



## NILES-BUCHANAN-CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

### COMBINED TECHNICAL ADVISORY and POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

Brandon Kovnat, *Transportation Planner*

Kim Gallagher, *Transportation Planner*

(269)-925-1137 Ext: 1524 & 1518

**DATE:** Tuesday September 27, 2016

**TIME:** 1:30 PM

**PLACE:** Niles City Council Chambers  
1345 E Main St Niles MI, 49120

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**AGENDA** Comments will be solicited on each item following discussion and prior to any final action.

1. **Call to Order / Introductions and Pledge of Allegiance**
2. **Changes to the Agenda**
3. **Public Comment**
4. **Approve Minutes from the August 23, 2016 Meeting (*enclosed*) ACTION**
5. **Staff Report**
  - CMAQ Process Updates
6. **Community Land Use and Zoning Member Updates**
7. **Public Transit**
  - Berrien Countywide Service Plan (*SWMPC Staff*)
  - Niles Dial a Ride (*Kelly Getman Dissette*)
  - Buchanan Dial a Ride (*Kim O'Haver*)
8. **Project Status Reports**
9. **Old Business**
  - Bylaw Review Update Delayed
10. **New Business**
  - 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Travel Demand Model Process (*Don Mayle & Jon Roberts MDOT*)
  - MPO Member Roles in Review of Employment and Demographic Data (*Don Mayle & Jon Roberts MDOT*)
  - Approve 2017 Meeting Schedule (*enclosed*) ACTION
  - State and Federal Updates (*Jim Sturdevant & Jonathon Smith MDOT*)
11. **Public Comment**
12. **Privilege of the Floor**
13. **Adjournment**
  - Next NATS meeting is scheduled for: Tuesday October 25, 2016 @ 1:30 pm.

**NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (NATS)**  
 Joint Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) & Policy Committee (POL)

**MINUTES**  
 August 23, 2016

<b>Attendance</b>		<b>Committee</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>REPRESENTING</b>	<b>TAC</b>	<b>POL</b>
Brian Berndt	Berrien County Road Commission	x	
Barbara Cook	Cass County Planning Commission	x	
Richard Cooper	Niles Charter Township	x	x
Rich Low	Village of Edwardsburg	x	x
Jan Personette	Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce	x	x
Don Ryman	City of Buchanan	x	x
Jonathon Smith	MDOT Coloma Office	x	x
Bob Sutton	Mason Township	x	x
Georgia Boggs	City of Niles		x
Dawn Bolock	Ontwa Township		x
Malinda Cole-Crocker	Buchanan Township		x
Pete Fournier	Cass County Road Commission		x
Serita Mason	City of Niles		x
Jess Minks	Berrien County Road Commission		x
Jim Sturdevant	MDOT Planning (ex-officio)		x
Robert Ziliak	Cass County Board of Commissioners		x
Brandon Kovnat	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission	Staff	
Ryan Fellows	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission	Staff	
<b>Committee Members Absent</b>			
Joe Bellina	Cass County Road Commission		
Craig Bradfield	Howard Township		
Fred Featherly	MDOT-Multi-Modal		
Kelly Getman-Dissette	Niles Dial A Ride		
Steve Hicks	Bertrand Township		
John Klimek	Berrien County Board of Commissioners		
John Lanum	Michigan Department of Transportation		
Jason Latham	MDOT Southwest Region		
Bill Marx	City of Buchanan		
Stewart McKenzie	Federal Transit Administration (ex officio)		
Melinda Michael	Four Flags Area Council on Tourism		
Kim O'Haver	Buchanan Dial A Ride		
Joe Ray	City of Niles		
Evan Smith	Berrien Co. Community Development/Berrien Co. Transit		
Representative	Southwestern Michigan Economic Growth Alliance		
Representative	Milton Township		
David Newell	Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians		
Andrea Dewey	Federal Highway Administration (ex officio)		

**NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (NATS)  
Joint Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) & Policy Committee (POL)**

**1. Call to Order/ Introductions and Pledge of Allegiance**

The Joint Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Committee meeting was called to order by Policy Committee Chair Cooper at 1:30 PM on August 23, 2016 at the Niles City Council Chambers, 1345 E Main St, Niles, MI. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present, followed by introductions.

**2. Changes to the Agenda**

None.

**3. Public Comment**

None.

