

**MINUTES**

**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council  
Transportation Division  
POLICY COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, November 20, 2013  
Kent County Road Commission  
1500 Scribner NW      Grand Rapids, MI**

Varga, chair of the Policy Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:34 am. No introductions were necessary.

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

Peter Varga, <i>Chair</i>		ITP-The Rapid
Alex Arends		Alpine Township
Dave Bulkowski		Kent County Commissioner
Dan Carlton		Georgetown Township
Mark DeClercq		City of Grand Rapids
George Haga		Ada Township
Jim Holtrop		Ottawa County
Rich Houtteman		City of Kentwood
Paul Lott	<i>Proxy for Dal McBurrows</i>	MDOT
		MDOT
Jim Miedema	<i>Proxy for Tim Grifhorst</i>	OCRC
		OCRC
Brian Ryks		GRFIA
Darrel Schmalzel		City of Walker
Dan Strikwerda		City of Hudsonville
Steve Warren	<i>Proxy for Mike DeVries</i>	KCRC
		Grand Rapids Township

**Staff and Non-Voting Guests Present**

Andrea Faber		GVMC Staff
Rod Ghearing		ITP-The Rapid
Abed Itani		GVMC Staff
Dennis Kent	<i>Proxy for Mark Howe</i>	MDOT-Grand Region
		City of Lowell
Josh Lunger		GR Chamber
Darrell Robinson		GVMC Staff
Norm Sevensma		WMEAC-RWBC
Jim Snell		GVMC
Mike Zonyk		GVMC

**Voting Members Not Present**

Jerry Alkema		Allendale Township
Gail Altman		Jamestown Township
Jamie Davies		City of Rockford
Eric DeLong		City of Grand Rapids
Mike DeVries		Grand Rapids Township

Ken Feldt  
 Tim Grifhorst  
 Bryan Harrison  
 Don R. Hilton, Sr.  
 Dennis Hoemke  
 Mark Howe  
 Ken Krombeen, *Vice Chair*  
 Dal McBurrows  
 Tim Nelson  
 Audrey Nevins-Weiss  
 Richard Pastoor  
 Jack Poll  
 Chuck Porter  
 Ben Swayze  
 Thad Taylor  
 Toby VanEss  
 Member Awaiting Appointment

City of East Grand Rapids  
 OCRC  
 Caledonia Charter Township  
 Gaines Township  
 Algoma Township  
 City of Lowell  
 City of Grandville  
 MDOT  
 Cannon Township  
 Byron Township  
 City of Wyoming  
 City of Wyoming  
 Courtland Township  
 Cascade Township  
 City of Cedar Springs  
 Tallmadge Township  
 Plainfield Township

## II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Varga entertained a motion to approve the September 18, 2013 minutes.

**MOTION by Holtrop, SUPPORT by Schmalzel, to approve of the September 18, 2013 Policy Committee meeting minutes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Sevensma commented that, last month, the City of Grand Rapids was awarded a bronze medal by the league of American bicyclists for being a bicycle-friendly city. Only two other Michigan cities have received the award in the past—Traverse City and Ann Arbor.

## IV. 2035 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN AMENDMENT

Referring to **Item IV: Attachment A**, Itani explained that when the FY2014-2017 TIP was developed earlier this year, there were seven projects selected that were not listed in the 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan because they would have required a lengthy air quality analysis. Due to the scope of the projects it is required that they be included in the current MPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan. However, because the EPA has revoked the past air quality standards, an air quality analysis is not required at this time to move them into the MTP. These projects include the following:

- FY2014 Three Mile Road—Wilson Avenue to Kinney Avenue (CMAQ)
- FY2015 Division Avenue—54<sup>th</sup> St. to 60<sup>th</sup> St. (STPU)
- FY2015 52<sup>nd</sup> St.—Patterson Avenue to Kraft Avenue (EDFC)
- FY2016 48<sup>th</sup> Ave—M-45 to Pierce St. (STPU)
- FY2016 Post Drive—Pine Island Drive to Samrick Avenue (EDFC)
- FY2017 56<sup>th</sup> St.—Byron Center Avenue to Ivanrest Avenue (EDFC)
- FY2016 Belmont Avenue—South of 10 Mile Road (Illustrative)

Funding is identified for each of these projects with the exception of Belmont Avenue, which is listed as illustrative. An air quality analysis is not required at this time.

