

**MINUTES**

**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council  
Transportation Division  
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Wednesday, December 7, 2011  
Kent County Road Commission  
1500 Scribner NW Grand Rapids, MI**

Conners, chair of the Technical Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. The Committee members, staff, and guests present introduced themselves.

**I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Voting Members Present**

Scott Conners <i>(Chair)</i>		City of Walker
Roger Belknap		City of Cedar Springs
Timothy Cochran		City of Wyoming
Rick DeVries		City of Grand Rapids
Wayne Harrall	<i>Proxy for Tim Haagsma</i>	Kent County
		Gaines Charter Township
Jim Holtrop		Ottawa County
Dennis Kent	<i>Proxy for Dan DesJarden</i>	MDOT
		City of Lowell
Ray Lenze		MDOT
Dave Pasquale		Grand Rapids Township
Steve Peterson		Cascade Charter Township
Terry Schweitzer		City of Kentwood
Rick Sprague	<i>Proxy for Steve Warren</i>	KCRC
		KCRC
Dan Strikwerda		City of Hudsonville
Chris Zull		City of Grand Rapids

**Staff and Non-Voting Guests Present**

Andrea Faber	GVMC Staff
Abed Itani	GVMC Staff
Erick Kind	MDOT
Roger Marks	CZAE
Darrell Robinson	GVMC Staff
Suzanne Schulz	City of Grand Rapids
Norm Sevensma	WMEAC-RWBC
Don Stypula	GVMC Staff
Sarah Van Buren	FHWA
Steve Waalkes	Michigan Concrete Assn.

**Voting Members Not Present**

Jerry Alkema	Allendale Township
Alex Arends	Alpine Township
Dan Carlton	Georgetown Township
Ron Carr	City of Grandville
Dick Davies	Cannon Township
Jamie Davies	City of Rockford

APPROVED

Dan DesJarden  
Mike DeVries  
Bill Dooley  
Ken Feldt  
Jim Ferro  
Tim Haagsma  
Roy Hawkins  
Dennis Hoemke  
Bob Homan  
Taiwo Jaiyeoba  
Brett Laughlin  
Jim Miedema  
Audrey Nevins  
Chuck Porter  
Martin Super  
Toby VanEss  
Steve Warren

APPROVED

Item II: Attachment A  
City of Lowell  
Grand Rapids Township  
City of Wyoming  
City of East Grand Rapids  
Ada Township  
Gaines Charter Township  
GRFIA  
Algoma Township  
Plainfield Township  
ITP-The Rapid  
OCRC  
Jamestown Township  
Byron Township  
Courtland Township  
Village of Sparta  
Tallmadge Township  
KCRC

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Connors entertained a motion to approve the October 5, 2011 Technical Committee meeting minutes.

**MOTION by Holtrop, SUPPORT by Harrall, to approve the October 5, 2011 Technical Committee meeting minutes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**IV. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Connors noted that his term as chair of the Technical Committee is up and that past protocol has called for the vice chair to assume chairmanship duties. Connors then entertained a motion to nominate Harrall as chair of the Technical Committee.

**MOTION by Pasquale, SUPPORT by DeVries, to nominate Harrall to serve a two-year term as chair of the Technical Committee. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Itani noted that the new chair and vice chair would assume their roles in January. Connors asked for a motion to nominate a new vice chair of the Technical Committee, and then entertained a motion to nominate DeVries to this role.

**MOTION by Schweitzer, SUPPORT by Harrall, to nominate DeVries to serve a two-year term as vice chair of the Technical Committee.**

DeVries suggested that his name be removed from consideration. Connors noted that the Committee should respect DeVries's wishes, and the motion was dropped.

Connors entertained another motion to nominate Zull as vice chair.

**MOTION by Schweitzer, SUPPORT by Harrall, to nominate Zull to serve a two-year term as vice chair of the Technical Committee. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Itani noted that one of the responsibilities of the Technical Committee vice chair is to chair the Transportation Programming Study Group (TPSG) meetings. He added that the chair cannot vote at these meetings.

**V. MICHIGAN AT COLLEGE CORRIDOR**

Referring to **Item V: Attachment A**, Zull stated that the City of Grand Rapids is requesting high priority corridor status for Michigan Street, similar to what was done for 44<sup>th</sup> St. in the past. He explained that, as the Michigan at College intersection project has progressed, it has become clear that this project will require a corridor-wide improvement strategy that includes enhancing the nonmotorized transit network, mobility, and alternate modes and routes. Lastly, he noted that the project meets the requirements for high priority corridor status as laid out in the MPO's Policies and Practices for Programming Projects document.

