

# TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

## Minutes

July 20, 2015

10:30 A.M.

Kinexus- Lighthouse Room, 499 W Main St, Benton Harbor

<b>POLICY MEMBERS PRESENT:</b>	Bill Chickering, Berrien County Board of Commissioners Denise Cook, St. Joseph Charter Township Tim Fenderbosch, St. Joseph Charter Township Carolyn Fowler, Benton Charter Township Matt Galbraith, MDOT Statewide Planning Juan Ganum, City of Bridgman Darrell Harden, MDOT Southwest Region William Hodge, Berrien County Planning Commission Joanne Johnson, Disability Network Southwest Michigan Deb Kavanaugh-Frank, Hagar Township John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning Tim Lynch, Berrien County Road Commission Bill Purvis, Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority Jonathan Smith, MDOT Coloma TSC Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township
<b>POLICY MEMBERS ABSENT:</b>	Vince DesJardins, Southwest Michigan Regional Airport Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) John Gast, Lake Charter Township Representative, Sodus Township Erin Jolivette, MDOT Coloma TSC Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Brad Sharlow, MDOT (ex officio) Darwin Watson, City of Benton Harbor Representative, Cornerstone Alliance
<b>SWMPC STAFF PRESENT:</b>	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani Kris Martin
<b>OTHERS PRESENT:</b>	Kim Avery, MDOT Southwest Region Engineer James Cronk Ron Griffin, St. Joseph Charter Township David Jones, League of Michigan Bicyclists Steven Jones, Transit Advocator at Disability Network Southwest Michigan Clay McCausland, District Representative for Congressman Fred Upton Debra Panozzo, Berrien County Commissioner Steve Stepek, Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Rep. Fred Upton, US House of Representatives Rich Vavra-Musser, Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers Tim Zebell, City of St. Joseph

## 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 Chickering with support by Fenderbosch to approve the minutes of the June 15 Policy Committee meeting. **Motion passed.**

## 3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Steven Jones introduced himself as an intern with the Disability Network and representative of the group Transit Advocators. The Advocators have an immediate goal of developing a system so that people can book paratransit rides online. One solution would be to have a form that allows people to enter a specific time and day if they consistently need rides. Steven welcomes comments. For more information, please contact Steven Jones at [transitadvocators@gmail.com](mailto:transitadvocators@gmail.com) or by 269-408-4321.

## 4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION BY US CONGRESSMAN FRED UPTON

U.S. Representative Fred Upton talked to the committee and guests about federal transportation funding. Upton said that the House has passed a 5-month extension, setting the stage for a longer-term solution between now and December. Upton said that the gasoline tax revenues bring in \$34 billion per year, and Congress has been authorizing \$50 billion. There needs to be a solution that addresses this shortfall by increasing revenue devoted to transportation. The Senate is looking at a \$350 billion, 6-year bill. Not all details had been released by the time of the meeting. Upton says it is highly unlikely that the Senate bill will come up for a vote in the House before the summer recess because there are still too many issues to be sorted out for the Senate to pass it. Upton reiterated that he supports a long-term solution that keeps the highway trust fund solvent.

Rich Vavra-Musser from the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers asked Upton how we include rail funding in the package for a longer-term solution. Currently, Amtrak has to receive an authorization in an annual appropriations bill. Upton said that there are not any talks currently underway to tie Amtrak funding to the highway trust fund. Upton reiterated that he has supported passenger rail and helped ensure that SW Michigan maintained its rail lines back in the 1990s.

Griffin asked the Congressman about Upton's proposal of the addition of a 3<sup>rd</sup> lane on I-94 between Kalamazoo and I-69, and also the need for completion of the US-31 freeway in Berrien County. Upton said that there needs to be a solution that addresses the susceptibility of the area between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek to accidents under winter conditions. Adding a third lane might also be necessary to accommodate an increased traffic presence around Fort Custer due to a contract for a missile defense system. Upton said he was in continuing discussions about the best solutions.

Regarding US-31, Upton reiterated that completion of it is not in the 5-year plan. Upton said that with rules banning earmarking, it is more difficult to get funding for completion of these projects. Upton said that he had helped earmark funding under the old rules to help fund US-31, but that he is no longer on the Transportation Committee in the House. Lanum (from MDOT) confirmed Upton's comments stating the project is not in the five year plan. Currently, MDOT is not funding capacity expansion projects, instead focusing on preservation and improvement of existing lane miles.

