

MINUTES

**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
Transportation Division
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, August 4, 2010
Kent County Road Commission
1500 Scribner NW Grand Rapids, MI**

Conners, chair of the Technical Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:31 am. The Committee members, staff, and guests present introduced themselves.

I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Voting Members Present

Scott Conners (<i>Chair</i>)		City of Walker
Alex Arends		Alpine Township
Mike Bouwkamp		City of Rockford
Dan Carlton		Georgetown Township
Ron Carr		City of Grandville
Timothy Cochran		City of Wyoming
Sandra M. Cornell-Howe		MDOT
Rick DeVries		City of Grand Rapids
Wayne Harrall	<i>Proxy for</i>	Kent County
	<i>Tim Haagsma</i>	Gaines Charter Township
	<i>Mike DeVries</i>	Grand Rapids Township
Roy Hawkins		GRFIA
Taiwo Jaiyeoba		ITP-The Rapid
Jack Klein	<i>Proxy for</i>	OCRC
	<i>Brett Laughlin</i>	OCRC
Steve Peterson		Cascade Charter Township
Dan Strikwerda		City of Hudsonville
Steve Warren		KCRC
Chris Zull		City of Grand Rapids

Staff and Non-Voting Guests Present

Roger Belknap	KCRC
Andrea Dewey	GVMC Staff
Andrea Faber	GVMC Staff
Abed Itani	GVMC Staff
Dennis Kent	MDOT
Erick Kind	MDOT
Darrell Robinson	GVMC Staff
Norm Sevensma	WMEAC-RWBC
Jim Snell	GVMC Staff
George Yang	GVMC Staff
Mike Zonyk	GVMC Staff

Voting Members Not Present

Jerry Alkema
Sandra Ayers
Mike Berrevoets
Dick Davies
Sharon DeLange
Dan DesJarden
Mike DeVries
Bill Dooley
Ken Feldt
Steve Groenenboom
Tim Haagsma
Dennis Hoemke
Jim Holtrop
Bob Homan
Brett Laughlin
Jim Miedema
Audrey Nevins
Chuck Porter
Terry Schweitzer
Toby VanEss

Allendale Township
Village of Caledonia
City of Cedar Springs
Cannon Township
Village of Sparta
City of Lowell
Grand Rapids Township
City of Wyoming
City of East Grand Rapids
Ada Township
Gaines Charter Township
Algoma Township
Ottawa County
Plainfield Township
OCRC
Jamestown Township
Byron Township
Courtland Township
City of Kentwood
Tallmadge Township

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Conners entertained a motion to approve the July 7, 2010 Technical Committee meeting minutes.

MOTION by Cochran, SUPPORT by Carr, to approve the July 7, 2010 Technical Committee Meeting Minutes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Sevensma asked that the Committee reconsider funding nonmotorized projects with CMAQ funding. Warren added that a bike path in Kentwood was funded through CMAQ. Dewey responded that the Non-Motorized Committee redeveloped the Policies and Practices document to reflect current practices of the MPO.

IV. 2035 LRTP SUBCOMMITTEE NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

Referring to **Item IV: Attachment A**, Dewey informed the Committee that, in order to assist with the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan, six subcommittees have been meeting to develop needs assessments for various modes of transportation. The resulting needs lists will be brought to the joint Tech/Policy meeting later this month so that an investment strategy can be determined. Dewey and Snell then provided an overview of the needs and recommendations determined by all six subcommittees.

Intermodalism, Freight, Rail & Air (aka "Freight"): Dewey explained that the Freight Committee had a difficult time determining a needs list. However, the Freight Committee did determine two recommendations. The first recommendation is to conduct a comprehensive freight study that would be used to determine desired routes, specific

system deficiencies, commercial safety issues, and the potential for enhanced intermodalism in the freight community. The second recommendation is to develop and maintain a sustainable freight network for the MPO area. She concluded that, for the purposes of the Long Range Transportation Plan currently under development, there are no costs associated with the development of and improvements to a designated freight network.

Peterson asked if future planned corridors (especially the planned corridor from 60th/Kraft area to the airport) will be preserved with the development of a sustainable freight network. Dewey responded that the Freight Committee did discuss how the MPO could work with municipalities to maintain and sustain railroad corridors. However, it is uncommon for MPOs to finance the purchase of land for railroad corridors. Hawkins stated that the airport wished to preserve the airport corridor as well and added that a Committee should be discussing preservation with the railroads now instead of waiting for the development of the next LRTP. Dewey added that the Freight Committee will examine this issue.

