

**MINUTES**

**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council  
Transportation Division  
POLICY COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, March 16, 2016  
Kent County Road Commission  
1500 Scribner NW Grand Rapids, MI**

Darrel Schmalzel, vice chair of the Policy Committee, call the meeting to order at 9:30 AM

**I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Voting Members Present**

Darrel Schmalzel, Vice Chair		City of Walker
Gail Altman		Jamestown Township
Alex Arends		Alpine Township
Terry Brod		Cannon Township
Mark DeClercq	<i>Proxy for Eric DeLong</i>	City of Grand Rapids
Jim Holtrop		City of Hudsonville
Jim Holtvluwer		Ottawa County
Dennis Kent		MDOT
Ken Krombeen		City of Grandville
Doug LaFave		City of East Grand Rapids
John Lanum		MDOT
Chuck Porter		Courtland Township
Terry Schweitzer		City of Kentwood
Rick Sprague	<i>Proxy for Steve Warren</i>	KCRC
		KCRC
Peter Varga		ITP-The Rapid
Rod Weersing		Georgetown Township

**Staff and Non-Voting Guests Present**

Michael Brameijer		GVMC
Liz Treutel Callin		Michigan Environmental Council
Andrea Faber		GVMC
Darrell Harden		MDOT
Abed Itani		GVMC
Laurel Joseph		GVMC
John Langdon		Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers
Norm Sevensma		WMEAC-RWB
Dan Strikwerda		City of Hudsonville
George Yang		GVMC

**Voting Members Not Present**

Jerry Alkema  
Dave Bulkowski  
Jamie Davies  
Eric DeLong  
Mike DeVries  
George Haga  
Bryan Harrison  
Don Hilton, Sr.  
Dennis Hoemke  
Jim Miedema  
Dave Pasquale  
Rich Pastoor  
Jack Poll  
Brian Ryks  
Ben Swayze  
Thad Taylor  
Roger Towsley  
Toby Van Ess  
Cameron Van Wyngarden  
Steve Warren  
Audrey Nevins Weiss

Allendale Township  
Kent County  
City of Rockford  
City of Grand Rapids  
Grand Rapids Township  
Ada Township  
Caledonia Township  
Gaines Charter Township  
Algoma Township  
OCRC  
City of Lowell  
City of Wyoming  
City of Wyoming  
GRFIA  
Cascade Township  
City of Cedar Springs  
Village of Sand Lake  
Tallmadge Township  
Plainfield Township  
KCRC  
Byron Township

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Schmalzel entertained a motion to approve the November 18, 2015 Policy Committee minutes.

**MOTION by Varga, SUPPORT by Holtrop, to approve the November 18, 2015 Policy Committee meeting minutes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**IV. FY2014-2017 TIP AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS**

Referring to **Item IV: Attachment A**, Robinson informed the committee that MDOT, GVMC Staff (on behalf of the members), and ITP-The Rapid were requesting to amend/modify the FY2014-2017 TIP.

Specific requests included the following:

- MDOT requested to amend/modify the FY 2016 and FY 2017 projects and GPAs listed in the FY2014-2017 TIP.
- ITP-The Rapid requested to make modifications to FY 2016 and FY 2017 project costs for several projects including the CNG fueling station projects. ITP also requested the addition of a new project to replace vanpool vans.

- GVMC staff requested to move two TAP projects from the illustrative list to the General Program Account (GPA) list: Byron Township's Fred Meijer M-6 Trail Phase IV and Gaines Township's Dutton Spur to Paul Henry Trail project. Additionally, the Hudsonville, Jamestown Township, and Georgetown Township 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave Barry Street Connector project is moving toward conditional commitment, receiving funding from GVMC TAP funds. Phase I is a prospective FY 2016 TAP project and Phase II is a proposed advance construct project for FY 2016.
- The City of Wyoming requested to modify the limits of its Inter Urban Rehab trail project.

Kent described additional details about MDOT's projects.

The floor was opened for questions and Schmalzel asked Kent about details regarding the number of lanes planned for the I-196 bridge project. Kent said three lanes in each direction are planned. No other questions were raised.

Schmalzel entertained a motion to amend the FY2014-2017 TIP.

**MOTION by Krombeen, SUPPORT by Varga, to recommend the approval of the amendments/modifications to the FY2014-2017 TIP requested by MDOT, GVMC, ITP-The Rapid, and the City of Wyoming. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **V. APPROVAL OF DRAFT PROJECT LISTS FOR FY2017-2020 TIP**

Referring to **Item V: Attachment A**, Robinson stated that the Transportation Programming Study Group (TPSG) met to program projects, developing a draft list of projects. Project costs on the list included in the agenda packet were modified from the original TPSG list as a result of an increase in funding by about 2% each year provided by the recently enacted FAST Act transportation bill. Robinson stated that the Technical Committee recognized these cost changes, and pointed out that the illustrative list was also attached. The illustrative list was included so it goes through the consultation, environmental review, and the public involvement processes. This way, if additional funding becomes available, these projects can move forward.

