

NILES/BUCHANAN/CASS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Technical Advisory Committee

MINUTES

June 24, 2014

1:00 P.M.

Niles City Council Chambers

TAC Members Present:	Jason Auvil, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians 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 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 (arrived at 1:30 PM) Dennis Schuh, Berrien County Public Transit Kris Welch, MDOT Planning
TAC Members Absent:	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 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
Others Present:	Matt Kodis, Kinexus John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning Melinda Michael, Four Flags Council on Tourism

1. Call to Order & Introductions

Meeting was called to order by Bellina at 1:05 p.m, and he also led the group in introductions.

2. Minutes

A motion by Berndt with support by Personette to approve the TAC Committee Meeting minutes from May 27, 2014.

Motion passed.

3. Public Comment

Kodis noted that Kinexus had a tourism report that was available online, as well as a complete set of State of the Workforce reports. The most recently completed State of the Workforce report focused on quality of life. All reports are available on Kinexus' website, www.kinexus.org

4. Staff Report

▪ SWMPC Staff Changes

Mani said that SWMPC had chosen to fill Suzann Flowers' position internally. Kim Gallagher, SWMPC's Senior Planner, will be taking over most of Suzann's transportation duties. Kim has been involved in transportation work for SWMPC for over a decade, including with the MPO, and Mani said that the MPO would benefit greatly from having Gallagher's experience and knowledge at meetings on a more consistent basis.

Mani also said that Kris Martin, formerly SWMPC's program assistant, had been promoted to Associate Planner. Kris would be taking over management of Kim's US-12 and Rideshare programs, and SWMPC is excited that he will be working on community master plans.

▪ MTPA Update

None.

▪ Traffic Safety Committee Meeting Update

Mani said that someone from SWMPC attends the quarterly meetings of the Southwest and South Central region's traffic safety committees. These are organized by the Michigan Office of Highway Safety and Planning (OHSP). This month's presentation was particularly interesting as it dealt with motorcycle safety. It turns out that Berrien County has the 9th highest rate of unendorsed motorcyclists, meaning those that have not completed the state-mandated training. This rate is the highest outside of the Grand Rapids and Detroit regions. Kodis brought up the issue of transferring of endorsements across state lines. Mani said that another issue was the low number of training facilities and long waiting lists to take the classes, particularly the advanced rider trainings. Mani said that he would continue to bring updates from these traffic safety committee meetings to MPO.

▪ CTAA Conference Update

Gallagher said that she had attended the Community Transportation Association of America conference in St. Paul, Minnesota two weeks earlier. The conference brought together mobility managers and transit professionals from smaller, more rural transit agencies than does the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) meeting. Gallagher noted that a lot of the presentations focused on non-emergency medical transportation, and that would be a topic that increasingly comes up in transit discussions.

▪ Walk and Roll Survey Update

Mani said that the online survey is now closed, though we still welcome feedback on non-motorized transportation. Mani said that SWMPC staff would be working on a presentation regarding the survey results using SurveyMonkey's analytics, and would be presenting next month. We will be able to break down responses by jurisdiction.

- **MACOG Update**

None.

- **Berrien County Transit Consolidation Study Presentation**

Gallagher presented on the recently concluded transit consolidation study for Berrien County. Gallagher presented the multiple ways that transit in Berrien County could be more efficient, both in terms of use of taxpayer dollars and in terms of being able to get passengers to their destinations in a timely manner. Gallagher showed newspaper clippings from the 1970s showing residents and community leaders organizing for transit, and in particular, financial support of transit. To improve the transit system would take a change from high-rate local millages to a lower-rate countywide millage.

Gallagher said in the 1970s, Niles Dial-A-Ride was working on attracting choice riders; those individuals who have cars but choose to use transit for some or most of their trips. Now we are at a point where the transit system is only being used by those who have no other choice. From an economic competitiveness standpoint, we need to be working on attracting choice riders.

