



Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

376 West Main Street, Suite 130 • Benton Harbor, MI 49022-3651

TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

2017-2020 STP Project Selection Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday February 16, 2016 at 2:00 PM

376 W Main St Suite 130 Benton Harbor, MI 49022

Attendees

Brian Berndt, Berrien County Road Commission
David Chandler, Sodus Township
Chris Cook, City of Benton Harbor
Denise Cook, St. Joseph Charter Township
Louis Csokasy, Berrien County Road Commission
Ron Griffin, St. Joseph Charter Township
Darrell Harden, MDOT Southwest Region (via phone, at 3:00 PM)
Jason Latham, MDOT Southwest Region (left at 2:55 PM)
John Olson, Village of Stevensville
Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township
Steve Tilly, Royalton Township
Darwin Watson, City of Benton Harbor
Tim Zebell, City of St. Joseph

SWMPC Staff Present

Kim Gallagher
Gautam Mani

1. Call to Order/Introductions

Berndt called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM and led the group in introductions.

2. Explanation of TwinCATS Prioritization System and STP Funding

Mani explained that the target amount for each year in federal funds was \$871,925. There was \$11.8 million in requests for STP funds and only \$3.5 million to spend, so projects would need to be prioritized.

Gallagher said that TwinCATS had a prioritization system that was agreed to at the January meeting and approved at the Policy Committee meeting. All projects were scored according to the points system agreed to, based on many important factors to the TwinCATS planning process. Project score sheets were available for each project. The total project score was presented in the table. Projects were ranked within each fiscal

3. Explanation of TwinCATS Complete Streets Policy and Walk and Roll plan

Mani explained the Complete Streets Policy, which was included in subcommittee meeting packets. The TwinCATS committees agreed to the Complete Streets Policy in 2014. Under this policy, any project that uses federal funds in the TwinCATS area needs to show that it is taking steps to meet the needs of all users of the transportation network, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and persons with disabilities, all of whom have not usually been served in the past by road resurfacing projects. On some roadways, extensive new infrastructure is required. On other roadways, it is signage. The Complete Streets Policy is designed to encourage innovation in how agencies meet the needs of all users.

Csokasy asked whether the policy was a federal or state requirement. Mani said it was not, but it was something the state and federal government encouraged. The TwinCATS Policy Committee had voted to approve the Policy because they thought it was a way to make sure that limited dollars were being spent wisely.

4. Project Selection- How does TwinCATS program \$3.5 million in projects when there is \$11.8 million in demand?

Berndt noted that 2017 projects were already in the current TIP, so they should proceed and we were really talking about three years worth of funding for 2018-2020. Mani clarified that all scheduled 2017 projects were re-applied for, and the funding request and scope did not change. That was why the projects proposed for 2017 were proceeding as planned.

The selected 2017 projects are included in the spreadsheet along with 2018-2020 projects selected later in the meeting.

Cook had some questions before projects were selected. He wondered whether it was worth reviewing the scoring criteria for the accuracy of the data in the spreadsheet. Cook specifically questioned the traffic counts as well as the useful life criteria. He also suggested that Complete Streets criteria had some subjective elements, and it was worth re-examining those items before making a final determination. Cook suggested also that TwinCATS needed to determine whether the year was important for any of these projects.

Zebell suggested also looking at which of the projects recommended could leverage other funding sources in order to get completed. Zebell suggested that Marquette Woods Road project crossing Hickory Creek might be able to leverage Transportation Alternatives funds on the state level. Mani suggested that the project would be competitive if it applied for Transportation Alternatives (TAP) because it is the continuation of an existing project and is based on a clear, coherent plan by the Township to improve its pedestrian and bicycle network.

Cook wondered whether local bridge funds might be viable for the Hickory Creek crossing. Berndt suggested that it would be difficult given that the bridge is not in bad condition and during the previous call for Local bridge projects, \$250 million of need was applied for, and only \$50 million in funds was available. Berndt suggested funding a portion of the project using STP funds and a portion out of statewide Transportation Alternatives funding. Zebell suggested Safe Routes funding. Berndt said that TAP funding would be easier to use because Safe Routes funding would require sidewalks on both sides of a road.

Zebell also suggested that the Village of Stevensville apply for Category F funding for Red Arrow Highway. This is Michigan Transportation Economic Development Funding that can assist with projects on roads with a large number of jobs or commercial centers. Zebell said that he had applied for Category F funding in the past, but had been rejected because the City's traffic volumes on those routes had been too low. Zebell said that traffic volumes on Red Arrow Highway in Stevensville were likely high enough to qualify.

Berndt recommended that the 2017 projects be accepted since there were no changes requested to what was programmed in the TIP. Therefore, the focus of the meeting should be on programming 2018-2020 projects. There is \$2.6 million in funding and well over that amount in demand.