Bulkowski asked for clarification on the Belmont project and for a description of the listed

projects. Robinson provided additional information about all seven projects. Lott added that the reason why these projects were separated is that they have an element of a capacity change. Discussion ensued.

Varga entertained a motion to amend the 2035 MTP.

**MOTION by Bulkowski, SUPPORT by Schmalzel, to approve an amendment to include the seven identified projects in the GVMC 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan.**

**V. FY2011-2014 AND FY2014-2017 TIP AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS**

Varga noted that Staff was requesting the Committee's approval of several TIP amendment requests and suggested that the Committee take all amendment requests as part of one motion.

**MOTION by Warren, SUPPORT by Ryks, to approve all of the amendments to the FY2011-2014 AND FY2014-2017 TIP requested by the City of Grand Rapids, MDOT, the City of Wyoming, ITP-The Rapid, the KCRC, the City of Hudsonville, and Staff.**

Referring to **Item V: Attachment A**, Robinson reiterated that both the FY2011-2014 and FY2014-2017 TIP would be amended and explained the TIP amendment requests, which included the following:

- The City of Grand Rapids requested to make several minor modifications to FY2014 projects including—Buchanan Avenue, Carlton Avenue, Richmond St., Michigan St., Burton St., and Monroe Ave. The City also requested to move an FY2011 TSCP project—realignment and reconfiguration of Butterworth St from the WCL to Garfield Ave/Wealthy St. intersection and improvements on Butterworth St. from Veterans Memorial Dr. to the WCL— to FY2014. Lastly, the City requested to move a non-obligated FY2013 safety project, Leonard St. at College Ave., to FY2014.
- MDOT requested several amendments/modifications to the FY2011-2014 and FY2014-2017 TIPs .
- The City of Wyoming requested to slightly modify the limits of their FY2014 44<sup>th</sup> St. project.
- ITP-The Rapid requested to amend/modify the FY2011-2014 and FY2014-2017 TIPs to move several non-obligated FY2013 projects to FY2014.
- The KCRC requested to amend/modify the FY2011-2014 and FY2014-2017 TIPs. In addition to the agenda attachments, the KCRC was awarded another TAP funded project, Historic Bridge Preservation, Pine Island Bridge over the Rogue River with the Federal amount being \$195,000 and the total project cost being \$275,000.
- The City of Hudsonville requested to add an awarded FY2015 Oak St. bridge replacement project to the TIP.
- Staff requested to move the following projects from the illustrative list to the main body (project list) of the TIP for the listed year:
  - FY2014 Three Mile Road—Wilson Avenue to Kinney Avenue (CMAQ)
  - FY2015 Division Avenue—54<sup>th</sup> St to 60<sup>th</sup> St. (STPU)
  - FY2015 52<sup>nd</sup> St.—Patterson Avenue to Kraft Avenue (EDFC)
  - FY2016 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue—M-45 to Pierce St. (STPU)
  - FY2016 Post Drive—Pine Island Drive to Samrick Avenue (EDFC)

- FY2017 56<sup>th</sup> St.—Byron Center Avenue to Ivanrest Avenue (EDFC)

These projects went through the approval process as if they were included in the funded TIP including: Environmental Justice review, Consultation and Public Involvement.

