

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Technical Advisory Committee

MINUTES

May 27, 2014

1:00 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

TAC Members Present:	Joe Bellina, Cass County Road Commission Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission Richard Cooper, Niles Charter Township Katie Furner, Niles Dial-a-Ride Juan Ganum, City of Niles Community Development (arrived at 1:30p.m.) John Gruchot, Berrien County Community Development Darrell Harden, MDOT Southwest Region Erin Jolivette, MDOT Coloma TSC 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 Planning
TAC Members Absent:	Jason Auvil, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Craig Bradfield, Howard Township Pat Bellaire, Village of Edwardsburg Barbara Cook, Cass County Planning Commission Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) Zach Dripps, MACOG Fred Featherly, MDOT-Multi-Modal John Klimek, Berrien County Commissioner Joseph Kring, Bertrand Township John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region (Alternate) Bill Marx, City of Buchanan Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Jess Minks, Berrien County Road Commission 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 James Turnwald, MACOG Representative, MDEQ
SWMPC Staff Present:	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani Ryan Soucy
Others Present:	Matt Kodis, Kinexus

1. Call to Order & Introductions

Meeting was called to order by Bellina at 1:01 p.m, and he also led the group in introductions.

2. Minutes

A motion by Ganum with support by Ray to approve the TAC Committee Meeting minutes from March 25, 2014.

Motion passed.

A motion by Bellina with support by Cooper to approve the joint MPO meeting minutes from April 30, 2014 . **Motion passed.**

3. Public Comment

Kodis announced that Kinexus had just released new cost of living index numbers for Berrien County, and also that Kinexus had recently released a report on the impacts of tourism in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. All information is available online at kinexus.org.

4. Staff Report

▪ **MTPA and Asset Management Conference Follow up**

Mani said that he had attended the statewide asset management conference two weeks ago. The conference highlighted some of the emerging methodologies of asset management, and key sessions from the conference included:

- A presentation on a pilot project undertaken by MDOT and Michigan Tech on the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (“drones”) in creating an inventory of the location and condition of unpaved roads in the state. The drones take high-resolution images of roadways from 500 feet in the air that can be used for modeling.
- A presentation on the use of smartphone applications to rate the roughness of the roads, and a comparison of these ratings to those conducted by traditional rating methods.
- A presentation on “green, sustainable streets,” which emphasized the need to coordinate road treatments with sewer and water infrastructure.

Mani also said that MTPA had discussed the possibility of moving to a two-year TIP cycle, which would have meant that SWMPC staff were working on a new TIP in FY 2015. Mani said that MTPA decided on sticking with a three-year TIP cycle for now, meaning SWMPC would not have to develop a new TIP until FY 2016.

▪ **Follow up from Joint MPO Meeting**

Mani said that SWMPC staff were still mapping data from the group exercise from the joint MPO meeting, and thanked the group for their participation in identifying activity centers and where they wanted to see further investments to promote vibrancy.

O’Haver commented that she enjoyed Mitch Barloga’s presentation on trails and greenways in Indiana, and commented on how they were “miles ahead of us,” when it came to trails.

▪ **SWMPC New Planner Hire**

Mani said that the job posting for Suzann Flowers’ old position had closed. Mani said that John Egelhaaf, SWMPC’s Executive Director, was currently reviewing applications and making a decision on how to proceed.

▪ **Michiana Council of Governments (MACOG) Update**

There were no MACOG members present, and Mani said that he was unable to attend the May MACOG meeting.

5. Project Updates

Fiscal Year	Job Number	Agency	Project Name	Update Information	Date of last update	Bid Savings	Obligation Month	Bills Submitted
2012		Niles Dial A Ride	Preventative maintenance	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, need last approved TIP letter; ongoing	July 2013			
		Niles Dial A Ride	Free fare days-CMAQ project	Extended to summer 2013; happening in the summer; ongoing	July 2013			
2013	112102	Buchanan	Front St. Red Bud Trail to east city of Buchanan limit	Under Construction	May 2014		May/June	
		Buchanan Dial A Ride	Transit operations	Still operating	November 2013			
	112107	Cass County	Elkhart Road	Under Construction	May 2014			
	118207	Berrien County	IN-MI River Valley Trail	CON to be done July 25, 2014	May 2014			
2014	112104	Berrien County	Third St., Portage Rd	Have contract, scheduling work to	May 2014			
	104152	MDOT	CON phase Bridge replacement	August letting, construction in October, bridge removed in 2015	May 2014			
	112105	Niles	17 th Street	Completed	May 2014			
	118114	Niles DAR	Free fare days					
		Niles DAR	Maintenance software					
		Niles DAR	Preventative maintenance					

		Niles DAR	Replacement computers					
		Niles DAR	Replacement bus					
		Niles DAR	Operating assistance					
		Cass County RC	Bertrand Rd (Batchelor road to Gumwood) - Resurface	Awaiting contract	May 2014			
		Cass County RC	Redfield (Fir to Kline) -Resurface	Let and awarded— construction taking place in June	May 2014			
		Cass County RC	Gumwood Road TAP project	Waiting on township board approval for construction	May 2014			

Jolivette added another update—M-139 resurfacing from M-140 to Berrien Springs is scheduled for this year. The project had to be split into two years in the TIP, so the southern portion from the township line north to Berrien Springs will be done in 2015.

Bellina reiterated the need for resurfacing on M-60 in Cass County.

