



GRAND VALLEY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

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Board Meeting Agenda

Monday, April 9, 2012
10:30 a.m. • Prince Center

1. Call to Order by Chair
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of Minutes March 2012 (attached)
4. Finance
 - a. GVMC 2010/2011 Audit
 - b. Financial Services Contract with Chris Brown (attached)
5. Communications – News Items FYI (attached)
6. Legislative – MTT & PPT Meetings
7. Discussion with Mark Murray or What I Would Like GVMC to Accomplish in the Next 12-24 Months
8. Other
9. Adjourn

GRAND VALLEY METRO COUNCIL

Board Meeting

March 1, 2012

8:30 a.m.

Kent County Commission Chambers

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Chairman Jim Buck.

Members Present:

Jerry Alkema	Allendale Township
Alex Arends	Alpine Township
Jim Buck	City of Grandville
Chris Burns	City of Cedar Springs
Tom Butcher	Grand Valley State University
Dan Carlton	Georgetown Township
Daryl Delabbio	Kent County
Mike DeVries	Grand Rapids Township
Brian Donovan	City of East Grand Rapids
Jason Epler	City of Ionia
Steve Grimm	Cannon Township
George Heartwell	City of Grand Rapids
Carol Hennessey	Kent County
Don Hilton, Sr.	Gaines Township
Jim Holtrop	Ottawa County
John Hoppough	City of Greenville
Mark Howe	City of Lowell
Cindy Janes	Cascade Township
Robert May	City of Hastings
Mick McGraw	At-large Member
George Meek	Plainfield Township
Jim Miedema	Jamestown Township
Cy Moore	Treasurer
Audrey Nevins-Weiss	Byron Township
Jack Poll	City of Wyoming
Chuck Porter	Courtland Township
Jim Saalfeld	Kent County
Al Vanderberg	Ottawa County
Bill VerHulst	City of Wyoming
Michael Young	City of Rockford

Members Absent:

Dale Bergman	Sparta Township
Tom Fehsenfeld	At-Large Member
Rebecca Fluery	Village of Middleville

Brian Harrison	Caledonia Township
Doyle Hayes	At-Large Member
John Helmholdt	At-Large
Denny Hoemke	Algoma Township
Elias Lumpkins, Jr.	City of Grand Rapids
Steven Patrick	City of Coopersville
Milt Rohwer	City of Grand Rapids
Rick Root	City of Kentwood
Martin Super	Village of Sparta
Toby VanEss	Tallmadge Township
Rob VerHeulen	City of Walker
Patrick Waterman	City of Hudsonville
Roger Wills	City of Belding
Chris Yonker	City of Wayland

Others Present:

Andy Bowman	Grand Valley Metro Council
Leon Branderhorst	Grand Valley Metro Council
Ron DeCook	MDOT
Tim Hoeffner	MDOT
Abed Itani	Grand Valley Metro Council
Dal McBurrows	MDOT
Gayle McCrath	Grand Valley Metro Council
Peter Varga	The RAPID/ITP
John Weiss	Grand Valley Metro Council

2. Approval of Minutes

**MOTION – To Approve the Minutes of the February 2012 GVMC Board Meeting.
MOVE – Meek. SUPPORT – Hilton. MOTION CARRIED.**

3. Public Comment

Tyler Nickerson of Disability Advocates told the group that he supported GVMC’s Strategic Initiatives, particularly sustainable communities and asked that regional planning be added to the goals.

4. Oath of Office

Kent County Clerk Sonja Dean administered the Oath of Office to John Hoppough, Mayor of the City of Greenville.

John said he looked forward to serving on the Board and learning more about its activities.

5. Finance

a. MDOT Audit

John Weiss reported on the MDOT audit. The last remaining issue with the audit is the \$165,500 owed by REGIS. MDOT has previously rejected GVMC's request for forgiveness on the entire amount. GVMC asked for a second consideration of the amount. Dal McBurrows of MDOT (MDOT's new designate to GVMC) reported MDART met for a second time with GVMC on 2/15. The outcome was a decision by MDOT to forgive the \$165,500. In the future GVMC/REGIS needs to be in compliance with sub-agreements. There needs to be agreement with MDOT before any sub-agreements are signed.

George Heartwell thanked Mr. McBurrows for his willingness to work with GVMC.

b. GVMC & LGROW Budget Amendments

Leon Branderhorst reviewed the proposed budget amendments which include increases to revenue for:

PL	\$50,000
SPR	\$75,000
Contrib. Survey	\$2,000
LGROW	\$3,252
Data Collection	\$7,670

Proposed amendments to expenses included:

Administration

Salaries	\$19,390
Social Sec. Tax	\$1,203
Medicare Tax	\$282
Health & Dental Ins	\$125
Pension Plan	\$1,750
Legal	\$1,000
Contractual Serv	\$4,035
Meeting Exp	\$1,000
Mileage	\$1,330
Repair & Maint	\$185

Transportation

Health & Dental Ins	\$335
Contract Serv	\$50,100
Repairs & Maint	\$495

Regional Planning Services

Health & Dental Ins	\$110
Contract Serv	\$150
Repairs & Maint	\$120

The proposed LGROW amendment includes an increase in revenue of \$44,200 due to a grant from the Wege & Frey Foundations (including an anticipated GRCF \$16,000 grant). Increases in expenses include \$3,240 in GVMC Staff Services; \$13,860 in Contracting for Communications & Business Plan; and \$755 in Printing.