**4. Minutes**

Motion to approve the June 24, 2016 Joint Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) & Policy Committee Meeting Minutes, by Personette and seconded by Ziliak. **Motion Approved.**

**5. Staff Report**

Kovnat presented the staff report, including: (a) NATS FY 2016 Surface Transportation Program TIP Amount v. Actual Obligated amount; (b) FY 2017 S/TIP Amendment Schedule Draft. He also noted that the Fir Road Project in Cass County (from Redfield to US-12) was cancelled and funding de-obligation, as requested by the Cass County Road Commission.

**6. Community Land Use and Zoning Member Updates**

Cook noted that Volina and Ontwa Townships were making zoning changes.

**7. Public Transit Updates**

Due to the Michigan Public Transit Conference, public transit representatives were out of town and no updates were available.

**8. Agency Project Status Reports**

Kovnat: As of August 8 the State obligation authority has \$17.9 Million remaining.

**(a) Berrien County Road Commission**

Berndt: The 2016 Bertrand Township project is finished.

**(b) Cass County Road Commission**

Adamsville Road Project: Reallocation of federal aid was requested and approval was given on August 11, 2016. Non-Motorized Gumwood Road: Working on easements with property owner; construction moved to 2017.

**(c) MDOT**

Jonathan Smith: The US-12 overpass of M-51 project to restore and rehabilitate the bridge is complete. The Old M-205 and Five Points Road Intersection improvements and roundabout installation project is 60% complete. The US-12 to Bakertown Road resurface project was moved back to 2018. US-31 BR (M-51 and

Niles Main St) signal optimization project is 50% complete and is expected to be complete on the pushed back date of November 11, 2016.

## **9. Old Business**

None.

## **10. New Business**

### **▪ Officer Nominations**

Fellows presented a memorandum (See Attached) noting that NATS TAC Committee holds officer elections in August, but the NATS Policy Committee holds them in January. The Joint TAC-Policy Committee expressed a consensus to have the bylaws reviewed at the next meeting to discuss changing officer elections for both committees to be in January. Members also expressed consensus that other bylaw changes could also be reviewed at the next meeting.

Motion to table officer elections until after the bylaws are reviewed and possibly changed, by Sutton and seconded by Bolock. **Motion Passed.**

### **▪ State and Federal Updates**

Sturdevant noted that the 2014-2017 TIP amendment and UWP had been approved by FHWA, and the 2017-2020 TIP had been submitted to FHWA and is being reviewed.

## **11. Public Comment**

None.

## **12. Privilege of the Floor for TAC Members**

Ziliak noted that there was a fatal accident from a vehicle hitting a pedestrian during the annual US-12 Garage Sale event. Fellows noted that the event was organized by SWMPC and that we would look into better safety awareness.

## **13. Adjournment of the TAC Portion of the Meeting**

Meeting was adjourned at 2:23 PM. The next meeting is September 27, 2016, at 1:30 PM.

*Minutes compiled by: Ryan Fellows, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission*

# NATS Combined Technical Advisory and Policy Committee 2017 Proposed Meeting Dates

When: Tuesdays at 1:30 PM

Where: Niles City Council Chamber/ Fire Department  
1345 E Main St, Niles, MI 49120

Proposed Dates:

1. October 25, 2016
2. November 15, 2016\*
3. December 20, 2016\*
4. January 24, 2017
5. February 28, 2017
6. March 28, 2017
7. April 25, 2017
8. May 23, 2017
9. June 27, 2017
10. July 25, 2017
11. August 22, 2017
12. September 26, 2017

\*Note: The November and December dates are the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of the month to minimize conflicts with holidays.

**INCLEMENT WEATHER MEETING CANCELATIONS:** If either the City of Niles buildings or county buildings are closed the NATS meeting will be canceled. Cancellations will be posted on the NATS meeting page of the SWMPC website.

If you have any questions about meeting dates, please contact:

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# Culvert crisis in Berrien County

By JOHN MATUSZAK - HP Staff Writer | Posted: Sunday, September 18, 2016 6:00 am

One day it was there, and the next day it was gone.

That's what happened when a culvert running under Territorial Road in Bainbridge Township suddenly collapsed in April.

"We were on the road one day straddling a crack" in the road surface, recalled Berrien County Road Commission Managing Director Louis Csokasy. "The next day it's six inches wide, and the next day the crack has fallen into the creek bed."