Approval of the draft project list will allow GVMC to move forward with the consultation, environmental review, and public involvement processes. Robinson estimated that the draft FY 2017-2020 TIP document will be ready for Policy Committee review and approval in May.

The floor was opened for questions. Kent asked Robinson if the list will include MDOT modifications. Robinson replied yes and that it also will include modifications from ITP-The Rapid, Hope Network, and Georgetown Seniors.

Schmalzel thanked the Technical Committee and the TPSG Committee for all their work on this.

Harden requested that Robinson email him about any E-STIP changes.

Schmalzel entertained a motion to approve the draft FY 2017-2020 project lists.

**MOTION by Varga, SUPPORT by Porter, to recommend the approval of the draft projects lists for the FY2017-2020 TIP, including the requests from MDOT, ITP-The Rapid, Hope Network, and Georgetown Seniors. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **VI. COAST-TO-COAST PRESENTATION**

Liz Treutel Callin, Policy Associate for the Michigan Environmental Council, and John Langdon, Governmental / Public Affairs Coordinator for the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, presented on the findings of the recent Coast to Coast study.

Itani introduced the Coast to Coast rail study, noting that the presentation was just for the committee's information and not approval as additional study phases are necessary.

Callin gave the presentation about the Coast to Coast passenger rail study, an exploratory study to look at reestablishing passenger rail service between Detroit, Lansing, and Grand Rapids. The study resulted in favorable ridership and cost figures and focused on three different route options, though the study of these routes does not eliminate or choose a preferred route. All routes utilize existing rail lines, though lines would need to be upgraded to meet safety requirement for both 79 mph and 110 mph technology options. Ridership numbers were highest for Route 1, followed by Route 2 and then Route 3. Capital costs were highest for the 110 mph technology option because track would need to be acquired from private companies and safety standards at crossings would require additional upgrades. Operating costs for the 79 mph service would require a subsidy, while the ridership estimated for the 110 mph service would produce a surplus for operating costs.

Callin indicated that the study generally received positive feedback from the public. Public comments indicated that people liked the idea of having an option to travel without as much stress, worrying about parking, traffic, etc., though some had concerns about how to connect to a final destination once you get to a city, indicating the need to coordinate with transit agencies, rideshare, and bikeshare programs. Callin and Langdon provided the committee with the full report on CD.

Next steps include a more in-depth feasibility study that would consider environmental impacts, potential alternatives for analysis, safety upgrade requirements, opportunities for public private partnerships (P3) or other alternative service models, and identifying an implementation plan. Additionally, the group wants to coordinate with other work that's going on in rail in Michigan.

The floor was opened for questions. Sevensma asked about freight speed on tracks and arrangements for passenger and freight passing and other technical questions. Discussion ensued. Brod asked about travel times; Callin explained the ranges. Varga asked about consultation with rail companies; Callin indicated the group had talked to CSX during this phase of the study but that everything is subject to official agreements with the freight companies. Varga indicated that P3 might be the best model and suggested that the study provides accurate costs. Discussion ensued.

DeClercq asked whether combinations of service speed technologies were considered; Callin explained that the 79 mph and 110 mph speeds are maximum speeds, and that trains would not necessarily be going those speeds the entire time. Callin also stated that development would probably move from a more basic service to upgrade segments over time and that the group would be looking at phasing of segment development.

Lanum asked if the consultant was confident about ridership estimates; Callin stated that the consultant was confident about ridership and cost estimates, but that this is still a high level study. Sevensma asked if the study was done before the price of gas dropped; Callin indicated that it started before, but the gas price drop was beginning to be incorporated at the end of the study, and that the group will need to look more closely at the impact of gas prices in the future.

DeClercq asked if the study took into account assumptions of preferences of future generations; Callin said this was taken into account a little during the modeling, but was also reflected in the comments heard during public meetings. Callin stated that tourism and business travel are main markets they are looking at. Discussion ensued.

Schmalzel asked if there was a role for GVMC moving forward. Callin said that she will continue to coordinate with Faber and will potentially in the future ask for funding for an in-depth feasibility study, but will generally keep the line of communication open. Discussion ensued regarding additional cost considerations.

## **VII. OTHER BUSINESS**

- Safe Routes to School Training – Robinson pointed the committee to the agenda packet, which included the invitation and link to register online. The training will take place on Monday, April 18 from 9 am – 12 pm at Rapid Central Station.

Itani added that last week, GVMC staff went to Lansing for the UPWP meeting with MDOT and FHWA. The discussion focused on next year's budget. Itani noted that there will be an increase in planning funds because of the FAST Act. He explained that membership dues will be roughly the same as this year, so essentially there will be no dues increase for the second year in a row.

APPROVED

APPROVED  
Item II: Attachment A

Kent distributed copies of the 2016 Grand Region construction map that includes the new Grand Region. He explained that these boundaries are consistent with the Governor's new regional prosperity initiative.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Schmalzel entertained a motion to adjourn the March 16, 2016 Policy Committee meeting.

**MOTION by Krombeen, SUPPORT by Sprague, to adjourn the March 16, 2016 Policy Committee meeting at 10:26 am. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**