MOTION – To Approve the Proposed GVMC and LGROW FY2011/2012 Budget Amendments. MOVE – Hilton. SUPPORT – Nevins-Weiss. MOTION CARRIED.

John Weiss reported GVMC Financial Director, Leon Branderhorst, was retiring after 15 years with the Council. He thanked Leon for his service and presented him with a plaque of appreciation.

Leon Branderhorst said it has been a pleasure working for GVMC & wished everyone the best.

6. MDOT / Amtrak Resolution

The Pere Marquette is the passenger rail service, supported by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and operated by Amtrak that serves the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council MPO. This train operates seven days a week on track owned by CSX in Michigan and has several stops along the lakeshore including Holland, Bangor, and St. Joe/Benton Harbor, on its way to Chicago Illinois Union Station.

The GVMC MPO is not currently linked to the high-speed rail network by the Pere Marquette. The high-speed corridor runs between Kalamazoo and Porter Indiana on Amtrak owned railroad track. Michigan's other two passenger rail lines, the Blue Water and the Wolverine, currently operate on the high-speed corridor, from Port Huron and Detroit.

Recently, the City of New Buffalo, with support from Amtrak and MDOT, has created an application for a federal TIGER 4 grant of approximately \$56 million. This TIGER grant, if awarded, would go towards track improvements including extending rail siding from Dowagiac to Niles Michigan and about \$800,000 for the design phase for track improvements that would join CSX and Amtrak track in New Buffalo. The joining of CSX and Amtrak track would mean that all three of Michigan's passenger rail routes would use the same rail lines from New Buffalo and into Chicago.

GVMC staff recognizes the benefits of a project to join the tracks in New Buffalo for Pere Marquette riders, passenger rail in southern Michigan, and particularly the communities in the New Buffalo area, including:

- High-speed corridor access for the Pere Marquette (albeit an very small segment)
- Connection to the other two passenger rail lines, opening destinations to the east in addition to the regular terminus in Chicago
- Fewer delays for the Pere Marquette because the Amtrak trains would not be competing with freight traffic by operating on Amtrak owned track between New Buffalo and Porter Indiana
- Restoration of a New Buffalo stop for the Pere Marquette
- Passenger boarding in New Buffalo could arrive in Chicago 1.5 hours earlier by taking the Pere Marquette instead of the Blue Water or Wolverine lines

Ron DeCook & Tim Hoeffner explained the request for GVMC's resolution of support and answered questions. The proposed improvements would add frequencies and improve reliability for Amtrak travelers.

MOTION – To Approve the Resolution in Support of the City of New Buffalo's Amtrak/USDOT Tiger Grant Application to Improve Intercity Passenger Rail Service on the Pere Marquette Rail Corridor. MOVE – Heartwell. SUPPORT – Nevins-Weiss. MOTION CARRIED.

7. Outsourcing Update

John Weiss reported he was researching various options to outsource and collaborate to fill the duties of the outgoing Director of Finance and reduce salaries and overhead. Due to use of Federal Highway funds, an RFP process must be followed which will result in a longer timeframe to complete the process. He hopes to have the situation resolved by the next Board meeting.

8. Communications

John Weiss reviewed improvements to GVMC communications including a revamped website (which is a work in progress) and the distribution of the Weekly Update. Included in the Weekly Update will be a "Spotlight on Collaboration" section. Any member who has a collaborative project in the works is encouraged to contact John so that it can be featured. He also discussed the 2012 proposed construction maps and encouraged everyone to take one back to their offices and post them in a public area.

9. Legislative

John Weiss accompanied the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce to Lansing for its Legislative Day. He met with nine legislators and has follow-up visits scheduled. Lawmakers are well aware of the significance of the elimination of the PPT. Currently, there are no PPT bills in the House, with eight in the Senate. Under consideration is the elimination of the PPT for industrial and commercial, while preserving it PPT on utilities. Proposals include replacing a portion of the revenue through tax credits coming off line and battery credits. Additionally, communities are developing other suggestions.

George Heartwell stated the PPT affects schools, colleges, libraries and transit also. Peter Varga is organizing lobbying around transit. It would be good to have the others on-board with our efforts.

Daryl Delabbio reminded the Council of the very effective revenue sharing rally during the Engler administration. We need to speak with one voice. Current lawmakers haven't seen that kind of lobbying event before.

10. What I Would Like GVMC to Accomplish – To Be Addressed at Next Board Meeting

11. Other

John Weiss reminded members of the April 9 Quarterly Luncheon with Mark Murray and encouraged everyone to RSVP as soon as possible. Mr. Murray will also be participating in the GVMC Board meeting (which will be held at 10:30 a.m. in the Board room at the Prince Center preceding the luncheon). He will engage members in a casual conversation on how local government and business can work cooperatively.

12. Adjournment – 9:30 a.m.

MOTION – To Adjourn. MOVE – Delabbio. SUPPORT – Hilton. MOTION CARRIED.