That culvert failure and the massive culvert replacement project underway on Red Arrow Highway are costing millions of dollars and are causing headaches for residents detouring around the gaping chasms in the road. The Red Arrow project in Chickaming Township is the largest culvert replacement ever undertaken in Berrien County. That work started in August and is expected to be completed by mid-November, at a cost of \$1.4 million.

And these are not the only places where the ground is literally shifting under our feet. There are 400 large culverts crossing under Berrien County roadways, and almost 100 of them are in danger of collapsing, according to a 2012 engineering report. The large culverts range from three feet to as much as 32 feet in diameter.

Fixing the county's aging culverts and bridges will require a multi-million dollar, long-term solution that includes local funding, Csokasy said.

"The only solution is a county-wide general millage" that would generate between \$4 million and \$6 million, he said.

It's also going to require establishing a division within the Road Commission solely responsible for culverts and bridges, he said.

"We're going to have to re-invent the Road Commission, restructure the Road Commission to resolve the issues not only for roads, but for drainage, which includes culverts and bridges. That's a pretty wide



## Culvert crisis in Berrien County

Crews from Kalin Construction, under the supervision of the Berrien County Road Commission, work to replace a culvert under Red Arrow Highway Sept. 7 south of Sawyer. They removed 20,000 cubic yards of dirt and dug down 35 feet to reach the 86-year-old, 60-inch pipe, which will be replaced by a pipe that is 12 feet wide and 7 feet tall. It is the largest culvert replacement project ever undertaken in Berrien County. Road Commission Managing Director Louis Csokasy warns that almost 100 culverts across the county need to be replaced.

statement, but it is exactly where we are at,” Csokasy said. “We have to put the funding in place, put the people in place and put the equipment in place.”

His timeline for having everything in place is two years. He is calling the next 12 months “The Year of the Culvert.”

### Underground operations

The 2012 study found that, of the county’s 400 large culverts, 96 at that time were at risk of failing. Culverts are structures that allow waterways to pass under the road, and are usually made of corrugated steel or concrete.

Unfortunately, the only way to tell that a culvert is in need of replacement is when a crack shows up on the road that indicates that the culvert underneath is deteriorating.

That’s what happened on Red Arrow Highway, where a major culvert replacement project started last month. That replacement had been in the planning stages for two years from the date when the problem was first detected. The beginning of construction was delayed from April to August when area business owners complained that detours during the summer tourist season would severely curtail their income.

The unexpected collapse on Territorial Road was “a wake-up call” to what could be in store elsewhere in the county, Csokasy said. “It was such a catastrophic issue for us.”

The repairs to the two culverts are costing \$2.2 million. This year the Road Commission replaced four other culverts, each costing in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 range.

The Red Arrow culvert was built 86 years ago. Most of the other major culverts were installed in the 1950s and 1960s, Csokasy said.

The Road Commission further undertakes the replacement and repair of the county’s 103 bridges, said highway engineer Brian Berndt. Next year the commission will replace two bridges that are around 70 years old, but typically the county averages one bridge project a year.

“One bridge a year is not enough” to keep up with the need, Berndt said. Like most counties in Michigan, Berrien needs additional funding for these projects, “otherwise we will be shutting bridges down and shutting roads down.”

Repairing one regular-sized bridge costs about \$250,000, Berndt said. About 95 percent of those costs are covered by federal and state funding, with the Road Commission picking up the remaining 5 percent.

The Road Commission is repairing and replacing five culverts a year, when it should be doing 20 to 30, Csokasy said.

He said it could be difficult to convince residents to support funding to repair infrastructure they don’t usually see.

“Most people don’t drive through a culvert,” Csokasy said. “We’re spending a lot of money on Red Arrow Highway, but people will never see it. It’s not like when you’re repaving a road.”

But you sure miss it when it's gone, as those circumventing the construction zones on Territorial Road and Red Arrow have discovered.

Doing the math

A knee injury earlier this year gave Csokasy, who came to the Road Commission in 2013 from Cass County, the opportunity to illustrate just how urgent the emergency is.

While at home for a week, Csokasy took two large books containing data on bridges and culverts and turned it into a spreadsheet that listed the condition of more than 400 culverts, as well as their location, size and life expectancy.

He also produced a map that indicated culverts with red dots, and bridges with green squares.

