

TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Technical Advisory Committee

Minutes

August 17, 2015

9:00 A.M.

Kinexus Anchor Rooms A+B

TAC MEMBERS PRESENT:	Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission Chris Cook, City of Benton Harbor Matt Galbraith, MDOT- Southwest Region John Gruchot, Berrien County Community Development Jason Latham, MDOT - Southwest Region Scott Weber, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (ex officio)
TAC MEMBERS ABSENT:	Vince Desjardins, Southwest Michigan Regional Airport Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) Representative, Sodus Township Fred Featherly, MDOT Passenger Division (ex officio) Joanne Johnson, Disability Network Southwest Michigan Erin Jolivette, MDOT - Coloma TSC John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning Representative, Benton Charter Township Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) John Olson, Village of Shoreham and Royalton Township Gloria Payne, Lake Charter Township Bill Purvis, TCATA Thad Rieder, Cornerstone Alliance Donna Wittl, MDOT Statewide Urban Travel Analysis (ex officio) Representative, City of Bridgman Tim Zebell, City of St. Joseph
SWMPC STAFF PRESENT:	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani
OTHERS PRESENT:	Ron Griffin, St. Joseph Charter Township

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Berndt called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m. and led the group in introductions.

2. MINUTES:

- A motion was made by Cook with support by Gruchot to approve the minutes of the July TAC meeting. **Motion passed.**

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

4. STAFF REPORT

▪ **Colfax Avenue Bicycle Improvements**

Mani shared the good news that there were now bicycle lanes or "sharrows" throughout most of Colfax Avenue within the City of Benton Harbor. The bicycle infrastructure was added very late in the project. Mani said that Chris Cook helped make the bicycle infrastructure a reality by acting after the resurfacing project was complete but before striping had taken place.

Cook said that before the road was striped after the resurfacing project, he sat down with the contractor and looked at the striping plan. The width of the road gave the City the opportunity to add bicycle infrastructure and still preserve some on-street parking. Cook said that the bicycle lanes were immediately in use, as evidenced by the pictures. In most areas, the road right of way was wide enough to include dedicated bicycle lanes, but in other segments "sharrows" were used.

Gruchot asked about the concept of "sharrows." Cook said they alerted drivers that bicyclists were on the road, and also encouraged bicyclists by clearly informing them that they are welcome on the road. Latham said that MDOT had been looking at using sharrows in locations like the M-139 bridge project in Niles, where it would make no sense to have a dedicated bike lane on the bridge itself when there is no bicycle lane on either side of the bridge.

Griffin asked whether these new bicycle lanes meant that the City was now connected with 5-foot wide shoulders all the way out to Nickerson. Berndt and Mani clarified that Nickerson has a wide shoulder, while Colfax within St. Joseph Township/Benton Township is signed as a bicycle route. There are no bicycle markings on the pavement along the township stretches of Colfax, however.

Cook said that proper infrastructure for bicyclists is important because bicycling is becoming more popular; cyclists are going to be a part of transportation, and proper infrastructure will only make cycling safer. Cook recounted his recent experience cycling in Denver, and how much that city has prioritized cycling. Cook said that if places like Denver, New York, and Chicago can make it easier to cycle despite much more traffic and potential conflict points, we ought to be able to make cycling safe and viable on places like Colfax Avenue.

▪ **Local Road Safety Plan Update**

Mani updated committee members on progress on the Local Road Safety Plan, which is a collaborative effort between SWMPC and consultants retained by MDOT to address systemic safety issues in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties. The consultants have delivered a memorandum outlining countermeasures that can be used to address safety deficiencies in the area. Mani said that SWMPC staff were pushing hard to make this a document that could be useful once the consultants are gone, and so that communities without engineering expertise on hand could still make preliminary decisions about safety solutions to pursue. SWMPC was suggesting the following changes to the countermeasures memo:

- A matrix of high, medium, and low cost solutions, as well as funding sources.
- A description of the circumstances that warrant the use of certain countermeasures vs. others (i.e. when a roundabout is appropriate vs. a four way stop vs. education).
- A framework for various agencies working on safety issues to pool resources and work together.