**GRAND VALLEY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL AGREEMENT FOR
ACCOUNTING SERVICES CONSULTING**

THIRD PARTY CONTRACT

THIS AGREEMENT is made between the **GRAND VALLEY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**, *Grand Rapids, Michigan 678 Front Ave NW, Suite 200, Grand Rapids, MI 49504* (the "**GVMC**") and **Brown Accounting & Tax Solutions**, 5923 West River Road, Belmont, Michigan 49306 (the "**CONSULTANT**").

RECITALS:

WHEREAS, the GVMC is interested in obtaining services for the purpose of performing outsourced Financial Services including Payroll and Flexible (125) Plan Administration and;

WHEREAS, the Consultant has submitted a Proposal and Cost Estimate representing that it is both interested and qualified to perform such services; and

WHEREAS, based on the recommendations of GVMC staff and the GVMC Executive Committee, the GVMC has selected the Consultant to provide such services as of the date of the signing of this Agreement; and

WHEREAS, the Consultant and GVMC staff have composed a description of the work to be accomplished, schedule of work, and arrangement of review meetings, hereinafter referred to as the "Scope of Services";

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the respective covenants contained herein, the parties agree as follows:

**ARTICLE I
AGREEMENT AND TERM**

1.1 The Agreement. This Agreement shall incorporate and include all of the following, as specifically identified or attached to this Agreement:

- (a) The Scope of Services except as the same is inconsistent with this Agreement.
- (b) All provisions required by law to be part of this Agreement.
- (c) All applicable provisions stated in MDOT Master Agreement # 2012-0004

1.2 Term. This Agreement shall commence upon execution by the parties and shall remain in effect until April 1, 2014, unless extended by execution of a written amendment to this Agreement in accordance with paragraph 5.1 of this Agreement.

1.3 Service Description. Perform the Accounting tasks set forth by the GVMC as directed by the Executive Director. Work performed by the CONSULTANT to be hereinafter referred to as the "SERVICES". The SERVICES will be initiated through instructions to proceed issued by GVMC as funding is appropriated.

1.4 Notice to Proceed. The notice to proceed letter will contain information regarding which elements of the scope of work shall be completed during the contract's duration. The consultant shall not incur chargeable project costs for the project prior to receipt of the letter to proceed from GVMC.

ARTICLE II

CONSULTANTS' SERVICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 General Scope of Services/Work. Consultant will conduct the following tasks;

- Financial Services
 - Serves as chief financial officer for the Metro Council. Maintains and processes all financial and related records, including the general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable and payroll.
 - Assists the Executive Director and department heads with preparation of the annual budget. Prepares estimates of revenues and expenditures.
 - Compiles data and writes and distributes a variety of financial reports including monthly status reports for the Executive Director, department heads and Metro Council Board.
 - Collects and prepares data for the annual audit and coordinates audit with external auditors.
 - Develops and implements cost control policies and procedures. Monitors revenues and expenditures to assure activities are performed within budget.
 - Establishes and maintains financial practices to ensure conformance with generally accepted accounting standards. Provides recommendations on accounting and reporting procedures, and fiscal policies to improve operations.
 - Performs payroll functions for the Metro Council, including withholding and filing appropriate taxes. Oversees deferred compensation system and assists employees who participate.
 - Attends meetings of the Board and other meetings as requested.

- Payroll
 - To process bi-weekly payroll for 18 full-time and 2 part-time employees including special allowances (auto allowance, healthcare waiver allowance, etc.). (Roughly 40 General Ledger accounts)
 - Interface with Founders Trust for transfer of funds
 - Interface with ICMARC for retirement reporting and transfer of funds for 401a and 457 plans
 - Processing and filing of all reports regarding payroll taxes & compliance
 - Friend of the Court processing & filing (1 employee)
 - Track & report on hours, personal time, vacation, etc.
 - Ability to interface with General Ledger
 - Ability to produce cost reports

- Flexible Benefit (125) Plan Administration
 - Administer, Track & Record Healthcare and Childcare Reimbursement Plans and file any required reporting or compliance (currently approx. 10 employees participating)
 - Process check requests bi-monthly

2.2 Performance. Consultant shall perform the Project in accordance with generally accepted professional standards and shall use best efforts to comply with all applicable laws, ordinances, and codes of the United States, the State of Michigan, and local government(s) in the area in which the Project is performed. Performance shall begin as of the date that Consultant receives a Notice to Proceed and a signed copy of this Agreement.

2.3 Completion. Consultant shall complete all reports, documents, and all other work in accordance with the schedule set forth in Scope of Services and within the cost set forth in Article III of this Agreement.

ARTICLE III **COMPENSATION**

3.1 Payments. Pay the CONSULTANT for SERVICES of **sixty five (65) dollars** per hour, for a total amount not to exceed \$60,000.00 over the contract's timeline. Compensation will be made in accordance with the cost presented in **Exhibit A**. Funding is contingent upon GVMC appropriation. The SERVICES will be initiated through instructions to proceed issued by GVMC as funding is appropriated. If sufficient funding is not appropriated, the SERVICES will not be initiated.

3.2 Additional Services. When work is required other than work provided for in this Agreement, the performance of and payment for such work shall require submission of a proposal and the execution of a written amendment prior to commencing the extra work. GVMC shall not be responsible to pay and Consultant shall not be entitled to receive compensation for any additional services if such services were required due to the fault of Consultant or Consultant's failure to perform in accordance with the terms of this Agreement.