Johnson asked about whether Upton would continue to be a supporter of funding for public transit. Johnson reiterated that extensive research shows that communities with excellent public transit have

better outcomes for their population. It helps attract and retain a good work force and helps older adults and people with disabilities.

Upton responded, stating he does support public transit. He said he used public transit in D.C. regularly, and he also said he enjoys cycling and uses the Kal-Haven trail. He said that he has helped earmark funds for Dial-a-Ride services in the Southwest Michigan Region. When earmarks went away, he was no longer able to bring in funds for public transit. Upton said that transit is an essential part of the “transportation mix.”

David Jones of the League of Michigan Bicyclists recalled living in Washington DC and being able to use his bicycle to commute and take care of all of his daily needs most of the time. Jones emphasized how important bicycle lanes, paths, and trails are for improving people’s daily lives. Upton’s response was that he was absolutely an advocate for better bicycle facilities and more bicycle activity.

Upton thanked the TwinCATS committees for all that they do. Upton stated that Michigan is ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in capital per spending on our roads, and that he is working with state leaders to improve infrastructure on a state level as well. The committee thanked Fred Upton for speaking to our group.

#### **4. STAFF REPORT**

- **National Functional Classification Revision Requests- Voting in August**

Mani reported that National Functional Classification change requests were due to MDOT in September. Within the TwinCATS area, Mani said he anticipated two requests to upgrade from the local system to the federal-aid system. These requests were for Maiden Lane in Lincoln Township and St. Joseph Township and Momany Drive in the City of St. Joseph. Mani said that traffic counts were concluded and he would be working with the communities in question to fill out the necessary paperwork and mapping. The MPO would be voting on changes within its boundaries in August.

- **MTPA Conference Updates**

Mani reported that he and Gallagher had attended the annual Michigan Transportation Planning Association conference two weeks earlier in Ann Arbor. A big theme of this year's conference was recognizing all of the impacts that a transportation project can have on land uses, the environment, economic development, and health along a particular corridor. To that effect, there was a presentation on new tools that FHWA had introduced to look more holistically at community-wide impacts.

The first tool is called INVEST, and it is often called "LEED for roads." It looks at the durability and sourcing of roadway building materials and the sustainability of highway projects from the standpoint of environmental impacts. FHWA's INVEST tool can be found at:

<https://www.sustainablehighways.org/>

In addition, FHWA has rolled out a tool known as Placefit to help individuals see how the community they are interested in performed on factors that are important to them. This tool can help with community visioning and goal setting, even for specific transportation projects. The Placefit tool is available at: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/tools/placefit/>

Gallagher said that there was also a lot of great information shared on transit service planning in the Ann Arbor region. While Ann Arbor is quite different from any community in SW Michigan,

areas of Washtenaw County such as Saline and Dexter are quite rural in nature and have similar service needs. Gallagher said that Michael Benham from the Ann Arbor Area Transit Authority was willing to come to Southwest Michigan to discuss fixed-route planning, so that would be a big help as SWMPC writes the request for proposals for the Countywide Fixed Route Service Plan.

▪ **Local Road Safety Plan Update**

Mani said that the consultants assisting MDOT and SWMPC with this project had just released a memo outlining countermeasures to safety issues in the three counties of Southwest Michigan. SWMPC staff had not had enough time to analyze the memo as yet.

▪ **Project Selection Criteria Working Group**

Mani said that the project selection criteria subcommittee would still be getting together soon for the upcoming 2017-2020 TIP selection. The goal of this subcommittee is to develop a project prioritization procedure for the 2017-2020 TIP. Project selection will take place in November or December of this year. Mani thanked those who had already volunteered.

▪ **Road and Transit Funding on a State Level**

Mani reported that two separate bills to increase funding for transportation had passed the Michigan House and Senate. Mani said that SWMPC's counterparts in the Detroit region had produced an excellent analysis of the bills, and the analysis can be found in the TwinCATS meeting packet at: [http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/july\\_2015\\_meeting\\_packet.pdf](http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/july_2015_meeting_packet.pdf) .

Mani presented briefly on the key provisions of the bills:

- Senate plan would raise the state gasoline tax by 15 cents by 2017, and after that the tax would be indexed to inflation. Diesel fuel would ultimately be taxed at the same rate at the pump as motor fuel. There would be registration fee increases on electric/hybrid vehicles that would help raise additional revenue.
- The House plan would index the gasoline tax to inflation to raise revenue, but would not actually raise the level of the tax.
- Both plans rely on diverting growth in revenues in the general fund from other sources to transportation, primarily from the income tax. There is talk in both chambers of eliminating the state portion of the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- The Senate plan would increase revenues for transit and rail, which have been at the same level in real terms since 1987. The House plan would leave transit and rail funding stagnant, as all new revenues would go towards roads and bridges.

