien County was looking for ideas to fill 2018-2020. These projects must show an air quality benefit in order to qualify for the funds. Any project application ideas for 2018-2020 are welcome.

Cass County will be holding a CMAQ meeting in December in conjunction with the Rural Task Force program, as is the case annually.

5. Public Transit Updates

Gallagher shared that the Governor had announced a Regional Mobility Initiative based on the Prosperity Regions. As the Regional Prosperity Initiative applicant, SWMPC had been tasked with assisting with developing an assessment of current regional mobility needs. These needs focused on both intra-county connections (which, as identified in the study, are lacking in Berrien County) and trips between counties. A letter had gone out to SWMPC and there will be a conference call on November 3rd to discuss these items further.

Gallagher also noted that Niles Dial-A-Ride had completed its triennial review with FTA.

O'Haver said that as with the transit consolidation study, we should be careful that the Regional Mobility Initiative results do not make promises that cannot be delivered on. It is important to have a vision that we can follow through on.

Ryman said that transit consolidation in the county will not work, and that it is penalizing communities that set up a transit system three or four decades ago. Ryman said that it is possible to get across the state line using transit as it exists now, and that we should not simply accept solutions being proposed by higher levels of government. Ryman urged that we should consider transit at a grassroots level. Ryman said it was possible that we would end up with no transit system if this consolidation occurs.

Minks said that it was absolutely time to bring the four transit systems together, as there is an increasing transit dependent population of older adults. This area is seeing more and more retirees who are often not able to drive, especially after their physical health starts to decline. Minks said that his own family was an example, as one person in the household had medical issues, and his children had moved away. Minks said that we need to be conscious of the reality of our demographics, where people are living further away from services and will not be able to drive forever.

6. Project Updates

Fiscal Year	Job Number	Agency	Project Name	Update Information	Date of last update	Bid Savings	Obligation Month	Bills Submitted
2013	118207	Berrien County	IN-MI River Valley Trail	Have sent a new offer to Alcoa for their property; still a question of who has environmental liability	October 2014			

2014	104152	MDOT	M-139 CON phase Bridge replacement	Came in under engineers' estimate; construction in October	August 2014			
	118114	Niles DAR	Free fare days	No longer using CMAQ funds for this program	October 2014			
		Niles DAR	Maintenance software					
		Niles DAR	Preventative maintenance					
		Niles DAR	Replacement computers					
		Niles DAR	Replacement bus					
		Niles DAR	Operating assistance					
		Cass County RC	Bertrand Rd (Batchelor road to Gumwood) - Resurface	Completed	October 2014			
		Cass County RC	Gumwood Road TAP project	Reprogrammed for 2015	October 2014			
2015		Berrien County RC	Range Line Road, Lake St and Main St Resurfacing	Program application will be submitted in December				
		Berrien County RC	Madron Lake, North Main, and Red Bud Trail	Program application will be submitted in December				
		City of Niles	Broadway Avenue Resurfacing	GI Package submitted--only issue was a couple of utility poles. Aiming for December letting	October 2014			
		Cass County	Adamsville Road Reconstruct	Design work about to begin	October 2014			
		Buchanan Dial-a-Ride	Replacement Bus	Contract probably not coming until next September	October 2014			
		Niles Dial-A-Ride	Replacement Tires					

Other updates

Jolivette said that the M-139 resurfacing project from M-140 to Fairland would be constructed next June 10- August 27, and the M-60 BR resurfacing would be constructed from August 17th of next year until October 19th.

7. Land Use Updates

Mani said that the City of Niles was revising its master plan, primarily to look at its designated wellhead protection areas and whether they ought to be changed. The City is going to the surrounding townships and trying to delineate where protected areas overlap.

Niles Township was similarly examining its own wellhead protection ordinances to determine whether they adequately protected wells that need to be protected.

The City of Niles had rezoned three parcels on S 11th St that could be bundled together as a single site. In addition, they had rezoned a parcel on Wayne St that will be converted to an auto shop.

8. Old Business

▪ Move Gumwood Road Path Project to FY 2015

Mani directed committee members to the memorandum attached in their packets. The Gumwood Road non-motorized path project using the NATS allocation of Transportation Alternatives funds was not obligated in FY 2014. However, Matt Wiitala, our Transportation Alternatives grant coordinator, had agreed to simply roll the project funding into FY 2015, since the Transportation Alternatives program has unspent balances on a state level that it can use. Wiitala just needs the committees' approval to roll that project into 2015. There would not need to be any reprogramming of NATS projects in FY 2015; this was effectively an addition of funds to FY 2015.

A motion by Ziliak with support by Poehlman to move \$43,207 in federal TAP funds for the Gumwood Road Path project to FY 2015. **Motion passed.**

▪ Local Agency Programs Review

Mani said that although NATS did not end up losing any project funding in FY 2014, obligation authority did run out rather abruptly, and so this was a good opportunity to review the timeline for getting a project through Local Agency Programs and the stumbling blocks a community might encounter. Mani reiterated the project schedule and the recommended timeline for Local Agency Programs. It pays to start the application process very early. The presentation can be found here:

http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/local_agency_programs_review.pdf

Gallagher noted that SWMPC staff would be asking for more detailed updates on projects so that the area does not lose federal funds in the future.

8. New Business

▪ GPA Guidance

Mani said that MDOT-Statewide Planning would need to present this at a future meeting, as they were not in attendance.

• Legislative Updates

- **Federal-** Dewey said that FHWA had received a large number of comments on its proposed rulemakings on performance measures, and particularly on safety. Clearly, safety was a key concern of the respondents. Dewey said to expect further proposed rulemakings on pavement and bridges, and on asset management in the coming months, and CMAQ rulemakings down the road.

- **State-** None.

9. Public Comment

None.

10. Privilege of the Floor

Gallagher shared that the City of Niles had cancelled Dial-A-Ride service for the day after Thanksgiving (Friday, November 28th) because other City departments were closed. Gallagher said that this would affect employees who needed to work at retail destinations on Black Friday. Cooper said that it was a city decision, but that he would have liked to see service in place for that day.

11. Adjournment at 3:43 p.m.

- The next meeting will be November 25 at 1:00 PM.

Minutes compiled by: Gautam Mani, Transportation Planner, 2014.

DRAFT