

# TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Technical Advisory Committee

## Minutes

February 22, 2016

9:00 A.M.

St. Joseph City Commission Chambers

<b>TAC MEMBERS PRESENT:</b>	Calli Berg, Benton Charter Township Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission Chris Cook, City of Benton Harbor Joanne Johnson, Disability Network Southwest Michigan Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region Bill Purvis, Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority Dan Roberts, MDOT Kalamazoo TSC Terrie Smith, Lincoln Charter Township Tim Zebell, City of St. Joseph
<b>TAC MEMBERS ABSENT:</b>	Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) Vince Desjardins, Southwest Michigan Regional Airport Representative, Sodus Township Fred Featherly, MDOT Passenger Division (ex officio) John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Katie Montoya, Berrien County Community Development Department John Olson, Village of Shoreham, Village of Stevensville, Royalton Township Gloria Payne, Lake Charter Township Representative, Cornerstone Alliance Donna Wittl, MDOT Statewide Urban Travel Analysis (ex officio) Representative, City of Bridgman
<b>SWMPC STAFF PRESENT:</b>	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani

### 1. CALL TO ORDER:

Berndt called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and led the group in introductions.

### 2. CHANGES TO THE POSTED AGENDA:

None.

### 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

### 4. MINUTES:

- A motion was made by Cook with support by Berg to approve the minutes of the January 26 TAC meeting as presented. **Motion passed.**

Berndt noted that in the meeting minutes for the project selection subcommittee from February 16<sup>th</sup>, it should be noted that the 2017 John Beers Road project is in Royalton Township only and is a reconstruction project with 5 foot wide paved shoulders.

- A motion was made by Cook with support by Latham to approve the minutes of the February 16 project selection subcommittee meeting with corrections noted above. **Motion passed.**

## **5. STAFF REPORT**

None.

## **6. PUBLIC TRANSIT**

- **SWMPC Transit Updates**  
No update.
- **TCATA Updates**  
No update.

## **7. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- **Regional Inclusive Community Coalition (RICC)**  
Johnson said that the RICC was in the process of completing a letter in support of consolidation of the four transit agencies in Berrien County. Johnson said they expected to complete the letter by the end of this month.
- **Walk and Roll Report**  
Mani said that the Walk and Roll committee had not met, but that SWMPC staff had undertaken a review of projects submitted to for STP funding to see whether they complied with the TwinCATS Complete Streets Policy. They would be presenting those findings later on in the agenda.

## **8. COMMUNITY LAND USE AND ZONING UPDATES**

None.

## **9. PROJECT UPDATES**

### **City of Benton Harbor**

2016 Pipestone at Wall Street Traffic Signal replacement project- Grade Inspection plans have been submitted. The City anticipates a May project letting and a summer construction.

### **City of St. Joseph**

2016 Lakeview Avenue from Hilltop to Highland Avenue reconstruct- the project had some issues with MDOT's programming system that have delayed obligation, but should be able to proceed now. They are anticipating meeting the May letting

## **Berrien County Road Commission**

2016 Shawnee Road from the Bridgman city limits to Jericho Road- project applicant anticipates May 6<sup>th</sup> letting.

2016 Pipestone Traffic Signal at Entrance to Meijer- Final plans have been approved.

2016 Napier at Pipestone traffic signal- construction is almost complete.

## **MDOT**

No updates

## **TCATA**

No updates

## **10. OLD BUSINESS**

None.

## **11. NEW BUSINESS**

### **▪ Review and Approval of Projects for funding in 2017-2020**

Gallagher gave an overview of the application and selection process for the \$871,925 in Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds that TwinCATS receives as a federal allocation each year between 2017-2020. These projects feed the four-year Transportation Improvement Program, a document that TwinCATS develops every three years.

Gallagher noted that at last month's TwinCATS meetings, the Policy Committee had approved a prioritization system for these projects. Federal, state, and local planning factors had all informed that prioritization system. Gallagher also gave an overview of the timeline for project submittal and selection, and that additional opportunities would be forthcoming for comments on projects. The selection committee had recommended a list of projects to TAC, who in turn recommended projects to Policy Committee.

Gallagher shared that \$11.8 million in federal funds was requested, but only \$3.5 million in funds were available, so prioritization was needed. A total of 29 projects were submitted by jurisdictions, which is many more than previous calls. Berg asked why so many projects were submitted this time as opposed to previous calls. Berndt said that the roads are falling apart in our area, and there has been additional deferred maintenance since the last Call for Projects.

