

MINUTES

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
Transportation Division
TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMMING STUDY GROUP
Wednesday, October 30, 2009
Kent County Road Commission 1500 Scribner Ave NW

Conners, Chair of the TPSG Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:32 am.

The Committee members present went around the table and introduced themselves.

I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Voting Members Present

Scott Conners	<i>(Chair)</i>	City of Walker
Jerry Alkema		Allendale Township
Ron Carr		City of Grandville
Sandra M. Cornell-Howe		MDOT
Rick DeVries		City of Grand Rapids
Ken Feldt		City of East Grand Rapids
Tim Haagsma		Gaines Township
Brett Laughlin		OCRC
Steve Peterson		Cascade Township
Terry Schweitzer		City of Kentwood
Steve Warren	<i>Proxy for Mike DeVries</i>	KCRC
		Grand Rapids Township

Staff and Non-Voting Guests Present

Roger Belknap	KCRC
Andrea Dewey	GVMC Staff
Andrea Faber	GVMC Staff
Chris Glass	GR Chamber of Commerce
Abed Itani	GVMC Staff
Dennis Kent	MDOT-Grand Region
Steve Kepley	City of Kentwood
Erick Kind	MDOT
Darrell Robinson	GVMC Staff
Jim Snell	GVMC Staff
George Yang	GVMC Staff

Voting Members Not Present

Sandy Ayers	Village of Caledonia
Mike Bouwkamp	City of Rockford

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Christine Burns
Patrick Bush
Tim Cochran
Sharon DeLange
Dan DesJarden
Mike DeVries
Bill Dooley
Dan Strikwerda

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ITEM II: ATTACHMENT A

City of Cedar Springs
City of Grand Rapids
City of Wyoming
Village of Sparta
City of Lowell
Grand Rapids Township
City of Wyoming
City of Hudsonville

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Conners entertained a motion to approve the October 7, 2009 Transportation Programming Study Group meeting minutes.

MOTION by Schweitzer, SUPPORT by Carr, to approve the October 7, 2009 Transportation Programming Study Group Meeting Minutes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

None

IV. DISCUSSION REGARDING GVMC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR PROGRAMMING PROJECTS DOCUMENT

Speaking on **Item IV: Attachment A**, Itani stated that the purpose of today’s meeting was to review the policies and practices for developing the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that have been in place for the last seven years in order to ensure that they still made sense. He provided an overview of how these policies and practices came into place and added that some of the issues that arose during the last programming of the TIP stemmed from trying to adhere strictly to these policies.

To this end, Itani stated that Snell had gone through the agenda attachment entitled “DRAFT: Policies and Practices for Programming” and had made some minor modifications to it. Snell provided an overview of these changes. Snell also recommended that the Asset Management group reconvene to discuss the thresholds for condition in the “Condition” section of the Policies and Practices for Programming document, as well as the current pavement management system, before this section of the document is revised. Discussion ensued.

Snell explained that one of the biggest issues that had come up in the past occurred when jurisdictions would perform maintenance on roads after projects were programmed in the TIP. This occasionally resulted in jurisdictions losing projects because the maintenance would elevate the PCI rating. Therefore, Snell proposed to revise the policy as follows:

“Upon inclusion in the TIP, a roadway section’s condition will be frozen. This will

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allow a jurisdiction to continue basic maintenance on the programmed roadway without the possibility that federal funding will be taken from the project. If, however, that roadway receives a treatment that is more than mere patchwork (i.e. water project improvement), that project shall be removed from the programmed TIP and the funding shall be placed back in the funding pool for projects from any jurisdiction in the region.”

Warren stated his support of freezing PCI ratings once a project is in the TIP. However, he said that he would prefer the policy to be even more flexible and requested that it be modified to read that an agency can do any essential emergency maintenance it deems necessary in order to maintain the safety of a road without risking the loss of the project. Itani agreed that agencies should not lose projects because they performed stop-gap measures to maintain the safety of a road. Discussion, comments and questions ensued.

Kepley stated that a “patchwork” repair wouldn’t include other types of maintenance, such as chip seals. Since chip seals can last up to seven years, he recommended that the policy be revised to say that projects receiving treatments that last for more than seven years would no longer qualify for federal aid. However, short-term repairs lasting five to seven years should qualify for federal funds. Haagsma stated that he had seen two different types of preventative maintenance scenarios. The first is essentially repairing small patches of pavement, while the second involves seal coating an entire length of pavement. Itani stated that while he understands the Committee’s concerns, this is an issue for the Pavement Management group to discuss. This group would need to determine the types of preventative maintenance that would be acceptable in order for a project to still be eligible for federal funding.

Itani stated his intent to revisit the PCI threshold rating system to make sure that this scale still makes sense. Warren responded that he did not believe that this was a topic for today’s meeting, but stated his support for reconvening the Asset Management group to discuss this item, as well as the general direction of the pavement management system. Snell agreed that this item would need a recommendation from the Asset Management group before moving forward. Itani suggested that the Committee consider using deterioration curves in order to add projects into the TIP that are not currently deficient but will be within a couple of years. Discussion ensued.

Conners suggested that the Committee members review the Draft Policies and Practices for Programming document and send any proposed changes to the MPO staff.

