

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

MINUTES

January 26, 2016

2:30 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

Policy Members Present:	Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg Dawn Bolock, Ontwa Township Craig Bradfield, Howard Township Pete Fournier, Cass County Road Commission Erin Jolivette, MDOT – Coloma TSC Jess Minks, Berrien County Road Commission Kim O’Haver, Buchanan Dial A Ride Don Ryman, City of Buchanan Bob Sutton, Mason Township Debbie Sullivan, Mason Township Vickie Wagner, Berrien County Planning Commission
Policy Members Absent:	Georgia Boggs, City of Niles Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex-officio) Jason Latham, MDOT, Southwest Region John Klimek, Berrien County Board of Commissioners Steve LeClaire, Bertrand Township Serita Mason, City of Niles Representative, Buchanan Township Stewart McKenzie, FTA (ex-officio) Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce David Sewell, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Brad Sharlow, MDOT Planning (ex-officio) Representative, City of Niles Dial-A-Ride Representative, Southwest Michigan Economic Growth Alliance Robert Ziliak, Cass County Board of Commissioners
SWMPC Staff Present:	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting was called to order by Bradfield at 2:47 p.m. and Minks led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Minutes

O’Haver noted that she was at the Policy Committee meeting in November, and that this needed to be corrected in the attendance section of the minutes.

A motion by Minks with support by Sutton to approve the Policy Committee Meeting minutes from November 24, 2015, as amended. Wagner abstained from voting since she was not at the meeting. **Motion passed.**

3. Changes to the Posted Agenda

Mani noted that under “Staff Report,” SWMPC would not cover the CMAQ update, but an update had been provided in the meeting packets. In addition, they would discuss the Call for Projects under “New Business,” while discussing the project prioritization system.

4. Public Comment

None.

5. Staff Report

FAST Act

Mani said that since the committees had last met in November, Congress had passed a new transportation bill, known as the FAST Act. The FAST Act increases transportation investment nationwide primarily through non-transportation revenue sources. Included in committee members’ meeting packets was a brief, preliminary analysis of what the FAST Act would mean for the TwinCATS and NATS MPOs.

The FAST Act largely maintains the program structure of MAP-21, the previous transportation authorization. Mani said that more information would be provided once further estimates were developed at the state level. However, it is safe to say that the NATS MPO would receive an increase in Surface Transportation Program funding over current levels for the next several years. NATS will get an increase of the overall Surface Transportation Program share.

The FAST Act also breaks precedent by including passenger rail in the main transportation authorization. Previously, Amtrak was authorized under a separate bill. Amtrak will still need to go through the appropriations process annually, but inclusion in the main transportation authorization provides a longer-term policy vision for the agency.

Wagner asked whether something like an electric vehicle charging station would be eligible for CMAQ funds. Mani and Gallagher said they would look into it. Alternative fueling stations are usually eligible, but they have to be on public property.

Passenger Rail Study

Mani noted that a rail study was still underway on the Wolverine Corridor from Detroit/Pontiac to Chicago to look at double tracking for part of the route, in addition to the continued attempts to implement high speed rail in the corridor. Both of these measures would reduce travel time and delays due to freight rail movements that currently clog up the system. In addition, it would raise the possibility of additional trains running on the route each day. Since Niles is along the route, it stands to benefit from the increased frequency and reduced travel times to and from Chicago and Detroit. Mani recommended that committee members contact Jan Personette of the Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce, who had attended a local meeting on the ongoing study.

6. Public Transit Updates

▪ SWMPC Transit Updates

No update

▪ Agency Updates

At the TAC meeting, the following reports were given:

Niles Dial A Ride reported that it was having its Local Advisory Committee meeting on February 9th at 1:00 PM or 3:00 PM.

Buchanan Dial-A-Ride's Local Advisory Committee meeting had been cancelled due to lack of a quorum. O'Haver was pleased to report that Buchanan Dial-A-Ride would be receiving a delivery of three buses in March or April.

7. Land Use Updates

Sutton expressed strong concerns about traffic being diverted onto Mason St during construction of the new roundabout at the Five Points Intersection with Old M-205. In particular, Mason and Sullivan said that they were concerned about increased truck traffic on that route, which is ill-equipped to handle it.

8. Project Updates

a) Berrien County Road Commission

-North Main St from Reed to Miller Resurfacing project has had its Advance Construct (AC) funds converted in 2016.

-Bertrand Road, Third Street and Stateline Road preventative maintenance project has been obligated

b) City of Buchanan

-Traffic signal replacement at Red Bud Trail at Front St (CMAQ) and resurfacing on Red Bud Trail from Front St to the South City limits (STP) are separate projects but the applicant is aiming to have GI meetings for those projects at the same time in February

c) Cass County Road Commission

-Adamsville Road from May St to US-12 is under design – HMA base crushing and shaping

-Fir Road from Redfield Road to US-12 resurfacing- design work is underway

-Fir Road from Stateline to Redfield Road resurfacing- design work is underway

d) MDOT

- US-12 bridge deck over M-51 Restore/Rehabilitate is proceeding as planned

- US-12 resurfacing from Bakertown Road to the start of the divided section may need additional ROW easements, grading permits, and correcting culverts in the area. Construction is scheduled for 2017.

