

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

MINUTES

May 26, 2015

2:30 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

Policy Members Present:	Dawn Bolock, Ontwa Township Craig Bradfield, Howard Township Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Matt Galbraith, MDOT State John Lanum, MDOT State Serita Mason, City of Niles Jess Minks, Berrien County Road Commission Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce Don Ryman, City of Buchanan Kris Welch, MDOT State 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) Darrell Harden, MDOT, Southwest Region Erin Jolivette, MDOT – Coloma TSC John Klimek, Berrien County Board of Commissioners Jason Latham, MDOT-SW Region Steve LeClaire, Bertrand Township Representative, Buchanan Township Stewart McKenzie, FTA (ex-officio) Kim O’Haver, Buchanan Dial A Ride Brad Sharlow, MDOT Planning (ex-officio) Representative, City of Niles Dial-A-Ride Joe Sobieralski, Southwest Michigan Economic Growth Alliance Bob Sutton, Mason Township
SWMPC Staff Present:	Gautam Mani Kim Gallagher Patrice Rose

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting was called to order by Cooper at 2:36 p.m. and Bradfield led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Minutes

A motion by Mason with support by Personette to approve the Policy Committee Meeting minutes from March 24, 2015. **Motion passed.**

3. Public Comment

None

4. Staff Report

▪ **APA Transportation Updates**

Mani shared some information from the Future of Transportation session at the American Planning Association Conference he attended last month.

- Data now clearly show that younger generations are more willing to give up their car than give up their cell phone, if faced with a choice. This is not surprisingly, but is now confirmed by data.
- Nationwide, there has been a sharp increase in people who are remaining in the workforce after Age 65. Mani showed statistics of the percentage of the total population over Age 65 in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties that reported working in the past 12 months. Compared to the nation as a whole, each of the three Southwest Michigan Counties has a lower percentage of its 65 and older population working than the national average. However, all three counties are at or above the Michigan average for this indicator. Retirees have a very different set of transportation needs as compared with older workers.
- There has been relatively little discussion so far regarding regulations and ownership concerns surrounding automatic vehicles that are under development. While we are likely at least 10-20 years away from these vehicles being deployed en masse, certain automatic vehicle technologies such as parking assist are already available. Regulations will need to be in place for these new types of vehicles in order for them to be successfully deployed.

▪ **Statewide Asset Management Annual Report**

Mani reported that, not surprisingly, the 2014 Statewide Asset Management Annual Report shows that Michigan's federal-aid eligible roads continued to deteriorate from 2013-2014. Michigan's bridges, on the other hand, have been improving for a number of years due to very strategic investments by the state. However, it is projected that bridge condition has peaked and that the condition will decline because revenue still no longer be able to keep up with existing bridge needs.

▪ **Performance Measures Peer Exchange**

Mani said that he and Kim Gallagher had attended the Performance Measures Peer Exchange in Lansing in April, along with other MPO staff, MDOT, FHWA, FTA, and peers from Arizona, Minnesota, and Ohio. There were two main takeaways from the workshop for now:

- Small MPOs have a different set of data gathering needs and concerns than larger MPOs. Mani said that SWMPC would be participating in a small MPO working group to come up with a uniform set of items to measure that can serve as a base, and also a list of needs from the state.
- The proposed rulemaking for Asset Management, as it reads now, would require data gathering beyond the PASER system. Specifically, Michigan would need to gather data using the International Roughness Index (IRI) which measures ride quality and that many other states already use. Michigan would also need to gather data on rutting and faulting. It is not clear right now whether Michigan would continue to collect PASER ratings in addition to the other datasets or whether there would be a new system in place that gets rid of the PASER rating system.

Gallagher reported that when selecting projects, MDOT does not look at PASER rating. She stated that PASER is used as an overall management tool and helps to give a general picture of the condition of the road. However, MDOT relies on more specific measurement of the distress index, which is measured by laser at precise locations along the roadway.

- **NFC Reminders**

Mani reminded MPO members that National Functional Class change requests for roadways were due by September 1. Mani said that MPO staff are available to assist communities with filling out the required forms to make those change requests possible.

- **FY 2017-2020 TIP Development Schedule**

Mani said that MDOT had released a draft schedule for development of the next Transportation Improvement Program. A federal revenue announcement is expected on October 1 and then MDOT recommends that MPOs conduct project selection between November and December of this year. Finalized TIPs are due to MDOT by July of 2016. Mani said that SWMPC staff would be ratcheting up their efforts to develop new project selection criteria and a new TIP application form. Mani also advised communities to begin prioritizing their own needs and projects now so that it is easier to allocate limited federal funds later on this year.

- **Local Road Safety Plan and Safety Funding for 2017**

Gallagher reported that our Region has been selected as a pilot for a Local Road Safety Plan, along with the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. She reported on the first meeting and showed an MDOT Video on traffic fatalities. Gallagher also presented data on high crash locations within Berrien County, many of which are on state trunklines or at intersections with trunklines in Berrien County. The consultants involved in the process will pull crash and design data and looking for trends and reasons for accidents, road environment, driver skill and attitudes. Then, the consultants will recommend interventions for improving road user safety, through education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency response.

Gallagher also said that going through the Local Road Safety Plan process would make projects that contribute to implementation of the plan more competitive in applying for safety. Gallagher said that safety funds could be used on any roadway, including local ones, and that local agencies could submit more than one project.

Turning Lanes, traffic lights, and signage are just examples of some types of projects that would qualify. Gallagher noted that the deadline for applying for Safety Funds for FY 2017 was on August 14 of this year.

On the subject of road safety, Ryman reports that people running red lights is a serious problem, and that there needs to be better enforcement in Southwest Michigan. Ryman also reiterated that just because there have not been a large number of fatalities at a particular intersection does not mean that it is safe.

