

MINUTES

**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
Transportation Division
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, September 3, 2008
Kent County Road Commission
1500 Scribner NW Grand Rapids, MI**

Conners, vice chair of the Technical Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:32 am. Since there were several new people in attendance, those present went around the table and introduced themselves.

I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Voting Members Present

Scott Conners	<i>(Vice Chair)</i>	City of Walker
Roger Belknap	<i>Proxy for</i>	Kent County Road Commission
	<i>Steve Warren</i>	Kent County Road Commission
	<i>Wayne Harrall</i>	Kent County
	<i>Bob Homan</i>	Plainfield Township
Patrick Bush		City of Grand Rapids
Ron Carr		City of Grandville
Sandra M. Cornell-Howe		MDOT
Rick DeVries		City of Grand Rapids
Bill Dooley		City of Wyoming
Ken Feldt		City of East Grand Rapids
Jan Hoekstra	<i>Proxy for</i>	ITP-The Rapid
	<i>Conrad Venema</i>	ITP-The Rapid
Jim Holtrop		Ottawa County
Dennis Kent	<i>Proxy for</i>	MDOT
	<i>Dan DesJarden</i>	City of Lowell
Gerald Mears		City of Wyoming
Terry Schweitzer		City of Kentwood

Staff and Non-Voting Guests Present

Andrea Dewey	GVMC Staff
Andrea Faber	GVMC Staff
Mike Hall	Hope Network Transportation
Abed Itani	GVMC Staff
Joan Konyndyk	Hope Network Transportation
Darrell Robinson	GVMC Staff
Norm Sevensma	WMEAC-RWBC
Don Stypula	GVMC Staff
Brandon Wilcox	MDOT-Statewide Planning
Mike Zonyk	GVMC Staff

Voting Members Not Present

Sandra Ayers
James Beelen
Mike Berrevoets
Marta Brechting
Dick Davies
Sharon DeLange
Dan DesJarden
Mike DeVries
Steve Groenenboom
Tim Haagsma
Wayne Harrall
Roy Hawkins
Dennis Hoemke
William Holland
Bob Homan
Brett Laughlin
Jim McIntyre
Jim Miedema
Audrey Nevins
Steve Peterson
Dan Strikwerda
Conrad Venema
Steve Warren (*Chair*)
Bill Wiersma

Village of Caledonia
Allendale Township
City of Cedar Springs
Alpine Township
Cannon Township
Village of Sparta
City of Lowell
Grand Rapids Township
Ada Township
Gaines Charter Township
Kent County
GRFIA
Algoma Township
Georgetown Township
Plainfield Township
OCRC
Courtland Township
Jamestown Township
Byron Township
Cascade Charter Township
City of Hudsonville
The Rapid
Kent County Road Commission
Tallmadge Township

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Connors entertained a motion to approve the July 2, 2008 Technical Committee Meeting Minutes.

MOTION by Schweitzer, SUPPORT by Dooley, to approve the July 2, 2008 Technical Committee Meeting Minutes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Sevensma notified the committee about walkscore.com, a website that can calculate the walkability of a community on a scale of zero to 100. Discussion ensued.

IV. FY2008-2011 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) AMENDMENTS

Speaking on **Item IV, Attachment A**, Robinson informed the committee that the Village of Sparta and MDOT were requesting amendments to the FY2008-2011 TIP. The Village of Sparta requested to add an awarded Enhancement project to FY2009 for construction of the Sparta Downtown Revitalization and Streetscape Project. This Enhancement project was recently awarded and needs to be placed into the FY2008-2011 TIP in order for the Village of Sparta to obligate it. The funding breakdown was: \$376,500 federal, \$1,148,000 local, for a total of \$1,525,000.

MDOT requested to add a project on the I-196 Corridor for FY2009. The project would replace freeway lighting from M-45 to Monroe Avenue. The funding breakdown was \$1,855,000 Federal, \$206,000 Non-Federal, for a total of \$2,061,000.

Sevensma stated that he was an amateur astronomer and expressed concern about "light pollution" that could be caused by the highway lights pointing upward instead of downward. Kent stated that MDOT follows the appropriate federal standards in selecting highway lighting. Discussion ensued.

