

TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

Minutes

June 20, 2011

10:30 A.M.

Southwest Michigan Regional Airport

POLICY MEMBERS PRESENT:	Tim Fenderbosch, St. Joseph Charter Township Robert Judd, City of St. Joseph Erin Kercheval, MDOT Coloma TSC Ray Lenze, MDOT Planning Larry Merritt, Berrien County Road Commission Debra Panozzo, Berrien County Commission Lee Scherwitz, SW Michigan Regional Airport Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township Rachael Tupica, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio)
POLICY MEMBERS ABSENT:	Aaron Anthony, City of Bridgman Mickey Bennett, Sodus Township Bill Brown, Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (ex officio) John Egelhaaf, SWMPC Carolyn Fowler, Benton Charter Township John Gast, Lake Charter Township Jason Latham, MDOT Regional Planning Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Bill Purvis, TCATA Representative, Cornerstone Alliance Jim Soteriou, Royalton Township Bruno Trapikas, Village of Shoreham Darwin Watson, City of Benton Harbor Kevin Wordelman, Berrien County Planning Commission
SWMPC STAFF PRESENT:	Suzann Flowers Anna Rahtz Trevor Thomas
OTHERS PRESENT:	Ron Griffin, St. Joseph Charter Township

1. CALL TO ORDER:

- Chairman Judd called the meeting to order at 10:40 A.M.

2. MINUTES:

- *A motion was made by Panozzo, seconded by Merritt, to approve the minutes of the April 18, 2011 Policy Committee meeting. Motion approved unanimously with no corrections.*

3. STAFF REPORT:

- **Transit Consolidation Feasibility Study update**
 - Rahtz gave a summary of the kickoff meeting with the consultants KFH Group, which was held on June 1st at Michigan Works! Benton Harbor. Around 55 people were in attendance, representing social service agencies, government agencies, transportation providers, citizens, riders, people with disabilities, and a variety of other groups. The consultants gave an overview of the two-year (or potentially shorter) process they will be going through with the study, and the purpose of it is to

evaluate different levels of how the four transit providers can coordinate or consolidate their operations to provide better service to Berrien County residents. It will involve a consensus building process to make sure everyone involved is getting a good business deal and has buy-in to implementing the final plan, whatever it may be. Attendees provided feedback on the challenges that they see in this process, who else needs to be involved, how to get information out to the public and stakeholders, and the issues that need to be addressed in the study.

- Rahtz also added that this is her last TwinCATS meeting because her last day working at the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is June 28th, and that Flowers will be stepping in to take her place.

- **Asset Management Update**

- Thomas stated that SWMPC will be conducting PASER (Pavement Surface Evaluation Ratings) for the southern half of Berrien County in the summer 2011. He added that he will also be working with the City of St. Joseph and the City of Benton Harbor on local asset management plans. Any municipality can receive funds through the Transportation Asset Management Council to have their local roads rated every three years, and Thomas encouraged the local representatives to contact him if they are interested for 2012.

- **Walk and Roll update**

- Thomas presented the preliminary results of the Walk and Roll survey, which is still open for the rest of June on the SWMPC website. He also summarized the public comments that have been received for the Walk and Roll plan thus far, pertaining to specific streets or intersections of concern but also general comments about the use of non-motorized facilities in Southwest Michigan.
- Thomas added that the next step for the Walk and Roll plan will be to hold a subcommittee meeting in early July, and that he and Flowers are hoping to have a draft plan by early fall.
- Rahtz passed out the booklets of best practices that were distributed at the public meetings.
- Judd asked how many City of St. Joseph residents gave comments or responded to the survey. Thomas responded that not all of them answered the survey question about what community they live in, but based on the meeting attendance in St. Joseph his best estimate would be 12 people. Flowers added that the public meetings had not been as well attended as had been hoped, at about 10-12 people at each meeting.
- Judd added that a bicyclist he knows had commented that the new wide shoulder on M-63 is already full of gravel, and that the shoulders should be maintained.
- Stauffer noted that, as many survey respondents commented, the area of Lincoln Charter Township around the new Meijer store is a challenge for accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians. He stated that the Township had studied the option of constructing a sidewalk along Marquette Woods Rd and estimated it would cost \$250,000.
- Rahtz added that Marquette Woods Rd is not currently eligible for federal funds because its National Function Class is a local road, but that she had discussed with the Berrien County Road Commission the possibility of applying to change the NFC for Marquette Woods Rd to a collector because it essentially serves as a collector to Meijer from a huge residential neighborhood. She noted that the Road Commission had agreed changing the classification would be a good idea, but that they would probably wait until MDOT performs the review of NFC at the end of this year.
- Panozzo asked for clarification on what is meant by "better signal timings" in the Walk and Roll materials. Thomas responded that many pedestrian crossing signals do not provide enough time for pedestrians, particularly children, the elderly, or individuals with disabilities, enough time to cross the street safely. He added that on many roads this has been solved by installing concrete refuge islands in the street so that pedestrians can cross a part of the distance during one signal and then cross the rest of the way when the signal changes again.
- Concerns were raised about whether such pedestrian medians are "snow plow-friendly," and Flowers and Thomas responded that it has been done in other cities. Judd noted that Main Street in St. Joseph has medians that help pedestrians to cross the street. He added the cost of pedestrian crossing islands would not be as burdensome if rolled in with the cost of a road

