

APPROVED

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ITEM II: ATTACHMENT A

**MINUTES**

**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council  
Transportation Division  
TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMMING STUDY GROUP  
Friday, October 20, 2017**

**Grand Valley Metro Council**

**678 Front Ave NW**

DeVries, chair of the TPSG Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves and the organization they represented.

**I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Voting Members Present**

Wayne Harrall  
Mike Devries  
Scott Conners  
Conrad Venema  
Terry Schweitzer  
Rick Sprague  
Chris Zull  
Rick Devries (*Chair*)  
Dan Strikwerda  
David Ducat  
Todd Wibright

County of Kent  
Grand Rapids Township  
City of Walker  
ITP-The Rapid  
City of Kentwood  
Kent County Road Commission  
City of Grand Rapids  
City of Grand Rapids  
City of Hudsonville  
City of Cedar Springs  
City of Grandville

**Staff and Non-Voting Guests Present**

Travis Mabry  
Imelda Martinez  
Laurel Joseph  
Amy Matisoff  
Darrell Robinson  
Art Green  
Mike Zonyk

City of Walker  
City of Grand Rapids  
GVMC Staff  
MDOT  
GVMC Staff  
MDOT  
GVMC Staff

**Voting Members Not Present**

Jerry Alkema  
Sandy Ayers  
Mike Burns  
Sharon DeLange  
Bill Dooley  
Roy Hawkins  
Doug LaFave  
Brett Laughlin  
Tom Stressman  
Phil Vincent

Allendale Township  
Village of Caledonia  
City of Lowell  
Village of Sparta  
City of Wyoming  
GRFIA  
East Grand Rapids  
Ottawa County Road Commission  
City of Cedar Springs  
City of Rockford

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Devries entertained a motion to approve the October 24th, 2016 TPSG meeting minutes.

**MOTION by Connors, SUPPORT by Harrall, to approve the October 24th, 2016 TPSG meeting minutes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**IV. FY2018 TAP PROJECTS-DISCUSSION**

Amy Matisof began her discussion by giving an update for the MDOT TAP program. They are no longer taking any applications for 2018 due to time constraints and noting that they were over programmed as is. Over programming occurs so that they can deliver projects to use the money available.

Some over programming and data analysis by MDOT has led to some projects not hitting obligation and conditional commitment. She further began to describe what common problems might be holding the projects up in our area. Site situations and property issues are causing some GVMC projects not hitting their obligation dates. The risk we run is losing federal funding and nobody wants that.

Matisof went on to explain some examples in our MPO area that we are seeing.

- Jamestown, Riley St Project – Existing site problems are occurring with landscaping, fencing, substantial trees that need to come down. Public comment had not occurred on the project and that might be an issue moving forward. Amy has spoken with Jamestown about the project to mediate some of these issues.
- City of Grand Rapids, Covell St Bike Lanes – Concerns from flow of bike lanes to Sharrow and how the navigation of signage and safety between the two happens. It's the level of technical review that MDOT gets into regardless of who is submitting the project. Another not was that Obrien Street has higher speeds at the end of where the bike lane was proposed so discussion logistics need to happen on how that transition needs to happen.
- City of Grand Rapids, 3 Mile – Similar concerns for removal of large trees being one of the biggest concerns for the evaluation committee. Making sure that the city has done there public awareness campaign is crucial to keeping these projects moving forward. There was also concern to see if replacement trees were going to be put back as well as utility concerns. Avoiding wildlife and wetlands can also be an issue and our applicants need to be aware that the DNR, DEQ and SHPO are also contacted and part of the review process when there are concerns respectively relating to these organization. All projects are required to meet all ASHTO standers with no expectation of design exceptions. Regardless of it being GVMC or TAP project we want to make sure that were hitting all the expectations of the Federal Highway Administration.
- City of Wyoming, 2015 Interurban Trail – Easement concerns and property issues hold up projects greatly. Know the reality of the timeline you are going to deliver
- City of Hudsonville, Buttermilk Creek – City of Hudsonville has a conditional commitment from GVMC through MDOT. They were original planning on a 2017 project but requested to move it to 2018 and were granted that revision to allow

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more time to finalize the route through the high school. Based on some requirements from the school the path had to be finalized in order. The need of a more formal letter of commitment from the school is a concern moving forward. If for some reason the city were not able to work with the school to get an easement we have committed federal funds to project that doesn't meet some basic requirements for TAP funds.

Matisof closed with saying that MDOT is not trying to pick on anyone specific, but these are the type of things that we need to be asking of the projects so we don't have to roll projects over and so that we don't mess up our budget for future fiscal years.