Neither plan would constitutionally protect general fund revenue that goes towards transportation. The legislature could move the funds if budget priorities change, as they have done in the past.

Mani said that one of the more controversial provisions in the Senate plan is the so-called "50-Year Roads Lock Box." 7 cents out of the 15 cent per gallon gas tax increase would go directly to the Treasury beginning in 2017. Funds could not be released for projects until certain conditions are met:

- MDOT must come up with a plan such that the costs of building and maintaining a road are reduced by 50% and also build roads to the 50-year standard, often known as the European standard.
- MDOT must come up with a plan such that no road under MDOT control is in poor condition in 10 years and no road under local control has its PASER rating deteriorate further.

Mani said that roads are currently built for a 20-year design life.

According to our MDOT Region engineer, Kim Avery, there was a pilot project with building some roads on the eastern side of the state to a 50-year service life. Building to a 50-year standard cost 2-3 times as much, yet did not yield significant observed improvement in service life. The provision to reduce costs at the same time would mean that under a 50-year standard, very few miles of roadway in the state would be reconstructed or repaired.

Secondly, Mani reminded committee members of just how many roads in the state were in poor condition. A standard of no further deterioration while reducing costs would be a very tall order for MDOT and local agencies to achieve.

Finally, funds that are diverted to the Treasury could not be released until the legislature passes a resolution with an approved project list. Mani said that this sets a precedent for project selection by the legislature that circumvents the planning work that MPO members all do. This sort of selection happened during the RRR and PRIP projects in 2014.

Lanum shared that MDOT is very concerned with the "lockbox" provision. Lanum also said that the state legislature will likely not take any further action on transportation funding legislation until the fall, as both the House and Senate are on recess.

Galbraith shared that Democrats in the state legislature were developing their own plan for providing \$1.2 billion in funding for roads. This plan will be released soon.

## 5. PUBLIC TRANSIT

- **SWMPC Transit Updates**

Gallagher spoke about SWMPC's participation in the statewide effort to reform the 211 service, specifically for veterans. Gallagher said that SWMPC had provided information on where the transit service gaps exist, and that the KFH group had been contracted by MDOT to identify strategies for improving the 211 service based on those gaps.

- **TCATA Updates**

None

## 6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

No report.

## ▪ **Walk and Roll Committee Meeting Report**

Mani reported that the Walk and Roll subcommittee met last week for the first time in a long time. The Walk and Roll subcommittee reviewed key documents related to non-motorized planning in the TwinCATS area, to see whether identified priorities were still relevant. The Walk and Roll Plan was adopted in 2011 and the complete streets policy was adopted in 2012. The complete streets policy was also updated in 2014. The Walk and Roll Plan created a top ten list back in 2011. We have reviewed the plan and the goals. The subcommittee found that while the Top Ten List may not have been based on objective criteria, the priority areas identified in the plan still needed design solutions.

Mani said that another topic of discussion at the Walk and Roll committee meetings was the possibility of pop-up, or temporary, bike lanes and non-motorized paths. Using planters, bollards, cones, and temporary paint, these lanes can be laid out at desired locations for a period of hours or a few weeks. Residents and business owners who may not be familiar with or may be uncomfortable with bicycle lanes and their interactions with traffic can see whether these facilities work or not in a low-risk investment. The cost of putting up a temporary lane is usually less than \$1,000, so it is an opportunity to test design strategies before committing to major expenditures. Gallagher and Mani showed a video of a pop-up bike lane installed during a community event in Minneapolis:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQy0pLkE280>

Gallagher mentioned that in many cases, residents fear that on-street parking would go away, and engineers are faced with adhering to the TwinCATS Complete Streets Policy or scrapping a resurfacing project altogether. A demonstration project in an area where there is significant right of way could help show that parking and bicycle facilities could co-exist, and actually make the roadway safer for all users. Gallagher said that she and Mani were looking at possible funding sources for the temporary bike lanes. Kalamazoo had recently done a similar demonstration project.

Another item that SWMPC created a few years ago was a citizen's guide for Walk and Roll. This is a great tool to share with local leaders and elected officials. The document helps to break down the nuts and bolts of how a project gets implemented. It also helps layout the estimated cost of a project item by item. Many of the segments identified in this guide still have issues of non-motorized safety now.

