

Minutes
Twin Cities Area Transportation Study
Policy Committee Meeting
 September 20, 2010
 10:30 A.M.
 Southwest Michigan Regional Airport

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

1. CALL TO ORDER:

- Chairman Judd called the meeting to order at 10:32 A.M.

2. MINUTES:

- *A motion was made by Scherwitz, seconded by Fenderbosch, to approve the minutes of the August 16, 2010 Policy Committee meeting. Motion approved.*

3. STAFF REPORT:

- **Rail Update**
 - **MARP/MEC meeting recap**
 - Thomas announced that SWMPC had been a partner in the meeting sponsored by the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers and the Michigan Environmental Council at the Shadowland Ballroom in St. Joseph on September 8th. Around 60 people had been in attendance, including representatives from county and township governments, TCATA, and other organizations. The attendees had drawn maps of their ideal passenger rail service in Michigan, which MARP and MEC plans to transmit to MDOT for consideration in their State Rail Plan.
 - Judd asked if SWMPC was going to compile a summary of comments to submit to MDOT on

behalf of TwinCATS, mentioning that there had been a lot of discussion at the input forum about the Pere Marquette route and the possible switch at New Buffalo. Rahtz responded that she and Thomas had begun drafting a list of comments and were planning to meet with John Egelhaaf about them. She stated that she would then circulate the list of comments to the members to review; she mentioned that the staff were struggling with whether the list should focus on a particular technical solution.

- **MDOT Rail Plan Public Comment**

- Rahtz announced that MDOT is updating its state rail plan for passenger and freight rail. There is a page about the State Rail Plan on MDOT's website (www.michigan.gov/mirailplan). Public comments are being accepted through Spring 2011.

- **MDOT Rail Plan Public Meeting**

- Rahtz added that MDOT is holding four public input meetings across the state for the State Rail Plan. The closest meeting is at Grand Rapids TSC on September 29th at 4:00 pm. She added that anyone interested in carpooling to the meeting could let her know. Rahtz emphasized that this meeting may be the only opportunity to discuss with MDOT the concern about rerouting the Pere Marquette line through Kalamazoo.

- **Walk & Roll update**

- **Walk and Roll status**

- Rahtz summarized the Walk and Roll update that Chris Cook had given at the TAC meeting. He and the staff had met with the TAC officers to come up with a strategy for obtaining input on the draft Walk & Roll maps. They will meet with representatives from each municipality, starting with the TAC representative. The approach for each municipality will be tailored according to what the planning/technical staff see as appropriate. Following input from each community, at least two large public meetings will be held.
- Rahtz mentioned that the TAC had passed a motion to approve the outreach process as outlined above.
- *Motion by Scherwitz, seconded by Merritt, to approve the outreach process for input on the draft Walk & Roll maps, as outlined above. Motion approved unanimously.*

- **US Bicycle Route 35 Public Hearing**

- Rahtz announced that a public hearing would be held on September 29th at MI Works! at 6:30 pm. A draft route has been developed for placing signs denoting a "US 35 Bicycle Route" as part of a national initiative by AASHTO and the Adventure Cycling Association. The steering committee was led by Paul Vandenbosch in South Haven, with representatives from each area including John Hodgson for St. Joe – Benton Harbor. After gathering public comments on the route, the steering committee will be turning in the draft route to the counties and MDOT for final approval.
- Judd mentioned the need to rebuilt BL 94 with wider shoulders.

- **Asset Management Annual Report** – Thomas announced that the Asset Management annual report for 2010 for Berrien County is now available at http://swmpc.org/asset_mgmt_b.asp. He went through a PowerPoint presentation showing the trends in the pavement condition in the TwinCATS area and Berrien County overall.

4. **OLD BUSINESS:**

- **Benton Harbor Local Match Update**

- No action.
- Scherwitz mentioned that the City is trying to prioritize their spending according to what is the most urgent, and that they are aware they owe the TwinCATS contribution.

- **Public Participation Plan draft**

- **Additional public comments**

- Rahtz went over additional public comments received on the "How can we involve you?" online survey.

