

TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

Minutes

January 26, 2015

10:30 A.M.

Southwest Michigan Regional Airport

POLICY MEMBERS PRESENT:	William Hodge, Berrien County Planning Commission Deb Kavanaugh, Hagar Township Joanne Johnson, Disability Network Southwest Michigan Erin Jolivet, MDOT Coloma TSC Richard Lewis, City of St. Joseph Paul Lott, MDOT Statewide Planning Tim Lynch, Berrien County Road Commission John Olson, Village of Shoreham, Stevensville, and Royalton Township Debra Panozzo, Berrien County Board of Commissioners Bill Purvis, TCATA Lee Scherwitz, Southwest Michigan Regional Airport Roger Seeley, St. Joseph Charter Township Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township Kris Welch, MDOT-Statewide Planning
POLICY MEMBERS ABSENT:	Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) Tim Fenderbosch, St. Joseph Charter Township Carolyn Fowler, Benton Charter Township John Gast, Lake Charter Township John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning Aaron Anthony, City of Bridgman Mickey Bennett, Sodus Township Bill Brown, Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (ex officio) John Egelhaaf, SWMPC Ron Griffin, St. Joseph Charter Township Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region Donald Schlipp, Village of Stevensville Darrell Harden, MDOT Southwest Region Nora Jefferson, Benton Charter Township Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Brad Sharlow, MDOT (ex officio) Terrie Smith, Lincoln Charter Township Darwin Watson, City of Benton Harbor Representative, Cornerstone Alliance
SWMPC STAFF PRESENT:	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani
OTHERS PRESENT:	Denise Cook, St. Joseph Charter Township August Zielke, Berrien County Road Commission

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Stauffer called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and led the group in introductions.

2. MINUTES:

- A motion was made by Panozzo with support by Lewis to approve the minutes of the November Policy Committee meeting. **Motion passed.**

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

4. STAFF REPORT

▪ Meeting Location Change

Mani said that despite our new speaker system, SWMPC had received concerns from committee members about not being able to hear at meetings and about the temperature being uncomfortable at times. Gallagher also added that from the perspective of the Federal Transit Administration, having the meeting on a stop on a fixed route would likely be a better situation in terms of public outreach.

Mani said that Scherwitz had done a very good job in providing a meeting space that met SWMPC's needs, but that SWMPC had space reserved at Kinexus/Michigan Works in the Anchor Rooms that would provide better audio visual equipment, as well as less of an issue with hearing.

A motion by Johnson with support by Panozzo to approve a change in meeting location to Kinexus, beginning with the February 23rd meeting. **Motion passed.**

▪ Obligation Thermometer

Mani let committee members know about a new tool that MDOT Local Agency Programs had put together to help MPOs and local agencies keep track of how much obligation authority the state of Michigan had left over at any given time. This way, communities could know the likelihood of projects in the pipeline getting obligated before it runs out, and could make plans accordingly. Mani said that any FY 2015 projects ought to have applications in to Local Agency Programs by now, but that there is still a fair amount of obligation authority left at this point. Mani said that the obligation thermometer would be updated monthly and transmitted to SWMPC. In addition, the obligation thermometer is always available at http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9625_25885-339193--,00.html

▪ Regional Safety Plan

Gallagher said that MDOT had selected Southwest Michigan as one of two pilot regions to undertake regional safety plans. MDOT was hiring consultants to assist with developing safety plans, primarily for rural areas. The plans would pertain to all aspects of safety, including vehicular collisions, obstacles, and non-motorized planning. Gallagher said that SWMPC did not have a timeline as yet from MDOT, but that they would be assisting MDOT with public outreach and setting up meetings.

- **Traffic Count Requests**

Mani said that it was not too early for MPO members to get their traffic counts requests in for the 2015 season. SWMPC was already receiving requests for counts, and this was a good time for MPO members to talk with their local boards about where they would like to see counts done. Count requests can be made at <http://www.swmpc.org/trafficcountform.asp>.

- **PASER Trainings**

Mani said that each year, trainings on the PASER rating system for roads take place around the state. Anyone who wants to rate roads on the federal aid system must be trained each year, and SWMPC always sends its PASER raters for training. Mani said that any communities that wanted to have that expertise in house to rate their own roads could sign up for \$10. The closest trainings to our area are in Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo, on March 24 and 25 respectively.

- **Walk and Roll- next steps**

Mani said that it had been some time since the Walk and Roll subcommittee had gotten together, and that in anticipation of the next projection selection in 2016/2017, it was important to discuss how the Complete Streets Policy should figure into project prioritization and what tools ought to be used to measure the success of non-motorized efforts. Mani said that this was also a good opportunity to provide updates on recent non-motorized projects. The meeting will take place on February 23rd at 8 AM, prior to the usual TwinCATS meeting.