ARTICLE IV **INDEMNIFICATION AND INSURANCE**

4.1 Indemnification. The Consultant shall indemnify, defend and save the GVMC, its officers, agents, and employees, harmless from and against all costs and losses, and all claims, demands, suits, actions, payments and judgments arising from personal injuries, property damage, bodily injury, or otherwise, brought or recovered against the GVMC to the extent caused by any negligent act or omission of the Consultant, its

agents, servants, or employees, in performance or nonperformance of the work, including any and all expense, legal or otherwise, incurred by the GVMC, or its representatives, in the defense of any claim or suit.

4.2 Insurance. The Consultant shall acquire, continuously maintain during the period in which the Consultant is performing services and provide the GVMC with acceptable proof of the following types and amounts of insurance coverage:

- (a) Statutory workers compensation insurance.
- (b) Comprehensive general liability insurance: with separate limits of not less than \$1,000,000 per accident for bodily injury and \$500,000 per accident for property damage, or with a combined single limit against both bodily injury and property damage of not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence. This coverage shall include a contractual liability endorsement.
- (c) Comprehensive owned and non-owned automobile liability insurance: with the same minimum limits of coverage as that required for the comprehensive general liability insurance.

The GVMC shall be named as additional insured by endorsement to the comprehensive general liability policy. Certificates of insurance evidencing that the Consultant has secured all of the foregoing insurance must be provided to the GVMC. A minimum of sixty (60) days notice to the GVMC prior to the cancellation of, or change in, any such insurance shall be endorsed on each policy and noted on each certificate.

ARTICLE V

AMENDMENT AND TERMINATION

5.1 Amendment. Any change in scope or character of the Services work, cost, or compensation, or any extension in the term of this Agreement shall require execution of a written amendment to this Agreement executed by the parties hereto.

5.2 Termination. This Agreement may be terminated without cause by the GVMC prior to the completion of the Services by written notice to Consultant in accordance with Section 6.6. The GVMC shall pay the Consultant for completed work up to the receipt of said notice of termination, in accordance with Article III of this Agreement. Upon final payment The GVMC shall receive all work product produced by the Consultant up to the time of termination.

ARTICLE VI

MISCELLANEOUS

6.1 Severability. It is the intent of the parties that if any provision of this Agreement or its application to any person or circumstance shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, that judgment shall not affect, impair or invalidate the remainder of this Agreement or its application to other persons or circumstances, unless so provided by the court or unless the severance of the invalid

provision alters the basic intent of this Agreement, or renders impossible compliance with any applicable statute or other law.

6.2 Interpretation. This Agreement shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Michigan.

6.3 Governing Law. This contract shall be governed by the laws of the State of Michigan as set forth in the prime contract. All terms and conditions included in the prime contract are incorporated into the subcontract, and in the event of a conflict, the prime agreement (GVMC Master Agreement with the Michigan Department of Transportation # 2012 - 0004) will prevail.

6.4 Integration. This Agreement constitutes the complete expression of the agreement between the parties and there are no other oral or written agreements or understandings between the parties concerning this Agreement. This Agreement may only be modified or amended by a subsequent written agreement executed by the parties.

6.5 Successors and Assigns. This Agreement shall be binding on and inure to the benefit of the GVMC and Consultant, their successors, assigns and legal representatives.

6.6 Non-Assignability. This Agreement may not be assigned by the Consultant without the prior written approval of the GVMC which approval may be withheld for any reason or for no reason whatsoever.

6.7 Component Parts of this Contract. This contract consists of this agreement and the following component parts, which are incorporated by reference and made part of this contract even if not attached hereto:

- (a) Exhibit A – Consultant Proposal
- (b) Exhibit B – GVMC Payroll and/or Flexible Reimbursement (125) Plan Administration Request for Proposal
- (c) Appendix A – GVMC Title VI Assurances
- (d) Appendix B – Prohibition of Discrimination in State Contracts

6.8 Notices. All notices to either party shall be in writing and deemed to be effectively given when sent by first class United States Mail and addressed as follows:

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council:
Mr. John W. Weiss
Executive Director
Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
678 Front Ave. NW Suite 200
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Brown Accounting & tax Solutions

Mr. Chris Brown
President
5923 West River Road
Belmont, Michigan 49306

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the parties have caused this Agreement to be executed on this _____ day of _____, 2012.

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council

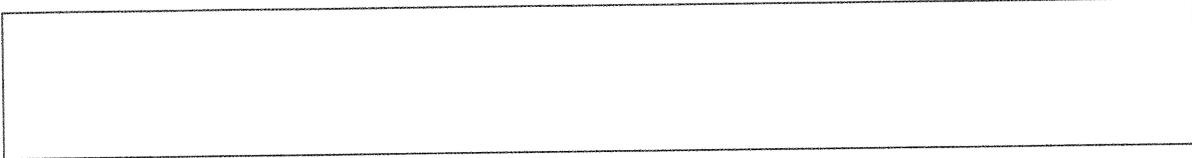
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Brown Accounting & tax Solutions

