

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Technical Advisory Committee

MINUTES

January 27, 2015

1:00 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

TAC Members Present:	Joe Bellina, Cass County Road Commission Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission Barbara Cook, Cass County Planning Commission John Gruchot, Berrien County Community Development Darrell Harden, MDOT Southwest Region Paul Lott, MDOT Statewide Planning Kim O’Haver, Buchanan Dial A Ride Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce Joe Ray, City of Niles Don Ryman, City of Buchanan Kris Welch, MDOT Statewide Planning
TAC Members Absent:	Jason Auvil, Berrien County Planning Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Melinda Michael, Four Flags Area Council on Tourism Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) Erin Jolivette, MDOT Coloma TSC Craig Bradfield, Howard Township Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg Fred Featherly, MDOT-Multi-Modal Katie Furner, Niles Dial-a-Ride Juan Ganum, City of Niles Community Development John Klimek, Berrien County Board of Commissioners Joseph Kring, Bertrand Township Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region (Alternate) Bill Marx, City of Buchanan Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) John Monaghan, Village of Edwardsburg (Alternate) Brad Sharlow, MDOT Planning (ex officio) Joe Sobieralski, Southwestern Michigan Economic Growth Alliance Bob Sutton, Mason Township Planning Commission Kelly Sweeney, Milton Township Zach Dripps, MACOG
SWMPC Staff Present:	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani
Others Present:	Theresa Harrison, Milton Township Resident LeRoy Krempec, Cass County Road Commission

1. Call to Order & Introductions

Meeting was called to order by Bellina at 1:02 p.m and led the group in introductions.

Lott announced that Kris Welch would be taking over as the voting representative for MDOT Statewide Planning for the NATS MPO. Since Kris had already been working with our MPO for some time, it would help the transition. Lott said that he enjoyed working in this area, but that he would now be able to focus on his other MPOs and several committees that he sits on.

2. Minutes

A motion by O'Haver with support by Ray to approve the TAC Committee Meeting minutes from December 16, 2014.

Motion passed.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Staff Report

▪ **Obligation Thermometer**

Mani let committee members know about a new tool that MDOT Local Agency Programs had put together to help MPOs and local agencies keep track of how much obligation authority the state of Michigan had left over at any given time. This way, communities could know the likelihood of projects in the pipeline getting obligated before it runs out, and could make plans accordingly. Mani said that any FY 2015 projects ought to have applications in to Local Agency Programs by now, but that there is still a fair amount of obligation authority left at this point. Mani said that the obligation thermometer would be updated monthly and transmitted to SWMPC. In addition, the obligation thermometer is always available at http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9625_25885-339193--,00.html

▪ **Regional Safety Plan**

Gallagher said that MDOT had selected Southwest Michigan as one of two pilot regions to undertake regional safety plans. MDOT was hiring consultants to assist with developing safety plans, primarily for rural areas. The plans would pertain to all aspects of safety, including vehicular collisions, obstacles, and non-motorized planning. Gallagher said that SWMPC did not have a timeline as yet from MDOT, but that they would be assisting MDOT with public outreach and setting up meetings.

▪ **MI Travel Counts Survey**

Mani passed around a letter that MDOT had just transmitted to SWMPC that was designed to assist communities with public outreach regarding the MI Travel Counts Survey. The MI Travel Counts survey attempts to construct travel patterns by sampling a portion of Michigan residents on their travel habits. Letters will be sent to over 700,000 households in Michigan. Of those, a sample of those households that respond will be asked to fill out a travel diary, detailing all of their travel activity for one day between April and June. In addition, some households will be asked to carry a GPS. Communities should make sure that if they get questions from residents, the survey is not a scam, and there is a financial incentive for participating. In addition, identifying information will be stripped when GPS data is sent to the state, so MDOT hopes that will alleviate concerns about privacy.

Mani said that the project is currently in the first phase, with pilot travel days being conducted. It is important that residents who get the survey do participate. Mani said that while we have covered the shortcomings of the Travel Counts survey in developing our travel demand model, these are the data that help feed the model. They are the best data we have available, and we do not know when MDOT will have \$3 million required to do the survey again. It is possible that the data gathered here will feed our next two Long Range Plan cycles, and we want accuracy.

- **Traffic Count Requests**

Mani said that it was not too early for MPO members to get their traffic counts requests in for the 2015 season. SWMPC was already receiving requests for counts, and this was a good time for MPO members to talk with their local boards about where they would like to see counts done.

