

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
 Technical Advisory Committee

MINUTES

February 28, 2012

1:30 P.M.

City of Niles Utility Department

322 Main St., Niles, MI 49120

TAC Members Present:	Jason Auvil, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission Irving Frost, Howard Township Barbara Cook, Cass County Planning Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Juan Ganum, City of Niles Community Development Kelly Getman-Dissette, Niles Dial-A-Ride Transit John Gruchot, Berrien County Community Development-Representing BC Planning Joseph Kring, Bertrand Township Don Kronewitter, Milton Township Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region (Alternate) Ray Lenze, MDOT Planning John Monaghan, Village of Edwardsburg (Alternate) Joe Ray, City of Niles Don Ryman, City of Buchanan
TAC Members Absent:	Joe Bellina, Cass County Road Commission Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg Neil Coulston, City of Niles DPW/Airport Fred Featherly, MDOT-Multi-Modal Darrell Harden, MDOT Southwest Region Erin Kercheval, MDOT Coloma TSC Shelley Klug, Southwestern Michigan Economic Growth Alliance Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce Robert Rusch, MDEQ Brad Sharlow, MDOT Planning (ex officio) Evan Smith, Niles Dial A Ride Transit Rachael Tupica, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) Representative, MACOG (ex officio)
SWMPC Staff Present:	Suzann Flowers Trevor Thomas
Others Present:	Sue Kronewitter, Milton Township Denelle Clark, Michigan Works Jerry Marchetti, Ontwa Township Kim O'Haver, Buchanan Dial A Ride

1. Call to Order & Introductions

- Ray called the meeting to order at 1:33p.m. and led the group in introductions.

2. Minutes

- Motion by Cook with support by Gruchot to approve the minutes of the January 24, 2012 TAC Committee Meeting minutes with the following changes:
- Add Kim O’Haver, Buchanan Dial A Ride to others present. **Motion passed.**

3. Staff Report

- **Michigan Works Bridge Academy Presentation-Delayed**
Flowers stated that as a means to reach out to the youth in the MPO planning area, she has scheduled a presentation with the Michigan Works JAG students and that the presentation has been delayed a week and will present information at the March 2012 TAC meeting.
- **Public Participation Plan Comments and Input Meetings**
Flowers stated that the 45-day public comment period is coming to a close, that both public input meetings were held during the month of February, and that once the comment period ends, she will compile all public comments received and present them to the Committee.
- **Investments Reporting Tools Training (IRT)**
Thomas again stressed the importance of the Asset Management trainings that have been on the SWMPC website and also brought up the topic of training for the new Investment Reporting Tool. Thomas will get the information out to the proper agencies, the county road commissions, cities, and villages, through an email to make sure that those agencies are aware of the changes occurring.

4. Project Updates

- **2010**
 - **Michigan Department of Transportation**
 - M-139 over St. Joseph River Bridge Replacement – in progress with draft hydraulics study, base plan alignment, and traffic plan; will be holding a design charrette in the fall; environmental assessment will be done fall 2011-2014 Construction-design phase
 - M-139 over Dowagiac River bridge work – new bridge will be built, 2012 May-October-letting,
- **2011**
 - **Michigan Department of Transportation**
 - US-31 freeway signing upgrade (jn108921) – Let, construction 2012 April-August
 - M-139 (Main St) over St. Joseph River bridge replacement SUB and PE phases (104152) – design phase-public meeting will happen soon and public will be able to view design options
 - M-51 slope stabilization near Pucker St (108186) –continuing to monitor the slope, consultant hired for base design
 - M-60 weigh station at US-12 interchange (110758) –spring 2012 Construction
 - US-12 resurfacing from M-60 to Edwardsburg (90361) –let construction 2012 May-October
 - M-139 Over Dowagiac River, near N limit of Niles-JN 86785 bridge replacement-2012 Construction
 - US-12, .68 miles east of Cassopolis Rd-JN 112819 ROW Phase-MDOT is obtaining culvert right of way
 - **Niles Dial-A-Ride**
The grant was just awarded in September 2011 and the projects will be completed in 2012
 - Bike racks-purchase up to 5 bicycle racks and install kits for buses
 - Generator
 - On bus camera system
 - Preventative maintenance

- Ramp lift
- Replacement tires-ordered October 2011
- Landscaping
- **Cass County Road Commission (No representative present)**
 - ~~Pine Lake St. M-60 to Anderson Rd JN 112861 CON Phase resurface done~~
 - ~~Redfield St from Kline Rd to Conrad Rd JN 110361 CON Phase resurface done~~
 - Redfield St. over Christina Creek-JN 109283 bridge replacement CON phase-ROW, let in Feb.
 - ~~Redfield St and Bertrand Rd Berrien County Line to Ironwood Rd JN 107691 CON Phase resurface done~~
 - Redfield St. M-62 to Brande Creek Rd-, JN 114517 CON Phase-construction 2012, let in Jan.
- **2012**
 - **Berrien County**
 - Red Bud Trail at Old Bitty Creek JN 114518 CON Phase- design phase, meeting with DEQ on design
 - West River Rd, Ullery Rd, Pucker St, and Main St. JN 112101 CON Phase-contract signing
 - Bertrand Rd, Ontario Rd, Fulkerson, and Bell Rd. JN 112086 CON Phase-contract signing
 - Bertrand Rd. from Mayflower Rd to Red Bud Trail CON Phase JN 112084-let April 6, 2012
 - **MDOT**
 - M-51 near Pucker St. JN 108186 CON Phase-restore and rehabilitate-design phase 2013 construction-consultant working on design
 - US-31 Walton Rd over US-31, US-31 NB JN 111239 CON Phase-bridge-let in June 2012 construction
 - **Niles Dial A Ride**

The projects have been assigned grant numbers and the projects should move forward summer 2012. There will be some project changes for the March meeting.