Varga called the motion to question. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## VI. **FY2014 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM**

Referring to **Item VI: Attachment A**, Itani explained that staff is requesting to amend the FY2014 UPWP, which includes the budget for all federally assisted transportation planning activities that the GVMC Transportation Division, the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP), and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) will undertake. This amendment will reflect additional FTA transportation funding for ITP. The FTA 5307 grant funding is listed under work item “6.6 Human Resources Planning.” The goal of the grant is to “study and ultimately implement electronic methods for the creation and subsequent storage of employee records.” In order for ITP to use the FTA grant, the FY2014 UPWP needs to be amended.

In addition, Itani added that Kent contacted GVMC yesterday about a downtown traffic circulation and access study with the City of Grand Rapids that would be an outcome of the Michigan Street study project that GVMC is involved in. The state gave the MPO \$25,000 in additional funding for this project, so the UPWP amendment would also include adding this funding to the UPWP as well.

Varga entertained a motion to approve the UPWP amendments.

**MOTION by Bulkowski, SUPPORT by DeClercq, to approve of the amendments to the UPWP requested by ITP-The Rapid and GVMC Staff, as identified.**

Bulkowski asked if staff has collaborated with Grand Rapids Downtown Inc. (GRDI). Itani stated that the City of Grand Rapids will have a seat at the table and that he assumed that GRDI would be involved, since there will be a lot of coordination with all of the players in the downtown area. However, all the entities that will serve on the steering team for the study have not yet been identified. Discussion ensued.

Varga called the motion to question. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## VII. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

Referring to **Item VII: Attachment A**, Itani stated that Staff has recently updated the existing Public Participation Plan in an effort to improve it before the development of the next MTP. He stated that Staff took the old plan, looked at the new technologies that were available, and tried to come up with a plan that meets federal guidelines and regulations. The revised plan includes information such as when staff takes out public ads, the length of the waiting periods, and tables that clarify that information. A draft was submitted to FHWA and returned with extensive comments. Since that time, staff has met again with FHWA and they are satisfied with the current product. Faber added that Staff is bringing the draft plan forward to the Committee today for draft approval to move forward with the public comment period for the document, which will begin on Saturday, November 23 and run through January 6<sup>th</sup> for a total of 45 days. The public will be notified of the comment period by ads in the Advance and El Vocero newspapers, and

an informative postcard will also be sent to the interested citizens/agencies list that GVMC maintains.

Varga entertained a motion to approve the revised Public Participation Plan.

**MOTION by Bulkowski, SUPPORT by Holtrop, to approve the revised Public Participation Plan.**

Warren asked if the mailings that were used for the environmental justice (EJ) process were discussed in the PPP. Itani responded that, for the TIP, Staff sent 11,000 postcards for EJ and only received one response, which is the ongoing challenge with public participation. He stated that, since that time, he has talked with FHWA and they said that GVMC doesn't need to do that in the future. Itani added that Staff may utilize other strategies to reach the public in the future, like YouTube videos. Warren commented that Staff needs to be careful about what they communicate to the public about projects on the illustrative list so as to not falsely alarm people that a project will happen when it may not. He added that the KCRC prides itself on being very thorough about public participation and always gives the public an opportunity to look at projects, plans, etc. Itani responded that a project isn't really a project until it becomes funded and that Staff is very aware of that fact. Discussion ensued.

Bulkowski suggested that Staff advertise in the Grand Rapids Times paper, which focuses on the African American community. He also noted that "persons with disabilities" should be used instead of "the disabled" in the document. He also added that Disability Advocates has a project whereby they are collecting civic engagement tools around the state and appreciated Appendix A in the document. Discussion ensued.

Itani added that staff is also looking into ways in which they can explain the MTP to individual communities. He stated that staff may go to disability groups, attend town hall meetings to explain the process, etc. This will be on top of the usual ads on the website and in the newspapers that staff will take. He noted that YouTube videos may be particularly effective with this. He added that an extensive targeted mailing list will also be contacted.

