

TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

Minutes

January 27, 2014

10:30 A.M.

Southwest Michigan Regional Airport

POLICY MEMBERS PRESENT:	Erin Jolivette, MDOT Coloma TSC Jae Guetschow, Village of Stevensville Tim Lynch, Berrien County Road Commission Debra Panozzo, Berrien County Commission Lee Scherwitz, SW Michigan Regional Airport Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township Darwin Watson, City of Benton Harbor
POLICY MEMBERS ABSENT:	Aaron Anthony, City of Bridgman Mickey Bennett, Sodus Township Bill Brown, Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (ex officio) Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) John Egelhaaf, SWMPC Tim Fenderbosch, St. Joseph Charter Township Carolyn Fowler, Benton Charter Township John Gast, Lake Charter Township Ron Griffin, St. Joseph Charter Township John Gruchot/Catherine Montoya, Berrien County Planning Department Darrell Harden, MDOT Southwest Region William Hodge, Berrien County Planning Commission Nora Jefferson, Benton Charter Township Joanne Johnson, Disability Network Southwest Michigan John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning Jason Latham, MDOT Regional Planning Richard Lewis, City of St. Joseph Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) John Olson, Village of Shoreham Bill Purvis, TCATA Roger Seely, St. Joseph Charter Township Brad Sharlow, MDOT (ex officio) Terrie Smith, Lincoln Charter Township Jim Soteriou, Royalton Township Kris Welch, MDOT-Statewide Planning Sarah Woolcock, MDOT Coloma TSC Representative, Cornerstone Alliance
SWMPC STAFF PRESENT:	Gautam Mani

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Scherwitz called the meeting to order at 10:34 a.m. and led the group in introductions.

2. MINUTES:

- A motion was made by Lynch with support by Stauffer to approve the minutes of the December 16 Policy Committee meeting. **Motion passed.**

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

4. STAFF REPORT:

- **CMAQ Meeting Update**

Mani said that a CMAQ meeting had taken place on January 23 for Berrien County. Berrien County chose not to program funds for 2018 or 2019 because of low attendance. Mani said that he was continuing to wait for Oronoko Township to consult with MDOT to figure out whether their project on Kephart Lane would be able to move forward in 2014 if approved by CMAQ in February. Mani said that he was expecting to hear back from Oronoko Township regarding whether the project could realistically get through Local Agency Programs. Mani said he was hoping for a response this week.

- **LRP and TIP Document Copies**

Mani encouraged committee members to take extra copies of the long range plan and TIP for their organization, as SWMPC was trying to get rid of these copies before they move this week. SWMPC is moving to 376 West Main St in Benton Harbor. Mani advised committee members that SWMPC staff might be unreachable by phone or email sporadically over the next two weeks. Mani said he hoped committee members would visit the new space once SWMPC fully moves in.

- **MTPA Report Out**

Mani said that the main item to update from MTPA was from the Roads and Risk Reserve (RRR) fund, a category of state transportation funds that was allocated to projects in December. Three projects within the TwinCATS MPO were allocated funds. These were:

- Cleveland Avenue from Warren Woods to Wagner
- Red Arrow Highway within the City limits of Bridgman.
- M-63 over Hickory Creek

Mani said that the Cleveland Avenue project was one that the Berrien County Road Commission had requested; however, it was by no means identified it as a top priority when State Representative Pagel asked him for a list.

Mani said that although Lott was unable to attend the meeting, he did provide some information, requesting that committee members contact their legislators on any concerns regarding how RRR monies were allocated. Project selection was a purely legislative decision; MDOT Statewide Planning section was not involved in the selection.

Jolivette said that the TSC was consistently looking to use more “M” (state) funds for projects, because they came with fewer stipulations than federal funds. In that sense, the RRR does provide them with flexibility on projects. However, the RRR did not fund the Coloma TSC’s planning priorities. Jolivette noted that a project in Van Buren County was already funded, and

from a planning perspective, the TSC might have preferred that the RRR helped to fund desired but previously unfunded projects.