Gallagher added that a new facility was going into place at Old Berrien General Hospital for drug treatment and rehabilitation. This would have a serious impact on transit, as it will create a unique need for individuals who might have had their licenses suspended or revoked.

6. Land Use Updates

- Niles Township- working on update to zoning ordinance
- Countywide- Berrien County is working on an update to its master plan. This is not a complete re-write, but an update to certain sections.

7. Old Business

- **Walk and Roll**
Mani thanked committee members who had hosted Walk and Roll meetings with their local boards. Mani also said that SWMPC had received over 200 responses to the Walk and Roll survey, and would be closing it up in 2-3 weeks. The data from the Walk and Roll survey and from each community would be used to develop a full Walk and Roll plan for the NATS area, listing deficiencies and areas where community members would like to see improvements.
- **Revised Bylaws**
Mani said that two members had dialed in to the TAC bylaw review conference call, but that discussions were productive. Mani said that among the biggest changes being proposed were:

- An inclement weather/emergency policy, whereby county government closures would trigger a meeting cancellation or rescheduling, at the behest of the chair
- A clear procedure in place for new organizations or communities to join NATS.
- A phone-in participation option so that members from out of town could continue to participate in the meeting if travel conditions or other conflicts prevented them from physically attending, although they would be unable to vote.

Bellina wondered why someone participating in the meeting via phone would not be able to vote. Mani said that SWMPC staff had received guidance from MDOT Region stating that we might conflict with the Open Meetings Act in that a person's identity on the other end of the phone cannot be verified. O'Haver stated that a board she sits on allows phone-in participation and voting via phone. Gruchot said that it may be a case where it depends on the public nature of the body in question; it may not be allowed for the MPO. Ganum found guidance from the Michigan attorney general's office suggesting that voting via phone may be in conflict with the Open Meetings Act. Ganum said he would try to get verification on the applicability of those rules to a body like the MPO.

Gruchot recommended changing the wording regarding how "conflicts of interest" are reported to the chair from "shall advise," to "shall notify" to clear up any potential issues.

Bellina recommended that we bring the TAC Bylaws up to a vote next month. Mani agreed that he would make requested changes and aim for approval in June.

8. New Business

- **Annual Unified Planning Work Program FY 2015**

Mani said that the FY 2015 UWP followed a similar format to the FY 2014 UWP, continuing many of the same initiatives. The UWP is an annual document detailing all of the activities that the MPO will undertake in a given fiscal year. Mani said that among the key items that the MPO will address that are different from previous years are:

- Roadway National Functional Class (NFC) Review
- Gathering of land use data for scenario planning
- Gathering freight data from existing sources
- Full integration of the transportation plan with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Public Outreach for the Transit Consolidation Plan in Berrien County

A motion by O'Haver with support by Ray to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the FY 2015 UWP. **Motion passed.**

- **Economic Development Presentation by Ryan Soucy**

Mani introduced Ryan Soucy, Economic Development Planner at SWMPC. Mani said that this was a good opportunity to follow up from the joint MPO meeting in April, after hearing presentations on placemaking and some of the excellent initiatives taking place in Indiana. Soucy introduced himself and discussed the topics of placemaking and the 2013 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS that he developed through an extensive stakeholder participation process. The CEDS outlines key data and goals of economic development stakeholders throughout the Southwest Michigan region. Soucy said that the creation and preservation of vibrant places was a key piece of the CEDS, and that SWMPC had assisted by facilitating placemaking trainings and doing mapping activities. Ryan showed a video that illustrated the need to distinguish vibrant streets from highly functional roads---both are needed in the landscape.

Soucy's full presentation can be found at

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

- **TIP Amendments**

Mani said that there was only one TIP amendment this month, which is a cost increase on MDOT's M-139 bridge replacement project. Jolivette added that this was likely due to the initial bids coming in far too high.

Mani also said that there were two administrative modifications that the committee needed to be aware of. Niles Dial-A-Ride was switching its funding source on its replacement buses in 2014 and 2015. Mani said that these changes would be automatic once we had an approved TIP back.

A motion by Ganum with support by Personette to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the 2014-2017 TIP Amendments. **Motion passed.**

- **Legislative Updates**

- **Federal-** None.
- **State-** Lott said that there had been little action on various transportation revenue proposals, including a gas-tax increase, a diversion of tax revenues intended for schools, and a 6% wholesale tax. What is more concerning to him is the lack of action on the second round of project selection on the RRRF funds, which were supposed to be legislatively-selected projects. If no selection is made soon, the remaining monies will be distributed via the Act 51 formula.

9. Public Comment

None.

10. Privilege of the Floor

Gallagher said that the Berrien County Transit Consolidation Study had been completed and was posted online. Gallagher highly encouraged committee members to read the document, especially the executive summary, and that she would be giving a more formal presentation in the next couple of months.

The plan can be found at: <http://www.mywaythere.org/plansprogress.asp>

Gallagher also said that Wal-Mart was hiring in Benton Harbor, Niles, and Paw Paw, but that the Niles job fair was in Benton Harbor. This produces a unique transit issue with job seekers not being able to get to Benton Harbor. Kodis said that Kinexus was working to resolve this issue of getting people to the job fair.

11. Adjournment at 2:17 p.m.

- The next meeting will be June 24, 2014 at 1:00 PM.

Minutes compiled by: Gautam Mani, Transportation Planner, 2014.