Gallagher said that right now, the countermeasures memo is not at a point where SWMPC staff can share it with committee members.

- **Project Selection Criteria Working Group Meeting Scheduling Notice sent out**
Mani said that a doodle poll had been sent out to schedule a meeting of the project selection criteria working group for the next TIP cycle (FY 2017-2020), and that the meeting would take place in September. Mani encouraged committee members who had volunteered to be on the working group to fill out the poll.

- **Draft General Program Accounts Policy- Vote in September or October**
Mani said that MPO staff had drafted a policy on General Program Accounts (GPAs) for perusal by the committees. General Program Accounts can group projects of a similar work type or phase type together. This can potentially reduce the number of TIP amendments. Small changes to a project can be done by administrative modification. Only when a change is large enough to significantly impact the entire GPA would a TIP amendment be triggered. Processing a TIP amendment takes funds in the form of legal notices and staff time at the regional, state, and federal level. The MPO would still maintain oversight under its TIP amendment policy. A list of individual projects would still be maintained.

Mani and Gallagher said that the MPO may use general program accounts for transit projects in the future, and the policy leaves that possibility open. However, for now, staff are proposing that GPAs be established only for the following conditions:

- MDOT Trunkline Bridge Preservation Projects
- MDOT Trunkline Safety Projects
- Pre-Construction Phases of MDOT Projects
- Rail Safety Projects (generated by MDOT)

The committees will revisit the General Program Accounts policy in September.

5. PUBLIC TRANSIT

- **SWMPC Transit Updates**
Gallagher said that she was continuing to work on the RFP for the Berrien Countywide Service Planning grant. Michael Benham from the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority would be coming to Benton Harbor in September to discuss with the Strategic Leadership Council the success of service planning in the Ann Arbor area, which includes communities of all sizes and some that resemble both small urban and rural areas of Berrien County.

- **TCATA Updates**

None.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Regional Inclusive Community Coalition (RICC)**

None.

- **Walk and Roll Report**

None.

7. COMMUNITY LAND USE AND ZONING UPDATES

None.

8. PROJECT UPDATES

- Obligation Thermometer- Galbraith reported that we are still waiting on final apportionment numbers regarding obligation authority.

Fiscal Year	Job Number	Agency	Project Name	Update Information	Date of last update	Cost Changes	Projected Letting and obligation date
2012							
	113585	MDOT	I-94 Red Arrow Highway to Livingston Rd	Plan Review January 20th- still on track for January 2016 construction	January 2015		
	103293	MDOT	I-94 at Nickerson Ave in Benton Township (roadside facility)	Scheduled for October letting; returned to region for funding to move forward; no change; March 2013 Moving Forward for January 2013 letting July 2013: On hold	July 2013		
		Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority	New expanded hours	July 2012: Continued through 2013 (2014 funding seems less certain); September 2012: Continued Service; 11/2012 after 2013 the state will match buses but	November 2013		

				nothing else; December 2012- already been awarded; November 2013: not funded			
		Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority	New line haul route	July 2012: Continued through 2013 (2014 funding seems less certain); ; 11/2012 after 2013 the state will match buses but nothing else July 2013: JARC funding cut in half, project will proceed.	July 2013		
		Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority	Transit vehicle replacement (3 total)	July 2014: Buses on the way, with propane conversions	July 2014		
2013	115751	MDOT	I-94 WB (from I-196 for 0.4 miles to start of 2008 concrete pavement)	Suspended project	January 2015		
	113585	MDOT	I-94 WB (On I- 94 from Red Arrow Highway for 3.0 miles to Livingston Road)	Mill existing and place 2 HMA overlay-ROW phase; no change	December 2012		
	110779	MDOT	I-94 EW and WB over Hickory Creek	January 2015: August 2015 Construction Completion	January 2015		
		TCATA	Replacement 3 buses CMAQ project	2013 applications are due to the state in December; July 2013: Waiting for contract approval	July 2013		
		TCATA	Expanded hours- JARC grant				
		TCATA	Mobility manager grant	11/2012 Purvis stated that this will be available for 2013 but not sure if funding will be there for 2012; SWMPC handling this	December 2012		
		TCATA	New line haul to Stevensville	Project is continuing; hoping to get state funds in 2014	January 2013		
		TCATA	Bus operations	Not submit yet			
	116924	SWMPC	Berrien County-	In progress			

