

MINUTES

**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
Transportation Division
TECH/POLICY COMMITTEE
Monday, April 20, 2009
Kent County Road Commission
1500 Scribner NW Grand Rapids, MI**

Varga, Chair of the Policy Committee, called the meeting to order at 8:14 a.m.
Varga introduced Jaiyeoba to the Committee.

I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS**Voting Members Present**

Peter Varga (Chair)		The Rapid
Michael Bouwkamp		City of Rockford
Pat Bush		City of Grand Rapids
Ron Carr		City of Grandville
Scott Conners		City of Walker
Mike DeVries		Grand Rapids Township
Rick DeVries		City of Grand Rapids
Ken Feldt		City of East Grand Rapids
Roy Hawkins	<i>Proxy for Jim Koslosky</i>	GRFIA
		GRFIA
Jim Holtrop		Ottawa County
Rich Houtteman		City of Kentwood
Taiwo Jaiyeoba		ITP-The Rapid
Dal McBurrows		MDOT
Rich Pastoor		City of Wyoming
Steve Peterson		Cascade Township
Kent Rubley	<i>Proxy for Larry Bruursema</i>	OCRC
		OCRC
Darrel Schmalzel		City of Walker
Terry Schweitzer		City of Kentwood
Dan Strikwerda		City of Hudsonville
Don VanDoeselaar		City of Hudsonville
Steve Warren	<i>Proxy for Bob Homan</i>	KCRC
		Plainfield Township

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
Don Stypula	GVMC Staff

Vicki Weerstra
George Yang

MDOT
GVMC

Voting Members Not Present

Jerry Alkema
Alex Arends
Sandy Ayers
Mike Berrevoets
Larry Bruursema
Christine Burns
Dan Carlton
Tim Cochran
Sandra Cornell-Howe
Dick Davies
Mark DeClercq
Sharon DeLange
Dan DesJarden
Jeff Dood
Bill Dooley
Steve Groenenboom
Tim Haagsma
George Haga
Wayne Harrall
Bryan Harrison
Don R. Hilton, Sr.
Dennis Hoemke
Bob Homan
Jim Koslosky
Ken Krombeen
Brett Laughlin
Jim Miedema
Audrey Nevins
Sandi Frost Parrish
David Pasquale
Jack Poll
Chuck Porter
Jon Rice
Toby VanEss

Allendale Township
Alpine Township
Village of Caledonia
City of Cedar Springs
OCRC
City of Cedar Springs
Georgetown Township
City of Wyoming
MDOT
Cannon Township
City of Grand Rapids
Village of Sparta
City of Lowell
City of Rockford
City of Wyoming
Ada Township
Gaines Charter Township
Ada Township
Kent County
Caledonia Charter Township
Gaines Township
Algoma Township
Plainfield Township
GRFIA
City of Grandville
OCRC
Jamestown Township
Byron Township
Kent County Commissioner
City of Lowell
City of Wyoming
Courtland Township
KCRC
Tallmadge Township

II. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

None

III. PROPOSED EARMARK PROJECTS FOR THE NEXT TRANSPORTATION BILL

Varga explained that the purpose of the meeting was to give various jurisdictions the opportunity to submit earmark projects for consideration for the next transportation bill. Referring to **Item III: Attachment A** and a handout, Varga stated that a list of potential projects had been compiled for the agenda and

asked for committee comments on the list. Varga added that the list did not include transit projects, which would total \$15 million dollars.

Itani stated that at the last Policy Committee meeting, it was the consensus of the group that any jurisdiction that wants to propose an earmark project should be able to do so. He continued, stating that staff had requested submissions from the jurisdictions to formulate a list of earmark projects. The resulting list was included as part of the agenda. Itani stated that Staff included the policies and procedures for the regular MPO process in the agenda. However, he also stated that Staff recognizes that there isn't a formal process to select High Priority Projects. Therefore, Itani stated that he had called Congressman Ehlers' Office and Congressman Hoekstra's office for clarification. Congressman Hoekstra stated that the projects for Ottawa County must be in the TIP or the LRTP. Congressman Ehlers planned to simply choose projects from the submitted list. However, for both congressmen, all projects must be regionally significant, in the federal aid system, and financed by 80/20 matches. Itani clarified that the role of staff would be simply to inform Committee members whether or not their projects qualified. Discussion, comments, and questions ensued.

Varga stated that this process is different from the process in the past, in which individual jurisdictions would submit projects that they wanted to the congressmen. He questioned whether the Committee should comment on these projects to the congressmen or try to create a plan that would ensure all jurisdictions that what they ask for would move forward. He added that the U.S. House of Representatives will have a bill done by the end of the year, and he asked for comments regarding the list of proposed earmark projects.

Kent stated that MDOT takes a different view of earmarks and that traditionally, earmarks come off the top of what Michigan gets for funding. Kent stated that MDOT follows certain criteria in determining the projects that they support. These criteria included the project being listed in the 5-year program, on a deferred project list, in the body of the LRTP, and/or cleared through the environmental process. Kent named several projects that did not meet these criteria, including Burton Street over I-96, Forest Hills Avenue over I-96 and Approaches from Burton to Cascade, M-11 (Wilson Avenue) from South of M-45 to 28th Street, the Access Road from 7 Mile Road to US-131, and 32nd Avenue from M-121 to Highland Drive. He continued that the four projects at the top of the list, including I-196 at Fuller, I-196 from M-21 to Cascade Road, I-196 from US-131 to Ottawa, and M-37/44 from Cascade Avenue to Knapp Street are all in the LRTP and have environmental clearance, and therefore, these are the types of projects MDOT is willing to support. However, Kent stated two changes to these project descriptions. First, I-196 from M-21 to Cascade Road would become I-96 from M-21 to Cascade road. Second, I-196 from US-131 to Ottawa Avenue would become I-196 westbound only.