Panozzo asked whether TwinCATS might draft a letter to the state legislators detailing the local TIP project selection process and the Complete Streets Policy; the letter would focus on the extensive planning process to which committee members devote their time. Panozzo said that the letter should state that this process was circumvented. Panozzo said that committee members feel like they are not adding value through their planning efforts when these sorts of funding decisions are made without adequate local consultation. Mani said that with the approval of the Policy Committee, SWMPC staff could draft a letter on behalf of TwinCATS expressing these concerns, and it could be voted on at the next committee meeting in February. Stauffer agreed that the decision-making process had been circumvented, and that it was really troubling.

Lynch asked who would write the letter. Mani explained that SWMPC would write the letter on behalf of the TwinCATS MPO, and the Policy committee chair (Lee Scherwitz) would sign the letter once the committee approved it.

Guetschow recommended that the MPO, in the letter, invite the legislators to come to a meeting to discuss the project selection process. Mani said that SWMPC was in the early stages of planning a legislative tour that would showcase transportation projects and continuing areas of need for transportation funding for the legislators themselves (no aides). Mani did acknowledge that the letter was probably the best short-term strategy.

Panozzo remarked that a letter now was already behind the curve in terms of letting legislators know their dissatisfaction. Panozzo recommended that Mani look towards getting committee member approval via email so that they did not have to wait until next month's meeting to submit the letter.

Scherwitz recommended that a letter go to the Governor as well as MDOT Director Kirk Steudle expressing concern, along with those going to the legislators.

Jolivette wondered whether the committees were going to vote on the projects, as the project would hopefully not be delayed. Mani said that SWMPC staff had received no instructions from MDOT-Statewide Planning or MDOT-Southwest Region on what action to take, and Lott had advised them that it was fine to wait on taking action. Mani said that the projects ought to go through a full review as TIP projects do, as they are located within the MPO.

A motion by Lynch with support by Stauffer to instruct SWMPC transportation staff to draft a letter to state legislators, the Governor, and MDOT director Kirk Steudle on behalf of the TwinCATS Policy Committee, outlining the local transportation planning process and inviting the legislators to a TwinCATS meeting. **Motion passed.**

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

▪ Walk and Roll

Mani said that the Walk and Roll subcommittee would reconvene in February to discuss modifications to the Complete Streets Policy. The Complete Streets Policy is currently in the hands of other SWMPC staff who are working on making sure the language is easily understandable and that the policy applies adequately to transit.

- **Regional Inclusive Community Coalition (RICC)**
Mani said that Joanne Johnson had provided an update via email. The RICC has decided that it will advocate around transportation issues (including a universal ADA card and the general importance of public transit) at the February RICC legislative event.
- **Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Coalition (BCCTC)**
Panozzo said that the transit consolidation study would be done by March, as that is when the funding for the study will run out.
- **Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) Local Advisory Committee**
Panozzo said that she had attended the most recent TCATA LAC meeting. She wishes that the meetings were advertised better and that more people attended who rode public transit on a daily basis. Panozzo praised some of the progress that has been made in terms of on-time performance on the new Blue Route schedule.

6. PROJECT UPDATES

Fiscal Year	Job Number	Agency	Project Name	Update Information	Date of last update	Cost Changes	Projected Letting and obligation date
2012							
	113585	MDOT	I-94 Red Arrow Highway to Livingston Rd	PE Phase-design; no change; base plan review February 3rd	January 2014		x
	103293	MDOT	I-94 at Nickerson Ave in Benton Township (roadside facility)	Scheduled for October letting; returned to region for funding to move forward; no change; March 2013 Moving Forward for January 2013 letting July 2013: On hold	July 2013		x
		Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority	New expanded hours	July 2012: Continued through 2013 (2014 funding seems less certain); September 2012: Continued Service; 11/2012 after 2013 the state will match buses but nothing else; December 2012: already been awarded; November 2013: not funded	November 2013		x
		Twin Cities Area Transportation	New line haul route	July 2012: Continued through 2013 (2014 funding	July 2013		x

