

# TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

## Minutes

February 24, 2014

10:30 A.M.

Southwest Michigan Regional Airport

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

**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 Fowler to approve the minutes of the January 27 Policy meeting. **Motion passed.**

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None.

**4. STAFF REPORT:**

- **MTPA Follow Up**

Flowers said that the only item of relevance from the February MTPA meeting was a reminder to follow ADA guidelines on most projects. While some projects do not require ADA compliance, this list is now very small, and the vast majority of projects do. Flowers advised that if committee members had questions about whether a project required ADA compliance or not, they should contact MDOT engineers, as they are best able to answer questions.

- **State of the Region Report Document Copies**

Mani noted that the State of the Region Report would begin printing this week, and that it was not too late for organizations to request copies. SWMPC is ordering 100 hard copies, and so far, there are not 100 people scheduled to receive the document.

- **CMAQ Update**

Mani said that after SWMPC was able to get its communications back online, he had been on a very tight deadline to get CMAQ applications in for this call for projects, and wanted to make sure that any applications for 2015 got in on time. All applications for 2015 were submitted, along with any applications for 2016-2019 that he already had. Projects for 2016 and beyond will have another opportunity for submittal during the next call for projects next year.

- **Presentation on Soil and Water Quality**

Mani introduced Marcy Colclough, SWMPC Senior Planner. Flowers said that the reason for having a presentation on soil and water quality was because committee members had an interesting discussion after the climate change report presentation on issues they were having with managing development footprints due to issues with the drain commissioners, and new requirements from the state for managing stormwater.

Colclough gave a brief introduction to the concept of a watershed. Colclough said that the two watersheds within MPO boundaries are the St. Joseph River and the Galien River (a small portion of the MPO to the south drains into the Galien River).

Colclough then described wetlands, and their functions. Wetlands not only serve as habitat that preserves species diversity, but also has an important absorption function. Wetlands act as a crucial buffer between developed area impacts and bodies of water. The lifeforms in wetlands are often highly resilient and can help maintain water quality overall.

In addition, wetlands can help reduce flood impacts because they can store floodwater. Colclough pointed out, however, that Michigan, and indeed most of the United States, continues to lose wetlands and this important flood barrier. The two watersheds within the TwinCATS MPO have lost 53-58% of their wetlands from before European settlement.

Wetlands help prevent sediment from piling up in harbors and streams; Colclough noted that protection of wetlands may reduce costs of dredging in the St. Joseph River Harbor, which have increased consistently in recent years.

Colclough noted that one strategy for preserving wetlands, or at least attempting to plan development so that it maximizes the benefits of wetlands, is to make sure that wetlands are mapped in local future land use plans. In addition, communities can pass ordinances or zoning code amendments that allow for clustered development. Currently, zoning codes often specifically ban clustered development. Clustered development can help preserve the ecological functions of green spaces and can also increase property values. Communities in Indiana have actually banned development on hydric soils in the future to help allow for the best floodwater absorption.

Colclough said that purchases of development rights and formal protections of wetlands as preserves are both also viable strategies for maintaining water quality.

Flowers asked about the impact of extensive drain maintenance activities that many cities, villages, and townships are now undertaking. Flowers noticed that on her property, these activities have significantly altered the natural landscape and flow of water. Colclough said that in a lot of cases, drain maintenance activities by the drain commissioner impact hydric soils, which were wetlands in the past and may still provide some of the benefits of wetlands.

Bennett asked about coordination with assessor's offices to track impacts of planned unit development and other open space preservation programs on property values. Colclough said this was a necessary step.

Mani noted that Colclough had offered to give a specific presentation on Ox Creek, which is severely impacted by the impervious surfaces on Pipestone Road and around the Orchards Mall. Mani said this was a huge opportunity for TwinCATS to shape the way Ox Creek is treated in any redevelopment of the Pipestone I94 Interchange. There is an opportunity to potentially restore water quality in that creek. Currently, the redevelopment of Pipestone Road is outside the five year statewide plan, so this is a great opportunity for TwinCATS committee members to make their voice heard before any preliminary designs are even decided.