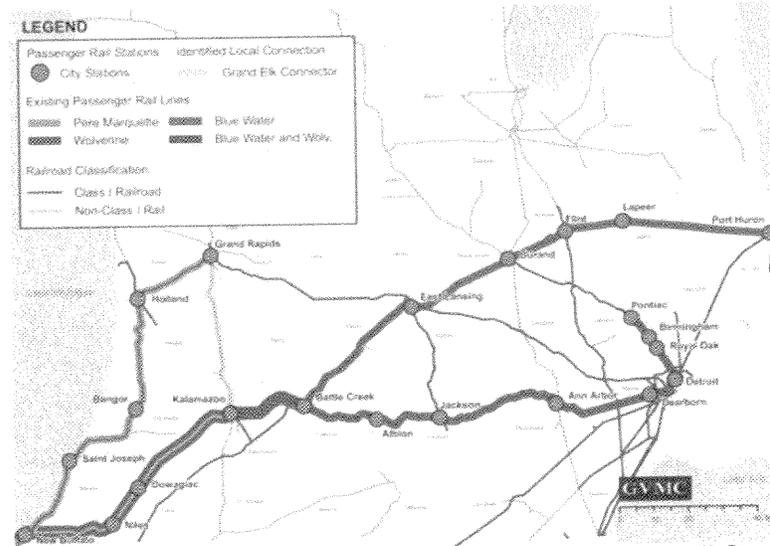
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A stretch of track between New Buffalo and Chicago may be improved to accommodate Amtrak's Pere Marquette at speeds up to 110 miles per hour.

GVMC supports new rail plan

David Czurak
Published: March 12, 2012

Members of the Grand Valley Metro Council recently got onboard to back a resolution that could result in a leg of Amtrak's Pere Marquette service running on high-speed rail.

The city of New Buffalo, backed by Amtrak and the Michigan Department of Transportation, has applied for a federal TIGER grant worth \$56 million that would make track improvements and allow the Pere Marquette to top 100 miles-per-hour between New Buffalo and Chicago.

"We're very happy to have this increased speed," said Tim Heffner, MDOT director of rail.

"It will help promote the future growth of this line, as well," added Amtrak's Ron DeCook.

Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell said supporting the proposal was a no-brainer. "It seems to be an easy one for us to support," he said.

TIGER is an acronym for the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery program, and it is funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which has made \$527 million available nationwide for transportation projects.

GVMC Executive Director John Weiss said the grant money would be spent on track construction and design enhancements. "These improvements will eventually improve service for our Pere Marquette line by making a section of high-speed track southwest of New Buffalo available for use by our Grand Rapids-to-Chicago Pere Marquette riders," he said.

In addition, the grant will provide for the construction of additional track, or double tracking, to separate freight and passenger train scheduling conflicts, which could result in increased service to our region and help facilitate the potential of a Grand Rapids to Kalamazoo service in the future," added Weiss.

A Grand Rapids to Kalamazoo line would likely originate in Holland. It is being considered because high-speed track is already in place in the Cereal City, so a much longer stretch of the Pere Marquette's 176-mile journey would move along at a much faster clip. Heffner said the train could reach 110 mph.

"Such a route would not negatively impact the southwestern Michigan communities or affect their passenger rail service. It would, however, provide travel benefits for passengers departing from Holland and Grand Rapids," said Andrea Dewey, GVMC transportation planner.

DeCook said the addition of the high-speed track could lead to more Pere Marquette runs, like maybe two daily round trips instead of the current one per day. Heffner said it's easier to add another train to the route because it's the shortest of the three Amtrak runs in Michigan.

Heffner also said more analysis is needed, including the environmental effect of a second train, before making the change because the state picks up a portion of Amtrak's operating cost in Michigan. "What it allows for is increased efficiencies and speed for the Pere Marquette from New Buffalo into Chicago," he said. "We can handle reverse trips better."

The Pere Marquette began its GR-to-Chicago route in 1984; the train carried 106,662 passengers during the last fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30. That ridership figure represented an increase of 4.7 percent from 2010, and ticket revenue in 2011 was \$3.2 million, up by 9.8 percent from the previous fiscal year. Amtrak's Michigan runs, which include the Wolverine and the Blue Water, had \$27.7 million in ticket revenue last year.

Amtrak owns 10 miles of the current Pere Marquette track, while freight lines CSX and Norfolk Southern own the rest. Dewey said the TIGER grant would result in fewer delays for the Pere Marquette because the train wouldn't be competing with freight traffic on Amtrak-owned track between New Buffalo and Porter, Ind., which is the section that would offer the higher speed.

But much of what is in the future for the Pere Marquette could be derailed next year. Mitt Romney, the leading Republican presidential candidate, said in Grand Rapids that he plans to end funding for Amtrak if he wins the November election.

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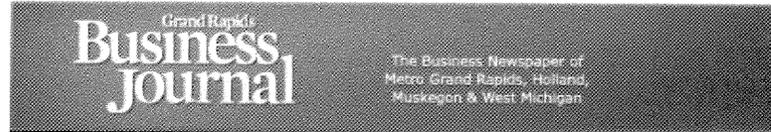
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**Funding for corridor study a surprise**

David Czurak

Published: March 12, 2012

When Grand Rapids Planning Director Suzanne Schulz was putting the Michigan Street Corridor Study together, she wasn't certain how many dollars she would be able to find to fund the work. But the amount she has found so far — \$977,246 — was way more than she expected.

"We were surprised when everything was added up. Once the scope of the project took form and was expressed in a way that resonated with people, the response from local, state and federal partners was really amazing," said Schulz, whose department is guiding the work.

