

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

MINUTES

February 24, 2015

2:00 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

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

1. Call to Order & Introductions

Meeting was called to order by Cooper at 2:35 p.m and he led the group in the pledge of allegiance.

2. Minutes

A motion by Bradfield with support by Personette to approve the Policy Committee Meeting minutes from January 27, 2015. **Motion passed.**

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Staff Report

▪ **Obligation Thermometer**

Mani recapped the obligation thermometer that was introduced at the last meeting. This is a tool that MDOT provides to let local agencies know how much federal obligation authority is left over in the state at any given time. Mani said that as of February 3rd, MDOT had used up 43.3% of its available obligation authority that runs through May 31st. After May 31st, new transportation legislation would be needed in order for obligation authority to continue to be available. Mani said that even if reauthorization of MAP-21 happens right away, there would be a few week lag time in Michigan receiving that obligation authority. Therefore, project applicants that are looking to obligate in June may run into delays. As always, SWMPC encourages its local agencies to obligate early in the fiscal year.

The obligation thermometer is updated monthly and is available at http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9625_25885-339193--,00.html

▪ **Traffic Count Requests**

Mani noted that it was never too early to get count requests in for the 2015 season. Gallagher added that this was a free service that SWMPC provides to any city, village, or township in our three counties. Mani said that this year, a question had come up regarding how early or late in the year it was possible to do counts. Mani said that if you request that count be done anytime between May and October, you were probably safe. Our count team is usually able to get out into the field in April, and if there is no winter precipitation, they can sometimes do counts in November.

Mani said that this year, agencies may request counts specifically for National Functional Class Reclassification. NFC Reclassification requires current traffic counts. Mani said there was a box on the online form where agencies could mark whether a count was for proposed NFC reclassification. If we have a high number of count requests, those counts that are for NFC reclassification would take high priority.

The count request form may be found at <http://www.swmpc.org/trafficcountform.asp>.

▪ **Spring Asset Management Conference April 30**

Mani said that the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council was putting on the Spring Asset Management Conference on April 30 in Grand Rapids. This would be an all day event. Mani said it was an excellent opportunity to learn about the latest in pavement management practices and also emerging practices in gathering data. Mani said that the timing of this conference was also excellent, as it is less than one week before the transportation funding ballot measure is up for a vote. That would almost certainly be a topic on the agenda. Elected officials and municipal engineers are strongly encouraged to attend. Public agency registration fees are deeply discounted.

▪ **MI Travel Counts Survey**

Mani said that MDOT was conducting a Travel Demand survey throughout the state in 2015, looking at the routes people use to travel, the modes of transportation they use, and the times of day that they

travel. MDOT was currently sending out letters to pilot participants. Eventually, they will send out letters to 700,000 households, hoping to get 21,000 to participate. A subset of those households will be asked to fill out a travel diary, recounting all of their trips for one day between April and June. An even smaller subset would be asked to carry around GPS receivers tracking their activities.

Mani said that these data were extremely important for feeding the travel demand model for our MPO area in our long range plan. Mani said he anticipated that committee members might get questions from their residents regarding whether the survey is legitimate and whether their privacy would be protected if they participate. The answer to both questions is yes. Data from the diaries and GPS receivers would go to Westat and be stripped of identifying information before it goes to MDOT. There is also a very small financial incentive involved in participation, so residents should definitely be encouraged to fill out the survey.

Gallagher encouraged committee members to also check out the Facebook page for MI Travel Counts for the latest information.

5. Public Transit Updates

Transit Consolidation Study and Countywide Service Plan Updates

Gallagher said that the County was still discussing whether to form a new authority as part of the effort at transit consolidation in Berrien County.

Gallagher said that the main report that she had to share was that she had applied for a grant through MDOT to do a countywide service plan that would like at the viability of fixed routes throughout Berrien County. The total grant amount is \$200,000, 20% of which must come from local match. Gallagher said that she had secured commitments for the required local match from the Lakeland Health Foundation, Berrien Bus, and the Berrien County Manufacturers Association. The federal funds would come in the form of section 5304 funds from the Federal Transit Administration.

