

MINUTES
NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
Technical Advisory Committee

January 22, 2008
Niles City Council Chambers
1:30 P.M.

TAC Members Present:	Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Neil Coulston, City of Niles & DPW/Airport Juan Ganum, City of Niles Planning John Gruchot, Berrien County Planning Darrell Harden, MDOT, Southwest Region Ray Lenze, MDOT – Planning William Myers, Niles Charter Township John Pleveich, Niles Dial-A-Ride Joe Ray, City of Niles Mary Beth McAdams, MACOG (ex officio) Sharon Tyler, Southwestern Michigan Economic Growth Alliance/Cass
TAC Members Absent:	Joe Bellina, Cass County Road Commission Fred Featherly, MDOT-Multi-Modal Sarah Koepke, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) John Monaghan, Village of Edwardsburg Public Works Robert Rusch, MI Department of Environmental Quality/Air Quality Division Paul South, MDOT Coloma TSC Sarah Woolcock, MDOT Coloma TSC Jennifer Osborne, MDOT Joe VanderMeulen, City of Buchanan Kimberly O’haver, Buchanan Dial a Ride
SWMPC Staff Present:	Nickolas Musson, SWMPC Kim Gallagher, SWMPC Suzann Flowers, SWMPC
Others Present:	Don Kronewitter, Milton Township Sue Ellen, Milton Township

1. Call to Order & Introductions

- Vice-Chairman Ray called the meeting to order at 1:36 PM. Chairman Bellina was absent.

2. Minutes

- Motion by Berndt, seconded by Coulston, to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2007 TAC meeting. Motion approved.

3. Staff Report

- **New Transportation Planner – Nick Musson**
Hello, my name is Nickolas Musson and I am excited to be your new transportation planner. I am from central Wisconsin where I was born and raised. I recently graduated from the University Wisconsin Stevens Point with majors in Geography, Public Administration and Philosophy. I have minors in Geographic Information Systems and Environmental Studies. I am a member of Association of American Geographers (AAG) and the

Wisconsin Land Information Association (WLIA). It is truly an honor to start my career here and to be of service to you.

- **Asset Management Training Session**

Investment Reporting Tool Training Session

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is hosting an investment reporting tool training session on Tuesday March 4 in Lawrence at 9:30 am to noon. This training session is open to all participants in the investment reporting process, such as road agencies, MPOs, regional planning agencies, and contractors for the jurisdiction. This training session will focus on version 2.0 of the online investment reporting tool to be released this month. There will be a live demo where participants can input their feed back and suggest any improvements and ask questions.

Discussion-

Lenze strongly urged the group to participate in the session. There was a discussion on the importance of investment reporting tool and the amount of money it takes to use. Lenze stated that it is a good tool and we will be required to do it. Ray mentioned that there are not enough funds at the local level to use the investment reporting. Lenze mentioned that this is a tool to determine which project should be constructed first or how best to use their money. Gallagher asked the question about funding once you have an asset management in place. There was a reply stating that you get the same amount of money, but you can use more of the funding for major roads on local roads.

- **MACOG Certification Review** – The Michiana Area council of Governments (MACOG) will be reviewed by the FHWA and FTA on February 11 to 13, 2008. SWMPC is working with MDOT to determine how involved we should be in this process. There is a public meeting that will be held Monday February 11, 2008 from 6 to 7 pm. McAdams stated that this review is done every three years.

Lenze states that because of MACOG we are a MPO because the NATS area overlaps into MACOG. Lenze also stated that what happens at the MACOG certification review will indirect affect what happens here.

- **TIP/STIP**

The TIP has been submitted, but needs to be approved. This is because MDOT is trying to solve internal TIP problems. This means that nothing is official until the TIP is approved. It is likely that in February we will be working to integrate all the amendments we have into the approved TIP. Musson will be attending TIP training at the end of this month.

Lenze mentioned that the TIP should be approved by January 31, 2008 and if it is not we will go ahead any way.

4. Project Updates

- Berrin County, Niles-Buchanan Road – construction in the process
- Cass County projects Lake Street and Barron Lake Road were question and the status was unknown because of the absent of Joe Bellina. Nickolas Musson said that he would look into the progress of these projects and make any adjustments to the TIP if it is needed.
- City of Buchanan – Vandermeulen was absent.

