

# TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

## Minutes

February 22, 2016

10:30 A.M.

St. Joseph City Commission Chambers

<b>POLICY MEMBERS PRESENT:</b>	Bill Chickering, Berrien County Board of Commissioners Denise Cook, St. Joseph Charter Township Juan Ganum, City of Bridgman Dan Roberts, MDOT Kalamazoo TSC John Hodgson, City of St. Joseph Deb Kavanaugh-Frank, Hagar Township Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region Tim Lynch, Berrien County Road Commission Roger Seely, St. Joseph Charter Township Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township Steve Tilly, Royalton Township
<b>POLICY MEMBERS ABSENT:</b>	Andrea Dewey, Federal Highway Administration (ex officio) Vince DesJardins, Southwest Michigan Regional Airport Tim Fenderbosch, St. Joseph Charter Township Carolyn Fowler, Benton Charter Township John Gast, Lake Charter Township William Hodge, Berrien County Planning Commission Dave Chandler, Sodus Township John Lanum, MDOT Statewide Planning Stewart McKenzie, Federal Transit Administration (ex officio) Brad Sharlow, MDOT (ex officio) Darwin Watson, City of Benton Harbor Cathy Tilley, Cornerstone Alliance
<b>SWMPC STAFF PRESENT:</b>	Kim Gallagher Gautam Mani
<b>OTHERS PRESENT:</b>	Ron Griffin, St. Joseph Charter Township

### 1. CALL TO ORDER:

Stauffer called the meeting to order at 10:37 a.m. and led the group in introductions.

### 2. CHANGES TO THE POSTED AGENDA

None.

### 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

#### 4. MINUTES

A motion by Hodgson with support by Lynch to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2016 TwinCATS Policy Committee meeting as presented, and the minutes of the project selection committee from February 16, as amended. **Motion Passed.**

#### 5. STAFF REPORT

- None.

#### 6. PUBLIC TRANSIT

- **SWMPC Transit Updates**  
None.
- **TCATA Updates**  
None.

#### 7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Regional Inclusive Community Coalition (RICC)**  
Mani reported that at the previous meeting, Joanne Johnson had reported that she was in the process of completing a letter in support of consolidation of the four transit agencies in Berrien County. Johnson said they expected to complete the letter by the end of this month.
- **Walk and Roll Report**  
Mani said that the Walk and Roll committee had not met, but that SWMPC staff had undertaken a review of projects submitted to for STP funding to see whether they complied with the TwinCATS Complete Streets Policy. They would be presenting those findings later on in the agenda.

#### 8. COMMUNITY LAND USE AND ZONING UPDATES

Ganum shared that the City of Bridgman was in the process of doing a major overhaul of its zoning code. Williams & Works is working with the City on switching over to a form-based code.

#### 9. PROJECT UPDATES

##### **City of Benton Harbor**

2016 Pipestone at Wall Street Traffic Signal replacement project- Grade Inspection plans have been submitted. The City anticipates a May project letting and a summer construction.

##### **City of St. Joseph**

2016 Lakeview Avenue from Hilltop to Highland Avenue reconstruct- the project had some issues with MDOT's programming system that have delayed obligation, but should be able to proceed now. They are anticipating meeting the May letting

##### **Berrien County Road Commission**

2016 Shawnee Road from the Bridgman city limits to Jericho Road- project applicant anticipates May 6<sup>th</sup> letting.

2016 Pipestone Traffic Signal at Entrance to Meijer- Final plans have been approved.

2016 Napier at Pipestone traffic signal- construction is almost complete.

**MDOT**

No updates

**TCATA**

No updates

**10. OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**11. NEW BUSINESS**

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

Gallagher gave an overview of the application and selection process for the \$871,925 in Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds that TwinCATS receives as a federal allocation each year between 2017-2020. These projects feed the four-year Transportation Improvement Program, a document that TwinCATS develops every three years.

Gallagher noted that at last month's TwinCATS meetings, the Policy Committee had approved a prioritization system for these projects. Federal, state, and local planning factors had all informed that prioritization system. Gallagher also gave an overview of the timeline for project submittal and selection, and that additional opportunities would be forthcoming for comments on projects. The selection committee had recommended a list of projects to TAC, who in turn recommended projects to Policy Committee.

Gallagher shared that \$11.8 million in federal funds was requested, but only \$3.5 million in funds were available, so prioritization was needed. A total of 29 projects were submitted by jurisdictions, which is many more than previous calls. Berg asked why so many projects were submitted this time as opposed to previous calls. Berndt said that the roads are falling apart in our area, and there has been additional deferred maintenance since the last Call for Projects.

Gallagher went over the approved tools that TwinCATS has to evaluate projects submitted, including the prioritization system, the Long Range Plan, and the Complete Streets Policy. Gallagher reiterated that the Complete Streets Policy was something that TwinCATS members agreed to in 2014 as a means of efficiently allocating increasingly scarce federal dollars to projects that meet multiple long range plan goals. 25 of the 29 projects submitted for funding met the Complete Streets Policy.

Gallagher went through the results of the scoring system, and also the road conditions on segments where projects were recommended for funding by the project selection committee. Nine of those projects were rated at a 3-4 on the PASER system, whereas the other two projects were at a 5-7, allowing for potential preventative maintenance to extend the useful life of the road.

Gallagher also shared the analysis of conformity to the Complete Streets Policy. Of the \$3.5 million in federal funds, approximately \$1.9 million conforms to the Complete Streets Policy, meaning that the funding helps provide for the needs of all users. That is progress over the last

Call for Projects. However, nearly \$1.6 million worth of projects do not conform to the Policy, which should raise concerns as to whether TwinCATS is meeting its own policies.