Gallagher said that it was currently logistically difficult to use transit to get from Cass County to the City of Buchanan, even though it is a very short distance. The amount of time spent waiting for the right transit connections can be difficult, and part of that stems from a lack of schedule coordination. The fare structure is also very confusing to most transit riders and can lead to exorbitantly high fares just because someone leaves a jurisdictional boundary.

Ray said a countywide millage itself would solve a lot of problems and be more politically tenable. Gallagher countered that even with a millage, four separate systems would struggle with service boundaries. Ryman said strongly that consolidation should not be pushed on the county from above, and should not penalize those communities that chose to create transit at a grassroots level 30 or 40 years ago.

Michael said that her sister, who lost her vision from macular degeneration, struggled to use Berrien Bus from her rural location.

Schuh said that under the current structure, Berrien Bus' agreement with Buchanan Dial-a-Ride is on a year-to-year basis, making it impossible to do route planning or long-term joint marketing.

Gallagher's complete presentation is available at:

http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/nats_presentation_transit_plan_2014_1.pdf

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	July 2013			

				2012. There will be some project changes for the March meeting, need last approved TIP letter; ongoing				
		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	Complete	June 2014			
	118207	Berrien County	IN-MI River Valley Trail	Under Construction-struggling with high volume of rain and drainage directly behind Bell Road at Township Hall.	June 2014			
2014	112104	Berrien County	Third St., Portage Rd	Scheduling Work	June 2014			
	104152	MDOT	M-139 CON phase Bridge replacement	TIP Amendment submitted. Fall construction bridge removed in 2015	June 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	Scheduling contract	June 2014			
		Cass County RC	Redfield (Fir to Kline) -Resurface	Complete	June 2014			
		Cass County RC	Gumwood Road TAP project	GI package turned in this week	June 2014			

Jolivette noted one other update. M-139 from M-140 to Deans Hill Road (JN 124309) would be repaved during this construction season.

6. Land Use Updates

Gruchot said that Chikaming Township was working on its master plan update. SWMPC has received a copy for review.

7. Old Business

- Revised Bylaws

Mani said that there were very few changes he had made to the bylaws from last month's draft; mostly, it was correcting typographical errors and minor edits proposed by committee members. The substance is mostly the same as last month's draft, except with Kinexus having voting membership. Mani said that Matt Kodis had proven clearly his organization's value to NATS over the last two years, and that they ought to be grandfathered in and not have to go through the application process.

A motion by Ganum with support by Auvil to approve the revised TAC bylaws with corrections noted at the meeting .

Ayes: Unanimous

Nays: None.

The required 2/3 majority vote was attained. Motion passed.

8. New Business

- Legislative Updates

- **Federal-** In the absence of an FHWA representative, Lott said that there were no updates on a new transportation bill. However, FHWA was taking comment on the proposed rulemakings regarding performance measures and MPO/regional transportation planning through the federal docket at regulations.gov.

Kodis added that the Census Bureau is considering eliminating questions regarding income, disability, and time leaving for work from the American Community Survey due to privacy concerns. These pieces of data are vital for many local agencies in being able to access federal funds, including for the MPO. The commute timing data was particularly important for planning transit schedules and possible construction schedules. Mani said that the MPO needs to conduct environmental justice analysis in its long range plan, which would be impossible without data on income. In addition, Gallagher pointed out that 5307 transit funding was distributed based on ability to serve low income

populations. Kodis, Gallagher, and Mani strongly encouraged committee members to submit comments to the Census Bureau asking them to keep these questions.

The Census Bureau is currently taking public comment through its docket.

https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about_the_survey/content_review_feedback/

- **State-** Lott shared that the legislature was on recess, and would probably not be considering a new transportation revenue package until after the elections. There had been some progress on warranties on road projects, but that was all there was to report.

9. Public Comment

None.

10. Privilege of the Floor

Mani said that Barbara Rodebush, the wife of longtime NATS committee member Johnie Rodebush, had recently passed away after a long illness. There was a condolence card that NATS members could sign for him, and Mani said that Rodebush would certainly appreciate it.

11. Adjournment at 2:27 p.m.

- The next meeting will be July 22, 2014 at 1:00 PM.

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