Zebell stated that the City of St. Joseph was strongly advocating that its Broad Street and Langley Avenue project proceed for funding in 2018. The project is coordinated with major sewer and water investments, it is part of a capital improvement plan, and was ranked the highest in terms of project scoring. The project is also providing a higher than required portion of local match. The project is being built in 2017, so the City of St. Joseph is taking a major risk in fronting the money for the project and asking for reimbursement in 2018.

The second highest priority for the City of St. Joseph would be the reconstruction project proposed on Wallace Avenue.

Cook identified Colfax Avenue South segment, from May St to the South City Limits, as the top priority for the City of Benton Harbor. Cook said that the project ought to go as soon as possible based on the traffic volume and pavement condition, as well as the fact that it is a relatively inexpensive project at \$186,000 in federal funds.

Cook said that Benton Harbor's second highest priority would be resurfacing on Pipestone Road. The segment requested for FY 2019 is the highest priority for Pipestone Road.

Tilly conveyed that from driving on Nickerson Avenue in Sodus Township, he would prioritize that route for resurfacing over any route in Royalton Township.

Csokasy said that he understood that each agency was here representing their own municipality's interests, but said that all of us drive on roads across multiple cities and townships, and so we need to look at addressing the overall need.

Latham said that the point of having an MPO was to work together to complete projects that make sense. The scoring system is one element in the process, but projects should be programmed based on their need. A road with a rating of 5-7 may not have as large of a need as a road that is failing. It was important to partner with each other and do projects that make sense for the region

Berndt recommended that each municipality identify its highest priority project and that we see how much funding is available after that. The points system had yielded projects that were all within a few points of each other, so local priorities should also carry weight.

Here were the priorities identified by each jurisdiction that applied. The person who spoke up on behalf of each jurisdiction is identified in parentheses.

City of St. Joseph [Tim Zebell]

Langley Avenue and Broad Street resurfacing and non-motorized elements for a federal cost of \$460,000 and a local cost of \$2,903,500.

Sodus Township [David Chandler]

Nickerson Avenue from M-139 to 700 feet East of Woodley resurfacing project for a federal cost of \$143,000 and a local cost of \$32,000.

City of Benton Harbor [Chris Cook]

Colfax Avenue from May St to the South City limits resurfacing and non-motorized improvements for a federal cost of \$186,000 and a local cost of \$42,000.

Benton Township [Brian Berndt]

Napier Avenue from M-139 to I-94 resurfacing for a federal cost of \$630,000 and a local cost of \$140,000.

Royalton Township [Steve Tilly]

John Beers Road from Hollywood Road to Scottdale Road resurfacing and paved shoulders for a federal cost of \$392,000 and a local cost of \$87,000.

Lincoln Township [Dick Stauffer]

Marquette Woods Road from Roosevelt to Cleveland for a federal cost of \$400,000 and a local cost of \$100,000 [with the understanding that the additional \$654,000 in funds for Marquette Woods Road would be applied for through federal Transportation Alternatives funding and local match].

St. Joseph Township [Denise Cook]

Napier Avenue from the St. Joseph River east towards Broadway resurfacing for a federal cost of \$526,000 and a local cost of \$116,000.

Village of Stevensville [John Olson]

Red Arrow Highway resurfacing and paved shoulders within the Village limits for a federal cost of \$881,288 and a local cost of \$220,322. Olson said he concurred with the recommendation to go after Category F funds rather than using STP funds.

Further discussion ensued. Berndt said there was approximately \$3.2 million in demand listed and \$2.6 million to spend. Berndt suggested that Road Commission projects could take on reduced federal shares if necessary, and that Napier Avenue projects may have to reduce their limits in order to get the project in under.

Cook expressed a concern about a resurfacing being done on Napier Avenue that does not provide for complete streets. Cook said that the corridor posed consistent safety issues, and that there was strong public demand for bicycle facilities and/or sidewalks on that stretch. Cook said that it was included as a priority corridor for non-motorized projects in the Walk and Roll plan, and was one of the few projects submitted that did not conform to the Complete Streets Policy. Gallagher reminded the group that a “goat path” existed along much of Napier in Benton Township, indicating that people were already walking there.

Berndt said that he understood the concern for complete streets, but sidewalks are the responsibility of the municipality, and that in his job, he is concerned about the condition of pavement. The road has not been resurfaced in more than twenty years and needs the work. It is a high traffic volume road. The cost of sidewalks or other new infrastructure would be prohibitively expensive and would mean that a smaller stretch of the road could be resurfaced. Berndt said that a Safe Routes project was under consideration there that could help pay for the cost of sidewalks. Mani said that since it would take multiple years to install sidewalks on Napier Avenue, the Safe Routes program and MDOT were looking at whether it was possible to commit multiple years of Safe Routes funding. Cook argued that the Complete Streets Policy was designed to show TwinCATS’ belief that the added cost of doing complete streets was worth it, even it meant resurfacing less road miles.