reconstruction project.

- Tupica noted that there is a federal requirement to consider non-motorized facilities when designing any road project.
- Fenderbosch noted that around \$90,000 had been spent on engineering for the sidewalk on Hilltop Rd, which had been held up by one or two property owners. He expressed that, while many agencies in TwinCATS see the need for non-motorized facilities, they have a financial challenge and other logistical challenges to implement the projects.
- Rahtz responded that the committee members should continue to use Thomas and Flowers as a resource to assist with finding funding sources and other challenges.
- Panozzo added that more citizen advocacy is needed in support of these projects, such as in the case of the Hilltop sidewalk project, to convince opponents of the importance of them.
- Rahtz added that in a lot of cases, it is not necessary to go to the expense and effort of construction a sidewalk because there are numerous roads, such as Fairplain Avenue in Benton Township, that have far more lanes for cars than are needed for the amount of traffic on the road. In such cases, the stripes could be moved at no cost and the excess asphalt could be used for a non-motorized shoulder or pathway.
- Griffin noted that it took St. Joseph Township twenty years to finish the Vineland Trail. Many of the home owners had feared that the trail would bring crime, and he had pointed out that it would not provide any more access to the houses for criminals than the street currently does. After the trail was finished, one the property owners selling the house advertised it as abutting the nature trail, and so the local residents have come to realize that a trail is an asset.
- Flowers discussed the results of a presentation she had given to the Berrien Unitarian Service Group, a church group for seniors that meets in Lincoln Township. She summarized the comments that the group members had provided about the need for non-motorized transportation and public transportation to access local businesses and other needed services. She added that the group members find it difficult to receive news for local events or efforts happening in Michigan since they can only pick up South Bend and Chicago news channels, and some houses in rural areas cannot get local newspapers delivered.
- Those present agreed that communicating with local residents is challenging because of an arbitrary FCC rule, based on a Nielsen group determination, that Southwest Michigan can only receive South Bend and Chicago television channels. This hurts economic development efforts in Southwest Michigan because residents are only seeing advertisements for businesses in other cities rather than in their own region.
- **Complete Streets Workshop**
 - Flowers stated that a Complete Streets workshop will be held at Andrews University on June 30th, 2011 from 6:30-8:30pm. She added that, in contrast to the Complete Streets workshop held by MSU-Extension on May 3rd, this workshop will be free. The focus of the workshop will be to promote and foster citizen advocacy, as well as to provide information about the Michigan Complete Streets legislation and how local governments can get started with writing Complete Streets policies.
 - Panozzo asked for the flyer electronically to distribute to interested individuals.
- **Rail Update**
 - Rahtz stated that MDOT will still be taking comments on the draft statewide rail plan until July 1, 2011. The draft plan is online at www.michigan.gov/mirailplan.
 - Thomas commented that in the draft State Rail Plan Update, the reroute of the Pere Marquette through Kalamazoo is included in the "best case" funding scenario, which is considered a long-term or low priority in the plan.