 - Garage equipment
 - Garage maintenance
 - Preventative maintenance
 - Scheduling software
 - Parking lot
 - **Cass County (No representative present)**
 - Bertrand Rd from Ironwood Dr. to Batchelor JN 112863 CON Phase-resurface-in design

5. Old Business

- **NATS TIP Policy**

At the January 2012 NATS TAC Committee meeting, Flowers was asked to make some changes to the draft TIP Policy document. Those changes were done and a new draft document was placed on the website for review.

Motion by Auvil with support by Gruchot to make the recommendation that the NATS TIP Policy document be approved by the NATS Policy Committee. Motion passed.

- **Support Letter for Harbor Authority**

Flowers explained that the NATS Policy Committee had asked her to draft a support letter for the Harbor Authority and that at the January meeting, John Gruchot had asked if the support letter could come from both the NATS and TwinCATS MPOs.

Motion by Auvil with support by Cook to recommend the NATS Policy Chair, John LaMore, to sign the resolution of support for the St. Joseph River Harbor Authority. **Motion passed.**

6. New Business

▪ Legislative Updates

○ Federal

Flowers and Thomas handed out a 2-page sheet explaining the updates for the Federal Transportation Bills along with a handout from the Association for Metropolitan Planning Organizations, comparing the House and Senate versions of the transportation bill. Discussion focused on provisions to eliminate existing small (under 200,000 populations) MPOs, as well funding implications for transit and the Transportation Enhancement program. Finally, Flowers and Thomas stated that the current consensus among experts is that neither the House nor the Senate transportation bill is likely to be passed in the near future.

Lenze pointed out that the current extension ends at the end of March and that would mean that if an extension or new legislation is not done that federal funding of projects would be in jeopardy. One member questioned what the justification would be to get rid of small MPOs and Lenze stated that there would be more funding to go around to the MPOs that were left. He also mentioned that there have been provisions about grandfathering in any small MPO but only new MPOs would be created if they had a population of 200,000.

○ State

A number of bills have been proposed at the state level many of the bills are discussing the reinvention of Act 51, funding for roads such as using additional vehicle registration fees, an increase in the gas tax.

A moratorium on force account work from MDOT was discussed and Cook discussed how much this would impact the Cass County Road Commission. Lenze added that the contractors union wanted to ensure that they had the ability to bid projects and that is why MDOT was halting this work until a policy could be worked out. Thomas added that if people had questions regarding this discussion that they should contact Joe Bellina at the Cass County Road Commission.

▪ TIP Amendments

○ Buchanan Dial A Ride

- Adding in FY 2013, Rural operating funds, for a federal cost of \$23,000; state cost of \$73,000; local cost of \$106,000; for a total project cost of \$202,000.

○ MDOT

- Adding in FY 2012, General Program Account, for pre-construction phases, for a federal cost of \$34,000; state cost of \$8,000; for a total project cost of \$42,000.
- Adding in FY 2014, JN 113932, project US-31 roadside facility PE phase, for a federal cost of \$6,000; state cost of \$1,000; for a phase cost of \$7,000 and a total project cost of \$62,000.

○ Niles Dial A Ride

- Adding in FY 2012, JN 115795, project free fare days on ozone action days, for a federal cost of \$2,000; and local cost of \$1,000; for a total cost of \$3,000.

Motion by Ryman with support by Berndt to approve the 2011-2014 NATS TIP amendments. **Motion passed.**

Lenze noted that the next TIP submission to MDOT is April 2012.

- **NATS Walk and Roll Plan-Form Subcommittee**

Flowers discussed with the Committee members the option of forming a non-motorized subcommittee, similar to the TwinCATS Walk and Roll subcommittee, to address the growing need for pedestrian and non-motorized focused transportation planning. Flowers displayed a draft outline of what a potential plan would entail. The plan would represent information for citizens and communities to better understand where the greatest needs are in the NATS region. Flowers also reminded the Committee members that they were not a stand alone MPO, that they were part of the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) transportation management area (TMA), and that MACOG has been planning for and building non-motorized projects for many years.

Ryman added that there are big problems with bikes and cars sharing the road and that bikes should really be on sidewalks. Thomas stated that there are numerous studies that point to bikes and pedestrians being safer when bikes share the road with automobiles and pedestrians use the sidewalk.

Getman-Dissette stated that she supported the idea of forming a subcommittee and volunteered to be on such a committee.

Motion by Gruchot with support from Ganum to recommend that the NATS Policy Committee approve the formation of a subcommittee to address pedestrian and non-motorized transportation needs in the NATS region. **Motion passed.**

- **IN-MI River Valley Trail Support Letter**

Flowers discussed the Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail effort. This is a 34-mile off-road trail project connecting the City of Niles, Niles Charter Township to the South Bend, Indiana trail system. Flowers asked the Committee members if they would sign a letter of support for the trail group's application to the Michigan Department of Transportation Enhancement program.

Motion by Auvil with support by Gruchot to recommend to the NATS Policy Committee to sign the IN-MI River Valley Trail funding support letter. **Motion passed.**

7. Public Comment

- Ryman commented on the speed of trains and their proposed increase in speed to 110 mph.

8. Privilege of the Floor

- Cook added that Cass County was updating their master plan and that there would be a public meeting on March 29, 2012 at the Cass County Road Commission offices on O'Keefe St at 7:00p.m. She encouraged all members to attend.

9. Adjournment: 2:25p.m. Motion by Frost with support by Gruchot to end the meeting. **Motion passed.**

- The next meeting is **March 27, 2012 at 1:30 P.M.**

Minutes compiled by: Suzann Flowers and Trevor Thomas, Transportation Planners, February 2012