Conners also raised the issue of using federal funds for sidewalks. Itani stated that it is an internal policy not to use federal funding for sidewalks, not a federal policy. Itani’s recommendation to the Committee was to look at the entire transportation system and try to devise an investment strategy that provides mobility to everyone. DeVries asked the Committee if the feds and the state have reached an agreement on when sidewalks are required. Kent stated that he would follow up with MDOT and FHWA on this. Itani added that if programming policies were to be changed to accommodate sidewalks, he would advocate for a 5-year transitional period to make sure that everything is set in place. Discussion, comments and questions ensued.

Schweitzer stated that the next transportation bill may have specific direction on funding

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nonmotorized projects. Itani stated that the next bill will likely include several targets that the MPO will be expected to achieve, such as emission reduction. Itani added that he would like every entity to take a look at their nonmotorized facilities and determine how to best provide mobility to their citizens as a way to improve the transportation system as a whole. The Committee came to the consensus of allowing nonmotorized funding to be considered on the critical network as part of the nonmotorized master plan in the future. Discussion ensued.

Warren stated that he had two additional items to bring before the Committee. The first item was a proposal to use STP-Rural funds for preservation work that included any type of surface treatment, such as chip seals, etc. Warren passed out a handout for this item entitled "Approved Preventative Maintenance Treatments," which was part of MDOT's Local Agency Program Guidelines for Geometrics. Warren stated that he would send the full version to Itani for distribution, since it may include sidewalk requirements as well.

Warren explained that in 2008, MDOT, the feds, and the County Road Association developed new criteria for using federal aid for preservation work. These criteria now allow STP funds to be used for preservation. Warren advocated that using federal aid for preservation stretches federal aid dollars a lot farther. However, in order to use STP-Rural funds for preservation, Warren would need a policy and procedure change from Metro Council as to how projects are identified. This is because Warren would not know which roads would need preservation treatments years in advance. Kepley added that the City of Kentwood is trying to eventually avoid reconstruction by using preventative maintenance treatments. Itani responded that the Pavement Management group may need to address this issue by developing guidelines for when a project is eligible for funding for preventative maintenance. These guidelines could eventually be rolled into the Policies and Practices document. Snell stated that he could put together different scenarios of pavement options so that Committee members could see how they would get the most "bang for the buck." The Committee expressed a general interest in looking into using federal aid for preventative maintenance in the future. Kent stated that MDOT does preventative maintenance, and added that they do use federal aid for that.

Itani stated that this conversation should be brought to the Rural Committee since the TPSG Committee cannot speak for the Rural Committee on how to spend rural funds. The TPSG Committee can, however, decide on how to spend STP-Urban funds. Warren stated that he could talk to other county road commissions that have been using federal funds for preservation in order to learn how they are doing this. Discussion, comments and questions ensued.

Warren's second item regarded EDF-C funding. Warren explained how EDF-C funding has been distributed in the past and declared that it is becoming more difficult to find qualifying projects for EDF-C money. Warren said that he wanted the reaction of the TPSG Committee before he pursued a change in law that would increase eligibility for projects for EDF-C funding and allow for EDF-C funding to be used to apply preventative maintenance treatments to roads already built with this funding source. Warren asked if any of the Committee members disagreed with his approach. The Committee members were in general agreement with Warren. Warren stated that he would look into determining all of the types of projects that are currently eligible for EDF-C funding. Snell directed Warren to look at the eligibility requirements for projects on the EDF-C web site.

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Discussion ensued.

Kent drew the Committee's attention to a paragraph in the Draft Policies and Practices Document in the "Capacity Deficient Project Eligibility" section that read, "The EA, EIS, and IJR processes may occur prior to inclusion of a project in the MPO LRP, or may occur as part of the TIP project implementation process, depending on the scope of the proposed project." Kent stated that as federal regulation evolves, they are starting to require phases that indicate a commitment to doing projects as environmental assessments in EIS. He said that there should be enough flexibility in this policy to comply with the current guidelines. If a committee member is planning on doing EA, Kent stated that they may need to commit to completing another phase of the project. Snell asked Kent to revise this item and to resubmit it to him.

Kent also stated that MDOT had been funding right-of-way and engineering portions of projects with federal aid, and he wanted to make sure that he could continue to do this according to the Policy document. Cornell-Howe stated that this would be up to the group. Itani added that this had been discussed in the past, but the Committee had decided not to allow federal funds to be used for these items. However, nothing was written in the policy itself. Therefore, Kent asked that MDOT's exception to the unwritten policy of not using federal aid for right-of-way and engineering be noted. Discussion ensued.

Connors entertained a motion to move forward with the items discussed at today's meeting.

MOTION by Warren, SUPPORT by DeVries, that the TPSG Committee approve a recommendation that the Metro Council move forward with the following: (1) allowing the PCI rating for a project to be frozen after a project is programmed in the TIP, along with considering safety-related short-term repair as patchwork, (2) reconvening the Pavement Management Committee to discuss the PCI threshold, short-term repairs, etc., (3) exploring pavement management work as a potential state/federal funding opportunity in the future, (4) recommending discussions about whether sidewalk requirements need to be participating costs, along with requesting more definitive answers from MDOT on sidewalk requirements, (5) considering nonmotorized funding on the critical network as shown in the Nonmotorized Plan and (6) encouraging discussion at the state level regarding EDF-C funding in order to open up additional funding opportunities. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

Itani reminded the Committee that a new transportation bill is in the process of being developed. He stated that the Committee would reconvene once the new bill is ready.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Connors adjourned the October 30, 2009 TPSG Committee meeting at 11:12 am.