

TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND POLICY COMMITTEE COMBINED MINUTES

September 20, 2021

TWINCATS MEMBER ORG./POSITION	MEMBERS	TAC	POL	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Benton Charter Township	Richard Royal	x	x	V		V		V		V		A			
Berrien Co. Board of Commissioners	Ray Bell		x	A		V		A		A		V			
Berrien Co. Community Dev. Dept.	Evan Smith	x		A				A		A		A			
Berrien Co. Planning Commission	Eric Lester, M.D.		x	V		V		V		V		V			
Berrien Co. Road Dept.	(vacant)		x												
Berrien Co. Road Dept.	Kevin Stack	x		V		V		V		V		V			
City of Benton Harbor	Ellis Mitchel		x	A		A		A		A		A			
City of Benton Harbor	Chris Cook (Pol. V. Ch.)	x	Alt	V		V		V		V		V			
City of Bridgman	Juan Ganum	Alt	x	A		A		A		A		A			
City of Bridgman	Tim Kading	x	Alt	V		V		A		IP		V			
City of St. Joseph	John Hodgson		x	V		V		V		V		A			
City of St. Joseph	Tim Zebell (TAC V. Ch.)	x		V		V		V		IP		A			
Cornerstone Alliance	Sue Wyman	x	x	A		A		A		A		A			
Disability Network of SW Mich.	Cindy gray	x		V		A		A		V		A			
Hagar Township	(vacant)	x	x												
Kinexus	(vacant)	x													
Lake Charter Township	Gloria Payne	x	x	A		A		A		A		A			
Lincoln Charter Township	Dick Stauffer (Pol. Ch.)		x	V		V		V		IP		IP			
Lincoln Charter Township	Terrie Smith	x		V		V		V		V		A			
MDOT – Bureau of Trans. Planning	Jim Sturdevant	x	x	V		V		V		V		V			
MDOT – Southwest Region	Amy Lipset	x	x	V		V		V		IP		V			
MDOT – Southwest Region	Brian Sanada	Alt	Alt	A		A		A		A		A			
MDOT – Trans. Service Center	Jonathon Smith	x	x	V		V		V		V		V			
Royalton Township	Steve Tilly	x	x	A		A		A		A		A			
Sodus Township	David Chandler	x	x	A		A		A		A		A			
Southwest Mich. Regional Airport	Vince Desjardins	x	x	A		A		A		A		A			
St. Joseph Charter Township	Denise Cook		x	V		V		V		V		A			
St. Joseph Charter Township	Roger Seeley	x		A		A		V		V		V			
	Ron Griffin	Alt		A		A		A		A		A			
	Jonathan Fisk	Alt		V		V		V		A		V			
Twin Cities Area Trans. Authority	Paul Gillespie	x	x	V		V		V		IP		V			
Village of Grand Beach	(vacant)	x	x												
Village of Shoreham	Mike Schnable	x	x	A		V		V		V		A			
Village of Stevensville	(vacant)		x	A											
Village of Stevensville	Chris Cook (Pol. V. Ch.)	x	Alt	V		A		V		V		V			
Federal Highway Administration	Andy Pickard	x	x	A		A		A		A		A			
Federal Transit Administration	Cecilia Crenshaw	x	x	A		A		A		A		A			
MDOT - Modeling	Katie Beck	x		A		A		A		A		A			
MDOT - Passenger Division	Fred Featherly	x		A		A		A		V		V			
Northwestern Ind. Reg. Plan. Comm.	Scott Weber	x	x	A		A		A		A		A			
Southwest Michigan Planning Comm.	Kim Gallagher	x	x	V		V		V		IP		IP			
Southwest Michigan Planning Comm.	Brandon Kovnat			V		V		V		IP		IP			

Pol. Ch.- Policy Chair; TAC Ch. - TAC Chair; Alt – Alternate; IP – Present in person; V – Participating remotely; A – Absent; A blank spot means the position is vacant.

Others Present: Anita Boughner, MDOT; Steve Carlisle, Wightman & Associates

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**

Policy Committee Chair, Dick Stauffer, called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. Kim Gallagher took roll call.

2. **Changes to the Agenda**

None

3. **Public Comment**

None.

4. **Approve Minutes from May 17, 2021 Meeting**

Motion to approve the minutes from the July 19, 2021 combined Technical Advisory and Policy Committee meeting. Made by Tim Kading, and seconded by Ray Bell. **Motion approved.**

5. **SWMPC Staff Report**

Gallagher announced that PASER ratings for all federal aid eligible roads was complete and had been emailed to members. She reminded the committee about the call for projects dues dates:

- TwinCATS Surface Transportation Program applications due on September 24, 2021
- Rural Task Force Surface transportation Program applications Due on October 1, 2021
- Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement applications due on October 6, 2021

6. **Agency Updates**

6.1. **Public Transit:** Gillespie said they signed the RFP for replacing their phone system with voice over internet protocol system. It will cost \$13,000 and will reduce the phone bill from \$300 a month to \$140 a month.

Gillespie had attended the Michigan Public Transit Association annual conference. He said that speaking with other transit agencies there are common issues around the state. There is a difficulty in hiring enough drivers. There is also still reduced ridership. After ridership fell sharply in April-May 2020, there was a slow rebound but ridership is still down 30-40% from pre pandemic levels. Gillespie said that the CARES Act was a lifeline that has allowed transit agencies to remain in business and funded long term capital expenditures. TCATA has a little less than half of the CARES Act funds remaining. MTPA is also working with a firm on a statewide media campaign to help increase transit ridership.

Gillespie said he was considering training for the TCATA board to help them better understand their roles and responsibilities. He said MDOT is working on a transit facilities assessment statewide. Gillespie said he is still interested in a transit transfer station. He was considering the property across from TCATA headquarters, but another buyer has expressed interest in the property.