- **Local Resolutions of Support for FY 2016 due in April**

Mani said that committee member' had the excellent idea of requiring local resolutions of support the April before the fiscal year in which the project is scheduled for obligation in order to give the committees time to reprogram funds if necessary. An April resolution also aligns better with municipal budget cycles. Mani said that these resolutions applied to any project that had a local match component.

5. PUBLIC TRANSIT

- **Transit Consolidation Study Updates**

Gallagher shared that she had given presentations to a retirees' club in Buchanan. In addition, there was a group within the Michigan's Great Southwest Strategic Leadership Council (MGSSLC) that was dedicated specifically to transportation. Members of the group were certainly very interested in public transit, primarily from a business perspective.

- **Countywide Service Plan Updates**

Gallagher said that years ago, TCATA had attempted to develop a fixed-route service plan. An RFP had been issued, but the bids had come back far too high. Gallagher said that now there was some support for a countywide public service plan to complement the consolidation effort. Several communities are willing to provide local match. Gallagher noted that even if there was a delay in consolidation, transit agencies like TCATA could still benefit from the service plan.

- **CMAQ for Gasoline Buses**

Mani said that several transit agencies were facing issues when it came to applying for CMAQ funds for gasoline buses. The form that MDOT has for replacement buses does not use the correct emissions calculations for replacing a gasoline vehicle with another gasoline vehicle. MDOT is working with SEMCOG on a form that is sufficient. In the meantime, transit agencies were asked to find alternate ways of proving an emissions benefit; gasoline buses are definitely eligible. Transit agencies were struggling to get this information since a lot of emissions data will not be shared by bus manufacturers. Mani said that SWMPC was in conversation with MDOT about how to resolve this issue.

Stauffer said that Lincoln Township had experience with converting its vehicles to diesel, and that diesel engines cost quite a bit to replace if they broke down. Keeping buses with gasoline or other fuels seemed like the way to go.

- **Mobility Management**

Panozzo said that she was continuing to assist individuals with reaching life-sustaining destinations. Panozzo said that an issue that had really hit the forefront of her work recently was having benches to wait for the bus, particularly at Intercare. Scherwitz suggested reaching out to service clubs and local businesses to provide benches. If given the opportunity to place their logo on the benches, they might support the placement of benches.

- **TCATA Updates**

Gallagher distributed ridership figures for TCATA for the year to date, dating back to 2010. Gallagher noted in particular that dial-a-ride ridership within the City of Benton Harbor had gone down dramatically. Ridership on the fixed routes had increased by 33%, however. Purvis said that these ridership numbers were a bit low because they took into account only the log cards from the dispatchers, and not the drivers' logs.

Purvis said that three liquid propane buses had been delivered this morning, and that they would not be in service until spring when the propane fueling station at TCATA had been constructed.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Regional Inclusive Community Coalition (RICC)**

Johnson said that the RICC is continuing to advocate for improvements to the four systems in Berrien County, including coordination and consolidation. Johnson commented that the RICC had recently testified in front of the County Board of Commissioners that they want the authority.

7. LAND USE AND ZONING UPDATES

Hodge said that the Berrien County Planning Commission could have an updated version of its master plan next week. Lewis said that the City of St. Joseph had held a meeting the previous week regarding the Harbor and how that would figure into the Resiliency planning process it is still undertaking. The City continues to move forward with its master planning process with assistance from LIAA.

8. 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	Plan Review January 20th- still on track for January 2016 construction	January 2015		
	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		
		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		
		Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority	New line haul route	July 2012: Continued through 2013 (2014 funding 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.	July 2013		
		Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority	Transit vehicle replacement (3 total)	July 2014: Buses on the way, with propane conversions	July 2014		
2013	115751	MDOT	I-94 WB (from I-196 for 0.4	Suspended project	January 2015		

			miles to start of 2008 concrete pavement)				
	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 2015: August 2015 Construction Completion	January 2015		
		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/Colfax Avenue Resurfacing	January 2015: Broadway Avenue is completed, Colfax Avenue will done in June 2015	January 2015		
	121011	Benton Harbor	Pipestone at Empire Traffic Signal Upgrade	January 2015: Restoration will take place in Spring	January 2015		
		Berrien County	Date Road Bridge Replacement	Complete	January 2015		
	121002	Berrien County	Roosevelt Road Non-Motorized Extension	Complete	January 2015		
		Village of Shoreham	Brown School Road Resurfacing	Letting in June	January 2015		
2015		Berrien County	Marquette Woods Road Restore and Rehab/Sidewalks	January 2015: GI has been completed	January 2015		