			Rideshare				
2014	112087	Benton Harbor	Broadway Avenue/Colfax Avenue Resurfacing	January 2015: Broadway Avenue is completed, Colfax Avenue will be done in June 2015	March 2015		
	121011	Benton Harbor	Pipestone at Empire Traffic Signal Upgrade	January 2015: Restoration will take place in Spring; fiber optic cable still needs to be run	January 2015		
		Village of Shoreham	Brown School Road Resurfacing	August 2015: In progress	August 2015		
2015		Berrien County	Marquette Woods Road Restore and Rehab/Sidewalks	August 2015: Construction will begin August 31	August 2015		
		Berrien County	Napier Avenue at Pipestone St Traffic Signal	August 2015: Obligated; September 4th Construction will begin	August 2015		
		City of Benton Harbor	Pipestone St at Britain Avenue Traffic Signal	August 2015: Submitted for Obligation	August 2015		
		City of St. Joseph	Botham Avenue	May 2015: Will be constructed this summer.	May 2015		
		City of St. Joseph	Park St. Bridge	March 2015: Pre-construction meeting on Thursday	March 2015		
		MDOT	I-94 Signing Project from Puetz Road to I-196	January 2015: September 1-October 16	January 2015		
		MDOT	M-63 bridge over Hickory Creek	June 8-July 21	January 2015		
		MDOT	M-63 Resurfacing	This summer	May 2015		

9. OLD BUSINESS

- **NFC Proposed Changes**

Mani said that there were three requests for changes to National Functional Classification to be submitted during the statewide review process, which ends September 1st. Staff were requesting MPO endorsement of these changes so that they could be submitted to MDOT. Ultimately, decisions about whether a road should be reclassified rest with the Federal Highway Administration after they have reviewed all criteria.

Mani said that SWMPC had reviewed the traffic counts for the segments in question and that they were at high enough levels to warrant consideration by FHWA. The two change requests are:

- Maiden Lane from Red Arrow Highway to Cleveland Avenue- change from local road to minor collector, thus making it federal aid eligible.
- Momany Drive from Upton Drive to M-63- change from local road to minor collector, thus making it federal aid eligible.
- Whitwam Drive within the city limits of St. Joseph- change from local road to minor collector, thus making it federal aid eligible.

A motion by Gruchot with support by Cook for the TwinCATS TAC to endorse the National Functional Classification change requests as proposed. **Motion passed.**

▪ **US-31 Considerations**

Mani said that based on Congressman Upton's comments last month regarding US-31 not being in MDOT's five-year plan, there had been renewed calls from MPO committee members to write a letter to MDOT Director Kirk Steudle to urge the completion of the US-31 freeway. Mani and Gallagher walked committee members through a past history of efforts regarding US-31:

- In 2004, a supplemental environmental impact statement was delivered on the project, and FHWA issued its record of decision supporting the location of the US-31 route.
- In 2006, MDOT tried to let the project, but was unable to do so while funding was still available. There are issues
- In 2009, SWMPC wrote a letter to Bobbie Welke, then-Region Engineer at MDOT Southwest Region, requesting that US-31 completion be included in the project list for ARRA (stimulus) funds.
- In 2013, State Rep. Al Pscholka sent a letter to Kirk Steudle requesting that US-31 completion be made a priority based on regional needs. Steudle responded by stating that MDOT is in a situation where they are focused on pavement preservation rather than capacity expansion.

Mani said that SWMPC had clarified the status of the project with FHWA, particularly with regards to money spent on the project going back to the federal government. MDOT is not currently in danger of having to give money back because they have spent funds on pre-engineering the final phase of US-31 within ten years of obligation. MDOT has done ROW acquisition using state funds, and have thus not obligated any money for that phase. Construction must begin within 20 years of obligating ROW phase funds.