A full copy of Colclough's presentation can be found here:  
[http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/twincats\\_presentation\\_on\\_water\\_quality.ppt](http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/twincats_presentation_on_water_quality.ppt)

## **5. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **▪ Walk and Roll**

Mani noted that SWMPC staff are still working on revisions to the Complete Streets Policy, as directed by the Walk and Roll committee. Mani said that nationwide, the standard for what constitutes a good Complete Streets Policy had really been raised in the two years since

TwinCATS passed its own policy. In addition, SWMPC staff wanted to make sure that language in the Policy was understandable to new committee members and those who have not been involved in the Walk and Roll process. The Policy will be available for review by all committee members very shortly.

Fenderbosch stated that preserving wetlands was in conflict with the Complete Streets Policy where new surfaces were added for bicycle lanes, sidewalks, or bus bulb-outs. Colclough said that Complete Streets Policy did not necessarily mean new impervious surfaces. In many cases, it involves low cost solutions in different contexts. Flowers acknowledged the issues that TwinCATS communities had with adding to the development footprint under the drain commissioner. Stauffer noted that having 6-foot wide sidewalks rather than 5-foot wide sidewalks greatly helped with snow removal during the winter months.

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

Johnson noted that the RICC had met with State Senator John Proos and Representative Al Pscholka about implementation of a universal ADA card. Currently, people with disabilities have to apply to each transit agency separately for ADA recognition. This is a serious problem for people who have to use multiple transit systems on a daily basis, or those who stay in different locations from one month to the next or one season to the next. Johnson said that the RICC had also discussed with the legislators the need for increased funding of paratransit services and noted that the legislators were receptive.

Johnson also echoed Flowers' comment regarding consultation of engineers on ADA compliance, but said that committee members and others curious should also turn to Disability Network for any of their questions regarding ADA compliance. They have excellent resources on the subject.

- **Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Coalition (BCCTC)**

None.

- **Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) Operations Update**

Purvis said that the new timings and frequency of the Blue Route had improved on-time performance and cut down on accumulated delay from one hour to the next. Purvis also said that currently, the state is not issuing its contracts for small cutaway buses because applications must specify a number of buses the agency wishes to receive, and not just a funding amount.

## 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 <b>July 2013: On hold</b>	July 2013		x
		Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority	New expanded hours	<b>July 2012:</b> Continued through 2013 (2014 funding seems less certain); <b>September 2012:</b> Continued Service; 11/2012 after 2013 the state will match buses but nothing else; <b>December 2012</b> -already been awarded; <b>November 2013:</b> not funded	November 2013		x
		Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority	New line haul route	<b>July 2012:</b> Continued through 2013 (2014 funding seems less certain); ; 11/2012 after 2013 the state will match buses but nothing else <b>July 2013:</b> JARC funding cut in half, project will proceed.	July 2013		x
		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. <b>August 2013</b> - lawsuit ongoing- probably means that project will not go through.	November 2013		

				<b>November 2013-</b> no change			
	112091	Berrien County	Hollywood Road	December 6 letting <b>December 2013:</b> Additional \$286,444 available in 2014, because this project will not use it. <b>February 2014:</b> April 1 construction; Open House Thursday from 3-6 PM at Royalton Township Hall.	February 2014		
	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	<b>January 2014:</b> Construction in July 2014.	January 2014		
	119786	MDOT	M-63over St. Joseph River in St. Joseph	Bridge Repair; January 2014: Detouring delayed due to weather	January 2014		
		Berrien County	Napier and Union	Traffic Signal; <b>July 2013:</b> GI comments, August 23 <sup>rd</sup> deadline for ROW. <b>October 2013:</b> November 1 letting; <b>November 2013:</b> pre-construction meeting next week; <b>December 2013:</b> work will begin when weather allows;	December 2013		
		TCATA	Replacement 3 buses CMAQ project	2013 applications are due to the state in December; <b>July 2013:</b> 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;	December 2012		