Johnson asked how public comment would impact the project selection process. Gautam said this time around, the public comment on projects selection will be earlier, and the public will have a bigger role in guiding project development rather than commenting on already selected projects. Mani said that public comment on the Walk and Roll survey from four years ago will definitely inform project selection as well, in addition to new comments. There will be a combination of use of old data and new outreach efforts.

## **7. COMMUNITY LAND USE AND ZONING UPDATES**

Stauffer shared that in Lincoln Township, three parcels along Red Arrow between Defay and Linco Roads were rezoned from neighborhood residential to light industrial. The parcel amounts to 34 acres. This property will now be used for dog kennels and dog-related business. The township is excited for the new business and this new use of the property.

## **8. PROJECT UPDATES**

- **Obligation Thermometer-** There is currently no obligation authority left for local projects at the state level. There will not be additional obligation authority until re-authorization occurs.

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 <b>July 2013: On hold</b>	July 2013		
		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		
		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		
		Twin Cities Area Transportation	Transit vehicle replacement (3 total)	<b>July 2014:</b> Buses on the way, with propane	July 2014		

		Authority		conversions			
2013	115751	MDOT	I-94 WB (from I-196 for 0.4 miles to start of 2008 concrete pavement)	Suspended project	January 2015		
	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>July 2015:</b> Ahead of Schedule	July 2015		
		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; 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	<b>July 2015:</b> Complete	June 2015		
	121011	Benton Harbor	Pipestone at Empire Traffic Signal Upgrade	<b>June 2015:</b> Complete	June 2015		
		Village of Shoreham	Brown School Road Resurfacing	<b>July 2015:</b> October 9 completion	July 2015		
2015		Berrien County	Marquette Woods Road Restore and Rehab/Sidewalks	<b>June 2015:</b> Poles reconnected; schedule proceeding	June 2015		
		Berrien County	Napier Avenue at Pipestone St Traffic Signal	<b>July 2015:</b> Obligated	July 2015		
		City of Benton Harbor	Pipestone St at Britain Avenue Traffic Signal	<b>July 2015:</b> Submitted for obligation	July 2015		

		City of St. Joseph	Botham Avenue	<b>June 2015:</b> Work has begun	June 2015		
		City of St. Joseph	Park St. Bridge	<b>June 2015:</b> Starting after Labor Day	June 2015		
		MDOT	I-94 Signing Project from Puetz Road to I-196	<b>January 2015:</b> September 1- October 16	January 2015		
		MDOT	M-63 bridge over Hickory Creek	<b>June 8-July 21</b>	January 2015		
		MDOT	M-63 Resurfacing	This summer	May 2015		

Additional updates from MDOT:

Smith reported that leftover funds are being used for spot location paving and sealing, including certain areas of I-196 and I-94. I-94 resurfacing between Bridgman and Stevensville will occur in 2016.

In 2016, there will be a project on M-63 between the St. Joseph River and Hagar Shore Road. There will also be road repair project on Niles Avenue between the I-94 interchange and Winchester Avenue.

Purvis shared that TCATA had just received its contracts for 2015.

Mani reminded committee members of upcoming 2016 Projects:

Pipestone at Wall St Traffic Signal (Benton Harbor)

Shawnee Road from Jericho Road to Bridgman City Limits (Road Commission).

## 9. OLD BUSINESS:

None

## 10. NEW BUSINESS

### ▪ TIP Amendments

TCATA is proposing two amendments this month to reflect cost increases to its bus bench and shelter projects in 2015. These cost increases come after research into the necessary funding for purchasing the desired model of benches and shelters.

A motion by Harden with support by Lynch to approve the July TIP Amendments. **Motion passed unanimously.**

### ▪ Federal Highway Administration Updates

None.

### ▪ MDOT Updates

None.

▪ **News Items of Interest**

Gallagher shared an item from the Herald Palladium. Stevensville was examining the possibility of an intersection overhaul at Red Arrow Highway and John Beers Road due to the prevalence of left-turning accidents. The signal controller is outdated, and spare parts are no longer available when it breaks down.

The Village may seek federal safety funding for 2018.

**11. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:**

Panozzo asked what committee members were planning to do to let state legislators know about their concerns with the “lockbox” provision in the Senate’s version of the transportation funding bill. Stauffer said that it was definitely an item for discussion at next month’s TwinCATS meeting.

**12. ADJOURNMENT at 11:30 AM.**

Next meeting is August 17, 2015 at 10:30 AM in Anchor Rooms A+B at Kinexus (Michigan Works!).

*Compiled by: Kris Martin and Gautam Mani, SWMPC Associate Planners, 2015.*

DRAFT