4. OLD BUSINESS:

- **Unified Work Program approval**

- Rahtz passed out copies of the draft TwinCATS FY 2012 Unified Work Program and stated that the Technical Advisory Committee had approved the draft document on the condition that changes

suggested by committee members are made.

- *Motion by Kercheval, seconded by Merritt, to recommend that the SWMPC board approve the FY 2012 UWP, on the condition that changes suggested by the committee members are made. Motion approved unanimously.*

- **Citizen representation on TwinCATS**

- Rahtz reminded the committee that at the February meeting they had asked for more information on how other MPOs use citizen advisory committees or citizen representatives. She had passed out some research at the April meeting, and there had been discussion about a motion at the June meeting to make the following suggested changes:
 - Change the agenda for the meetings to put the public comment at the beginning rather than the end.
 - Add non-voting representatives to give regular updates at each meeting from the following groups:
 - Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Coalition
 - TCATA Local Advisory Committee
 - Transportation Advocacy Group
 - Regional Interagency Consumers' Committee
- Rahtz added that the Technical Advisory Committee had approved these three changes for their committee but that the Policy Committee's decision would be separate for their committee.
- Concerns were raised by committee members that the meeting could become too long, and that the representatives should be instructed only to give a report if they have something substantive to report on, or possibly to have the report submitted in writing before the meeting.
- One committee member expressed a concern that more and more groups could ask to be represented, and the staff responded that a vote would have to be taken each time to amend the by-laws, and so that would be up to the committee. It was also noted that there is not enough citizen participation at this point to raise a concern.
- *Motion by Panozzo, seconded by Merritt, to move the public comment period to the beginning of the agenda, add non-voting members from each of the above four groups, and place a slot on the agenda for each representative to give an update if they have something substantive to update. Motion approved unanimously.*

5. NEW BUSINESS:

- **TIP Amendments**

- City of Benton Harbor
 - Amend in FY 2011, the project named Klock Rd. Amend the length from .91 miles to .42 miles and the limits from "M-63 to Paw Paw Ave" to "North Shore Dr to Paw Paw Ave." Amend the primary work type from Reconstruct to New route/structure (capacity increase). Amend project description from "Reconstruct and widen to three traffic lanes with new curb and gutter from M-63 to North Shore Dr; construct a new two-lane road from North Shore Dr to Paw Paw Ave." to "Construction of a new 2-lane road with curb and gutter, drainage, utility construction, and non-motorized path." Amend state cost (EDA) from \$1,042,850 to \$678,000 and local cost from \$1,381,293 to \$944,000. Job number 89085.
- Berrien County Road Commission (Lincoln Township)
 - Modify in FY 2011 the project named John Beers Rd. Modify project description from "construct 6 foot wide non-motorized paths" to "Construct 6 foot wide sidewalks on both sides of road." Job number 112682.
- Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
 - Add in FY 2011, the project named Berrien County Transit Consolidation Feasibility Study for countywide transit operations. Project description is "conduct transit consolidation feasibility study, May 2011 through September 2013." Transit capital. Federal cost is \$147,200 (5304 FTA funds), and local cost is \$36,800 (Other Local Funds from Consortium 4 Community Development).

