

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

**MINUTES**

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

3:00 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

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

**1. Call to Order & Introductions**

- LaMore called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Ryman led the group in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Minutes**

A motion was made by Auvil with support from Poehlman to approve the October 25, 2011 Policy Committee Meeting minutes. **Motion passed.**

**3. Staff Report**

- **Michigan Rail Summit**

Flowers discussed her attendance at the Michigan Rail Summit on October 31 in Lansing. Governor Snyder, Senator Proos, and several people from .....spoke about the advantages of rail service for the state of MI. The Governor was clear that the Chicago to Detroit high speed rail line was a focus along with the building of the new bridge. There was also increased attention on the MI to Canada connection. The Wolverine Line gets money from the Federal Rail Administration, the Battle Creek to Port Huron line and Pere Marquette lines get money from the State of Michigan. The Summit focused on the importance of rail as an economic driver for the recovery of the state of Michigan. For southwest Michigan, connecting the South Shore line is very important so that we don't have people drive all the way to South Bend to pick up the train. Discussions about the importance of Transit Oriented Development in providing valuable and sustainable connections for our region. We need to think about the multi-modalism activities that must be connected to our rail stations, such as walking, biking, and transit. Questions that we need to ask of our region: Who were we in the past, who are we now, and who do you aspire to be?

- **Freight Workshop**

Flowers attended a freight workshop in Lansing on November 10 and the focus of the workshop to discuss the supply chain role in transportation planning and economic development for the state of Michigan. The key speakers were two MSU professors from the Department of Supply Chain Management. The scope of the workshop focused on 6 key areas: An overview of supply chain management how scm is used to maximize firm profits, private sector opportunities to add value public sector opportunities to add value, discussion of the results of research work done by the professors, and what the next steps should be. One of the key geographic areas that were discussed was the importance of regions, Michigan's connection to Canada, and the interconnected region of the Midwest. Lee Scherwitz from the Southwest Michigan Regional Airport was also in attendance from southwest Michigan.

-LaMore commented that we do not want to rush customs coming from Canada and that this is a safety issue that the owner of the existing bridge failed to make updates to the customs area and that accounts for huge delays when crossing back into the US from Canada.

-Collins also stated that according to State Senator Casperson, Chairman of the State Transportation Committee, the bridge is only at 39% capacity and why build a new bridge when it is not operating as efficiently as it should. He further stated that Casperson indicated it is customs that is causing the delays.

-Lenze stated the bridge is in the middle of neighborhoods and that people do not want large trucks moving through their neighborhoods.

-Poehlman stated that the Farm Bureau group that he is familiar with is very much in favor of the new bridge being built.

- **Officer elections due in 2013**

The next cycle of officer elections will be held in 2013 unless any officer resigns, then an immediate election will be held at the next regularly scheduled committee meeting.

-LaMore stated that he will be retiring at the end of 2012 and that the Committee will need to replace him. Dale Lowe is currently the Vice-Chair of the Committee.

- **New TIP Calendar (Next process date is January)**

The Michigan Transportation Planning Association has issued the latest version of the Amendment Schedule for the Transportation Improvement Program. Handouts are available and the schedule was posted on the NATS FY 2012 Meeting handouts. Flowers pointed out that there are not only changes on when TIP amendments will be processed but each NATS meeting is listed along with when Staff needs to have TIP amendments submitted to be processed.

- **McCoy's Creek Trail Update**

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources announced that the Friends of McCoy's Creek Trail received 440 out of 510 points from the DNR Trust Fund. The Friends were 20 points higher than Ann Arbor and 30 points higher than St. Joseph. The grant request was for \$288,000. The development will take place between the Tinshop, where the existing trail ends and continue to Fireman's Park.

#### **4. Old Business**

None

#### **5. New Business**

- **NATS TIP Subcommittee Review Meeting**

Staff will be setting up a meeting to review and discuss TIP projects for FY 2012-2014 along with the Illustrative List to ensure that there are not any anticipated problems for projects that may not be able to find their local match or changes in the scope of projects.

Flowers stated that at the TAC Meeting, Joe Bellina asked who was in attendance at the last meeting and Flowers stated that she will look into this more and sent out the information when the meeting is firmly set. The meeting was tentatively set for December 13, 2011 with the meeting to be in the morning around 9:30a.m. The meeting will be noticed and is open to the public.