Gallagher went over the approved tools that TwinCATS has to evaluate projects submitted, including the prioritization system, the Long Range Plan, and the Complete Streets Policy. Gallagher reiterated that the Complete Streets Policy was something that TwinCATS members agreed to in 2014 as a means of efficiently allocating increasingly scarce federal dollars to projects that meet multiple long range plan goals. 25 of the 29 projects submitted for funding met the Complete Streets Policy.

Gallagher went through the results of the scoring system, and also the road conditions on segments where projects were recommended for funding by the project selection committee. Nine of those projects were rated at a 3-4 on the PASER system, whereas the other two projects

were at a 5-7, allowing for potential preventative maintenance to extend the useful life of the road.

Gallagher also shared the analysis of conformity to the Complete Streets Policy. Of the \$3.5 million in federal funds, approximately \$1.9 million conforms to the Complete Streets Policy, meaning that the funding helps provide for the needs of all users. That is progress over the last Call for Projects. However, nearly \$1.6 million worth of projects do not conform to the Policy, which should raise concerns as to whether TwinCATS is meeting its own policies.

There were three projects for 2018-2020 that were recommended for funding despite not meeting the Complete Streets Policy. Gallagher said that a fourth project did not meet the Complete Streets Policy. In other words, all four projects submitted that did not meet the Policy had been selected for funding. It would be up to the Policy Committee to determine whether these projects were exempt from the Policy or whether they needed to take measures to meet the Policy.

Each of the projects recommended for funding were discussed in detail. Mani pointed out that the Hilltop Road from M-63 to BL-94 mill-and-fill project was not compliant with the Complete Streets Policy. Cook said that it should be noted that the project applicants made an earnest attempt to comply with the policy, but ran into issues with obtaining right of way and getting property owner compliance from several property owners along the route. Zebell said that the city was still looking to have easements donated to allow for the possibility of sidewalks along certain portions of the route. Roberts said that this project was a 2 inch overlay, and therefore there may be limited opportunities for Complete Streets elements on road prior to full reconstruction.

A further project that did not meet the Complete Streets Policy was the resurfacing of Nickerson Avenue from M-139 east to 700 feet east of Woodley. Mani said that the land uses around the project did not generate a high volume of pedestrian activity. However, there are pedestrians who use this segment to access Plaza Drive and Cinema Way. Cook agreed that the project area does not have a huge number of pedestrian activity generators, stating that the project clearly falls under Exemption 2 of Section 6 of the Complete Streets Policy: the costs are disproportionate to the benefit gained based on the pedestrian volumes. Cook said that the representative from Royalton Township felt so strongly that this segment needed to be done, that he advocated for Nickerson Avenue ahead of projects in his own Township. That road is heavily traveled by vehicles trying to access US-31.

Additionally, two projects on Napier Avenue did not meet the Complete Streets Policy as they do not provide any facilities for those not in automobiles. In St. Joseph Township, an overlay project was recommended on Napier Avenue from the St. Joseph River to 3700 Feet west. In Benton Township, a project was recommended on Napier Avenue from I-94 to 4300 feet west. These projects were recommended by the project selection committee for funding despite not meeting the Complete Streets Policy. Mani said that it was up to the Policy Committee to determine whether these projects are exempt.

Gallagher said that there was a demonstrated demand for non-motorized facilities on Napier Avenue. Public comments had indicated a desire for such facilities, it was identified as a priority in the TwinCATS Walk and Roll plan, and it was identified in St. Joseph Township's most recent master plan as a non-motorized priority. Mani said there were also "goat paths" along

Napier Avenue, particularly on the segment in Benton Township, indicating that pedestrians are already using the route.

Cook said that there had been extensive discussion about these projects on Napier Avenue at the subcommittee meeting. There is a clear need for non-motorized facilities on this segment. However, the road is in deteriorating condition and will be worse by the time a project is done in 2019. There are extensive right-of-way issues on the segment with installing sidewalks, and the Road Commission had stated that a "road diet" is not a possibility because of the high volume of motorized traffic. Cook said that an effort to use Safe Routes to School funding was underway to provide some of that non-motorized infrastructure, as getting full sidewalks or full bike lanes would take a long-term sustained effort. It would be up to the two townships to provide maintenance funds for any sidewalks that are installed.

Mani asked specifically what exemption the committee would recommend that Policy Committee adopt for the two Napier Avenue projects given that they are clearly out of compliance with the Complete Streets Policy.

