

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

**MINUTES**

Tuesday, December 20, 2011

3:00 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

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

**1. Call to Order & Introductions**

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

**2. Minutes**

A motion was made by Poehlman with support from Frost to approve the November 22, 2011 Policy Committee Meeting minutes with the following changes proposed by Collins:

- **Page 2 under freight workshop bullet, make the following paragraph change:** “-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”.

- **Page 4 under move march 2012 meeting, change speaker to speaking Motion passed.**

### 3. Staff Report

- **Rural Task Force Training**

On December 7, 2011 SWMPC Staff attended training in Lansing regarding the roles that Regional Planning Organizations and MDOT will have in the coordination and administration of the Rural Task Force program. The regional planning commissions will assist MDOT in the administration and management of this process beginning in fiscal year 2012. SWMPC are working with the Rural Task Force Region 4 Chairman, Larry Hummel, on ensuring a smooth and continuous coordination of these duties. More information will be given to the Committee members as progress is made.

- **AARP Aging in Place Webinar**

Thomas stated that he sat in on a webinar hosted by AARP (<http://www.aarp.org/home-garden/livable-communities/info-11-2011/solutions-forum-aging-in-place.html>), which promoted the idea of “aging in place”, looking at how areas can provide transportation, housing, and land use environments that allow older residents to remain independent and live active lives in their own homes. Thomas stated that the TwinCATS population is significantly older than the country as whole, and that the ideas regarding transportation and land use discussed during the AARP event ought to continue to inform the work performed by the committees.

- **PASER Training Dates**

Road Rating training dates have been announced for the upcoming calendar year. This training is necessary if you want to assist in rating roads in your community. Communities can have their roads rated once every three years. Thomas explained that he attended the training and found the information very helpful in understanding how road ratings are done. The training dates are as follows:

February 28, 2012-West Branch, February 29, 2012-Saginaw, March 1, 2012-Grand Rapids, March 27, 2012- Kalamazoo, March 28, 2012-Dearborn, March 29, 2012-Lansing, April 17, 2012-Gaylord, April 18, 2012-Escanaba, April 19, 2012-Ishpeming. Flowers will email the dates and flyer out to the Committee members who receive email.

- **Next Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

The next TIP program update will be in 2013 and would cover 2014-2017. There is a one year overlap to ensure that the program does not lapse and that projects can still get obligated.

### 4. Old Business

- **Dues for member communities**

Flowers reported back to the Committee members that according to the SWMPC Business Administrator, all dues for the NATS member communities have been paid.

- **2013 CMAQ Call For Projects**

Thomas explained that before the Committee meeting communities met to review and discuss the schedule of CMAQ projects for 2012-2014. Thomas explained that there was a slight reduction in funding for 2013 and 2014 and that in 2013 Berrien Bus modified their project request from 2 new buses to 1 medium bus and 1 small bus to accommodate the funding reductions. A handout was given to those who attended the meeting. Thomas reminded the attendees that the CMAQ program is

administered by the county through the Rural Task Force program, but projects in the MPO do come before the committee for approval to include in the TIP.

▪ **NATS TIP Review Meeting**

Flowers gave a recap of the discussion that happened during the TAC meeting. Flowers will place notes from the TAC Committee in the minutes for Policy to ensure that the Committee members fully understand the discussion that took place. Flowers passed out copies of the draft minutes from the December 13, 2011 NATS TIP meeting and asked for approval of the minutes.

*The notes that are in ITALICS represent the notes from the TAC meeting. A discussion started about what needed to happen next and that there needs to be a clear process for how projects will be selected and moved within the TIP plan.*

*-Berndt stated that if there are extra funds for instance in FY 2012 that projects from 2013 or 2014 should move first before a new project is added.*

*-Ray stated that we should spell out in the TIP how this is going to happen so that it is clear to Committee members and members of the public.*

*-Tupica added that having an Illustrative list could help move projects easily into the TIP if additional funds are given to the MPO so that Staff can act quickly on the need, such as what we saw with ARRA funds*

*-LaMore stated that people attend these types of meetings when there is a problem.*

Harden restated his motion from the TAC meeting which was as follows:

“Motion by Harden with support from Getman-Dissette for the Technical Advisory Committee to recommend to the Policy Committee to direct staff to develop a Policy to address the movement of projects within the NATS TIP that can be incorporated into the 2011-2014 TIP”.