- **Asset Management Federal Aid Report**

Thomas handed out a 2 page fact sheet that displayed the results from the 2011 Road Ratings for Berrien and Cass Counties. He explained that only 50% of the federal aid eligible roads are rated each year. In Figure 1 if you compare the years of 2009 and 2011 those would be the same roads rated and that if people wanted to a full list of the rated roads then they can go online to view those ratings since 2003.

Thomas stated that the roads are rated by a team of 3 people: one from SWMPC, one from the local jurisdiction, and a MDOT representative who have all been trained to evaluate the condition of the road on a scale from 1-10.

- **Participation Plan Annual Review**

Staff are in the process of updating the Transportation Participation Plan for the MPOs. Several copies were brought for committee members to review and the draft plan was put on the FY 2012 meeting website. The maps in the Environmental Justice section of the plan need to be updated to review 2010 Census data. Staff will continue to make changes but encourage the Committee members to begin reviewing the proposed changes and sharing feedback with staff. The comment period for public participation is 45 days and staff will be asking for this plan to be put out for public comment in December.

- **Attendance for 2011**

Staff are reviewing attendance records for the past year and will be sending letters to communities that do not have assigned representatives or if representatives have not been attending meetings.  
-Flowers was asked to check to ensure that all member communities are paying their dues to the SWMPC.

- **2013 CMAQ Call for Projects**

Thomas handed out several items related to CMAQ including a CMAQ 2013 Call for Projects letter from MDOT, project list for 2011-2014 Berrien County CMAQ projects, and CMAQ 2013 Funding Amounts table. Thomas explained that due to the slight decrease in population in Berrien County there is a slight decrease in CMAQ funds. The funds available to 2013 are \$528,765 and the project list for desired CMAQ projects is at \$587,099. A meeting needs to be held to discuss 2012-2014 CMAQ projects with a projection of lower funds for each year. He also reported that Rachael Tupica from Federal Highway is reviewing the list of 2012 projects and that he should know the status of those shortly.

Thomas announced that a meeting on December 19, 2011 at 8:00a.m. was set at the TwinCATS meeting to review this topic. The meeting will be held at the Southwest Michigan Regional Airport, this is also the same date as the next TwinCATS Committee.

Thomas reminded Committee members that this is not an MPO function and is a county level project. Flowers and Thomas will help Berndt advertise and announce a call for projects in the region.

- **Move March 2012 Meeting**

There was a possibility of needing to move the March 2012 meeting to ensure that all TIP Amendments were submitted to MDOT in a timely manner. After speaking with Lenze there is no need to change our meeting date.

- **Letter of Support for City of South Bend**

Flowers presented a letter to the Committee to support the expansion of the River Park Trail in South Bend, IN. She stated that since we are the MI portion of the MACOG MPO, which includes the City of South Bend, that it would be good to show our support of the project.

Motion by Auvil with support by Kercheval to have the Policy Committee approve the Policy Chairman to sign the letter of support for the River Park Trail extension in South Bend, IN.

**Motion approved.**

-Cooper added that Niles Township acquired property by Fireman's Park and is working with AEP to acquire right of way agreements to connect parts of the IN-MI River Valley Trail.

## **6. Public Comment**

-Sue Kronewitter stated that Cass County will be looking for a road millage for the county.

-LaMore also stated that Berrien County was looking for a road millage for the county as well and that action will be taken at their December meeting to review the resolution. He stated that Lansing was ineffective on this issue and that they are asking Berrien County voters to act on this issue in 2012. He explained how the money would be split in the county and how much money each community would receive. LaMore stated that SWMPC had a meeting on this topic about a year ago and our elected officials were in attendance so that topic should not be new to them.

-Poehlman stated that the Cass County millage has the approval of all of the Commissioners and that the money will be for County primary roads and that it would be for 1 mill. It will be a tough sell to the farmers he stated.

-Kronewitter also stated that the Governor has proposed eliminating road commissions and Poehlman stated that the Cass County Road Commission has sent a letter to the state with a resolution stating that they oppose this bill. He encouraged the Berrien County Road Commission to do the same.

-Collins stated that they would not be saving any money by eliminating Road Commissions because the accounting for Act 51 is very different and requires special knowledge.

**7. Privilege of the Floor**

Flowers reminded Policy Committee members that the January 24, 2012 meeting will be held at 2:30 p.m.

**8. Adjournment: 3:54 p.m.**

The next meeting is **December 20, 2011 at 3:00 P.M.**

*Minutes compiled by: Suzann Flowers and Trevor Thomas, Transportation Planners, 11/2011*