The study's largest contribution, nearly \$460,000, came from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Michigan State Housing Development Authority donated \$150,000, while the Grand Valley Metro Council gave the project an \$80,000 federal grant it was awarded.

Many other local organizations, including foundations, educational facilities and governmental agencies, contributed to the study, which was sparked by the growing traffic congestion that has plagued the Medical Mile, the business district and the adjacent neighborhoods.

"This project reflects a systems-thinking approach that demonstrates how infrastructure, transportation, housing, jobs and public health are interrelated. There are not a lot of simple decisions to be made when we look at the Michigan Street Corridor. We need to think more broadly to ensure that decisions avoid potentially expensive and unintended consequences," said Schulz.

Portions of the work are done. Zimmerman/Volk Associates has completed a housing study and U3 Ventures has put together an employment portrait of the study area, which runs east from the Grand River to East Beltline Avenue, and south from Leonard to Fulton Street.

The four-mile district has seven residential neighborhoods with 20,000 residents, numerous businesses and the city's major health institutions. About 50,000 people work and attend school within 50 acres of the study area, and more than 30,000 vehicles travel the corridor every weekday.

The piece from Zimmerman/Volk reported that 45 percent of city residents and 30 percent of county residents combine to make up three-quarters of the district's potential residents, with another 5 percent coming from Ottawa and Allegan counties, and the remaining 20 percent from the rest of the country.

The firm's report said for-rent multi-family units, lofts and apartments made up the highest potential for housing in the area at 55 percent, with for-sale single-family units, like townhouses, next at 19 percent. Non-rental multi-family lofts and apartments were 16 percent of the market-type potential, and single-family homes on small lots came in at 9 percent.

Zimmerman/Volk concluded that younger singles and couples had the most potential to live in the study area, as those two groups were likely to make up seven of every 10 residents. Empty nesters and retirees were a distant second at 18 percent, and families brought up the rear at 11 percent.

"Millennials are demonstrating a strong preference for downtowns and walkable neighborhoods, particularly those served by transit, in contrast to the traditional

family — a married couple with children that comprised the typical post-war American household,” read the report. “Millennials are predominately younger singles and couples.”

Schulz said developers and real estate agents were already using the study to better understand the market potential for housing in the study area and in other near-downtown neighborhoods. “And an employment study completed by U3 Ventures created a general employee profile from ‘eds and meds’ institutions that will assist in understanding the housing demand for live-work programs in the vicinity,” she added.

The work by U3 Ventures is important because only 3 percent who work in the study area’s health facilities also live in the district. The consultant found the district’s housing stock has 10,600 units, with 11 percent of those vacant in 2010; two-thirds were rentals, a third of the units were detached, and its density was generally higher than the city at large.

U3 Ventures also found that Michigan Street had “an incredible concentration of anchor institutions within tight confines,” and the street offered “little to neighborhood residents beyond (a) place of employment.”

According to the report, Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University, Saint Mary’s Health Care, the Van Andel Institute and Spectrum Health employed 19,800 in the study area in 2010.

The full reports from Zimmerman/Volk and U3 Ventures can be found at michiganstreetcorridor.us.

As the first-phase work is wrapping up, the corridor study is set to move into its next phase, which will see LSL Planning take over the role of project director. City commissioners recently allocated \$325,457 to it, and it has an aggressive agenda to accomplish, including a detailed analysis of the area’s parking conditions, the production of a vision-and-goals document, and the development of a final corridor plan.

But another report is due next month.

“The Visioning and Scoping Report is expected in April and will really be a survey of existing conditions, including data on traffic, parking and people’s opinions of the corridor,” said Schulz. “We expect to take the results from our Quality of Life game that is out right now to help augment the data.”

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Weiss bridges public, private sectors in leading GVMC

Monday, March 12, 2012



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By Mark Sanchez | MiBiz
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GRAND RAPIDS — John Weiss takes over as head of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council at what he sees as an opportune time to promote greater cooperation among communities and stronger collaboration with the private sector.

Amid tight municipal budgets and a push by business leaders for public sector consolidation or sharing of services to save costs, Weiss believes the regional planning agency can become a conduit for greater collaboration.



Weiss

“There’s a lot to be done in intergovernmental cooperation and between government and business,” Weiss said. “The biggest opportunity for the Metro Council, as a collaboration of 30-plus governmental organizations, is to look for opportunities to share resources, to collaborate, to cooperate and to build closer ties with the business community so that we in the region, and in West Michigan, can speak with one voice on lots of issues that may impact us from Lansing or Washington.”

Weiss joined the Metro Council full time on Feb. 13. He succeeded Don Stypula, who retired as the Metro Council’s executive director in January after eight years.

Weiss came to the job with a background in both the public and private sectors.

He’s a former city manager, one-time township supervisor and served 16 years on the Kent County Road Commission. He spent 20 years at design and architectural firm Design Plus Inc., the last 10 as CEO, and has been active in the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, most recently chairing the business group’s legislative affairs committee.

The recession placed intense pressure on both business and local governments, the latter of which have had to adjust to cuts in state funding for public services, Weiss said. The challenges of the difficult economic times that are now waning are becoming opportunities for all parties to work together to drive greater efficiencies, he said.

A lot of collaboration already occurs in the public sector, Weiss said, “it’s just not celebrated” or noticed publicly. The present economic era and incentives offered from Lansing to collaborate makes now a good time to step up those efforts.

