

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

**MINUTES**

April 26, 2011

1:30 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

TAC Members Present:	Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Neil Coulston, City of Niles DPW/Airport Erin Kercheval, MDOT Coloma TSC Don Kronewitter, Milton Township Irving Frost, Howard Township Juan Ganum, City of Niles Planning Kelly Getman-Disette, Niles Dial-A-Ride Transit John Gruchot, Berrien County Community Development Darrell Harden, MDOT Southwest Region Joseph Kring, Bertrand Township Ray Lenze, MDOT Planning Jan Personette, Four Flags Area Chamber of Commerce Don Ryman, City of Buchanan Rachael Tupica, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio)
TAC Members Absent:	Jason Auvil, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg Joe Bellina, Cass County Road Commission Barbara Cook, Cass County Planning Commission Fred Featherly, MDOT-Multi-Modal Shelley Klug, Southwestern Michigan Economic Growth Alliance Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Jessica Mitchell, MACOG (ex officio) Kimberly O'Haver, Buchanan Dial a Ride Jennifer Osborne, MDOT Joe Ray, City of Niles Robert Rusch, MDEQ
SWMPC Staff Present:	Suzann Flowers Anna Rahtz Trevor Thomas
Others Present:	Laura Brown, RLS & Associates Denelle Clark, Michigan Works Matt Conover, RLS & Associates Jim Klett, Klett Construction Sue Kronewitter, Milton Township resident

**1. Call to Order & Introductions**

- Ganum called the meeting to order at 1:32 P.M. and led the group in introductions. *The Chair and Vice-chair were absent.*

## 2. Minutes

- *Motion by Berndt, seconded by Personette, to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2011 TAC meeting. Motion approved unanimously with no corrections.*

## 3. Staff Report

### • **Transportation and Environment Workshop – Update**

- Thomas stated that 50 people had attended the workshop at Andrews University, and had learned about how transportation projects can be coordinated with watershed planning to try to prevent problems like flooding deteriorating the pavement or runoff from the pavement impacting the water quality. He mentioned that the presentations from the workshop are available on the SWMPC website ([www.swmpc.org/trans\\_water.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/trans_water.asp)).

### • **2010 Census Data**

- Thomas presented on the changes in population in NATS communities seen from the 2000 to 2010 Census.
- There were questions about which data variables are available in the new Census data, and Thomas responded that some variables such as income and household vehicle ownership are available from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey five-year data; they are not going to be a part of the decennial census anymore.
- Lenze noted that it might be important to look at the Indiana numbers, because the NATS metropolitan planning area boundaries are based on the South Bend urbanized area numbers. If the Elkhart area continues growing in population then NATS could pick up more townships to the east in Cass County.
- It was asked if it is known where the people are moving from who are moving into the NATS communities, and Thomas responded that 2005-2009 ACS data can reveal numbers of people who have moved to new residences within the past year from outside of their local jurisdiction, out of county, out of state, or out of country.
- Thomas added that SWMPC staff will be glad to assist communities with finding Census data for their communities.

### • **Upcoming Workshops**

- Rahtz encouraged those present to attend upcoming workshops that may be beneficial:
  - Complete Streets workshop – May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Benton Harbor MSU Extension office
  - Asset Management Conference – May 12<sup>th</sup>, Grand Rapids
- Rahtz noted that the SWMPC/WMTGA trails workshop series has been cancelled due to lack of attendance.
- Rahtz announced that the Berrien County Transit Consolidation Feasibility Study will kick off with the consultant on June 1, 2011 at Michigan Works!.

### • **Nonmotorized Updates**

- Flowers gave an update on the workshop she had attended in Kalamazoo on April 19<sup>th</sup> about how to design streets in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. She emphasized what a good learning experience it was to go out in a wheelchair and understand how the details of design affect people with disabilities. She offered to share the powerpoints and other materials with the committee if they were interested, and passed around a guidebook.
- Flowers announced that SWMPC has been encouraging communities throughout Southwest Michigan to pass resolutions in support of Bike to Work Week, May 16<sup>th</sup>

through May 20<sup>th</sup>. She stated that the Van Buren County Road Commission and the Cass County Road Commission have passed the resolution, and she passed out a sample copy. She noted that it is a simple way to show support of other modes of transportation besides cars.