"One-quarter of those dots should be replaced," Csokasy said.

The list includes 17 culverts deemed to be in "critical" shape, expected to last one year or less. Another 50 are designated as "poor." Just about every township has culverts in each of these categories, with Lincoln Township being one of the exceptions.

The problem is so widespread that Csokasy said a county-wide solution is warranted. With road repairs, individual townships can request additional road millages for needed repairs, but the director doesn't think that approach would work in this case.

Berrien County has a large number of culverts because of the migration of water through streams and creeks toward Lake Michigan, Berndt said.

You never know how long they are going to last.

Csokasy said a culvert that looks to be in bad shape could last another 20 years, while one such as the Territorial pipe can be gone in a flash.

"There's a little bit of luck that goes into this," Csokasy said.

Project engineer Kevin Stack said problems were first detected at the Red Arrow site about eight years ago, when a truck fell into a sinkhole. Crews fixed the road, but two years another sink hole appeared, signalling that there was deeper trouble underground.

Stack said they used ground-penetrating radar at the Red Arrow site, but the device only goes down a maximum of 10 to 12 feet. The top of a culvert is usually 25 feet underground, and it's 35 feet to the bottom, he said.

The Road Commission doesn't have complete control about the design of a new culvert, and must get a permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

The Road Commission's mandate is to build a structure that can handle a 100-year storm event, the heaviest rain that should be expected in that period of time, Csokasy said. On the other hand, the DEQ wants to provide a free flow of water for the streams and creeks, and usually requires structures that are double, triple or even quadruple the size the Road Commission requests, he said.



That can mean a project that costs hundreds of thousands of dollars more. The Road Commission proposed to increase the size of the culverts from 41 to 86 inches wide. The DEQ wanted the Red Arrow and Territorial culverts to be 7 feet tall and 19 feet wide. Csokasy said they negotiated the agency down to structures that were 12 feet wide.

Requesting funding for bridge repairs is another ongoing chore. Csokasy said Berndt and other staff members are always seeking grants and trying to put together packages that lower the required local match.

“That’s a game we play every day,” Csokasy said.

Berrien County will have to fund culvert repairs mostly on its own, he said.

### Tectonic shift

Handling drainage issues pulls away funding, personnel and equipment from the Road Commission’s first priority, road repairs, Csokasy said.

Repairing potholes is the No. 1 task of the road crews, he said. No. 2 is drainage, which includes bridges and culverts.

“It’s funny, but we probably handle more drainage issues than the (county) drain commission,” Csokasy said.

The Road Commission relies on staff members such as engineers Kevin Stack, who designed the Red Arrow Highway project, he said. Csokasy would like to add one or two engineers to his roster.

Key equipment is wearing out. An excavator used by the Road Commission in culvert work is 20 years old, and the commission can’t even get replacement parts for it any longer.

“If you leave out any of these three components – people, equipment or money – the job doesn’t get done,” Csokasy said. “Funding actually drives the other two because it pays for the other two.”

He said the problem has built up because Michigan and Berrien County have under-funded their infrastructure work for the past 20 years.

Csokasy said the Road Commission has a good relationship with the county’s elected officials, who understand the agency’s dilemma.

Any tax increase request will first have to be considered by the five-member Road Commission board, and then by the 12 members of the Board of Commissioners.

Csokasy is confident that residents will see the necessity of supporting the Road Commission. He pointed out that 80 percent of road millages in Michigan are approved by voters.

Right now, it’s no longer a matter of managing existing resources, he stressed.

“If you don’t have the money, you can’t do the job,” Csokasy said. “I can’t manage a failed road system. I can’t manage a system that is just worn out.”

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## Condition of culverts, by township

Bainbridge: 1 poor

Baroda: 4 poor

Benton: 2 critical, 4 poor

Berrien: 2 poor

Buchanan: 1 critical, 3 poor

Chickaming: 2 critical, 3 poor

Coloma: 1 critical, 3 poor

Galien: 1 critical, 3 poor

Hagar: 2 critical, 1 poor

Lake: 1 critical, 3 poor

New Buffalo: 2 critical, 1 poor

Niles: 1 poor

Oronoko: 3 poor

Pipestone: 2 critical, 7 poor

Royalton: 3 poor

Three Oaks: 3 poor

Watervliet: 2 critical, 2 poor

Weesaw: 2 critical, 3 poor