Gillespie gave an update on the University of Michigan SMART study. He said he was looking at expanding fixed routes along Napier to connect to Lake Michigan College; a route to go to the Hollywood Road medical facilities; and a circulator route for the Benton Township / mall shopping area. The UM group used a software tool called Remix to model the number or potential riders and the number of jobs the new routes could access. HE said expanding routes would be the focus more in the next two years.

Gallagher asked about how CARES Act funding is used to cover loss of fares. Gillespie said the first major use of CARES act was for protective equipment. Farebox revenue used to cover 15% of TCATA's revenue but it was reduced by almost 60% due to COVID. He said the CARES Act funding was primarily meant to be used for operating expenses and can only be used if you certify that your agency hasn't laid any employees off. TCATA hasn't laid any employees off and will continue to use CARES Act funds

to cover lost farebox revenue. Gillespie said that despite the pandemic, CARES act funding has meant that TCATA is in a good place financially.

Gallagher said that SWMPC partners with TCATA for the mobility management program. Mobility manager was contacted by the Area Agency on Aging to promote vaccine clinics and assist as a transportation resource. SWMPC will identify all of the vaccine clinics in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties, identify their hours and the transpiration options & costs.

Gillespie said TCATA has taken hundreds of people to be vaccinated. He added that 75% of TCATA's employees have been vaccinated, which the FTA keeps track of. They only have a few holdout which he said was a challenge. There have been no serious COVID cases among TCATA employees.

Ray Bell asked about improving transit service in other parts of the county. He said that CARES act is helping Berrien Bus operate but is worried that in two to three years that money will run out. Gillespie discussed that right now TCATA only serves about half of the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph urbanized area for which TCATA gets federal & state funding to serve. Only Benton Harbor contributes to the system. Bell said he would continue discussions with TCATA on long term transit solutions.

6.2. Local Road Agencies

Berrien County Road Department: Stack said that Washington Avenue has been paved and the contractor is now adjusting the manholes.

Stack said he has been meeting with Wightman and St. Joseph Township on the Napier path. They are working on fitting the path within the right of way. He said he didn't believe that right of way issues would be an issue. Carlisle added that the final alignment for the Napier path should be ready by the beginning of October.

City of St. Joseph: No additional updates beyond what is in the packet.

Stevensville: No additional updates beyond what is in the packet.

6.3. MDOT

FY 2021 projects: There was no updates to add to the 2021 projects beyond what was in the packet.

FY 2022 projects: Lipset said that the work on I-94 which will be obligated in 2022 will be constructed in 2023 and in 2024. This project will include all of the ramps and bridges. At exit 23, space will be added to allow for a path on Red Arrow to connect up to Marquette Woods.

Noise receptors will be set up in the next few weeks along I-94. This will be used to run a model for a noise study, with a draft report available in January. There will be multiple public meetings, in February and March to allow MDOT to discuss the findings with smaller groups.

Lipset said that the Pipestone Interchange will be realigned to be south of its current location. The initial plan had been to align the WB off ramp with Mall Dr. that plan was changed because a property owner was asking for far more than fair market value. The new plan is to line up the WB off ramp the WB on ramp. In addition the EB on ramp will be tightened so it is further from the Meadowbrook Intersection. The interchange work will also include resurfacing Pipestone with sidewalks on both sides through the interchange area.

Lipset gave the update about the I-94/U-31 project. She said the culvert carrying sand creek under BL-94 was completed and is the Last culvert of this project this year.

Schnable asked about resurfacing of Lakeshore through the village of Shoreham. Smith said this was planned for 2024. This is planned only for edge of pavement to edge of pavement single course paving. There is no plan to widen shoulders for pedestrian accommodation. This is because of a flooding issue leading to an inability to add an extra pavement.

7. **New Business**

Pipestone Interchange:Lipset said that the Pipestone Interchange will be realigned to be south of its current location. The initial plan had been to align the WB off ramp with Mall Dr. that plan was changed because a property owner was asking for far more than fair market value. The new plan is to line up the WB off ramp the WB on ramp. In addition the EB on ramp will be tightened so it is further from the Meadowbrook Intersection. The interchange work will also include resurfacing Pipestone with sidewalks on both sides through the interchange area.

This amendment request is to remove the CMAQ funding from the Pipestone project which will eliminate JN 132664. The work for the interchange will still be a part of the larger I-94 reconstruction from Exit 23 to Brittan Avenue (131834). No amendment is needed for JN 131834.

Add maintenance of traffic for I-94: Smith explained that the maintenance of traffic for the I-94 reconstruction is being split into a separate job. This will allow it to be constructed sooner, thus ensuring this work is ready before the reconstruction begins. Maintenance of Traffic (MoT) means resurfacing and widening the shoulders to allow vehicles to drive on the shoulder while the interstate is being reconstructed.

Add Culvert Replacement: Lipset said this is like one being done currently. It will require a detour. Smith said that MDOT does inspections on culverts to prioritize work. The reason why there is another culvert replacement for M-139 is because the culverts on M-139 are all almost 100 years old..

Motion for the technical advisory committee to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the amendments to 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program as presented . Made by Kevin Stack, and seconded by Jim Sturdevant. **Motion Approved.**

Motion for the Policy Committee to approve the recommendation from the Technical Advisory Committee. Made by Dick Stauffer, and seconded by Eric Lester. **Motion Approved.**

8. **Privilege of the Floor or Public Comment**

Sturdevant said that the contract for planning funds for SWMPC has been approved.

9. **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 10:32 am. Next Meeting is scheduled for October 18, 2021 at 9:30 AM.

Minutes compiled by Brandon Kovnat, SWMPC Associate Planner