“We’re more empowered now to build on them than we have ever been in the past,” he said. “Everybody is busy and everybody has their hands full, and they’re all acting locally — as they need to be — in taking care of what needs to be done. We, at the same time, need to leverage regionally in both the public and private sectors and act regionally as well.”

Weiss views his position at the Metro Council as a “unique opportunity” professionally. He decided to make a career move after Design Plus “made it through the tough years” and “is looking very, very positive and busy in the future.”

“I’ve been doing public sector and private sector collaboration and cooperation most of my career,” said Weiss, who was contacted and asked if he was interested in the position. “I was looking for a new challenge and a new opportunity and, I think, my experience has been in bridging the gap between the public and private sectors.”

The organization will look at areas where communities can share or consolidate services to avoid duplications and to generate greater understanding among the public and private sectors on what they need from each other.

The public sector also has a “huge role” to play in supporting economic development and organizations such as The Right Place Inc.

Pursuing greater collaboration requires the Metro Council to expand on its traditional role as a planning body that includes coordinating millions of dollars annually in state and federal transportation funding. The Metro Council needs to become even more of an advocate for collaboration in the region.

“We have to provide the vehicle for it, we have to encourage it and we have to mediate, and we have to cajole,” Weiss said.



Amtrak's Grand Rapids to Chicago route could get in on high-speed rail with proposed upgrades

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Zane McMillin | zmcmilli@mlive.com
By

WEST MICHIGAN — Upgrades to Amtrak's Pere Marquette line between Grand Rapids and Chicago could be in the works thanks to a collaborative effort to net millions in highly competitive federal funding.

Amtrak is working with the Michigan Department of Transportation to drum up local support for the project, starting with an application by the harbor town of New Buffalo near the Indiana border for a slice of nearly \$500 million in federal TIGER grants.



Press File Photo

Passengers board an Amtrak train on the Pere Marquette line in Grand Rapids in this 2009 file photo.

This will be the fourth year the U.S. Department of Transportation awards the grants, which are highly competitive and go toward transportation and similar projects.

New Buffalo was taken off the Pere Marquette line in 2009, but assistant city manager Ryan Fellows said the city is applying for grants in the hopes of being linked to Amtrak's planned 110-mph train route between Kalamazoo and Porter, Ind.

The TIGER grant would allow Amtrak to add New Buffalo back to the Pere Marquette line, which in turn would give cities along that route, including Grand Rapids and Holland, access to high-speed rail.

"It'd increase our level of service," Fellows said, adding the proposals would have implications for travel to the east side of the state as well.

The possibility of putting New Buffalo back on the Pere Marquette line drew interest from the Grand Valley Metro Council in Grand Rapids, which last week passed a resolution supporting New Buffalo's efforts.

- Metro Council Executive Director John Weiss said the council was approached by MDOT's new rail director, Timothy Hoeffner, to collaborate on the plans.

Part of the TIGER grant also would be used by Amtrak to "double track" its lines near Bangor, another city along the Pere Marquette line, Weiss said.

Doubling tracking would separate passenger and freight rail lines, which could lend itself to increased train frequency to and from Chicago to Grand Rapids, he said.

"It's just an intergovernmental cooperation where this could benefit our riders and it could benefit passenger trains," Weiss said.

"What we like about it too is it could increase passenger trains coming from the south," he added. "It's for tourists going up north. Anything we can do to make it easier for our residents to go to other places or have tourists come to us, that'd be great."

Hoeffner said such plans likely are years off, adding Amtrak has been exploring ways to better its service in West and Southwest Michigan for some years.

MDOT recently released a long-term plan for rail operations in the state, and although this particular project is not spelled out in that report, Hoeffner said it goes along with where the department hopes to head in coming years.

"It provides more flexibility for Amtrak's operations today and also provides additional capacity for increased frequencies in the future," Hoeffner said. "So it really helps with reliability and also travel times."

The TIGER grant application deadline is March 19, with the federal transportation department announcing recipients at a later date.

Despite the proposals being tentative, Fellows expressed optimism with their outcome.

"It is an exciting opportunity that we're glad to be a part of," he said. "This is not just a benefit to New Buffalo, but to the entire rail corridor, too."

Zane McMillin may be reached through **email** and **Twitter**.

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In this ripe market, it's condo buyers beware, page 10.

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GVMC supports new rail plan

Federal grant could put Amtrak train on a fast track.

David Czurak
Grand Rapids Business Journal

Members of the Grand Valley Metro Council recently got onboard to back a resolution that could result in a leg of Amtrak's Pere Marquette service running on high-speed rail.

The city of New Buffalo, backed by Amtrak and the Michigan Department of Transportation, has applied for a federal TIGER grant worth \$56 million that would make track improvements and allow the Pere Marquette to top 100 miles-per-hour between New Buffalo and Chicago.