5. Public Transit Updates

- **SWMPC Transit Updates**

Kim Gallagher reported that SWMPC had been notified that it had received a grant to develop a Countywide Fixed Route Transit Service Plan for Berrien County. The next step is to begin writing a request-for-proposals so that the project can go out for bid.

- **Agency Updates**
None

6. Land Use Updates

Cooper states that Niles Township is working on a new zoning ordinance and that changes to zoning on S 11th St have taken a long time, but will be part of the new ordinance.

7. Project Updates

- **Obligation Thermometer-**
Mani said that the State was out of obligation authority and that it would only receive more once a federal funding extension past May 31 that has been passed by Congress is signed by the President. Lanum added that once obligation authority is received, projects that had proceeded as Advance Construct would have priority for funding.

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	TAP application is in for next phase. No issues with ALCOA property; route will run along 3rd Sreet	May 2015			
2014	104152	MDOT	M-139 CON phase Bridge replacement	According to MDOT, construction is still on schedule for a November completion.	May 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)	Obligated; working to acquire ROW	May 2015			

2015		Berrien County RC	Range Line Road, Lake St and Main St Resurfacing	Scheduled for August assuming that obligation is obtained	May 2015			
		Berrien County RC	North Main St	June 5th Letting	May 2015			
		City of Niles	Broadway Avenue Resurfacing	Broadway Avenue Resurfacing	May 2015			
		Cass County	Adamsville Road Reconstruct	Will be bid June 5th	May 2015			
		Cass County	Gumwood Road Phase II	Close to being awarded	May 2015			
		Buchanan Dial-a-Ride	Replacement Bus	Contract probably not coming until next September	October 2014			
		Niles Dial-A-Ride	Replacement Tires					

Additional updates from MDOT:

- M-139 from M-140 to Fairland Road mill and overlay paving work will start on June 10th. Traffic will be maintained in both directions. Matthew Road will be closed and detoured when that intersection is being repaved. Completion date for the whole project is August 17, 2015.
- M-60 Business Route from 13th St to 17th St mill and overlay with Sidewalk Ramp Improvements will take place August 17th- October 19, 2015. Traffic will be maintained in both directions.

8. Old Business

None

9. New Business

▪ **TIP Amendments**

The following TIP amendments were proposed:

1. The Cass County Road Commission is proposing to add a 10' wide Non-motorized Path from Clare Street to the Edwardsburg Sports Complex with design work happening in 2015 and construction taking place in 2018. The total cost of the project will be \$203,657.
2. MDOT is proposing to add three phases of a resurfacing project on US-12 between Bakertown Road and the divided section of highway. Construction will take place in 2015 with a total project cost of \$5,121,884.
3. MDOT is proposing to delete the PE phase of the US-12 over M-51 bridge repair project, and move funds over to the SUB phase. No funds are being changed.

A motion by Bradfield with support by Minks to approve the May TIP Amendments. **Motion passed.**

- **2016 UWP Approval**

Mani said that the 2016 Unified Planning Work Program describes all of the MPO's expected work activities in FY 2016, which runs from October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016.

Mani highlighted changes to this year's work program as compared with past years. Some of the major changes include:

- A region-specific list of transportation issues affecting the TwinCATS MPO.
- Countywide Service Planning Grant support is a work activity
- Implementation of the Local Road Safety Plan, including monitoring of data, is now a work activity.
- MPO staff will develop project selection criteria and continue to participate in development of performance measures.
- MPO staff will update the public participation plan in consultation with committee members.

Mani said that the only major anticipated change to the UWP would be made by SWMPC Executive Director John Egelhaaf and involves the cost allocation plan and indirect cost rate.

Mani encouraged public comment, the period for which ends on May 31.

A motion by Bradfield with support by Minks to approve the 2016 UWP subject to minor corrections to formatting, the SWMPC cost allocation plan, and subject to the end of the public comment period.

- **FHWA Updates**

Dewey reported that there was a voice vote early Saturday for a two month extension on federal funding for transportation through July. This is the 33rd time congress has approved a temporary fix in the last ten years.

- **MDOT Updates**

Welch reported that with the failure of Proposal 1 earlier this month, one of the alternatives that the state is looking at is legalizing marijuana as a source of tax revenue for roads. No road funding proposals have so far been passed, though.

10. Privilege of the Floor

Ziliak questioned whether U-turns are legal, as it seems more drivers are making them in Michigan and that it should be looked at. Cooper and Ryman confirmed that they are still illegal in Michigan.

Mason reported that there have been issues with Niles Dial-A-Ride and busses breaking down. This has led to delays for Dial-A-Ride passengers in particular. Gallagher said that it is possible to get a performance report on all vehicles online, and she will do that.

Personette said that there is a problem with drivers making left hand turns into Exit Lane for Lowe's on M-51. Cooper and Bradfield have witnessed the same thing.

Cooper reported that Niles Township is strongly considering adopting a Township special assessment of up to \$65 per parcel per year to pay for roads. Cooper said that the Township arrived at this position due to the failure of Proposal 1 and after consultation with the Berrien County Road Commission. A special assessment for ten years would help the Township strategically manage its roadway assets.

Minks reported that the county now is in a position where it has to focus on taking care of primary roads first and that 50 miles of roads are slated to return to gravel this year, with many more miles coming in the years to follow. Minks said that grinding up the roads to gravel is a precursor anyway to reconstruction, and that this way, the roads will be safer in the meantime. Minks said that a map and listing of roadway segments that are scheduled for conversion to gravel is available on the Road Commission web page: www.bcroad.org.

11. Public Comment

Committee members pointed out that Jess Minks celebrated a birthday on Monday and Gautam Mani on Sunday.

12. Adjournment at 3:44 p.m.

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

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

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