Connors noted that there were a lot of inconsistencies in vocabulary/technical restrictions between communities with moving freight on the road network and stated that he would like to see this addressed. Discussion ensued.

Non-Motorized Committee: Dewey stated that the Non-Motorized Committee members worked specifically on revisions to the Policies and Practices for Programming Projects sections pertaining to non-motorized transportation, revisions to the “needs” lists, as well as project selection methodology. The Committee chose to redevelop the Policies and Practices to reflect current practices of the MPO. The revised section allows for the expenditure of federal funds in addition to Transportation Enhancement funds on non-motorized projects, lists the types of non-motorized facilities recognized by the MPO, and sets two fundamental criteria for non-motorized project consideration—projects that demonstrate mode shift and projects that enhance connectivity in the transportation network. The Committee is also continuing to revise prioritization criteria for non-motorized projects. The Committee hopes to have criteria in place should additional funds come to the area as part of the Rails-to-Trails effort or other means to systematically address the development of a non-motorized transportation network.

As part of the development of the LRTP, the Committee also worked with staff to update the non-motorized “need” inventory maintained by the MPO. The total need, as developed by the Committee for the next 25 years, is approximately \$93 million. It was the recommendation of the Committee to expend \$1 million in federal funds annually (in addition to any TE awards) for non-motorized projects, as identified in the LRTP. The Committee currently receives approximately \$1 million in TE funds annually. However, TE funds are not exclusively for non-motorized projects.

Warren asked how the non-motorized committee’s needs list would be written into the LRTP and if this would mean constraining \$1 million in federal funds. Itani added that it was premature to discuss funding allocation. Kent stated the importance of using funding to preserve the old system vs. build new trails. Dewey responded that Kent Trails was recently preserved using TE funds; however, this was just possible because the trail was awarded TE funds to widen to AASHTO standards. Discussion ensued.

Transit and Passenger Rail: Dewey explained that while this Committee found it difficult to determine needs, they did discuss challenges to transit and passenger rail. These challenges included (1) improved transit links to other modes (airport, Amtrak, Greyhound/Indian Trails), particularly for students, including a potential rail link between the Gerald R. Ford International Airport and Rapid Central Station; (2) one additional daily departure on the *Pere Marquette*; (3) improved connections between land use decisions and transit development to enhance the quality/maintenance of bus stops and address ADA accessibility issues and convenience to destinations; (4) development of a Rapid Bus Rapid Transit route to the Allendale GVSU campus (“Laker Line”); (5) operations and maintenance challenges for small transit service providers; and (6) overwhelming service demands on paratransit services, such as Ridelink, which serve seniors and the disabled population. The demand for transit service in the rural area is currently being researched as part of the Kent County Transit Needs Assessment (KCTNA), for which GVMC is the lead agency.

Dewey noted that the most quantifiable need voiced by the Committee was that of operations and maintenance support for the smaller transit providers. The total cost to operate and maintain them annually, with inflation, is \$7,080,118.

DeVries asked if, instead of a second daily departure of the *Pere Marquette*, a train route could be established from Grand Rapids to Kalamazoo. Kent responded that this was discussed by the Committee, but would require additional work on the track.

Segment Capacity (Congestion Management): Snell discussed with the Committee the three areas of recommendation from the Congestion Management Committee—Recurring Congestion, Corridor Progression/Operations, and Non-Recurring Congestion.

The first objective (recurring congestion) seeks to improve the transportation system productivity by addressing capacity deficient miles on the federal aid system and emphasizes the reduction of deficient miles on the federal aid system. To address this objective, a list of deficient corridors was developed, along with recommended solutions to the identified deficiencies. To implement the solutions for the identified congested corridors, the cost would be \$70 million.

The second objective (corridor progression/operations) seeks to enhance mobility by reducing overall travel times and delays along “corridors of significance” and emphasizes an operations approach to reducing delay by using technology to improve traffic flow along corridors of significance. The second recommendation is to create a regional inventory of all signalized intersections. The third recommendation is to allocate funding for geometric and technological upgrades at many intersections with identified capacity need. Cost for corridor progression/operations solutions would be \$38,251,220 over the next 25 years.

The third objective (non-recurring congestion), seeks to increase the reliability of the transportation system and reduce travel delay caused by incidents by continuing enhancement of real time automated incident detection technologies and working toward improved response protocol when incidents are identified. The fourth recommendation is to maintain and moderately expand to completion the regional ITS network. The fifth and final recommendation is to allocate funding toward the development and operation of a freeway service patrol to remove broken down vehicles during peak travel hours. This service could be subsidized by sponsors/advertising as done in other parts of the

country. The cost of non-recurring solutions is \$54,750,000 long term. Itani stated that the first three years could be funded by CMAQ. After this, more participation would be needed from governmental units. Discussion, comments and questions ensued.