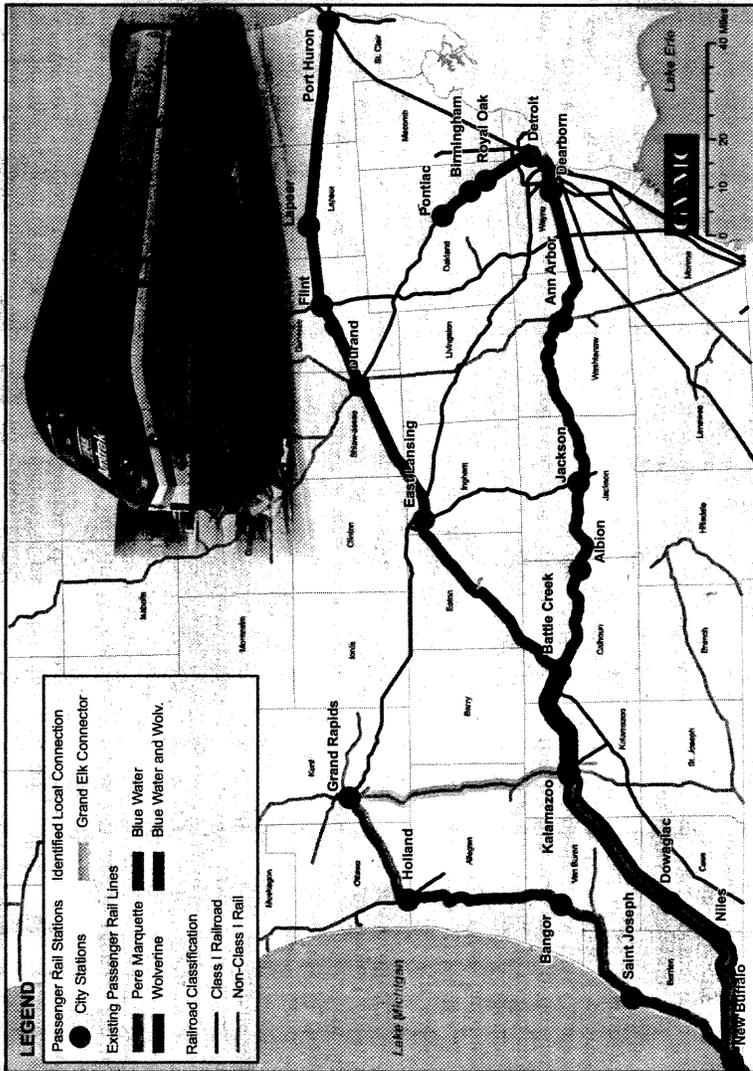
"We're very happy to have this increased speed," said Tim Heffner, MDOT director of rail.

"It will help promote the future growth of this line, as well," added Amtrak's Ron DeCook.

Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell said supporting the proposal was a no-brainer. "It seems to be an easy one for us to support," he said.

TIGER is an acronym for the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery program, and it is funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which has made \$527 million available nationwide for transportation projects.

GVMC Executive Director John Weiss said the grant money would be spent on track construction and design enhancements. "These



improvements will eventually improve service for our Pere Marquette line by making a section of high-speed track southwest of New Buffalo available for use by our Grand Rapids-to-Chicago Pere Marquette riders," he said.

"In addition, the grant will provide for the construction of additional track, or double tracking, to separate freight and passenger train scheduling conflicts, which

could result in increased service to our region and help facilitate the potential of a Grand Rapids to Kalamazoo service in the future," added Weiss.

A Grand Rapids to Kalamazoo line would likely originate in Holland. It is being considered because high-speed track is already in place in the Cereal City, so a much longer stretch of the Pere-Marquette's 176-mile journey would move

Macatawa Bank in the clear again

"Significant reduction" in problem assets leads to lifting of consent order.

Pete Daly
Grand Rapids Business Journal

Macatawa Bank of Holland learned in early March that the consent order it has been operating under for two years has been lifted by federal and state bank regulators.

The consent order, which the bank entered into following its negotiations with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and the Michigan Office of Financial and Insurance Regulation, took effect in February 2010, and was the result of a regulatory examination of the bank in the summer of 2009.

"We received notice (March 2) from the FDIC and the Office of Financial Regulation in Lansing that they had terminated our consent order," said Macatawa Bank president/CEO Ron Haan. "The regulators are acknowledging that the bank's financial condition has improved significantly. We no longer warrant formal regulatory supervision.

"We will see a significant reduction in expenses associated with the consent order," he added.

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same on the way, and they are competing to maintain their market shares," said Moyer.

Rail speed may increase

◀ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

portation planner.

DeCook said the addition of the high-speed track could lead to more Pere Marquette runs, like maybe two daily round trips instead of the current one per day.

Heffner said more analysis is needed, including the environmental effect of a second train, before making the change because the state picks up a portion of Amtrak's operating cost in Michigan. "What it allows for is increased efficiencies and speed for the Pere Marquette from New Buffalo into Chicago," he said. "We can handle reverse trips better."

The Pere Marquette began its GR-to-Chicago route in 1984; the train carried 106,662 passengers during the last fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30. That ridership figure represented an increase of 4.7 percent from 2010, and ticket revenue in 2011 was \$3.2 million, up by 9.8 percent from the previous fiscal year. Amtrak's Michigan runs, which include the Wolverine and the Blue Water, had \$27.7 million in ticket revenue last year.

Amtrak owns 10 miles of the current Pere Marquette track, while freight lines CSX and Norfolk Southern own the rest. Dewey said the TIGER grant would result in fewer delays for the Pere Marquette because the train wouldn't be competing with freight traffic on Amtrak-owned track between New Buffalo and Porter, Ind., which is the section that would offer the higher speed.