Mitchell proposed that the Policy Committee act on the motion as stated by Harden, Rodebush supported this motion. **Motion passed.**

▪ **Public Participation Plan**

Flowers discussed that the staff were in the final stages of the preparing the Public Participation Plan for the required 45-day comment period. Flowers asked that the Committee members approve a motion to release the plan for the comment period beginning January 15, 2012. Flowers asked for any suggestions from the attendees.

*-Rodebush stated that we should replace acronyms with a full spelling and then use acronym after that throughout the document.*

*-Another member suggested that when you are reading the document online that if you hover your mouse over the acronym that it could state the full word.*

*-Flowers stated that she will check with the website provider for SWMPC to see what resources that our website can provide.*

*-The discussion of adding a Citizen Advisory Committee to the NATS process was also discussed.*

*-LaMore stated that there was no need to add another layer to the process and that MPO work has a big learning curve for people to feel comfortable with the process.*

*-Flowers stated that this would be a separate Committee that could be given specific tasks to focus on and that we could really search out a Committee that represents youth. The Committee would not need to have a vote on the NATS Committees but a way to engage a specific demographic in the region.*

*-Rodebush proposed sending a letter to the region schools giving them the dates of the MPO meetings and inviting students and school administration to attend the meetings. He further*

encouraged staff to connect with the local community colleges, LMC and SMC in the region to engage them in the MPO process.

-Collins suggested recording the meetings and having people/students comment on the recording if they cannot directly attend.

-Other suggestions for reaching out to community groups like the Rotary and Lions Clubs have monthly presenters and this could be a good way to engage another audience.

-Tupica stated that Citizen Advisory Committees are a great way to involve everyone in the process and those parameters should be given to the group to work on specific tasks.

-Poehlman shared an experience he had working with MDOT and the type of outreach that they engaged in with using maps for a project improvement. Because MDOT had taken the time to ask the people how they would like the project to look and engaged them in a meaningful way, the project was broadly accepted with the public's support.

Motion by Rodebush with support from LaMore to place the Public Participation Plan out for the public comment period of 45-days beginning January 15, 2012. **Motion passed.**

## 5. New Business

### ▪ NATS Annual Report

MPO Staff are completing the draft NATS Annual report. The draft document is on the website and any comments from the Committee members are encouraged. We will be looking for formal approval to the SWMPC Board at the January 2012 meeting.

## 6. Public Comment

-Collins mentioned that the NATS Policy Committee should draft a letter of support for the Harbor Master due to the lack of funds to dredge the St. Joseph River Harbor. Flowers will draft a letter and bring it to the Committee in January.

-LaMore mentioned how important the harbor is for the region and that he read an article that compared the impact that freight has on the region. The article mentioned that 1 loaded semi is the equivalent to 170 vehicles on the road.

## 7. Privilege of the Floor

-Flowers reminded the Policy Committee members that beginning January 1, 2012 the Policy Committee will be meeting at 2:30p.m instead of 3:00p.m.

-Lenze discussed the issue of TIP amendments and public outreach given the current NATS meeting schedule. Due to the fact that the TAC and Policy meetings are back to back, it does not allow any changes to be made to the TIP the day of the meeting. Staff must have a 7 day comment period regarding any TIP amendments prior to the Committee meeting to give the public an opportunity to comment on the changes. TwinCATS and NATS meetings are the only MPO in the state to have their meetings on the same day. Other MPOs across the state have their TAC committees early in the month to allow for immediate changes need to the TIP the day of the TAC meeting. Then they will notice out the changes and have their Policy Committee meet 1 or 2 weeks later to approve the changes. The current structure for TwinCATS and NATS has not allowed for public comment for TIP Amendments.

-Flowers discussed that if we stick to the current TIP Amendment schedule this should not be an issue.

Flowers will put it back on the agenda for next month so that members can give the topic further thought.

-Lowe discussed the paperless move and Flowers stated that the Policy Committee wanted to make sure that items were still printed for members and that items that were mailed to people continued.

-Harden also mentioned that the Complete Streets Advisory Council has completed a vision statement that

can be found online at [www.michigan.gov/completestreets](http://www.michigan.gov/completestreets). Also the MDOT SW Region will hold a listening session from 2:30-6pm on December 21, 2011 regarding projects that MDOT will be working on. IF you cannot attend the meeting then you can submit comments at [www.michigan.gov/mdot5yearplan](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot5yearplan).

**8. Adjournment:** \_\_\_\_\_ **p.m.**  
The next meeting is **January 24, 2012 at 2:30 P.M.**

*Minutes compiled by: Suzann Flowers and Trevor Thomas, Transportation Planners, 12/2011*