

TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

Minutes

January 25, 2016

10:30 A.M.

St. Joseph City Commission Chambers

POLICY MEMBERS PRESENT:	Calli Berg, Benton Charter Township Denise Cook, St. Joseph Charter Township Vince DesJardins, Southwest Michigan Regional Airport Erin Jolivette, MDOT Coloma Office Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region Carolyn Fowler, Benton Charter Township William Hodge, Berrien County Planning Commission John Olson, Village of Shoreham, Village of Stevensville, Royalton Township Bill Purvis, Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority Dan Roberts, MDOT Kalamazoo TSC Roger Seely, St. Joseph Charter Township Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township
POLICY MEMBERS ABSENT:	Bill Chickering, Berrien County Board of Commissioners Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) Juan Ganum, City of Bridgman John Gast, Lake Charter Township Representative, Sodus Township John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning Tim Lynch, Berrien County Road Commission Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Brad Sharlow, MDOT (ex officio) Darwin Watson, City of Benton Harbor Representative, Cornerstone Alliance
SWMPC STAFF PRESENT:	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Stauffer called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m. and led the group in introductions.

2. CHANGES TO THE POSTED AGENDA

There were no changes requested to the posted agenda.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

4. MINUTES

A motion by Hodge with support by Stauffer to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2015 Policy Committee Meeting. **Motion Passed.**

5. STAFF REPORT

▪ **Fixing America's Surface Transportation FAST Act Summary**

Mani said that since the committees had last met in November, Congress had passed a new transportation bill, known as the FAST Act. The FAST Act increases transportation investment nationwide primarily through non-transportation revenue sources. Included in committee members' meeting packets was a brief, preliminary analysis of what the FAST Act would mean for the TwinCATS and NATS MPOs.

The FAST Act largely maintains the program structure of MAP-21, the previous transportation authorization. Mani said that more information would be provided once further estimates were developed at the state level. However, it is safe to say that the TwinCATS MPO would receive an increase in Surface Transportation Program funding over current levels for the next several years.

The FAST Act also breaks precedent by including passenger rail in the main transportation authorization. Previously, Amtrak was authorized under a separate bill. Amtrak will still need to go through the appropriations process annually, but inclusion in the main transportation authorization provides a longer-term policy vision for the agency.

▪ **Benton Harbor Safe Routes to School**

Mani directed committee members to an article from the Herald Palladium in their packets about two schools in Benton Township that were undertaking the Safe Routes to School process: Hull International Academy on Territorial Road and the Arts and Communication Academy on Napier Avenue. Mani said that SWMPC had been approached by the principals of the two schools about their interest in providing better walking and bicycling facilities and undertaking a planning process as is required to use Safe Routes to School funds. Mani said that SWMPC had convened an initial meeting with stakeholders from MDOT, the schools, and the Berrien County Road Commission. Michigan State University was now assisting MDOT with the survey and data gathering process for the schools. Mani said that at the initial meeting, MDOT and others were quite surprised by the extent of the ROW and safety issues in the area. The project will need to be done in phases, which poses complications in the planning process for Safe Routes to School.

Purvis pointed out the concern that the schools using Safe Routes money might close. Gallagher and Mani said that was always a valid concern, but with these two schools, there would be benefits to having sidewalks, non-motorized paths, or bicycle lanes to the public at large even if schools were closed.

Gallagher said that the Safe Routes program funds infrastructure improvements such as new sidewalks or non-motorized paths, and that a small portion of the grant goes towards educational activities on walking. The grants are usually for \$200,000. The tricky thing with Safe Routes to School funding is that if you use the funding to build 5-foot sidewalks, they must be on both sides of the road.

▪ **CMAQ Funding Update**

Mani noted that an update on Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) projects funded within Berrien County and throughout the TwinCATS area had been provided in meeting packets. Mani advised committee members that in Michigan, new activities were now eligible for CMAQ funds, including:

- Installation of new, 5-foot wide sidewalks on a case-by-case basis.
- Replacement of municipal and county fleet vehicles, including the cabs and chassis of certain types of plow trucks

Other activities such as 10-foot wide non-motorized paths, traffic signal replacements, and bus replacements are still eligible for CMAQ funds.

Gallagher showed a graphic with the percentage of CMAQ funds in Berrien County that go towards each type of project from 2017-2020. Transit buses use approximately 61% of the CMAQ funds, per Berrien County's policy of using CMAQ funding to take care of transit agency needs.