Count requests can be made at: <http://www.swmpc.org/trafficcountform.asp>.

Bellina recommended that traffic count requests that were needed for NFC reclassifications ought to get priority, as FHWA requires the latest traffic counts to reclassify a road.

- **Upcoming PASER trainings**

Mani said that each year, trainings on the PASER rating system for roads take place around the state. Anyone who wants to rate roads on the federal aid system must be trained each year, and SWMPC always sends its PASER raters for training. Mani said that any communities that wanted to have that expertise in house to rate their own roads could sign up for \$10. The closest trainings to our area are in Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo, on March 24 and 25 respectively.

- **Walk and Roll- Next Steps**

Mani said that SWMPC staff were continuing to follow up with results of the NATS Walk and Roll survey, and that we were trying to determine how that survey would inform the next project selection, coming up in calendar year 2016. NATS has not had a non-motorized subcommittee in the past, but Mani suggested the possibility of one. Mani said he was open to committee member ideas on how to move that work forward.

- **Local Resolutions of Support for FY 2016**

Mani said that committee members in TwinCATS had the idea of requiring local resolutions of support the April before the fiscal year in which the project is scheduled for obligation in order to give the committees time to reprogram funds if necessary. An April resolution also aligns better with municipal budget cycles. Mani said that these resolutions applied to any project that had a local match component.

Bellina said that the Road Commission's fiscal year does not begin until October 1, and they would not have budget numbers until September. Therefore, a resolution of support certifying that they would provide the local match would be meaningless. He recommended keeping the resolution due date where it is.

Ray said that construction costs could change dramatically in the months between April and October, and that the current resolution due date coincides better with when municipalities could have a good final cost estimate for their projects. If construction costs have increased, for example, local agencies might need to add funds or add to their local match. He also recommended that committees keep the resolution due date where it is.

5. Public Transit Updates

- **Transit Consolidation Study Updates**

Gallagher said that consolidation was still an ongoing process and that presentations to various boards and councils were continuing.

- **Countywide Service Plan Updates**

Gallagher said that years ago, one transit agency had attempted to develop a fixed-route service plan. An RFP had been issued, but the bids had come back far too high. Gallagher said that now there was some support for a countywide public service plan to complement the consolidation effort. Several communities are willing

to provide local match. Gallagher noted that even if there was a delay in consolidation, transit agencies like Buchanan Dial-A-Ride could still benefit from the service plan.

- **CMAQ Funding for Gasoline Buses**

Mani said that several transit agencies were facing issues when it came to applying for CMAQ funds for gasoline buses. The form that MDOT has for replacement buses does not use the correct emissions calculations for replacing a gasoline vehicle with another gasoline vehicle. MDOT is working with SEMCOG on a form that is sufficient. In the meantime, transit agencies were asked to find alternate ways of proving an emissions benefit; gasoline buses are definitely eligible. Transit agencies were struggling to get this information since a lot of emissions data will not be shared by bus manufacturers. Mani said that SWMPC was in conversation with MDOT about how to resolve this issue.

Lott said that MDOT had developed a form in conjunction with SEMCOG that would potentially work and would send it to SWMPC on Wednesday.

O'Haver asked if projects that were already approved for CMAQ eligibility were "grandfathered in" from the new emissions form requirements. Lott said that anything that has already been approved would still be able to proceed.

- **Agency Updates**

O'Haver said that Buchanan Dial-A-Ride had a good year in 2014, with ridership being up and overall efficiency of the system being up as well.

6. Land Use Updates

Gruchot said that Berrien County was in the process of completing its master plan update. Since it covers the whole county, it would be of limited applicability to local land use decisions.

7. Project Updates

Fiscal Year	Job Number	Agency	Project Name	Update Information	Date of last update	Bid Savings	Obligation Month	Bills Submitted
2013	118207	Berrien County	IN-MI River Valley Trail	Article in paper about progress on trail being made near Mishawaka	January 2015			
2014	104152	MDOT	M-139 CON phase Bridge replacement	Ongoing	January 2015			
		Niles DAR	Maintenance software					
		Niles DAR	Preventative maintenance					
		Niles DAR	Replacement computers	Purchase has been approved by City Council	January 2015			