There were three projects for 2018-2020 that were recommended for funding despite not meeting the Complete Streets Policy. Gallagher said that a fourth project did not meet the Complete Streets Policy. In other words, all four projects submitted that did not meet the Policy had been selected for funding. It would be up to the Policy Committee to determine whether these projects were exempt from the Policy or whether they needed to take measures to meet the Policy.

Each of the projects recommended for funding were discussed in detail. Mani pointed out that the Hilltop Road from M-63 to BL-94 mill-and-fill project was not compliant with the Complete Streets Policy. Since the project was selected prior to the new Complete Streets Policy taking effect, it had been “grandfathered in.” However, the City of St. Joseph had made an earnest attempt to comply with the policy and was still trying to acquire easements in order to at least put in some stretches of sidewalk on the project.

A further project that did not meet the Complete Streets Policy was the resurfacing of Nickerson Avenue from M-139 east to 700 feet east of Woodley. Mani said that the land uses around the project did not generate a high volume of pedestrian activity. However, there are pedestrians who use this segment to access Plaza Drive and Cinema Way. The TAC had recommended that the project be exempt under Exemption #2 of Section 6 of the Complete Streets Policy; the pedestrian volume is not high enough for the benefits of non-motorized infrastructure on this segment to outweigh the costs.

Additionally, two projects on Napier Avenue did not meet the Complete Streets Policy as they do not provide any facilities for those not in automobiles. In St. Joseph Township, an overlay project was recommended on Napier Avenue from the St. Joseph River to 3700 Feet west. In Benton Township, a project was recommended on Napier Avenue from I-94 to 4300 feet west. These projects were recommended by the project selection committee and the TAC committee for funding despite not meeting the Complete Streets Policy. Mani said that it was up to the Policy Committee to determine whether these projects are exempt. Mani said that TAC had recommended that these projects be exempt from the policy with the understanding that TwinCATS continue to engage with the townships involved to provide non-motorized elements and make progress towards complete streets.

Gallagher pointed out that this was not a situation of SWMPC or the TwinCATS organization trying to impose complete streets on townships. The demand for these facilities is well documented and it is also included as a priority in the local master plan. This is an opportunity to assist the township with implementing its own master plan.

Hodgson said that he understood the road commission’s need to maintain pavement, and understood the townships’ concern with the cost of maintaining sidewalks. However, he still did not see how the TwinCATS Policy Committee could grant an exemption to the Napier Avenue projects given the extreme, documented need for non-motorized facilities and the intent of the complete streets policy to assist communities with providing those facilities.

Seely acknowledged that St. Joseph Township had been in continued discussions with the Road Commission about sidewalks. Tim Fenderbosch had participated actively in those discussions, but they had stalled since he had been out of the office for some time. Griffin suggested that the

Walk and Roll Committee get together with members of the two Townships to brainstorm solutions once again. According to Griffin, the Walk and Roll Committee should really be the force in engaging with the two Townships.

Chickering wondered whether Benton Township had expressed any interest in sidewalks, as he knew from his own experience that St. Joseph Township recognized they were an issue. Latham conveyed that the Township had consistently expressed that it was not interested in building and maintaining sidewalks. Chickering said that with a new administration in place at the Township, it was worth reengaging them on this question of sidewalks.

Latham suggested the possibility of SWMPC requesting additional funding through its UWP to have a study done on the whole Napier Avenue corridor to develop cost estimates for solutions. This way, solutions could be proposed for both Townships at the same time.

Stauffer said that 10 foot paths are tricky even when ROW is available because once you have committed to a side of the road for the path, you need to stick with that side. If you apply for federal or state funded projects to continue those paths, MDOT is going to be less supportive of paths that have to cross over to the other side of the street.

Mani said that concrete actions would need to be taken by the Policy Committee to help the townships come into compliance with the policy. It would be very easy to make another commitment to working with the townships, and then forgetting about it in the months ahead as TwinCATS moves on to other business.

Stauffer also cautioned about the danger of non-compliance with complete streets becoming a priority. If a community gets a non-compliant project funded, what incentive do they have to comply with the policy in future years? Stauffer said that on

Hodgson said that the committees need to revisit the list of non-motorized priorities for TwinCATS to see what progress we are making towards implementing the Walk and Roll plan. Chickering suggested that the level of discussion on these topics should be increased both inside and outside the TwinCATS meetings.

A motion was made by Lynch with support by Seely to approve Complete Streets Exemption #2 for the Nickerson Avenue resurfacing project in 2018, and Complete Streets Exemption #4 for the Napier Avenue from the St. Joseph River to 3700 feet east in St. Joseph Township, and the Napier Avenue from I-94 to 4300 feet west in Benton Township. **Motion passed unanimously.**

A motion was made by Stauffer with support by Tilly to approve the recommended project list using STP funds for 2017-2020, with the understanding that TwinCATS members would continue to meet with officials from Benton Charter Township and St. Joseph Township to assist them in achieving TwinCATS' Walk and Roll Plan and Long Range Plan goals on their federal-aid road projects. **Motion passed unanimously.**

- **MDOT and FHWA Updates**  
None.

**12. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:**

**13. ADJOURNMENT at 11:55 AM.**

Next meeting is March 21, 2016 at 10:30 AM at St. Joseph City Commission Chambers.

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

DRAFT