- **Member discussion**
 - Rahtz summarized the discussion that had been held by the TwinCATS and NATS committee members. This included:
 - It is not possible, or expected, for staff to reach out to every single resident in Berrien County about transportation. Additionally, certain techniques suggested by the survey participants are not financially feasible. However, it is possible to distribute information through the member agencies and through partner agencies, such as social service agencies, libraries, senior centers, etc.
 - An economic dialogue needs to be held with the public about how much could be accomplished with varying levels of funding, and to make the public aware of the current situation with transportation funding.
 - There was uncertainty about who the target population is for transportation information.
 - There were comments that legal notices are sometimes effective for bringing attendees to public hearings.
- **Member survey**
 - Rahtz noted that she had sent out a member survey to gauge where TwinCATS is on meeting participation legislation, but had not received enough responses.
 - Latham asked if the committee could have more time to fill out the survey, and Rahtz responded that it could be filled out by the October meeting.
- **Suggested changes**
 - Rahtz went over several suggestions the staff have for improving the participation processes for TwinCATS and NATS.
 - Rahtz noted that the TAC had passed a motion approving the draft document with no changes.
 - She asked for a motion to approve the final draft of the Transportation Participation Plan, adding that further changes to the processes could still be made later without being reflected in the plan. The final draft of the plan would go on to the full SWMPC board.
 - Fenderbosch mentioned that he likes the idea of rotating the meeting locations so they are not always in the same community. Merritt responded that it had been done that way in the past, and there had been poor attendance from members.
 - Judd mentioned that meetings about special topics should be set up in the evening at a location along the Blue bus route, based on the comment from the previous meeting about Dial-a-Ride service ending at 5:00pm. He added that it is a good idea to catch people where they are, such as at senior centers.
 - *Motion by Scherwitz, seconded by Merritt, to approve the final draft of the SWMPC Transportation Participation Plan. Motion approved unanimously.*
 - Scherwitz added that he likes the flexibility of the current plan, and that it is a working document.

5. NEW BUSINESS:

- **Long Range Plan / Socioeconomic Data Update**
 - Thomas announced that SWMPC is conducting a review of the numbers of employees at locations throughout Berrien County for the Travel Demand Model for the next Long Range Transportation Plan.
 - Thomas explained that the staff would like the committee members to review packets with employee numbers for the communities they represent. He passed out the packets and instructions on what the staff are looking for in the review. The purpose is to identify employers that have relocated, closed, opened, laid off, or hired new employees so that the model will accurately capture the commuting patterns of workers.
 - Additional notes can be submitted electronically by October 1, 2010.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT:

- None.

7. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

• **CMAQ projects**

- Rahtz informed the committee that the CMAQ project called Benton Harbor Bicycle Racks that had been approved by the committee to add into the TIP in 2010 at the August meeting had not been approved by FHWA. The reason is that some of the locations were considered "recreational" and there was not enough time to amend the project cost in the TIP.
- Rahtz added that in the future it would be necessary to develop a CMAQ Illustrative list of viable projects and have them ready in advance, in case of a situation like what happened this year. Then an illustrative project could be administratively moved up into the TIP without a motion, and the MPO would not lose federal funds.
- Griffin stated that St. Joseph Charter Township regrets not being able to push the Hilltop Road sidewalk project forward in fiscal year 2010. He stated that the Township had learned from the project and planned to regroup and come up with a plan to move the project forward in a future year.
- There was discussion about alternative options for the project, including reapplying for the project in pieces as separate projects, or redesigning the pathway on the South side of the street. It was noted that the one property for which an easement could not be required is already paved; the project included only painting a walkway and adding a curb cut on that property. It was added that this would be considered a property improvement rather than a taking of property value, and so the Township would not be willing to offer compensation for the easement.
- There was agreement from the committee as to the importance of the project, given the continuing employment growth along Hilltop Road.
- Fenderbosch stated that he would like the Berrien County CMAQ group to reconvene and discuss the possibility of rearranging some of the funding so that the project can go forward.
- Lenze stated that MDOT had received an extension from FHWA for the review of the FY 2011-2014 TIP. The FY 2008-2011 TIP is therefore remaining in effect through October 31, 2010.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

- Meeting adjourned at 11:30 A.M. Next meeting is October 18, 2010 at 10:30 A.M.