

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Technical Advisory Committee

MINUTES

March 24, 2015

1:00 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

TAC Members Present:	Joe Bellina, Cass County Road Commission Craig Bradfield, Howard Township Barbara Cook, Cass County Planning Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) John Gruchot, Berrien County Community Development John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning Jess Minks, Berrien County Road Commission Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce Joe Ray, City of Niles Don Ryman, City of Buchanan Dennis Schuh, Berrien Bus Kris Welch, MDOT Statewide Planning
TAC Members Absent:	Jason Auvil, Berrien County Planning Commission Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Melinda Michael, Four Flags Area Council on Tourism Darrell Harden, MDOT Southwest Region Erin Jolivette, MDOT Coloma TSC Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg Fred Featherly, MDOT-Multi-Modal Juan Ganum, City of Niles Community Development John Klimek, Berrien County Board of Commissioners Joseph Kring, Bertrand Township Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region (Alternate) Paul Lott, MDOT Statewide Planning Bill Marx, City of Buchanan Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Melinda Michael, Four flags Area Council on Tourism John Monaghan, Village of Edwardsburg (Alternate) Kim O'Haver, Buchanan Dial A Ride 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 Patrice Rose
Others Present:	LeRoy Krempec, Cass County Road Commission

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting was called to order by Bellina at 1:03 p.m. and Minks led the group in the pledge of allegiance.

2. Minutes

Bellina pointed out that February minutes contained an error under Agenda item #5 Public Transit Updates. The current wording reads “Gallagher said that the main report that she had to share was that she had applied for a grant through MDOT to do a countywide service plan that would like at the viability of fixed routes throughout Berrien County.” Bellina and Ryman recommended changing the word "like" to "look"

A motion by Ryman with support by Cook to approve the TAC Committee Meeting minutes, as amended, from February 24, 2015. **Motion passed.**

3. Public Comment

None

4. Staff Report

▪ Traffic Count Requests

Mani reported that a record number of traffic count requests were coming in for the 2015 season, so it was definitely time for communities to send in their requests. Gallagher reminded committee members that when filling out count requests, they should make sure to submit separate requests for each requested count spot, even if each of the counts is a different segment on the same roadway. Currently, some of the count requests are becoming jumbled. The traffic count form is available at: <http://www.swmpc.org/trafficcountform.asp>.

▪ Spring Asset Management Conference- April 30 in Grand Rapids

Mani encouraged committee members and any elected officials or engineers in their communities to attend the Spring Asset Management Conference at the Hilton near Grand Rapids Airport on April 30. The agenda is still under development, but it is always a good opportunity to learn about the latest best practices in pavement management and data gathering and since this event is occurring a week before the transportation ballot proposal is up for a vote, that will be a major topic of discussion . Registration is \$25 per person for public agencies. Registration is available at: <http://ctt.nonprofitsoapbox.com/upcoming-events/event/155>

▪ Asset Management Annual Report for Berrien and Cass Counties

Mani gave a presentation on the Asset Management Annual Report for Berrien and Cass Counties. These are reports that SWMPC produces that catalog the change in road conditions from 2003 to the present year. They show extremely sharp deterioration in pavement conditions across the state and within Southwest Michigan. Mani said that committee members were free to use these data and the presentation in any way they saw fit. The report is available at: <http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/annualreportberrien20042014.pdf>

<http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/annualreportcass20032014.pdf>

A complete presentation on pavement condition in Southwest Michigan is available at:

http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/asset_management_presentation.pdf

Bellina noted that Cass was one of the few counties in Michigan was where the local road network was in better condition than the federal-aid network, because Cass County had moved funds onto the local system.

Minks said that Berrien County had to turn six miles of road back to gravel last year, and that more would be turned back to gravel or dirt if a funding fix did not arrive.

▪ ADARS-IRT Reporting Issues for Act 51 Issues

Gallagher noted that Act 51 agencies were supposed to be tracking their investments using ADARS and IRT reporting. Statewide, however, participation in the IRT tool is only at 30%. Gallagher said that SWMPC would be compiling a list on which jurisdictions in our region had and had not participated and were available to assist Act 51 agencies with reporting.

Bellina and Ray said that while they participated in the IRT, the tool was often down and there was no one available on the technical support line. Mani and Gallagher said they would look into this with their Director John Egelhaaf, who sits on the asset management council.

- **2016 Pre-UWP Updates**

Mani said that SWMPC had held its annual meeting with MDOT and Federal Highway Administration to go over work activities for FY 2016. Mani said that the main items of note to the committees are that the next update to the Long Range Plan will be due in July of 2018. We are on five year cycles of LRP updates now due to changes in air quality regulations. In addition, the next Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will be due around June 2016. MDOT is working to finalize the development schedule, but the TIP being due means that project selection will be occurring sometime in the next year for 2017-2020. Communities should start prioritizing their own projects for STP funding before committee project selection takes place.

- **Travel Demand Model Updates**

Mani also said that they had met with MDOT Travel Demand modelers last week to discuss the state of the model for the NATS area. For the next Long Range Plan, we would likely only be making minor adjustments to the employment and housing data. Unless there is a big change in development patterns in the area, we will not redo the model until after the next decennial census.