DeClercq added that it should be clarified whether this plan is for participation or education and what type of input is being solicited. He noted that it has been difficult to get the public involved with engineering projects and explained that if the Committee is going to muster any type of transportation funding at the state level, they need to educate the public. He noted that if we want to make an educational change/cultural shift, there should be a communication/pr plan to go along with it. He also added that because Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years fall within the public comment period for the document, the time frame may not be ideal. Warren added that he liked the idea of a constant education program focused on the public as well as the idea of utilizing what we have with the MPO to get information consistently out to the public. He added that rather than have something satisfy a bureaucratic requirement, we should use this tool to educate the public about why more investment is needed in transportation. Warren also noted that more effort should be put into social media and web outreach, since that is how people get their information nowadays, versus public meetings. Faber responded that social media is covered in the PPP, and Itani added that staff is constantly looking at how to improve the outreach process. He also commented that the public participation procedures outlined in the PPP for the TIP and MTP are a completely

different process from educating the public about transportation funding. However, he agreed that there does need to be an educational process for the public. He added that GVMC would be a participant if the Committee wants to develop a communication or educational plan for educating the public in the future. Arends added that, in his opinion, what is important is for the Committee members to make information available to the public in the easiest way possible in a manner that is as accessible and informative as possible. The rest should be left to the public. He also noted that currently, members must put various public notices in the paper. He suggested that GVMC serve as a comprehensive clearinghouse for that information. Every community or association that had to submit public notices could then do so, and the public could then find it by city, township, etc. Discussion, comments and questions ensued.

Itani added that communication is a complex issue and explained that, for the next MTP, staff will identify interest groups and meet with them. He also reiterated to the committee that the purpose of the PPP is to cover the development of the TIP and MTP, not to address a transportation philosophy to educate the public about transportation. Varga added that the PPP is a valid plan that meets the obligations for transmitting funds under FHWA. However, he added that regionally, the communication issue has not been addressed, and that this is worth exploring. He asked Itani to take the suggestions from the committee back to GVMC for further discussion. Itani added that a regional communication plan could be included in the next UPWP, if the Committee wishes. Discussion ensued.

Lunger added that only 40% of the public says they are willing to pay to fix the bad roads. He noted that the Committee should use every opportunity to educate, and there is an opportunity to build those poll numbers up. Varga invited GVMC to see how they can use their public access to elevate the conversation about what the issues are and see how they can get the communities to pull together. Discussion ensued.

Varga called the motion to question. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Itani asked the Committee to send comments to staff on the document.

#### **VIII. NON-MOTORIZED PLAN FUNDING POLICY**

Speaking on **Item VIII: Attachment A**, Itani stated that the motion to approve the funding policy presented by the Non-Motorized Committee in September was tabled. The policy was since modified from the discussion comments and has been approved by the Technical Committee for further action. The revised policy reads as follows:  
*All non-motorized projects included in the GVMC Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Non-Motorized Transportation Plan are eligible for funding as allowed under applicable federal-aid categories. A target of one-half of the allocated funds to the MPO for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) shall be used on bicycle and pedestrian related facility improvements. The allocated funds to the MPO for the congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program shall also be eligible and considered for use on bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements. All CMAQ funded non-motorized projects shall be addressed on a case by case basis to prove high use, mode shift, and connectivity and score well using the scoring criteria set forth in the Non-Motorized Plan. For the use of CMAQ funds all projects must demonstrate emission reduction and alleviate congestion.*

*All non-motorized projects requesting federal funds must be endorsed by the MPO to receive federal funds and be included in the MPO TIP.*

Varga entertained a motion to approve the revised policy.

**MOTION by Bulkowski, SUPPORT by DeClercq, to approve the revised Non-Motorized Plan funding policy. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**IX. OTHER BUSINESS**

DeClercq thanked the colleagues around the table for a fruitful discussion about the Public Participation Plan.

Itani added that the Committee would have elections in January and noted that the current vice chair—Krombeen—would be nominated to be chair. He suggested that the Committee think about nominations for the next vice chair. Discussion ensued.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

Varga adjourned the November 20, 2013 Policy Committee meeting at 10:55 am.