Zebell said that there are major right of way issues on that segment, and also asked whether the Township was committed to maintaining sidewalks. Zebell said that it was difficult to maintain sidewalks, and the City of St. Joseph had to plan and commit a large amount of money in order to make it possible. If the Township weren’t committed to maintaining sidewalks, there was no reason to build them.

Further discussion surrounding how to arrange funding across different fiscal years ensued. Berndt said that the Napier Avenue projects could take a funding cut in the federal share and

would need to be reduced in scope. Instead of the limits assigned, they would need to proceed until the funding ran out. Zebell suggested that the Road Commission write up new limits for the funded portions of the project and then add the unfunded portions to the Illustrative List. Those projects on Napier Avenue would then have priority on the Illustrative List for any funds that become available under the FAST Act. Zebell suggested a separate meeting to prioritize the Illustrative List.

5. Recommended Project List

The project list that was agreed to for 2017-2020 is presented below:

FY 2017

Federal Funding Available= \$871,925

Project Location	Project Name	Work Type	Federal Funding	Local Funding
City of St. Joseph/St. Joseph Township	Hilltop Road from BL-94 to M-63	Mill and Fill	\$652,000	\$144,579
Village of Shoreham	Brown School Road (ADVANCE CONSTRUCT CONVERSION from 2015)	Reconstruction with paved shoulders and sidewalks	\$27,762	
Royalton Township/Lincoln Township/St. Joseph Township	John Beers Road from Hollywood Road to 0.5 west of the township line	Mill and Fill	\$192,163	\$42,612
City of St. Joseph	Langley Avenue and Broad Street from Pearl Street to the Department of Public Works Entrance (ADVANCE CONSTRUCT)	Reconstruction		\$3,363,500
FY 2017 Total Federal Funds Requested			\$871,925	

FY 2018

Federal Funding Available = \$871,925

Project Location	Project Name	Work Type	Federal Funding	Local Funding
City of St. Joseph	Langley Avenue and Broad Street from Pearl Street to the Department of Public Works Entrance (ADVANCE CONSTRUCT CONVERSION from 2017)	Reconstruction	\$460,000	\$0
Sodus Township	Nickerson Avenue from M-139 to 700 feet East of Woodley	Mill and Fill	\$143,000	\$32,000
Lake Township	Shawnee Road from Jericho Road to Date Road	Reconstruction with 5 foot wide paved shoulders	\$268,925	\$184,075
FY 2018 Total Federal Funds Requested			\$871,925	

FY 2019

Federal Funds Available: \$871,925

Project Location	Project Name	Work Type	Federal Funding	Local Funding
City of Benton Harbor	Colfax Avenue from South City Limits to May St.	Mill and Fill with bicycle lanes and crosswalk improvements.	\$186,000	\$42,000
Royalton Township	John Beers Road from Hollywood to Scottdale Road	Reconstruction and 5 foot wide paved shoulders	\$350,000	\$129,000
St. Joseph Charter Township	Napier Avenue from St. Joseph River to 3700 feet East	Mill and Fill	\$335,000	\$74,000
FY 2019 Total Federal Funds Requested			\$871,000	

FY 2020

Federal Funds Available: \$871,925

Project Location	Project Name	Work Type	Federal Funding	Local Funding
Benton Charter Township	Napier Avenue from I94 to 4300 Feet West	Mill and Fill	\$471,000	\$42,000
Lincoln Charter Township	Marquette Woods Road from Roosevelt to Cleveland	Resurfacing and 6 foot wide paved shoulders and bridge crossing	\$400,000	\$100,000
FY 2020 Total Federal Funds Requested			\$871,000	

Cook once again expressed his strong concern about Napier Avenue having no non-motorized facilities, but did acknowledge that the system was fair for spreading money across multiple jurisdictions. Gallagher asked the committee members how they would defend the decision-making regarding Napier Avenue to the public who sees it as the lowest scoring project. Cook said that the project's PASER rating, traffic count, and number of years since prior resurfacing all indicated a need that made the project defensible.

All projects not listed here are illustrative.

All in the room agreed to submit this project list to the TwinCATS Committees for approval on Monday February 22nd.

A more detailed recommended project list can be found here:

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

6. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:36 PM.

The TwinCATS TAC and Policy Committees will discuss these items and more at its regular monthly meetings. Monday February 22nd at 9:00 AM at the St. Joseph City Council Chambers, 700 Broad Street, St. Joseph MI.

Minutes compiled by Gautam Mani, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, February 16, 2016.