- *Motion by Panozzo, seconded by Stauffer, to approve the amendment of the above three projects in the FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program. Motion approved unanimously.*
- Michigan Department of Transportation
 - Amend in FY 2011, the project named I-94 for bridge work under John Beers Rd. Amend project description from "full paint, joint replacement" to "full paint, substructure repair, joint replacement, shallow concrete overlay, concrete surface coating." Amend federal cost from \$395,139 (bridge program) to \$1,060,200, amend state cost from \$43,904 to \$117,800, and amend total project cost from \$534,047 to \$1,273,004. Job number 88086.
 - Delete in FY 2011, the project named I-94 for carpool lot resurfacing at Nickerson Rd, M-40 at M-43 and I-94 at M-40. (Nickerson Ave. lot is in another project and so project is moving outside of TwinCATS area). Job number 103294.
 - Amend in FY 2011, the project named I-94 for bridge work on I-94 westbound from I-196 to .4 miles east of M-140 and on I-94 eastbound from Hennessy Road to .4 miles east of M-140. Amend length from 1.39 to 7.02 to match limits and amend project description. Job number 112949.
- *Motion by Fenderbosch, seconded by Lenze, to approve the amendment of the above three MDOT projects in the FY 2011-2014 TIP. Motion approved unanimously.*
 - Add in FY 2011, the general program account for Pre-Construction Phases. Federal cost is \$20,463 (ST) and state cost is \$54,537.
 - Add in FY 2011, the project named M-63 for resurfacing from I-94 to Midway Ave. Length is 2.14 miles and primary work type is resurface. Project description is "Overband crack seal pre-treatment and two course micro-surface treatment." Construction phase. Federal cost is \$273,493 (NH), state cost is \$60,646, and total project cost is \$570,000. Comments: 61.31% of project is in TwinCATS area, remainder is rural. Job number 113014.
- Berrien County Transportation / Berrien Bus
 - Add in FY 2012, Rural Operating Funds for rural portion of TwinCATS area. Federal cost is \$26,030 (5311 FTA funds).
 - *Schuh added that he had been instructed by FTA that the portion of operating funds to put in TwinCATS should be calculated based on percentage of land area, and that 5311 funds had never been shown in the TIP in previous years. Rahtz added that she had been instructed by MDOT Passenger Transit Division not to show a local match for these funds even though there really is a local match.*
- *Motion by Panozzo, seconded by Merritt, to approve the amendment of the above three projects in the FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program. Motion approved unanimously.*
- Michigan Department of Transportation
 - Amend in FY 2012, the project named I-94 for bridge work on I-94 eastbound and westbound over Hickory Creek, 2.1 miles northeast of Stevensville. Amend total project cost from \$1,588,608 to \$1,698,370 to account for increase in design costs. Job number 110779.
 - Amend in FY 2012, the project named I-94 for resurfacing of carpool lot at Nickerson Ave in Benton Twp, lot 711005. Amend total project cost from \$33,000 to \$35,000 to account for increase in design costs. Job number 103293.
 - Add in FY 2012, the project named I-94 WB for resurfacing from Red Arrow Hwy (Exit 16) to Livingston Rd. Length is 3 miles, primary work type is resurface, and project description is "mill existing and multiple course HMA (hot mix asphalt) overlay." Preliminary engineering phase. Federal cost is \$1,800,000 (IM), state cost is \$200,000 and total project cost is \$15,000,000. Job number 113585.
 - Add in FY 2012, the general program account for CPM CSM (Capital Preventive Maintenance Capital Structural Maintenance) Bridge Trunkline. Federal cost is \$573,725 (ST) and state cost is \$143,431.
 - Add in FY 2012, the general program account for CPM (Capital Preventive Maintenance)

7. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

- Panozzo expressed frustration about not having enough information available about the construction zone on 94BL from Stevensville to St. Joseph; she remarked that there was no "Construction Ahead" sign along her route, and so many of the cars had to wait a long time and then turn around and go back. It was noted that there is a "Construction Ahead" sign on 94BL but not for cars coming from Cleveland Ave or other side streets. Kercheval explained that it was tricky dealing with all of the side streets on that project, and also that MDOT did not have the budget to do a detailed construction zone plan for smaller jobs. She added that MDOT had received numerous complaints about the flaggers causing confusion on this job, as well.
- **MPO Population Threshold**
 - Thomas presented a resolution that is being circulated by metropolitan planning organizations in response to an unofficial leaked draft of new transportation legislation from the US Department of Transportation, which would raise the threshold of population for a metropolitan planning organization. A region would have to be made up of at least 200,000 people to constitute a metropolitan planning organization, and so TwinCATS would no longer exist. There is no grandfather clause mentioned in the draft legislation.
 - Lenze noted that this is unofficial and very draft language, but it is still a good idea to be proactive. He added that MDOT is abstaining from voting on such a resolution.
 - It was asked how the planning work would be handled if the MPO staff were not funded, and it was responded that MDOT would have to absorb all of the responsibilities.
 - Motion by Merritt, seconded by Fenderbosch, to approve the resolution to propose keeping the existing threshold of 50,000 people for a metropolitan planning organization. Motion approved unanimously (MDOT abstains).

8. ADJOURNMENT: 11:57 A.M.

- Next meeting is **July 18, 2011 at 10:30 AM**