Robinson stated that we have brought Amy in because we are having complications and issues bringing a project together with the funding associated with it for the fiscal year it's supposed to be using funds for. He further explained that there is no guarantee that we can keep moving projects forward and that the carryover can go away at any time. It's our job as staff to deliver the program and make it work, but many things seem to keep slowing this process. Robinson gave the example of Consumers Energy with the Wyoming project and how some things are just out of our control, but we need to see that we need to have conversations started and we're leading down the path to property licensed. Discussion ensued....

Matisof stated that MDOT wants to see that letters have been submitted and property owners have been notified that this project is being thought about with residents in mind before the application comes through MDOT. Discussion Ensued...

Harrall pointed out that on some of these projects you know your ideal route, but buying right of way before you have federal funds is a hard expectation. Most agencies aren't doing the advanced engineering to determine if you can fit it in the right of way. Questions like..do we need a DEQ permit, or do we need boardwalk. Some of these things are tough expectations. Discussion ensued....

Harrall explained about a project in the 296 right of way that Federal Highways is saying that the project is a break in limited access because you're allowing pedestrians in a right of way that was limited to freeway traffic. However it's viewed, they've had lots of trails in the right of way but this presents a new problem that will have to be faced. Harrall stated that the key thing for Federal Highways is, "have you explored all other options?" Discussion ensued....

Robinson stated again that we don't need all these things in place, but there needs to be a show of movement that they are being worked on. We just don't want surprises and are not usually prepared for them.

Connors pointed out that we do well on our road projects because we're working down our right of way. If we get off on the periphery the projects are just harder and more expensive.

Mabry stated that we are willing to do a little of the preliminary work to do concept drawings and public information meetings, but that in itself is hard unless a design is complete because the public wants information on that project and how it's going to impact their property with details. Discussion ensued....

Matisof pointed out the Federal Highways wants to see that we are using the money provided. If we don't use it they will take it back and assume that we don't need it. We = don't want to become a target. Getting feedback for process improvement so that we don't come under fire with the TAP program is a good starting point so that we can find ways to improve the process. We want to solve our issues, but not make it more difficult for jurisdictions. Discussion ensued....

Green asked if it would be helpful to have a separate scoping exercise to view the impact of the project at separate agencies to see the problems. "Is there a time of year that we could come together and address issues and to technical reviews in advance?" People need to know how and what it's going to take to deliver the project. Offering help and working with Amy to be resources might be helpful. Discussion ensued....

Mike Devries asked how many projects have these types of issues that have been hit upon today. Amy replied saying every project.

Mabry asked if it's possible to get a 1 page document of what needs to happen for a TAP grant application to have the best success. Amy replied that it is being worked on. Discussion ensued...

Matisof went on to describe the review process internally and during this process no punches are pulled. It does not matter the entity or project that is being submitting, if it's not realistic they don't want you to waste your time or energy. Discussion ensued...

Harrall said that it would be helpful if it worked more like the bridge program because we want to spend all the money. Rick agreed and discussion ensued...

Joseph explained that we'd like to see a bucket of projects that are ready to go and flexible enough to use the money we have available. Projects need to be shovel ready.

Mike Devries said we need to be less polite when it comes time to use the money with the understanding that on some projects you can't do the engineering and some projects and some issues don't come up until a project is reviewed. Discussion ensued...

Robinson brought up the idea of a checklist. Each year we have an idea of when projects need to be submitted and there is a submittal deadline. We want to have a pool that is first come first basis as backup to what we have programmed in our TAP so that we can hit our obligation amounts.

Matisof stated that she will work with Robinson and Joseph on getting projects in on time and review them, at which point GVMC will work out which ones are selected.

Conners asked if GVMC can reach out with a quarterly update to give them a timeline and a heads up of what's to come. Discussion ensued....

Rick Devries stated that if there were a fact sheet on things that were eligible that would be helpful. Mabry agreed and stated further that milestone dates and timelines of how long things work would be advantageous....

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Matisof will look into the possibility of a Grant workshop to deal with some of these specifics.

**V. FY2018 TAP PROJECTS-DISCUSSION**

Robinson suggested now that we need to review any projects and make amendments as necessary and to make sure all projects are realistic. Discussion Ensued...

Strikwerda offered to move a project slated for 2019 to the illustrative list that MDOT engineers have concerns of hydrologic engineering. The goal is to have it redesigned and offer a better solution to cross Chicago Drive. Discussion Ensued...

Conners suggested that they want to advance construct a 2020 project and that it would be a good policy to pull up AC projects for when things like this happen. Mabry pointed out that this project is approaching 80% design and just applied for Leonard Street funding yesterday so it is in the system already.

Matisoff said she will talk to Mike Smith about the potential for this project to move up.

Robinson noted that we will have to meet again and need to finalize any project selection for these funds and that it's a good idea for Walker to keep moving forward on their AC project.

Joseph reminded everyone to submit their projects for 2019.

**VI. OTHER BUSINESS**

None

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Rick Devries adjourned the Friday, October 20, 2017 TPSG Committee meeting at 11:15 am.