

Regional transpo board lays out vision for upcoming projects

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI - HP Correspondent | Posted: Sunday, February 21, 2016 6:00 am

ST. JOSEPH — A \$652,000 water main replacement and sidewalk upgrade along Hilltop Road is among 11 projects in line for federal highway funding assistance.

Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) members will finalize the list of projects at 9 a.m. Monday at St. Joseph City Hall in the second-floor City Commission chambers. The public is invited to attend.

Projects that make it onto the final shortlist will go into a three-year construction cycle running from 2017 through 2020, said Gautam Mani, an associate planner with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission – which provides technical assistance to TwinCATS.

“The TwinCATS area gets an annual allocation of federal funds to spend on transportation projects. These are surface transportation projects dealing with road reconstruction and resurfacing,” Mani said. “This is the largest block of funding that this group gets to program.”

Funds can also be used for related purposes, such as installing bike lanes or upgrading facilities for people with disabilities, he said.

Monday’s meeting will cap a process that began with 29 projects and about \$14 million in requested funds, Mani said.

However, only \$3.5 million in federal funding is available to cover local needs – making it necessary to trim the list, which a subcommittee of TwinCATS did last week.

“Each (member) jurisdiction identified its top priority, and that’s what was recommended for funding,” Mani said.

The commission is taking public comment on projects until mid-May, Mani said. An online form for that purpose will be posted on the SWPC website after Monday’s meeting.

“None of them are a done deal, and they will not be finalized until a lot more analysis has been done on them. But, because this is a critical stage, we’re encouraging that comment now,” Mani said.

Once the final list is determined Monday, the remaining projects will go into the Michigan Department of Transportation’s system, Mani said.

“These projects (will) continue to guide development of the Transportation Improvement Program, which is a document that shows how these projects make progress toward TwinCATS’ long-term goals, and whether they meet environmental and other regulations,” he said.

That work should be finished by June, and then sent on to MDOT, and the Federal Highway Administration

(FHWA), he added.

The 2017-20 Project Lineup includes:

- A 1-mile milling of Hilltop Road (from Business Loop 94 to Niles Avenue, city of St. Joseph), water main replacement and sidewalk upgrades to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act standards.

The Berrien County Road Commission is doing the project, which has a \$796,579 estimated cost.

The lion's share (\$652,000) would come out of federal Surface Transportation funds, leaving \$144,579 as the local match.

- A half-mile overlay and installation of 5-foot wide shoulders on John Beers Road in Royaltown Township.

The Road Commission is doing this project for an \$234,775 estimated cost. The federal share is \$192,163, and the local match is \$42,612.

- A \$27,762 reimbursement to Shoreham to cover a 0.3-mile reconstruction of Brown School Road, which it completed in fall 2015.

"The village footed a larger portion of the bill than they needed to because there were no federal funds available. They wanted to build the project in 2015, so they paid upfront with the promise of reimbursement when there were federal funds," Mani said.

- The 2018 project list includes:

A 0.25-mile reconstruction of Langley Avenue and Broad Street (Pearl Street to Department of Public Works entrance) in St. Joseph, which includes curb and gutter work, and new sanitary and storm sewer.

The estimated cost is \$3.6 million. The city is doing the project as part of its combined sewer overflow program, for which it would receive \$460,000 in federal STP funds.

- A 0.65-mile mill and fill of Nickerson Avenue (M-139 to 700 feet east of Woodley, Sodus Township).

The Road Commission is doing this work for a \$175,000 estimated cost. The federal share is \$143,000 and the local match is \$32,000.

- A 0.5-mile reconstruction of Shawnee Road (from Jericho to Date roads, Lake Township) by the Road Commission, which also plans on installing 5-foot wide shoulders.

The estimated cost is \$453,000. The federal government would pay \$268,925 and the local match is \$184,075.

- The 2019 project list includes:

A 0.27-mile resurfacing of Colfax Avenue south (May to Emery streets, city of Benton Harbor), which includes the addition of bike lanes, better crosswalks and storm sewer improvements, for a \$228,000 estimated cost.

The federal share is \$186,000 and the local match is \$42,000.

- A 1.21-mile mill and mill of Napier Avenue (from St. Joseph River to 3,700 feet east, St. Joseph Township), plus sidewalk upgrades.

The Road Commission is doing this work for a \$409,000 estimated cost. The federal portion is \$335,000 and the local match is \$74,000.

- A 1.05-mile reconstruction of John Beers Road (from Hollywood to Scottsdale roads, Royalton Township) – including resurfacing, and the addition of 5-foot shoulders – by the Road Commission.

The estimated cost is \$479,000. The federal share is \$350,000 and the local match is \$129,000.

- The 2020 project list includes:

A 0.5-mile resurfacing of Marquette Woods Road (from Roosevelt Road to Cleveland Avenue) in Lincoln Township, by the Road Commission.

Plans include a widening of shoulders to 6 feet, and a widening of the bridge over Hickory Creek to accommodate pedestrians.

The estimated cost is \$1.1 million. The federal portion is \$400,000 and the local match is \$100,000.

The remaining \$654,000 cost will come out of the local match, and a Transportation Alternatives grant, Mani said.

- A 1.41-mile mill and fill of Napier Avenue (from I-94 to 5,400 feet west, Benton Township), and sidewalk upgrades. The Road Commission is also doing this project.

The estimated cost is \$575,000. The federal share is \$471,000 and the local match is \$104,000.

The Twin Areas Transportation Study serves 14 municipalities on transportation issues in an area running from Hagar Township to Lake Township.

TwinCATS consists of two committees, the Technical Advisory Committee, and the Policy Committee – whose members include local elected officials, residents and transit providers, and representatives of Federal Highway Administration and Michigan Department of Transportation.

Meetings are held at Michigan Works! or at St. Joseph City Hall on the third Monday of the month.

For more information, visit <http://www.swmpc.org/twincats.asp>.