Weerstra stated that the funding total for the I-196 from US-131 to Ottawa Avenue project needed to increase from \$10 to \$15 million. Varga added that ITP-The Rapid will request that three transit projects be added to the list: \$6.2 million for the Wealthy expansion, \$4.8 million for the Amtrak station, and \$4 million for hybrid electric articulated buses.

Weerstra asked if additional funding could be added to the Amtrak station project to cover necessary improvements to US-131. Varga suggested that Weerstra talk to the State about this.

Itani asked the Committee if they wanted to include ITS projects in this earmark. Bush responded that the original ITS project design was for \$30 million, but only \$10 million of this work had been completed. He continued that if there was a consensus among the agencies to move forward, he would like to keep the project on the earmark list. Itani added that he felt very comfortable leaving the ITS project on the earmark list, especially because the partnership between MDOT and the locals for this project is working well. Discussion, comments, and questions ensued. There was general consensus among Committee members to leave the ITS projects on the earmark project list.

Itani stated that the City of Grand Rapids would need to discern what percentage of the Wealthy Street Extension and Butterworth Avenue project is on Wealthy Street. He stated that the Wealthy section of this project is not on the Federal Aid System; therefore, he suggested that the City of Grand Rapids complete the work on Butterworth Avenue instead, since Butterworth Avenue is on the Federal Aid System. Bush stated that they could reconstruct Butterworth for 12 million, or construct the extension and take Butterworth off the Federal Aid System and put the new section on. Bush stated that since his preference was to construct the extension and take Butterworth off the federal aid system, he would submit that project. If he was told he couldn't proceed with this plan, then he would choose to reconstruct Butterworth. Kent suggested changing the project name to "Reconstruction and Realignment of Butterworth."

Warren commented that Coit Avenue from 4 Mile Road to Plainfield Avenue needed to be resurfaced, but that the project was not a high priority. Robinson removed the project from the earmark list. Itani recommended that the Access Road project from 7 Mile Road to US-131 also be removed from the list.

Schmalzel asked if Ehlers wanted to receive a ranked list of projects. Itani recommended submitting an unranked, complete list of projects to both representatives. Discussion, comments, and questions ensued.

Schmalzel also stated that he was in agreement to take the M-11 (Wilson Avenue) project off of the earmark list at this time, with the commitment to do an environmental analysis in the future.

Itani asked if the Committee planned to move forward without the bridge improvement on Forest Hills Avenue. Schweitzer stated that if the bridge is going to be reconstructed, that is the best time to add a nonmotorized crossing. However, Schweitzer added that this project is also a candidate for Safe Routes to School. Schweitzer stated that since they need to partner with MDOT, and this project is not a priority for MDOT, the Forest Hills Avenue over I-96 and Approaches project should be removed from the list. Burton Street over I-96 was also removed from the list.

Weerstra asked the Committee to add another line to the earmark project list to include road improvements for the Amtrak Station project. Conners suggested

that this seemed important enough to add into the earmark list, stating that if the item needed to be removed, it could be taken out administratively at a later time. Weerstra suggested adding a line item for the road and bridge work separately from the Amtrak relocation project. Bush stated that the three project pieces—the rail, the station, and US-131—would need to be funded and move forward at the same time. He stated that if the Committee plans to move forward with the relocation of the station, then the road work needs to move forward as well. Discussion, comments, and questions ensued.

Weerstra asked to put \$15 million for road work related to the Amtrak station on the list, stating that she would call Robinson once an exact project total was determined. She added that the project should be listed as US-131 over Pleasant street/railroad structure replacement/wealthy street bridge. Discussion, comments, and questions ensued.

Itani stated that he would send the same earmark list to senators Levin and Stabenow, and that there would hopefully be some collaboration between senators and representatives. Questions, comments, and discussion ensued.

Varga recapped the changes that had been made to the list. He stated that the I-196 project from M-21 to cascade road would become I-96; the I-196 project from US-131 to Ottawa Avenue would become I-196 westbound only; the ITS project would stay; the Burton Street project would be taken off the list; the Wealthy Street extension would be renamed Butterworth Avenue extension and realignment, specifying Veteran's Memorial Drive to Wealthy; and Forest Hills Avenue, M-11 (Wilson Avenue), Access Road, and Coit Avenue projects would also be taken off the list. Additions to the list would include US-131 over Pleasant Street with the dollar amount pending and 3 transit projects. Kent clarified that the US-131 project needed to be included as part of the Amtrak project.

Varga clarified that every entity is responsible for submitting their own projects and that the Metro Council would simply endorse these projects. Itani asked for the Committee's approval to send the list of proposed earmark projects to both representatives and both senators. Discussion ensued.

Varga entertained a motion to approve the earmark project list as identified.

MOTION by Conners, SUPPORT by Pastoor, to approve the earmark project list for the next transportation bill with the changes decided by the Committee. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

Stypula informed the Committee that there would be a significant push in the Michigan legislature between now and July 3rd to raise transportation funding. He stated that the goal was to raise funding by 90% over a period of several years. Discussion, comments, and questions ensued.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Varga adjourned the April 20, 2009 Tech/Policy Committee Meeting at 9:18 am.