- **2017-2020 Call for Projects Released**

Mani said that despite the funding increase under the FAST Act, MDOT was still advising MPOs to be conservative with their STP funding targets for 2017-2020. Mani said that TwinCATS was keeping its funding estimate flat at 2017 levels by assuming revenues of \$871,925 per year, so this was still a conservative estimate. Projects can be added or modified once new estimates come in from the state.

Applications are due on February 8th by 5 PM via email. An application has been sent out to every jurisdiction that is eligible to apply for this funding. The eligible entities include the City of Bridgman, City of Benton Harbor, City of St. Joseph, Village of Stevensville, Village of Shoreham, and the Berrien County Road Commission. Townships should apply through the Road Commission. The application and more information about the TIP are available at: <http://www.swmpc.org/tcats1720tip.asp>.

6. PUBLIC TRANSIT

- **SWMPC Transit Updates**

None.

- **TCATA Updates**

Purvis reported that in 2015, TCATA's ridership had gone down for the first time since 2010. Ridership on fixed route is still increasing, but demand-response ("dial-a-ride") ridership is decreasing. Purvis said that one key issue is a shortage of drivers. TCATA and other transit agencies in Berrien County were struggling to hire drivers to replace new ones that were leaving. Purvis said that another issue was the new dispatching system where all rides were scheduled.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

Mani noted that at the TAC meeting, Johnson had reported out on the RICC's letter supporting better transit coordination throughout Berrien County. Johnson reported that the RICC had, at its last meeting, begun work on a letter expressing its continued support for consolidated or highly-coordinated transit throughout Berrien County, and the benefits that high-quality transit service would provide. Johnson said that she anticipated the letter being completed by the February RICC meeting.

- **Walk and Roll Report**

Mani noted that a member of the public had commented on the lack of activity on the Walk and Roll committee of late. Mani said that ideally, the Walk and Roll committee would have met by now to discuss 2017-2020 projects and whether they met the Complete Streets Policy. However, consideration of the Complete Streets Policy will need to be folded into the Project Selection Committee in order to get initial projects selected in time for MDOT's deadlines.

8. COMMUNITY LAND USE AND ZONING UPDATES

Gallagher congratulated St. Joseph Township on having gotten Eagle Technologies to move into the area. They will be adding 100 new high-tech jobs at the former Greentree Composites building.

9. PROJECT UPDATES

Gallagher and Mani noted that written project updates for TCATA and MDOT were distributed, and are attached at the end of these minutes. Other project updates are listed below.

City of Benton Harbor:

1. Pipestone at Wall Street traffic signal replacement for \$99,719 in federal funds. Will be having a Grade Inspection (GI) meeting in February.
2. Pipestone at Britain Traffic Signal replacement for \$160,000 in federal funds. Will be having pre-construction meetings this week for a spring construction.

Berrien County Road Commission

1. Shawnee Road from Jericho Road to the City limits of Bridgman resurfacing for \$373,658 in federal funds and a local cost of \$91,066. Will have final plans submitted as of January 25th.
2. Pipestone at Napier Traffic Signal Replacement for \$225,000 in federal funds is under construction.

City of St. Joseph

1. Lakeview Avenue reconstruct from Hilltop to Highland for \$90,000 in federal funds and \$370,000 in local funds. The City anticipates making the May project letting.

10. OLD BUSINESS

None.

11. NEW BUSINESS

- **Review and Approval of Project Prioritization Procedure for 2017-2020 STP funds**

Mani verified that all those present in the room had adequately heard the discussion at the TAC meeting regarding the project prioritization procedure and the concerns regarding local match and planning criteria [Please consult the minutes of the January 25, 2016 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting for a full description of the discussion.]. All verified that they had been there, so Mani said he would not go through a full description again.

A motion by Seely with support by Purvis to approve use of the project scoring system with the understanding that Section 2a., Section 6a and Section 6b be subject to a "sensitivity analysis" to see if they impact the projects that are selected, that the criterion regarding safety project applications be eliminated, and with the understanding that projects will still be selected through

an open, public process and after extensive debate by the TAC and Policy Committees. **Motion passed.**

- **MDOT and FHWA Updates**
None.

12. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

Jolivette introduced Dan Roberts from the MDOT Kalamazoo TSC. With the reorganization of MDOT's TSC offices, Dan would be attending many of the TwinCATS meetings moving forward.

13. ADJOURNMENT at 11:50 AM.

Next meeting is February 22, 2016 at 9:00 AM in the St. Joseph City Commission Chambers, 700 Broad St.

Compiled by: Gautam Mani, SWMPC Associate Planner, 2016.

DRAFT