		Authority		seems less certain); ; 11/2012 after 2013 the state will match buses but nothing else July 2013: JARC funding cut in half, project will proceed.			
		Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority	Transit vehicle replacement (3 total)	; 11/2012 after 2013 the state will match buses but nothing else	November 2012		x
2013	89085	Benton Harbor	Klock Rd (from North Shore to Paw Paw)-	1/2013- continues to be in limbo due to negotiations with Harbor Shores; no plans yet; 5/2013- Needs to use up EDA funds this year, ultimately Harbor Shores' choice as to whether project moves forward. July 2013: Lawsuit between Harbor Shores and New Products- 1 year left to use funds. August 2013- lawsuit ongoing- probably means that project will not go through. November 2013- no change	November 2013		
	112091	Berrien County	Hollywood Road	December 6 letting December 2013: Additional \$286,444 available in 2014, because this project will not use it.	December 2013		
	115751	MDOT	I-94 WB (from I-196 for 0.4 miles to start of 2008 concrete pavement)	2 course HMA over scratch course on existing concrete- PE phase, no change	December 2012		
	113585	MDOT	I-94 WB (On I- 94 from Red Arrow Highway for 3.0 miles to Livingston Road)	Mill existing and place 2 HMA overlay-ROW phase; no change	December 2012		
	110779	MDOT	I-94 EW and WB over Hickory Creek	January 2014: Construction in July 2014.	January 2014		
	119786	MDOT	M-63over St. Joseph River in St. Joseph	Bridge Repair; January 2014: Detouring delayed	January 2014		

				due to weather			
		Berrien County	Napier and Union	Traffic Signal; July 2013: GI comments, August 23 rd deadline for ROW. October 2013: November 1 letting; November 2013: pre-construction meeting next week; December 2013: work will begin when weather allows	December 2013		
		TCATA	Replacement 3 buses CMAQ project	2013 applications are due to the state in December; July 2013: Waiting for contract approval	July 2013		
		TCATA	Expanded hours-JARC grant				
		TCATA	Mobility manager grant	11/2012 Purvis stated that this will be available for 2013 but not sure if funding will be there for 2012; SWMPC handling this	December 2012		
		TCATA	New line haul to Stevensville	Project is continuing; hoping to get state funds in 2014	January 2013		
		TCATA	Bus operations	Not submit yet			
	116924	SWMPC	Berrien County-Rideshare	In progress			
2014	112087	Benton Harbor	Broadway Avenue Resurfacing	Final plans ready; still need the city's commitment. November 2013: Resolution approved. December 2013: trying to get GI meeting scheduled	December 2013		
	121011	Benton Harbor	Pipestone at Empire Traffic Signal Upgrade	November 2013: Resolution approved	November 2013		
		Berrien County	Date Road Bridge Replacement	GI plans have been submitted	December 2013		
	121002	Berrien County	Roosevelt Road Non-Motorized Extension	Plans will be ready over next few months; survey work will take place in spring	December 2013		
		Berrien County	Brown School Road	Plans in Progress; GI submitted- came	January 2014		

			Resurfacing	in under budget, transferring funds to the Village of Shoreham			
		Village of Shoreham	Brown School Road Resurfacing	Construct in June of 2014	October 2013		

7. OLD BUSINESS:

▪ **Bylaw Review**

Mani said that as discussed at last month’s meeting, a TAC working group would be formed to review the bylaws to determine what the appropriate membership for TAC was, and what other procedures need to be in place. Once TAC was decided, representatives that had been potentially left out would probably fit neatly into the Policy Committee. Mani said that in light of this recent weather, it would also be a good idea to have some sort of procedure in place to allow phone in voting and email voting when urgent matters come up. Mani said that individuals had been contacted to become a part of the working group, which would meet via phone conference and possibly before a TwinCATS meeting.

▪ **CMAQ MPO Supplemental Questions**

Mani said that this document was designed to make the application process for CMAQ projects within the MPO more streamlined. Submitting agencies would submit their regular CMAQ applications to MDOT and this document addressing how the project aligns with long range plan goals.

Mani said that at the NATS meeting, concerns were expressed by members that this document made the application process unnecessarily burdensome, as approval by MDOT indicates that the project provides some air quality benefit and therefore meets the long range plan goals. Another question

SWMPC staff would continue working to address these issues with the document, so any action on the document could be tabled.

▪ **TIP Administrative Modifications and Amendment Policy**

Mani said that this document continued to be a work in progress, as SWMPC had consulted with its partners from FHWA and MDOT. Mani said that the goal of having a policy was to make it easier for SWMPC staff to make very minor changes that are time-sensitive to a project, without having to wait for a full MPO committee. Mani noted that three big questions were still up in the air:

- What change in funding amount should trigger a mandatory MPO review?
- What specific changes in scope should trigger a mandatory MPO review, and what minor changes could be altered and entered by staff?
- What change in project length change should trigger an MPO review?