Safety & Operations: Snell reported that GVMC will focus on five safety emphasis areas not related to driver behavior (the largest factors in crashes). These areas of emphasis include intersection safety, corridor safety, non-motorized safety, senior mobility and safety, and car/deer conflicts. Snell explained that for safety, long-term need is difficult to determine. Therefore, GVMC will only forecast safety needs for a 10-year period.

The first itemized need determined by the Committee included a Drunk/Distracted Driver Awareness Program at a cost of \$25,000/year.

The second need was to analyze intersection safety. The Committee's recommendation was to develop an intersection safety improvement program that included three tasks: (1) dedicate funding every three years to complete a small intersection safety study on key locations in the region and funding for the improvements determined to be needed as a result of the study, (2) carry out the intersection safety study, and (3) complete the improvements identified in the study. This would be a three-year rolling project with 6-8 intersections selected per phase. The cost would be \$200,000 per study, for a total of \$600,000 for three studies, and \$250,000 per intersection, for a total cost of \$5,000,000.

The third itemized need was corridor safety. The Committee recommended that GVMC incorporate a policy into its procedures to allow for the addition of center turn lanes using EDFC funding even when the facility does not qualify for these funds because of GVMC capacity policy, when the addition of the center turn lane can be shown to produce a positive return on investment over the expected life of the pavement. Possible federal investment would be \$1,800,000/year. Discussion ensued.

The fourth need was determined to be senior mobility and safety. The Committee recommended that GVMC consider making funding available for federally required sign improvements. In addition, consideration should be given to implementing a regional sign program and perhaps standardizing signage to help eliminate confusion between jurisdictions. If there is cost associated with these activities GVMC will work with the West Michigan Traffic Safety Committee (WMTSC) to find appropriate funding sources for implementation. Total cost will be \$75,000 per year, or \$375,000 for FY2013-2017.

The fifth need was determined to be Bike and Pedestrian Safety. The Committee recommended that GVMC work in coordination with representatives from WMTSC to supplement, where possible, efforts to promote localized awareness activities. If there is cost associated with these activities, GVMC will work with the WMTSC to find appropriate funding sources for implementation. Possible federal investment would be \$25,000/year.

The sixth need was identified as Car/Deer Crashes. For this item, the Committee recommended that GVMC work with WMTSC or the Michigan Deer Crash Coalition (MDCC) to supplement, where possible, efforts to promote localized awareness activities. If there is cost associated with these activities, GVMC will work with the WMTSC to find appropriate funding sources for implementation. Possible federal investment was determined to be \$25,000/year.

The investment for all 6 needs over 10 years would be \$24,725,000. Discussion ensued.

Pavement Asset Management: Snell explained that to maintain the system at its current state, current investment in the system will need to nearly double. To improve the system to a 90% overall fair or good condition, the current investment will need to be tripled. As time passes and conditions become more dire, the necessary fixes will become more and more costly. Snell recommended that the region do all it can to protect its transportation network, valued at approximately \$2 billion. Without a sound transportation infrastructure, none of the goals of the Long Range Plan will be attainable.

Warren stated that these findings are very consistent with what is going on statewide. He also suggested that Committee needs be expressed as an annual dollar amount per year. Itani stated that Staff could provide numbers at the Tech/Policy meeting. Discussion ensued.

Conners noted that it would be a hard sell to take funding away from asset management, since a solid base is needed for other forms of transportation. Warren suggested an approach whereby the group would determine which needs have the highest priority. Then, when choosing projects, additional weight would be given to projects that covered multiple needs. Discussion ensued.

Conners asked that Committee members submit comments to Staff before the Tech/Policy meeting on August 18.

V. **OTHER BUSINESS**

- **ADA Training Opportunity**
Dewey announced that GVMC is working with MDOT and the City of Walker to provide an ADA training opportunity for all of its members on September 30th. She asked interested Committee members to sign up to attend.
- **New TIP Amendment Schedule**
Cornell-Howe reminded the Committee about the new bimonthly TIP amendment schedule. Robinson agreed to send out a reminder before amendments are due.
- **State/Federal Legislative Update**
Itani stated that the Senate has passed an appropriation bill for transportation, as has the House. The bills are now moving on to conference committee.

VI. **ADJOURNMENT**

Conners adjourned the August 4, 2010 Technical Committee Meeting at 11:12 am.