Latham said that there likely will be federal expenditures on the project whenever MDOT reconstructs the I-94 BL bridge over I-94. That bridge is currently deteriorating, and the pavement is in fair to poor condition. Once reconstruction occurs, MDOT will attempt to move the bridge slightly south so that it can be aligned for the US-31 completion. Relocation of the bridge can potentially be a catalyst for completion. At this point, reconstruction of the bridge is likely to occur in 2021.

Mani also clarified that Congressman Upton's statement that US-31 is no longer in MDOT's five year plan was not entirely accurate. The PE phase of US-31 completion is in the five year plan, effectively making US-31 a desired project if funds are available for new construction.

Mani and Gallagher both suggested that sending another letter to Kirk Steudle was likely to yield a courteous response stating that MDOT was in pavement preservation mode, and was probably not the most effective means of advancing US-31 towards completion. Mani and Gallagher said that they were meeting with MDOT's modeling division and that it would be useful to have data showing the levels of new truck traffic that would be coming on the completed US-31 from Indiana, and the benefits to the region.

Gruchot recommended that staff draft a letter, but wait to send it until more data could be added to the document.

- **State Legislature “Lockbox” action considerations**

Mani reiterated that there had been committee member concerns last month regarding the State Senate's version of the transportation funding package that includes a "lockbox provision," whereby some of the new revenue generated goes directly to the treasury. MDOT would have to come up with a plan to build roads to a 50-year (or "European") standard, reduce road costs, and keep roads from deteriorating further. However, the most controversial provision as expressed by TwinCATS members is that funds from the Treasury can only be released once a project list is developed by the state legislature and a resolution passes. This sets the stage for legislative project selection like that which occurred for the Roads, Risk and Reserve (RRR) allocation last year, and many committee members are concerned that this circumvents the local and MPO planning process. Educating our legislators on that process may be of value.

Gruchot and Cook recommended that perhaps all MPOs in Michigan could be more effective in educating members of the state legislature about the value of the planning process, as together they could hold more clout than just TwinCATS alone. Mani said he would have that discussion with the Michigan Transportation Planning Association.

10. NEW BUSINESS

- **TIP Amendments**

Mani said that there were two projects being added to the TIP this month. They are both MDOT bridge projects. PE and SUB phases will occur in 2015, and construction is slated to take place in 2019. The projects are as follows:

- 2015- Add PE and SUB phases of I-94 BL (Main St) bridge preservation over the St. Joseph River. PE phase cost is \$14,427 and SUB cost is \$412,571. Total project cost is \$3,155,042.

Construction phase will take place in 2019 and will be added to the Illustrative List.

- 2015- Add PE and SUB phases of M-63 bridge preservation over the St. Joseph River. PE phase cost is \$16,394 and SUB phase cost is \$558,897. Total project cost is \$4,250,762.

Construction phase will take place in 2019 and will be added to the Illustrative List.

A motion by Cook with support by Gruchot to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the August TIP Amendments. **Motion passed.**

- **Federal Highway Administration Updates**

No updates.

- **MDOT Updates**

Galbraith shared that the Michigan House was considering a new funding package for transportation that would take \$600 million from existing revenue sources and raise an additional \$600 million through new taxes and registration fees . It was not clear at the time whether any action would be taken on this proposal prior to the summer recess.

- **News Items of Interest**

- South Shore Line Bicycles

Mani said that there was exciting news to report regarding. Originally, NICTD, which runs the South Shore Line, was planning to do a study on adding capacity for bicycles on trains that would take until 2021. After outcry and pressure from various citizen's groups and government agencies in northwestern Indiana, NICTD proposed a prototype bike rack and also a pilot program to begin by April 2016. Capacity for bicycles will only be available on some weekend trains and only at stations with wheelchair-accessible platforms. There will be capacity for 25-30 bikes on these trains.

Weber said that groups in Northwestern Indiana were very focused on ensuring that NICTD followed its intended timeline.

11. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

None.

12. ADJOURNMENT at 10:29 AM.

Next meeting is September 21, 2015 at 9:00 AM in Anchor Rooms A+B at Kinexus (Michigan Works!).

Compiled by: Gautam Mani, SWMPC Associate Planner, 2015.