

**NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY**  
Policy Committee

**MINUTES**

March 27, 2012

2:30 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

Policy Members Present:	Jason Auvil, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Georgia Boggs, City of Niles Chuck Collins, Berrien County Road Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Irving Frost, Howard Township Darrell Harden, MDOT, Southwest Region Don Kronewitter, Milton Township Joseph Kring, Bertrand Township John LaMore, Berrien County Commissioner Larry Larson, City of Niles Ray Lenze, MDOT Planning Serita Ann Mason, City of Niles Dennis Patterson, Howard Township Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce Cliff Poehlman, Cass County Road Commission Don Ryman, City of Buchanan
Policy Members Absent:	Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg John Egelhaaf, SWMPC (ex-officio) Erin Kercheval, MDOT – Coloma TSC Dale Lowe, Cass County Commissioner Stewart McKenzie, FTA (ex-officio) Jane Mitchell, Buchanan Township Zach Perkins, Berrien County Commissioner Johnie Rodebush, Cass County Commissioner Brad Sharlow, MDOT Planning (ex-officio) Evan Smith, Niles Dial A Ride Rachael Tupica, Federal Highway Administration (ex-officio) Representative, Berrien County Planning Commission Representative, MACOG (ex-officio) Representative, Buchanan Dial-a-Ride Representative, Ontwa Township
SWMPC Staff Present:	Suzann Flowers Trevor Thomas
Others Present:	Sue Kronewitter, Milton Township

**1. Call to Order & Introductions**

- LaMore called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m. Poehlman led the group in saying the Pledge of Allegiance. New members were present and LaMore led the group in introductions.

**2. Minutes**

Motion by Poehlman with support by Collins to approve the February 28, 2012 NATS Policy Committee

meeting minutes as is. **Motion passed.**

### 3. Staff Report

#### ▪ **Public Participation Plan Comments and Input Meetings**

Flowers reported that the 45-day public comment period on the plan has ended and that several comments were generated from the public. A copy of the comments were placed on the [www.swmpc.org/participation.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/participation.asp) website and emailed to all members/or mailed to those who receive packets via mail. Flowers read one specific comment regarding the need to have Committee meetings held in the evening at least once or twice a year. Flowers stated that the TwinCATS members by an unofficial vote did not want to change the meeting schedule and encouraged her and Thomas to make a better connection to the members of the Committee and their home community in which they represent. Flowers and Thomas have been working on this table and will make it available and clearly communicate how members of the public can speak to representatives on the MPO Committees by attending community meetings which are normally held in the evening. Flowers also stated that she and Thomas will be looking for final approval of the plan at the April meeting along with a final version to review prior to the next meeting.

-LaMore stated that he believes that every effort is made available for the public to get involved and the County has tried to gain more interest in evening meetings with little success. The County is now exploring taping or television their meetings to make them available to the public as well.

-Poehlman stated that Cass County has also tried these methods with little success.

-Frost stated that he thought that the table was a good idea to connect citizens with townships.

#### ▪ **Maps displaying new urbanized area boundaries**

Thomas handed out information displaying new U.S. Census boundaries. Thomas explained that the maps are not the final urbanized area boundaries for MPO consideration but it does depict some changes that we may see. MDOT uses this information to see where urbanized boundaries have increased or decreased. There were some assumptions being made that Berrien Springs may have grown enough to connect into the NATS and TwinCATS MPO areas but that did not occur. Also the New Buffalo area was thought to connect to the Grand Beach and Michiana areas and that did not occur either. Thomas stated that it is possible that Mason Township may be added to the NATS MPO due to the population growth and the expansion of the Elkhart area. Comparison maps showing the 2000 information and 2010 information was handed out to members.

-Thomas added that the benefit to being added to the urbanized boundary would be to access urban funding sources.

-Lenze added that every 10 years the U.S. Census reviews urban boundaries and MDOT will also be evaluating the functional classification of the roadway system. The urbanized area is only allowed so many federal aid roads and other types of classification. He added that adding Mason Township would help our MPO recapture funds that may have gone to other MPOs such as the new MPO in Midland.

#### ▪ **Michigan Traffic Safety Summit**

Thomas attended the Summit attended by law enforcement, planners, and engineers. He stated that the new Highway Safety Manual would be a good tool for the Committee members to look into more because it used a tool that would better held predict the number of crashes for pedestrians and bicyclists given certain elements of road design.

#### ▪ **Training Opportunities**

Thomas handed out two flyers with trainings being hosted by MDOT.

- Traffic Safety Training for Elected/Appointed Officials-April 23, 24, and 30<sup>th</sup> at different

locations around the state. The cost is \$60 but scholarships are being offered to help defer the registration fee. The training would be very beneficial for people who would like to have a basic understand of traffic safety.