		Niles DAR	Replacement bus	Awaiting end of axle shortage	January 2015			
		Niles DAR	Operating assistance					
		Cass County RC	Gumwood Road TAP project (Phase I)	In letting phase	January 2015			
2015		Berrien County RC	Range Line Road, Lake St and Main St Resurfacing	Obligation Requested on January 15	January 2015			
		Berrien County RC	Madron Lake, North Main, and Red Bud Trail	TIP Amendment forthcoming	January 2015			
		City of Niles	Broadway Avenue Resurfacing	Waiting on award- 11% overbid. Will have major traffic control with detouring onto M-51.	January 2015			
		Cass County	Adamsville Road Reconstruct	Still in design	January 2015			
		Buchanan Dial-a-Ride	Replacement Bus	Contract probably not coming until next September	October 2014			
		Niles Dial-A-Ride	Replacement Tires					

8. Old Business

▪ TIP Amendments

Mani said that there was effectively one TIP amendment this month. The Berrien County Road Commission was scrapping its sealcoat project this year on Madron Lake, North Main, and Red Bud Trail and instead just resurface North Main Street from Reed to Miller, a total of 0.8 miles. This would bring the total cost of the project from 94,000 to approximately 188,000. In order to program the project for FY 2015, the Road Commission proposes doing an Advance Construct, and providing the additional funds out of the local share in FY 2015. Then in 2016, the Road Commission is reimbursed with \$76,900 in federal funds for which they were already scheduled. In order to accommodate the reimbursement, Berrien County is moving its 2016 project on Galien-Buchanan Road, Fourth Street, Terra Coupe, and Bakertown Road out of the TIP and onto the illustrative list.

The project is not impacting fiscal constraint for NATS, and only Berrien County Road Commission projects are being affected.

A motion by Bellina with support by Gruchot to recommend that the policy committee approve the NATS TIP amendments, pending the end of the public comment period. **Motion passed.**

- **State Transportation Legislation**

Mani shared some materials from the House Fiscal Agency (as reported by MLive) with members of the MPO regarding the transportation funding bills that were passed by the Michigan State legislature in December.

A ballot proposal that will be up for a citizen's vote in May would increase the sales and use tax from the current 6 cents to 7 cents, while eliminating the sales tax on motor fuels. Higher education (with the exemption of community colleges) would be exempt from the school aid fund.

The application of a wholesale tax on gasoline would generate \$1.2 billion in revenue, but that assumes a higher gasoline price than current levels. In addition, transit continues to get a portion of state revenue, which is different from proposals that NATS had seen back in December.

Ryman and Bellina suggested that relying on warranties for revenue would simply result in increased costs of transportation projects.

Ryman said that he had been examining the issue for a long time, and that in order to fix our roads, we need to be willing to pay for them somehow. Ryman said that he would have favored a use tax increase so that those who use gasoline pay. There would have been a guaranteed revenue stream. Lott said that there would likely be floors and ceilings for funding levels and the numbers that the House Fiscal Agency originally released are likely to be updated.

Personette commented that the language of these ballot proposals was often confusing, and if people had the ballot language in simple terms, it may ensure that they vote in the way that they actually wanted to. Lott said that the state board of canvassers would be releasing ballot language by February 5th.

Harden made it clear that if the NATS committees chose to take an official position on the ballot measure, that he would abstain because he did not think it was right for state employees to attempt to influence the public's vote on a matter that would increase state funding.

- **National Functional Classification Review Ongoing**

Mani said that MDOT had held a review meeting regarding National Functional Classification Review meeting in the TwinCATS area in December. Any changes to the NFC system are due by September. Mani said that any proposals to upgrade roads to other principal arterials (OPAs) were due by April.

9. New Business

Ryman shared that Kim Gallagher had presented to the Clark Retirees Luncheon regarding the need for improved transit in Berrien County. Ryman said it was a very effective educational session.

10. Privilege of the Floor

Harrison commented that discussions about the transportation funding proposal might be easier if we had easier-to-understand graphics.

Ray announced that Juan Ganum was leaving the City of Niles after 17 years. He would be beginning the City Manager's job in the City of Bridgman on February 2nd. Ray acknowledged that those would be very huge shoes to fill for the City.

O'Haver thanked Paul Lott for his services to the MPO, and especially for including public transit in the discussion and making sure the questions of transit agencies got answered. The group applauded Paul's effort.

11. Adjournment at 2:10 p.m.

- The next meeting will be February 24 at 1:00 PM.

Minutes compiled by: Gautam Mani and Kim Gallagher, Associate Planners, 2015.

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