Mani recapped the discussion from TAC: Berndt said that the scope of a project, as listed in the TIP, is usually general enough to allow for some leeway as the project goes through the Local

Agency Programs (LAP) process. Applicants do not usually specify lane width or number. Zebell agreed that the only change in scope that should trigger review is project length.

Panozzo proposed some sort of email voting to allow committee members to have feedback on all changes to the TIP.

Mani said that committee members should expect to vote on a finalized version of this document in March.

▪ **State of the Region Report**

Mani said that the State of the Region Report was complete and is online at <http://www.swmpc.org/2013sotr.asp>. The document contains data that should be valuable in benchmarking Berrien County's demographics, economic performance, community health, and education against other Southwest Michigan counties (Cass, Van Buren) and economically-similar counties throughout the nation. Mani said that appendix files allow users of the document to make their own analysis. Mani said that hard copies were available to all committee members upon request; they will not be provided unless requested.

8. NEW BUSINESS

▪ **Seasonal Traffic Count Locations**

Mani said that the traffic count team is getting ready for its summer counting season, and wanted to start taking counts in areas where there might be huge variation from summer to winter in terms of traffic. Mani said he was looking for committee member suggestions on areas where they suspect there might be variation. Mani also recommended that committee members get other requests in, as it will help traffic counters schedule their time this summer.

The traffic count request form can be found at <http://www.swmpc.org/trafficcountform.asp>

▪ **TIP Amendments**

The following TIP amendments were processed:

- Adding 4 MDOT I-94 Project Phases, four in 2014 and one in 2017
- Amending one MDOT project in 2015.
- Deleting the Hollywood Road project's 2014 portion for the Berrien County Road Commission, as 2013 funds adequately covered that project.
- Amending the project year of the City of Benton Harbor's Colfax Avenue project from 2016 to 2014 and amending federal cost to 286,444.
- Amending the Brown School Road project so that the Berrien County federal cost is 107,000, and the 28,000 in savings from that project go towards the Village of Shoreham portion, for a Village federal cost of 428,000
- Administratively modifying 2014 TCATA projects that use 5339 funds to list them as FTA desires.
- Administratively modifying the 2015 City of St. Joseph Park Street Bridge project into the 2014-2017 TIP.
- Amending the project year to 2014 for the MDOT carpool lot at Napier and US-31.

Mani asked Watson about the City of Benton Harbor project in terms of Colfax Avenue's compliance with the Complete Streets Policy, given that it already has sidewalks. Watson said that sidewalk upgrades and new curb cuts were being made to enhance safety. In addition, ADA-

ramps were being upgraded—several disabled students were currently struggling to make it to the high school along that stretch safely. In fact, the City had noticed serious safety hazards for all pedestrians approaching the school, particularly towards the beginning or end of the school day.

A motion by Stauffer with support by Lynch to approve the 2014-2017 TIP amendments for January 2014. **Motion passed.**

▪ **Targeted Transportation Plan Ideas**

Mani said that SWMPC staff are still soliciting ideas for learning topics for the joint MPO meeting. Mani said that one piece of feedback they had received after the last joint MPO meeting was to have more opportunities for interaction and to find out what is going on in each community. They will try to come up with some sort of activity that allows for more interaction.

▪ **Legislative Updates-Federal and State**

- **Federal** – None.
- **State** – None.

9. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

Jolivette commented that she had received an email on emergency management from Panozzo regarding the use of ITS signs in emergency response. Panozzo said that the Coloma TSC was continuing to look into ways to use the ITS signs on I-94 to warn people of vehicular accidents, detours, and hazardous weather conditions ahead. This warning would be uplinked into the Mi-Drive system.

In addition, Jolivette noted that new truck parking signs would soon be in place along I-94. Until now, these parking signs only told of where truck parking is, but now they can inform drivers whether parking is closed or the availability of spaces.

10. ADJOURNMENT at 11:34 a.m.

- Next meeting is **February 24, 2014 at 10:30 a.m.**

Compiled by: Suzann Flowers and Gautam Mani, Transportation Planners, 2013