Agency Updates

O'Haver said that MDOT's Triennial Review of Buchanan Dial-A-Ride had gone well. It was a highly cooperative process, and Buchanan Dial-A-Ride addressed concerns immediately. O'Haver is anticipating a good audit letter and funding application approval for her FY 2016 grants.

6. Land Use Updates

Gallagher presented articles of interest that were recently published, regarding a new coffee shop in Niles and icy sidewalks in Niles surrounding the high school. She said that SWMPC had developed a template for a municipal sidewalk snow removal plan, and would be happy to share that. Gallagher also said that SWMPC could assist with mapping the number of students that live within a walking radius of the school, so that sidewalks that students actually walk along could be given priority for snow removal. These would be cluster maps, so no individual students would be identified.

Ryman said that sidewalk snow removal ought to be done as a public service rather than relying on individual property owners to do their duty.

7. 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	Article in paper about progress on trail being made near Mishawaka	January 2015			
2014	104152	MDOT	M-139 CON phase Bridge replacement	Ongoing	January 2015			
		Niles DAR	Maintenance software					
		Niles DAR	Preventative maintenance					
		Niles DAR	Replacement computers	Purchase has been approved by City Council	January 2015			
		Niles DAR	Replacement bus	Awaiting end of axle shortage	January 2015			
		Niles DAR	Operating assistance					
		Cass County RC	Gumwood Road TAP project (Phase I)	In letting phase	January 2015			
2015		Berrien County RC	Range Line Road, Lake St and Main St Resurfacing	Obligation Requested on January 15	January 2015			
		Berrien County RC	Madron Lake, North Main, and Red Bud Trail	TIP Amendment forthcoming	January 2015			
		City of Niles	Broadway Avenue Resurfacing	Waiting on award- 11% overbid. Will have major traffic control with detouring onto M-51.	January 2015			
		Cass County	Adamsville Road Reconstruct	Still in design	January 2015			
		Buchanan Dial-a-Ride	Replacement Bus	Contract probably not coming until next September	October 2014			

		Niles Dial-A-Ride	Replacement Tires					
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8. Old Business

None

9. New Business

▪ FHWA Updates

None

▪ State Transportation Legislation and May Ballot Initiative Updates

Mani said that MDOT Finance had released a preliminary revenue estimate of how much each county, city, or village would receive if the ballot measure passes. Mani said it is important to convey to members of the public that while a certain portion of the revenue increase would go towards paying down debt that MDOT has on past transportation projects, the remaining funds would be distributed according to Act 51 formula, as they always have been. Mani said that information had been circulating that funds would be distributed according to some sort of different formula, and that was not the case.

Mani and Gallagher shared useful links on MDOT's website showing photos of current road conditions, a summary of current transportation funding, and documents and infographics related to common myths about transportation funding and MDOT's practices.

All of these links are housed in a central location now at : <http://www.swmpc.org/transfunding.asp>.

Minks said that people voting needed to understand that if the ballot measure were passed, than the separate funding pots for roads and schools would be constitutionally protected, and that if the ballot measure did not pass, people should expect to see roads deteriorate to the point where they might be converted back to gravel. .

10. Privilege of the Floor

Harden announced that Bobbi Welke has retired as the Region Engineer and is being replaced by Kimberly Avery, who had been the Deputy Region Engineer in MDOT's Metro Region.

Mani shared a couple of news items: the Berrien County Road Commission has a new smartphone app that allows users to send reports on road conditions directly to the Road Commission. Gallagher raised the issue of whether people would know that they were driving on a Berrien County road when they made the report, and how the Road Commission might pass along information to road agencies in other jurisdictions.

Gallagher also pointed out the Mi-Drive site from MDOT, which is useful in looking at delays on the roads. Ryman states that Buchanan has applied for CMAQ funding for a traffic lights at Red Bud and Front St.

11. Adjournment at 3:16 p.m.

- The next meeting will be March 24 at 2:30 PM.

Minutes compiled by: Gautam Mani, Associate Planner, and Patrice Rose, Administrative Assistant, 2015.