				SWMPC handling this			
		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. <b>November 2013:</b> Resolution approved. <b>December 2013:</b> trying to get GI meeting scheduled <b>February 2014:</b> Final plans submitted this past Friday	February 2014		
	121011	Benton Harbor	Pipestone at Empire Traffic Signal Upgrade	<b>November 2013:</b> Resolution approved; <b>February 2014:</b> Final package will be submitted in March.	February 2014		
		Berrien County	Date Road Bridge Replacement	GI plans have been submitted; <b>February 2014:</b> Final plans will be submitted	February 2014		
	121002	Berrien County	Roosevelt Road Non-Motorized Extension	Plans will be ready over next few months; survey work will take place in spring; <b>February 2014:</b> GI package submitted	February 2014		
		Berrien County	Brown School Road Resurfacing	Plans in Progress; GI submitted- came in under budget, transferring funds to the Village of Shoreham; <b>February 2014:</b> May 2 letting	January 2014		
		Village of Shoreham	Brown School Road Resurfacing	GI Package under review	February 2014		

## 7. OLD BUSINESS:

- Roads Risk and Reserve Fund Projects Update

Mani noted that at the request of the TAC and Policy Committees, SWMPC staff had drafted a letter detailing the committee members' concern over TwinCATS not being consulted regarding the initial selection of RRR projects. Mani said he believed it was vital for committee members to convey the process they go through to select projects and the time they put in at meetings and in other settings to legislators. If projects are going to continue to be selected outside of this process, it would seem that our planning efforts are not worth the time.

Mani said that one item which had changed is that SWMPC did receive a request from Representative Al Pscholka to submit projects. Mani said that the request came through SWMPC executive director John Egelhaaf. Mani said that SWMPC was given a little over twelve hours to respond to the request, which did not leave time for consultation with committee members. Since almost all of Rep. Pscholka's district lies within the MPO, SWMPC felt comfortable submitting projects that were currently programmed in the MPO TIP for FY 2015-2017. These projects had been thoroughly vetted by the committee and represented those that the Policy Committee deemed. Mani said this is why the committees have substantive planning documents- to allow Mani said he was given no idea as to how much funding was available, or when an announcement would be made. Mani said that the substance of the letter still stood; the committee should be consulted about project selection decisions.

Corrections were submitted to the letter. Flowers and Scherwitz said that corrections should be submitted to SWMPC staff by Thursday at the very latest, so that signatures can be put on the letter and so that it can be mailed off on Friday.

A motion by Guetschow with support by Stauffer to approve and authorize signature on a letter, with corrections to Rep Al. Pscholka and State Senator John Proos regarding the RRR projects, with MDOT director Kirk Steudle receiving a copy of the letter. **Motion passed.**

- **MPO TIP Form Questions**

Mani said that he and Flowers had been making changes to the form that was originally designed for CMAQ projects only. SWMPC staff had heard the concern that if CMAQ projects provided an air quality benefit, they met a goal of the Long Range Plan, and that was perhaps sufficient.

Lott stated that he was on the CMAQ eligibility committee, and he advised not to accept approval of eligibility as a necessary indicator that the project was good for the MPO. Lott strongly urged committee members to find a balance between properly scrutinizing the projects for their applicability to the MPO and recognizing the air quality benefits that a CMAQ project brings. Lott also noted that the CMAQ subcommittee was meeting for the first time on February 25<sup>th</sup> to review eligibility of 2015-2019 projects.

## 8. NEW BUSINESS

- **TIP Administrative Modification**

Mani noted that there was one minor administrative modification. The City of Benton Harbor Colfax Avenue and Broadway Avenue projects in 2014 were being combined into one. No costs are being changed and no length or scope changes are happening.

- **Legislative Updates-Federal and State**

- **Federal –**

Dewey said that the national performance measures rulemaking framework would be announced very soon.

- **State –**

Lott said that in addition to the latest round of RRR projects, for which SWMPC had submitted a project list, a Senate bill proposed an emergency allocation of \$100 million to assist communities with snow removal. If the House passes this appropriation, it would give funding out to local agencies based on the Act 51 formula. Stauffer commented that it was alarming that a local state senator could vote “no” on the bill, given the critical regional need for road repair as this winter draws to a close. Lynch commented that the Berrien County Road Commission was \$1 million dollars over budget for the fiscal year, and potholes are just starting to appear as roads thaw out.

## 9. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

Jolivette commented that Sarah Woolcock had retired from MDOT, and that she would appreciate it if committee members could sign a retirement card. In addition the utility and permit engineer at the TSC had switched places, so there was a new utility and permit engineer at the TSC.

## 10. ADJOURNMENT at 11:43 a.m.

- Next meeting is **March 17, 2014 at 10:30 a.m.**

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