Berndt, Zebell, and Cook stated exemption 2 was quite appropriate, given the costs of implementing non-motorized facilities on Napier Avenue. Johnson pointed out that the exemption does not provide an excuse to not provide complete streets because it would be too expensive to do so. The project must show that doing so would be disproportionate to the benefits provided to pedestrians. Pedestrians are already using these segments. Berndt said there was very little money to maintain these roads, and it was important that the road treatments be done at the appropriate time; there are over 20,000 vehicles on Napier Avenue, and people are going to be injured in their cars if the road deteriorates much further. There will already be some further deterioration of the road surface between now and 2019. There just is no money available to both fix the roads and keep pavement from deteriorating further.

Cook said that Exemption #4 might be more appropriate for the project given that it is a maintenance project that does not change the roadway geometry. Latham and Roberts reiterated that if the project were a complete reconstruct, then it would absolutely be necessary to provide Complete Streets elements. Mani said that was not what the policy stated, as other projects that were overlay were adding or upgrading non-motorized elements as part of the process. From an accountability standpoint, Gallagher said that the question at that point becomes why are some TwinCATS member agencies following the policy and potentially spending extra funds while others are not.

Cook said that at the project selection subcommittee meeting, he had been a strong advocate of Napier Avenue having non-motorized facilities, as it would greatly help our region. He wondered whether there was a way to tie the award of funding for the Napier Avenue projects to the townships showing clear progress towards meeting the complete streets goals of the MPO. There is time between now and 2019/2020 to ensure that the townships show progress. Mani said that specific actions need to be taken on the part of the committees for that approach to be successful.

Latham said that the Complete Streets Policy should not be so much an enforcement mechanism as an opportunity to work together with the jurisdictions to implement appropriate solutions that accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. No township should be forced to do complete streets if

the local desire is not there. Latham cited the example of successful Complete Streets in Portage, but said it was a sustained effort and a lot of negotiation was needed with property owners.

Mani said that no jurisdiction was being forced to install sidewalks or bicycle lanes, but they should look to other funding sources if they do not want to meet policies that the TwinCATS committees agreed to. Representatives of both townships involved in the Napier Avenue projects approved the Complete Streets Policy. The Policy Committee passed the Complete Streets Policy with no dissenting votes after much debate and revision, and they are bound by its stipulation that in order to use TwinCATS' allocation of federal funds, the project will meet the needs of all users. If TwinCATS Policy Committee decides to fund these projects anyway, they need to be ready to justify why they were not following their own policies.

Johnson asked what actions TwinCATS would be taking to ensure that the townships make progress towards meeting the policy through the Napier Avenue projects by 2019 or 2020. It was too long to wait another three years to have the conversation again, especially given that the townships are out of compliance with a stated policy of the committees. Johnson said that it was

Latham and Cook suggested that representatives of TwinCATS continue to meet with Benton Township and St. Joseph Township officials to move towards compliance with the Complete Streets Policy, and make it clear that it was not acceptable to continue to use federal funds without any non-motorized infrastructure in place. Gallagher asked which representatives would be conducting the meetings with the townships. Latham volunteered on behalf of MDOT, and Cook said he would as well, given his role on the Walk and Roll committee. The committees agreed that SWMPC could be a facilitator for these meetings. The goal of these meetings would be for non-motorized elements to be added to the jobs on Napier Avenue with township commitments to maintain those facilities. Zebell added that doing a road project does not preclude the possibility of doing a sidewalk project in a later year.

A motion was made by Latham with support by Purvis to recommend that the Policy Committee approve Complete Streets Exemption #2 for the Nickerson Avenue resurfacing project in 2018, and Complete Streets Exemption #4 for the Napier Avenue from the St. Joseph River to 3700 feet east in St. Joseph Township, and the Napier Avenue from I-94 to 4300 feet west in Benton Township. **Motion passed unanimously.**

A motion was made by Zebell with support by Smith to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the recommended project list using STP funds for 2017-2020, with the understanding that TwinCATS members would continue to meet with officials from Benton Charter Township and St. Joseph Township to assist them in achieving TwinCATS' Walk and Roll Plan and Long Range Plan goals on their federal-aid road projects. **Motion passed unanimously.**

- **MDOT and FHWA Updates**

None.

## **12. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:**

None.

## **13. ADJOURNMENT at 10:31 AM.**

Next meeting is March 21, 2016 at 9:00 AM at the St. Joseph City Commission Chambers, 700 Broad Street, St. Joseph.

*Compiled by: Gautam Mani, SWMPC Associate Planner, 2016.*

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