5. Old Business

- **SE data approval**

The NATS socioeconomic data has been updated and reviewed by Jennifer Osborne and waits approval.

Lenze stated that this data is important because it directly influences the data that will come from the model. Sue Ellen asked the question on where the numbers for Milton Township comes from. The numbers from the table were taken from the census, University of Michigan, and Claritas. They are then given to the local units to be verified. Ellen asked a question about the lack of representation for Milton Township and how Milton

would know to check these numbers. Harden explained that there were many attempts to reach everyone through emails and phone calls. Ellen suggests that somebody should check to see if the Milton Township numbers are correct. Flowers stated that there were multiple attempts to contact these people through email and phone calls. Flowers said that they would attempt to confirm the Milton Township numbers.

A motion was made by Ray, supported by Gruchot, to recommend approval of the socioeconomic data, contingent upon the attempt confirmation of Milton's Township numbers. Motion approved.

Lenze explained that the new data from the model will be sent to them soon and will need to be verified because it will be approved at the next meeting.

6. New Business

- **Transit Presentation – Kim Gallagher**

Kim gave an overview of transit in Berrien County and Niles Dial A Ride. There are 4 public transit systems in Berrien County providing 36,630 trips per month and over 439,568 trips annually. There is no typical public transit system in Berrien County. Two are small urban areas, while two are in rural areas of the county. They all range in sizes from 3 employees at Buchanan Dial A Ride to 31 employees at the Twin Cities Dial Ride in Benton Harbor. Niles Dial A Ride is considering putting in fixed routes with ¼ mile buffers for route deviation. New technology can make the process easier for the customers to understand and easier for the transit systems to manage their data. The use of technology to get to know your customers and their habits can increase efficiency. 6% of the sales tax on fuel does not go to transportation. Niles public input meeting will be held on February 4 at 9:00 AM and February 6 at 6:00 PM at the Niles City Council Chambers.

- **Act 51 Legislative Action: Needs Study**

Transportation Funding Task Force-

A task force is being created in response to the public Act 221 of 2007 to “review the adequacy of surface transportation and aeronautics service provision and finance” in Michigan. This would apply to roads, transit, and aviation.

Duties of task force

Review adequacy of surface transportation and aeronautic service provision and finance in Michigan.

Review strategies for maximizing return on transportation investments

Evaluate potential alternative strategies to replace or supplement: State motor fuel taxes, existing and alternative user fees, and nonuser revenues to support economic activity and personal mobility in Michigan.

The Big Issue Is FUNDING!

We are encouraged to put forth our views on funding solutions. We should consider putting together some kind of formal action that identifies our needs, wants and where to get the funding. If any individual or you know of an individual that would like to make a contribution they can submit their name on the governor's website to be part of the citizen advisory committee. The committee is made up of 19 governor appointed citizens comprised of 18 organizations, agencies, associations in transportation, the construction sector and then one member of the general public. Musson suggested that the members think about our needs, wants and possible funding options for the fuel tax.

7. Public Comment

Discussion-

Don Kronewitter stated that along the state line there are housing developments on roads that come in from Indiana, which are not up to code. Kronewitter is questioning why these roads are not being updated when housing development is moving in. Kronewitter and Ellen feel that Milton Township is not following the plan and not looking at the big picture. Ellen stated that there are tax dollars not being collected because of the homesteads. Lenze stated that roads will not be updated before housing development is built because they have been burned in the past and left with a three lane highway in the middle of nowhere. Lenze explains that this is the place to express your opinion and discuss issues. The LRP is in the process of being updated and this is the time to make your opinions know. The socioeconomic data that we were talking about earlier are all going into the updated LRP.

8. Privilege of the Floor

- *Harden stated that the US 31 business signs are going to be removed. There is a transportation work authorization in works to have them removed. Old 31 is supposed to be renumbered to M139 taking all the way to Niles and Main street. The stripping acceleration lane on east US 12, west river has inadequate geometry and would not be able to be stripped because it would have to be lengthened and repaved and there is not enough money to do that. TSC has not heard of Main and Broadway project, but are checking into it.*

9. Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM. The next meeting is February 26, 2008 at 1:30 PM.
- *Motion by Ganum, seconded by Harden, to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved.*

Minutes compiled by: Nickolas Musson, Transportation Planner, 01/25/08