-The new bridge in Niles on M-139 is open!

e) Niles Dial A Ride

- Ordered a new bus last week. 2016 project applications will likely come in during the summer.

f) Buchanan Dial A Ride

- Purchased a total of three buses using 5339 and CMAQ funds.

Bellaire commented that the new M-139 bridge in Niles looked great, especially at night.

9. Old Business

None.

10. New Business

▪ **Transportation Alternatives**

Mani said that a memorandum had been included in the committee member meeting packets regarding NATS' Transportation Alternatives funding situation. Mani reminded committee members that NATS had been given the option to "bank" two years' worth of its TAP allocation and then spend them in a single year. This would allow for a slightly more significant \$72,000 to \$86,000 project to proceed. However, Mani said that if NATS were to use two years' worth of TAP funding in a given year, it would have to program \$36,000 less of STP in order to maintain annual constraint across all programs. Given the current need of our roads for STP funds and the possibility of using STP funds to fund what would have been TAP improvements, the committee had at a prior meeting recommended against "banking" TAP funds, and the SWMPC staff also recommended this approach for at least this year.

Mani also said that while a Call for Projects had been out, no jurisdiction had expressed interest in a new TAP project using the \$36,000 in TAP funds. Mani said that the Cass County Road Commission still had an application in MDOT's system for Gumwood Road Phase II Non-Motorized Path, which did not get obligated in FY 2015. Given that it is late in the fiscal year, a ready application was important to have. In addition, Phase I of this path from the state line north has been built, and the Indiana portions have been built as well. The 10-foot wide non-motorized path connects Milton Township to the commercial developments in and around Granger, Indiana. Future phases will connect the path to Milton Township Hall, and the project anticipates future residential development in the area. SWMPC staff recommended that the Gumwood Road Phase II Non-Motorized Path be allowed to use 2016's allocation of TAP funding.

A motion by Bolock with support by O'Haver to approve the Gumwood Road Phase II project to use NATS entire allocation of TAP funds for 2016, and only the 2016 allocation. **Motion passed.**

▪ **Project Prioritization Procedure**

Gallagher introduced the project selection scoring system that had been developed in conjunction with members of the Project Selection subcommittee. The system was a 50-point system that gives major weight to project readiness and coordination as well as how well a project preserves the existing road network. Additional weighting is given to complete streets elements of the project and safety improvements. The draft prioritization system was distributed in committee member meeting packets. The sections correspond to sections of the TIP application.

Section 1 was simply basic applicant information. Section 2 listed the project, project description, and how much funding was being requested. Section 3 deals with safety. Section 4 looks in more detail at improvements being made on the road and non-motorized elements being added. Section 5 looks at how well a project will preserve the transportation system and what the current need is for the project. Section 6 looks at how ready a project is to proceed and whether it is coordinated with other investments or jurisdictions.

Mani verified that all present in the room for the Policy Committee meeting had heard the debate during the TAC meeting regarding the project prioritization procedure. Mani said that the TAC had approved the project prioritization system, provided that strong language is provided at the top that

the scoring system serves as guidance, and that it is one factor in a project selection process that will involve extensive public debate. The final authority for project selection will rest with the NATS Policy Committee.

A motion by Bolock with support by Bellaire to approve the project prioritization with strong language added at the beginning that the document serves as guidance, and that scoring will be one factor in projects that are selected through an open and public debate at the project selection meeting, TAC meeting, and finally Policy Committee meeting in February. The revised project prioritization procedure will be published prior to the project selection subcommittee meeting on February 18th.
Motion passed.

▪ **Village of Edwardsburg Section St Reclassification**

Mani recounted that at a past TAC meeting, the TAC had voted against approval of reclassifying Section St between Max St and US-12 as a federal-aid road because of the concern that it would eliminate the ability of the Village of Edwardsburg to restrict truck traffic. Mani said that after the meeting, information became available that the Village of Edwardsburg could still restrict truck traffic because of the availability of alternate routes. Mani said it was worth revisiting the possibility of approving the route as a federal aid eligible road.

Mani said that SWMPC would be bringing data directly to the Policy Committee next month. The TAC felt that it had already debated the issue enough.

▪ **State and Federal Updates**

None.

11. Public Comment

None.

12. Privilege of the Floor

Ryman asked about the status of the transit RFP. Gallagher said that she was attempting to get final edits in to the procurement manager at MDOT in order to issue the RFP and hire a consultant. They were very close to the point of being able to do that.

13. Adjournment at 3:50 p.m.

- The next meeting will be February 23 at 2:30 PM.

Minutes compiled by: Gautam Mani, Associate Planner, 2016