#### **4. Project Updates**

- **2009**

- **Niles Dial-a-Ride Transit**

- Bus shelters – finalizing order, will be installed in spring

- **2010**

- **Berrien County Road Commission**

- Niles-Buchanan Rd and Bell Rd – obligated; waiting for sealing in June 2011

- **Cass County Road Commission**

- No updates

- **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; gathering input and determining environmental impacts.
- US-31 over Dowagiac River bridge work – under construction

- **Niles Dial-a-Ride Transit**

- Contracted with RLS & Associates; currently gathering public input; holding public meetings on Wednesday April 27<sup>th</sup>, 10am at Niles City Council Chambers and 6pm at Niles High School
- It was noted that people are being asked to fill out a survey about transit online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/nilespublicsurvey>.

- **2011**

- **Berrien County Road Commission**

- Dayton Rd, Pucker St, Red Bud Trail, and Orange Rd – submitted

- **Michigan Department of Transportation**

- US-31 freeway signing upgrade – fall 2011 letting and spring 2012 construction
- US-31 BR over Dowagiac River bridge replacement – fall 2011 letting and spring 2012 construction

- **Cass County Road Commission**

- No updates

#### **5. Old Business**

- None

#### **6. New Business**

- **TIP Amendments**

- **Buchanan Dial-A-Ride Transit**

- Add in FY 2011, the project named Rural Operating funds for transit operations in the Buchanan area. Federal cost is \$24,115 (5311 funds).
- Add in FY 2012, the project named Rural Operating funds for transit operations in the Buchanan area. Federal cost is \$22,449 (5311 funds).
- *Motion by Harden, seconded by Getman-Dissette, to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the addition of the above two Buchanan Dial-A-Ride Transit*

*projects into the FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program, pending the confirmation that the correct amount of local match is shown. Motion approved unanimously.*

○ **Cass County Road Commission**

- Modify in FY 2011, the project named Redfield St and Bertrand Rd for resurfacing from Berrien County line to Ironwood Rd. Federal cost is modified from \$77,000 (STU) to \$56,247 (STU) and county cost is modified from \$19,000 to \$12,473.
- Modify in FY 2011, the project named Redfield St for resurfacing from Kline Rd to Conrad Rd. Federal cost is modified from \$68,000 (STU) to \$65,457 (STU) and county cost is modified from \$17,000 to \$14,515.
- Modify in FY 2011, the project named Pine Lake St for resurfacing from M-60 to Anderson Rd. Federal cost is modified from \$65,577 (STU) to \$63,111 (STU) and county cost is modified from \$19,423 to \$13,995.
- Modify in FY 2011, the project named Beebe Rd for resurfacing from Runkle St to Leet Rd. Federal cost is modified from \$68,000 to \$60,849 (STU) and county cost is modified from \$17,000 to \$13,493.

○ **Michigan Department of Transportation**

- Add in FY 2011, the project named US-12 for resurfacing from M-60 to Edwardsburg. Federal cost is \$5,811,350 (ST) and state cost is \$1,288,650.
- Add in FY 2011, the project named US-12 for acquiring right of way. Federal cost is \$4,093 (ST) and state cost is \$907.
- Add in FY 2011, the project named M-139 for bridge replacement of Main Street bridge over St. Joseph River. Sub phase. Federal cost is \$387,280 (BRT) and state cost is \$96,820.
- Add in FY 2011, the project named M-139 for bridge replacement of Main Street bridge over St. Joseph River. Preliminary Engineering phase. Federal cost is \$160,000 (BRT) and state cost is \$40,000.
- Add in FY 2011, the project named M-60 for weigh station at US-12 interchange. Federal cost is \$45,018 (ST) and state cost is \$9,982.
- Add in FY 2011, the project named M-51 for slope stabilization, shoulder reconstruction, guardrail replacement, and other restore and rehabilitate work on M-51 near Pucker Street. Federal cost is \$1,096,790 (ST) and state cost is \$243,210.
- Modify year from 2012 to 2011, the project named M-139 for bridge replacement over Dowagiac River near north limit of Niles. Federal cost is modified from \$1,869,568 to \$1,963,594 (BRT) and state cost is modified from \$467,392 to \$490,899. Total project cost is modified from \$2,496,604 to \$2,454,493.
- *Lenze asked whether the construction phase of the M-139 bridge replacement over the St. Joseph River is in the TIP, and Harden replied that it is in the TIP in FY 2013, for FY 2014 construction.*
- *Motion by Getman-Dissette, seconded by Gruchot, to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the addition of the above MDOT projects into the FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program. Motion approved unanimously.*
- Modify in FY 2013, the project named M-139 for bridge replacement of the Main Street bridge over the St. Joseph River, construction phase. Federal cost is modified from \$4,453,720 (BRT) to \$4,531,200 (BRT), and state cost is modified from \$1,113,430 to \$1,132,800.