- Safety Analysis using the AASHTO Highway Safety Manual-April 3-4 and April 18-19. The fee is \$140 and scholarships are also being offered to help defer costs. This would give attendees an opportunity to understand how to retrieve crash data and other statistics from RoadSoft, hands on experience with the manual, and much more.

Flowers and Thomas will email these training opportunities to Committee members.

#### 4. Old Business

- NATS non-motorized subcommittee

Flowers reminded the members that at the February 2012 meeting the Technical Committee approved the creation of a non-motorized subcommittee and that at this meeting the Policy Committee was going to take action on this recommendation.

-Members asked if this would be a duplication of the efforts of the 9 county plan? Flowers stated that the purpose of that project was to focus on regional projects and proposed linkages. This project would focus on the specific needs and wants of the MPO area.

-Cooper stated that Niles Township is moving forward with their plans to put in a trail connecting the City of Niles to US 12 and beyond to the City of South Bend, IN.

-Mason stated that it would be useful to know what the assets and deficits are within the area since greater attention needs to be paid to transit users. She stated that her only form of transportation is by transit.

-Poehlman stated that there have been efforts underway in Cass County to make better facilities such as the Diamond Lake bike project and the pathway from the Law and Courts building to the Village of Cassopolis limits.

-Cooper added that knowing what people are using would be a benefit for the 11<sup>th</sup> St. project and would be helpful for future designs and accessibility of the project.

Motion by Mason with support by Patterson to form a subcommittee in the NATS MPO area to study the assets and deficits of walking, bicycling, and transit needs in the MPO area. **Motion passed.**

#### 5. New Business

- **Welcome New Member from City of Niles, Serita Ann Mason and Larry Larson**

Mason and Larson took a couple of minutes to introduce themselves and explain their background. LaMore again welcomed them to the Committee and stated that their experience will be helpful on the Committee.

- **Legislative Updates**

- Federal

Flowers stated that the Senate version of the transportation bill MAP-21 SB 1813 had passed and that the House bill (HR 7) has stalled out completely. Flowers continued that the federal transportation extension ends on March 31, 2012 and that both chambers will need to come together to pass another extension. That seems the most likely. For the Senate bill there are still provisions which discuss the MPO process and that small MPOs under 200,000 would be considered Tier II MPOs. Lenze added that these small MPOs would be grandfathered in but that we would need to justify to our Governor that we would be meeting all federal requirements and that we would need to be re-classified as a Tier II MPO.

- State

Harden stated that MI Senate Bill 351 would change how the sales tax on gas tax would be distributed.

He stated that 2% of the tax would go to the school aid fund, 18% of the remaining 4% would go to the trunkline fund then to the revenue sharing for communities. This would result in less money in the general fund. This has not passed the house at this time.

-Ryman stated that Bill Marx from the City of Buchanan wrote to representative Levin and Stabenow regarding the importance of small MPOs and only received a form letter back from their offices. Ryman was frustrated that Michigan continues to be a donor state and that we do not receive the money that we should back from Washington, D.C.

## **6. Public Comment**

Sue Kronewitter thanked MDOT for their great public meeting that they held in Milton Township on the US-12 project. They provided details regarding the project along with providing maps on the project. Over 50 people were in attendance.

## **7. Privilege of the Floor**

-Flowers stated that next month Kelly Getman-Dissette from Niles Dial A Ride will be doing a presentation about transit. Flowers also added that Kim O'Haver had contacted her regarding her voting right on the Committees. According to the bylaws, Buchanan Dial A Ride does not have a voting right on the possibly both Committees. She will check with Bill Marx from the City of Buchanan and get back with Flowers. If the bylaws are to be amended, there will need to be a 30 day notification period for all voting and non-voting members on the Committees. The item will be emailed or mailed accordingly and be on the May agenda for the Committees to take action.

-Kring thanked Flowers for attending the Buchanan Lions Club meeting; the members were thankful for the information and enjoyed learning more about the MPO.

-Lenze stated that MDOT will be updating their Long Range Transportation Plan to meet the 20 year horizon. The current plan will be extended out to year 2035. A full update of the plan will take place after new transportation legislation is passed.

-Harden added that the Michigan Complete Streets Advisory Council will be meeting in April to discuss the policy report created. More information will be given to Committees once the meeting has taken place.

## **8. Adjournment: 3:35 p.m.**

Motion by LaMore with support by Patterson to adjourn the NATS Technical Committee meeting. **Motion passed.**

- The next meeting is **April 24, 2012 at 1:30 P.M.**

*Minutes compiled by: Suzann Flowers and Trevor Thomas, Transportation Planners, March 2012*