However, with the current travel demand model we have the opportunity to run possible scenarios of what would happen to travel patterns with particular roadway treatments. For example, NATS could examine what a road diet on a particular corridor would do to travel patterns, or a road closure for a particular project.

- **Performance Measures Peer Exchange**

Mani said that he and Gallagher would be attending a Peer Exchange on performance measures in Lansing on April 27 and 28 with agencies that had worked on performance measures in other states, MDOT, FHWA, and other Michigan MPOs. SWMPC staff were therefore requesting cancellation of the April 28th NATS meeting.

A motion by Cooper with support by Personette to cancel the April 28 NATS meeting. **Motion passed.** The next NATS TAC meeting will be Tuesday May 26th at 1 PM.

5. Public Transit Updates

- **SWMPC Transit Updates**

Gallagher said that SWMPC is waiting to hear whether the grant application for a Countywide Service Planning grant was successful. If it is successful, we will be able to issue an RFP.

In addition, SWMPC is working with MDOT to identify gaps in transit service across the seven-county Southwest region. This study will help United Way of Southwest Michigan with developing a service plan to address those gaps.

- **Agency Updates**

Schuh shared that County staff had been granted permission by the Board of Commissioners to speak about a new countywide authority to various communities in Berrien County, and they had been holding meetings on this topic.

6. Land Use Updates

None.

7. Project Updates

- **Obligation Thermometer-**

Obligation Thermometer – Mani reported that as of February 28, 60.2 % of 2015 obligation authority had been used up. This obligation authority is only available through May 31st, at which point there would need to be reauthorization of federal transportation legislation for the state to receive further obligation authority. Mani said that that SWMPC always encouraged agencies in the area to obligate early.

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	\$600,000 is the cost estimate to complete the next phase of the path in Michigan. The township has put together a grant application	March 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)	20% above budget - more money will be coming out of statewide TAP program	March 2015			
2015		Berrien County RC	Range Line Road, Lake St and Main St Resurfacing	Obligation Requested on January 15	January 2015			

		Berrien County RC	North Main St	GI package will be submitted in March	February 2015			
		City of Niles	Broadway Avenue Resurfacing	April Construction (pending weather)	February 2015			
		Cass County	Adamsville Road Reconstruct	Still in design	March 2015			
		Cass County	Gumwood Road Phase II	Working on design	March 2015			
		Buchanan Dial-a-Ride	Replacement Bus	Contract probably not coming until next September	October 2014			
		Niles Dial-A-Ride	Replacement Tires					

Bellina said that a proposed non-motorized path from the Edwardsburg Sports Complex to the High School had been submitted to MDOT for CMAQ eligibility determination. The project would use design phase funding in FY 2015 and would be constructed using 2018 funds. Once approved, it will enter our TIP.

8. Old Business

None

9. New Business

▪ TIP Amendments

The following amendments were proposed to the 2014-2017 NATS TIP:

- * Add Buchanan Dial A Ride 5311 operating funds to TIP for 2016.
- * Add Buchanan Dial A Ride 5339 replacement bus to TIP for 2016.
- * Add one MDOT bridge rehabilitation project on US-12 over M-51 for 2015.

Mani said that SWMPC staff had been instructed by MDOT to remove Buchanan Dial A Ride's operating funds since those were actually rural funds. This would not change Buchanan DAR's funding situation at all, simply whether the projects are listed in the TIP or directly in the STIP. Mani said they were asking for committee member approval, since the guidance

A motion by Ray with support by Schuh to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the March TIP Amendments. **Motion passed.**

▪ FHWA Updates

Dewey noted that the electronic system that manages federal obligation will not be shut down in April as originally scheduled, but rather at the start of FY 2016. This will mean that there will not be a delay in obligation due to the system being down this year.

▪ MDOT Updates on Ballot Initiative and Other Items

Ryman said that road funding is a very complicated issue, and that the wholesale tax is a very complicated way to fund it.

Krempec said that the "Frugal Five" group of Road Commissioners had met and that Barry County had

produced a great document outlining . Krempec said that we need to simplify the message to the public. Krempec said he would forward that document on to Mani via email to share with the NATS group. Personette encouraged committee members to have their legislators send information describing the facts surrounding the ballot measure to the local papers. Rep. Dave Pagel had already done this. Bellina and Krempec noted that Pagel was the only one of the local legislators who was in support of the ballot proposal, so it might be difficult to get editorials published regarding the ballot measure from the other legislators.

Minks said that committee members should write to their legislators asking them for a "Plan B" if the proposal fails. The proposal is not ideal, but there is no backup plan in case it does not pass.

Ray noted that despite the best efforts at education back in 2012, the Berrien County road millage did not pass. Ray said that with more confusion and less clear information being presented this time around, conditions did not look favorable for the ballot measure to pass.

Bellina clarified that the funds would be distributed according to Act 51 formula.

10. Privilege of the Floor

None.

11. Public Comment

None.

12. Adjournment at 2:25 p.m.

- The next meeting will be May 26 at 1:00 PM.

Minutes compiled by: Gautam Mani, Associate Planner and Patrice Rose, Administrative Assistant.