		Berrien County	Napier Avenue at Pipestone St Traffic Signal	January 2015: GI Completed	January 2015		
		City of Benton Harbor	Pipestone St at Britain Avenue Traffic Signal	January 2015: Surveying work completed	January 2015		
		City of St. Joseph	Botham Avenue	January 2015: Project let, bid 6.5% below estimate---making it possible to reuse funds as bid savings.	January 2015		
		City of St. Joseph	Park St. Bridge	January 2015: Came in over bid-- - have received final permission from CSX- will proceed in	January 2015		

Mani shared several additional MDOT updates. The healer-sealer project on I-94 over the St. Joseph River will be under construction from April until June. A freeway signing project on I-94 from Puetz Road to I-196 will be done between September 1 and October 16, 2015. The M-63 bridge over Hickory Creek will be constructed from June 8- July 21. M-63 resurfacing from M-139 to I-94 will take place this summer with no delays or detours.

9. OLD BUSINESS:

- **TIP Amendments**

Mani said that there was only one amendment this month-- a slight change in limits and project description for the I-94 WB reconstruction project that MDOT is scheduled to undertake in FY 2016. The project runs approximately between Exits 16 and 22.

A motion by Hodge with support by Olson to approve the January 2015 amendments, pending the end of the public comment period. **Motion passed.**

- **State Transportation Legislation and May Ballot Initiative**

Mani shared some materials from the House Fiscal Agency (as reported by MLive) with members of the MPO regarding the transportation funding bills that were passed by the Michigan State legislature in December.

A ballot proposal that will be up for a citizen's vote in May would increase the sales and use tax from the current 6 cents to 7 cents, while eliminating the sales tax on motor fuels. Higher education (with the exemption of community colleges) would be exempt from the school aid fund.

The application of a wholesale tax on gasoline would generate \$1.2 billion in revenue, but that assumes a higher gasoline price than current levels. In addition, transit continues to get a portion of state revenue, which is different from proposals that TwinCATS had seen back in December.

- Scherwitz pointed out that a gasoline use tax increase would have made the most sense given fuel price fluctuations. A gasoline tax increase would have guaranteed a revenue stream.

Scherwitz pointed out that a gasoline use tax increase would have made the most sense given fuel price fluctuations. A gasoline tax increase would have guaranteed a revenue stream. Scherwitz said he had been advocating for an aviation fuel tax increase for a long time, as it is at the same level as prior to World War II. Lott said that there had been some resistance to an increase in fuel taxes. This series of bills was the result of a compromise between many interests, not just transportation.

Panozzo said that she heard all the time from people that Michigan is taxed at the highest rate on fuel. Lott said that it is certainly possible that Michigan has the highest tax rate, but that it might also have one of the lowest percentages of that revenue that goes towards transportation.

As far as taking a position on the ballot measure, Mani said that staff were not encouraging TwinCATS to take a position for or against the ballot measure just yet, and that they do not need to take one at all. Panozzo suggested that a bigger role for the MPO might be to educate the public about the ballot initiative and all of the funding proposals, as these are extremely confusing. Gallagher said that SWMPC staff were continuing to gain new information, but were happy to share information as they received it so that TwinCATS members could share it with their communities.

▪ **NFC Review Ongoing**

Mani said that MDOT had held a review meeting regarding National Functional Classification Review meeting in the TwinCATS area in December. Any changes to the NFC system are due by September. Mani said that any proposals to upgrade roads to other principal arterials (OPAs) were due by April.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Mani noted that Andrea Dewey had been unable to attend the meeting, but that she had wanted to pass along information about the Mayor's Challenge for Safer People and Safer Streets. This was a call by Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx for mayors to gather data on walking and bicycling, incorporate non-motorized elements into planned resurfacing projects, and pass Complete Streets Policies in their own communities. This is a focus area for FHWA within Michigan. It is possible that funding in the next transportation reauthorization would incentivize elements of this challenge.

More information can be found at: <http://www.dot.gov/mayors-challenge>.

11. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

Lott said that Kris Welch would be taking over the MPO duties of NATS and TwinCATS for MDOT. Lott said that he would be continuing with his duties with his other MPOs, including Muskegon, Holland, and Grand Rapids. The committee members thanked Paul for his service to our area.

12. ADJOURNMENT at 11:28 AM

- Next meeting is February 23, 2015 at 10:30 AM at Anchor Room A+B at Kinexus (Michigan Works!).

Compiled by: Gautam Mani.