- **Rail letters**

- Rahtz passed out two draft letters that staff are working on in coordination with the Westrain Coalition. She noted that each agency on Westrain is seeking board approval for signing off on the letters. She stated that the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study and the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission board have already signed off on the letters, and that she was also hoping for a signature from NATS.
- She passed out the first letter, which is to MDOT in response to their draft statewide rail plan, which shows the realignment of the Pere Marquette Amtrak line through Kalamazoo. It documents the communications with MDOT regarding the realignment, emphasizes the importance of the St. Joseph and Bangor Pere Marquette stops, and urges MDOT to reopen the alternatives study of the Pere Marquette line using intensive stakeholder engagement. Rahtz noted that although the Pere Marquette route does not stop in the NATS area, the letter argues for its importance to the regional economy.
- *Motion by Ryman, seconded by Personette, to approve signing the letter. Motion approved unanimously.*
- Rahtz passed out the second letter, which is to Congressman Upton and other legislators emphasizing the importance of investing in rail and public transit for economic development.
- *Motion by Coulston, seconded by Berndt, to approve signing the letter. Motion approved unanimously.*

- **Travel Demand Model data**

- Thomas reminded the committee that he had requested corrections on roadway information for the travel demand model, such as number of lanes and signal locations. He thanked anyone who had given him information and asked anyone who hadn't to get that to him by the end of the month.

- **Transit Consolidation Feasibility study – consultant selection**

- Rahtz passed out a handout explaining the selection committee's process and reasoning behind choosing KFH to conduct the Berrien County Transit Consolidation Feasibility Study.
- It was asked where the funding was coming from to pay the consultant, and Rahtz responded that it was a Statewide Planning & Research grant through MDOT, with local match from the Consortium 4 Community Development in Benton Harbor.
- Ganum noted that he had sat on the selection committee, and emphasized that the purpose of the study is not to consolidate the four transit systems, but to study the four systems and determine the best ways in which they can coordinate their service to better serve the riders.
- *Motion by Gruchot, seconded by Getman-Disette, to approve the selection of KFH to conduct the Berrien County Transit Consolidation Feasibility Study. Motion approved unanimously.*

- **Unified Work Program development**

- Rahtz announced that SWMPC is beginning to develop the Unified Work Program, or schedule of planning tasks, for fiscal year 2012. The draft will be presented for approval by the committees at the June meeting. She reminded the committees to let her know as soon as possible if there is anything that she should include in the UWP.

## 7. Public Comment

- None

## 8. Privilege of the Floor

- Harden stated that he will be attending the first meeting of the governor's Complete Streets Advisory Council in Lansing on April 27<sup>th</sup>. These meetings are a way for MDOT to figure out its direction with implementing the statewide complete streets legislation.
- It was asked what complete streets means in a nutshell, and Harden and Rahtz responded that it is a concept of streets being designed for all users, including drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, etc.
- Personette announced that the Niles City Commission had voted on Monday to support the countywide initiative to allow voters to decide on a .5 mil levy for road preservation in 2012. She and Getman-Dissette noted that there has been a lot of confusion amongst the commissioners and the public about how the millage will work and the need for it.
- Rahtz noted that the SWMPC staff have been working on public education around how transportation is funded, adding that most people do not understand how the gas tax works and why it is not enough to fund the roads anymore. She will take any suggestions on how to do further public education on the topic.
- Ryman noted the importance for residents of Buchanan, as well as anyone who drives through Buchanan, of funding the Front Street project in 2013.

## 9. Adjournment: 2:19 P.M.

- *Motion by Harden, seconded by Personette, to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved unanimously.*
- The next meeting is **June 28, 2011** at **1:30 P.M.**