Connors entertained a motion to amend the FY2008-2011 TIP to include the projects identified by Staff.

MOTION by Bush, SUPPORT by Holtrop, to recommend to the Policy Committee approval of amending the FY2008-2011 TIP to include the Village of Sparta and MDOT's projects as identified. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Referring to **Item IV, Attachment B**, Dewey stated her request to amend the FY2008-2011 TIP to include an anticipated MDOT Service Development New Technology (SDNT) grant for \$150,000. The SDNT grant application was submitted by GVMC staff with assistance from ITP/The Rapid for funds to study the needs of those not currently served by public transportation as a basis for determining an appropriate level of service supported by the County. ITP/The Rapid has already pledged \$100,000 towards the study, bringing the anticipated budget to \$250,000 should the SDNT grant be awarded. The project funds will be used to research community needs on a countywide basis that could provide a direction for transit service models. In order to determine the need for transit service in the outlying areas a latent demand analysis study will be completed. Once completed, the results of the study will be used to determine the appropriate services to be provided.

Itani added that this item had been brought before the committee previously, as the study itself is reflected in the Unified Work Program for FY2009, and the committee already approved the \$50,000 in federal funds that will be matched locally for that study. He continued that the study is a latent demand study that will look at all of Kent County and part of Ottawa County and determine where the transit needs are. Schweitzer complimented the agencies for working together to determine a way to fund the study. Itani added that this study will coordinate well with other studies that are currently going on in Ottawa County. Discussion, comments and questions ensued.

Connors entertained a motion to amend the FY2008-2011 TIP to include the project identified by Staff.

MOTION by Mears, SUPPORT by Schweitzer, to recommend to the Policy Committee approval of amending the FY2008-2011 TIP to include the SDNT grant as identified by Staff. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

V. **WESTRAIN/AMTRAK ACTIVITIES**

Speaking on **Item V: Attachment A**, Dewey updated the committee on WESTRAIN marketing and Amtrak ridership and revenue. She stated that Amtrak ridership in Michigan is strong and continues to grow, and that nationwide, Amtrak reported the

highest monthly ridership in its 37-year history this past July. Amtrak revenue is also up.

She continued to discuss WESTRAIN marketing activities, stating that the WESTRAIN group continues to work with Sharp Marketing to expand and enhance Pere Marquette Ridership through an active marketing campaign. While the group is using a mixture of traditional marketing activities (like ticket giveaways, press releases, and radio advertising), this year's marketing focus has been on the debut of the revamped "mitrain" web site (www.mitrain.org). This web site is designed to attract ridership from the Chicago area to West Michigan by guiding visitors to the local amenities at each of the five train stops.

On the local level, Dewey stated that she is helping to facilitate improvements to the Amtrak station at the corner of Market and Wealthy. Improvements include a resurfaced and restriped parking lot, interior and exterior paint, a clock in the cupola, new landscaping, seating, waste cans, privacy fencing, and lighting.

Sevensma stated that The Grand Rapids Press currently lists the airfare from Grand Rapids to Chicago in the Sunday Travel Section and suggested that Amtrak list their significantly lower rate below it.

VI. TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Cornell-Howe showed the committee a presentation on transportation funding for FY2009 and beyond that described various challenges MDOT will be facing in the near future regarding state and federal funding, such as the projected FY2009 insolvency of the Highway Trust Fund and the decline in gas tax revenue. An additional challenge is the increasing cost of supplies, such as asphalt and concrete. MDOT is currently looking at four strategies to solve the transportation funding problem, and the Transportation Funding Task Force is also investigating viable transportation funding options. The Task Force will likely have their final report completed in mid-November. Itani stated that there are some different things that the MPO can do in the midst of these financial challenges, such as keeping the TIP constrained. He clarified that federal funding impacts the MPO more than state funding and stated that there is an intent in Congress to cover the Highway Trust Fund deficit. Stypula mentioned that the Transportation Funding Task Force meets on Monday, September 8 in Lansing and listed some options that they might be looking at as alternatives to the gas tax. Discussion, comments and questions ensued.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

Robinson stated that the GVMC Golf Outing will take place on Tuesday, September 16.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Conners adjourned the Technical Committee at 10:24 am.