Itani added that the MPO staff supports giving Michigan St. high priority corridor status. However, he noted that this designation would come with increased responsibility for the MPO and its members. Itani added that the Committee would need to consider the precedent set when 44<sup>th</sup> St. received high priority corridor status. At that time, there was a 44<sup>th</sup> St. Committee that met and discussed improvements on moving the 44<sup>th</sup> St. project forward. Itani declared that Michigan St. is equally important to the MPO as 44<sup>th</sup> St., since it serves multiple businesses and is important to growing the economy in this region. However, he also cautioned that the Committee will need to make sure that federal funds are managed properly, since this designation will allow the City of Grand Rapids to use them to purchase right-of-way. Itani recommended that the Tech Committee create a committee to stay engaged in the process to make sure that the right solution is being applied to the Michigan St. corridor, similar to what was done for 44<sup>th</sup> St.

Itani explained that, for 44<sup>th</sup> St., there was an agreement between the MPO and the members that there would be a 50/50 match for federal funding to purchase right-of-way. No PE funding was used on 44<sup>th</sup> St. Itani also noted that he has talked to several Committee members that agree that Michigan St. is a high priority facility that serves the region as a whole. However, many share concerns about the level of financial commitment the MPO is taking to improve Michigan Street.

Sevensma asked if the City of Grand Rapids was working to promote the addition of a grocery store on the corridor, since there are none in the area. Zull responded that the City of Grand Rapids' planning department and design team recognizes this and has been working to better engage the community and businesses on future development. DeVries added that D & W bought property in that area a year or so ago and walked away from the project due to the economy. Discussion ensued.

Itani said that the Committee may want to shorten the high priority project designation limits to Michigan St. east of Plymouth since the facility changes after that. Zull added that the study area goes from the Grand River to the Beltline, but that the traffic impact area would be better constrained by Plymouth. Harrall agreed that the length of Michigan St. that

received the high priority corridor designation should be shortened. However, he also stated that he would like to see the study completed before the Committee designates Michigan St. as a high priority corridor in order to see specifically what is being proposed. He noted that on 44<sup>th</sup> St. the Committee knew what was going to be built there before it was agreed that federal funding could be used for the purchase of right-of-way.

Itani stated that the MPO could endorse Michigan St.'s high priority corridor designation and then any improvements made to Michigan St. would still be approved by the MPO. He encouraged the Committee to come up with a policy for funding Michigan St. that would take variables such as the condition of the system and the availability of funds into consideration. Itani also expressed his concern that the cost to purchase right-of-way on Michigan St. would be astronomical, and with the precedent to fund right-of-way 50/50, that could take up a significant portion of the available federal funds. DeVries responded that, in the present economy, he didn't believe that astronomical amounts would be spent on right-of-way. He also added that roundabouts, which require purchasing right-of-way, would not work on Michigan St.

Conners asked how quickly the City of Grand Rapids would need to have this designation. Zull responded that the designation will frame how the City of Grand Rapids moves forward with the consultant on the project.

Conners asked for additional discussion, and Sprague shared a comment from Steve Warren, asking if the committee should be looking at creating a network of high priority corridors so that if this comes up again, there is a plan in place. He also agreed that it may be worth developing a Michigan at College committee to discuss this project further. Discussion ensued.

Schulz provided the Committee with an overview and timeline for the Michigan St. Corridor Plan. She noted that the transportation component specifically for this project is not to just look at Michigan St., but at the entire network, and that they are discussing a transportation mode shift as well. Schulz added that there are 15 other funding partners on this project and that they are currently completing phase 1 of the project. Phase 2 will start in January and last for 12-18 months. Discussion ensued.

Itani expressed his concern that the intersection is projected in many alternatives to still operate at Level of Service E, even with millions in improvements. Itani asked if the City could conduct a traffic circulation analysis instead. He also questioned if, at some point, the City of Grand Rapids would say that this is a congested facility and that there is nothing that can be done about it. Zull responded that the City of Grand Rapids has optimized this corridor a couple of times with previous CMAQ grants. Schulz noted that there is an adaptation (mode and behavior shifts, etc.) and mitigation (infrastructure) strategy to addressing this corridor. Itani encouraged the City of Grand Rapids to look at other modes of transportation to resolve this issue. Discussion ensued.

Itani added if the facility is designated as a high priority corridor, then the Tech and Policy Committees will be responsible for determining the appropriate level of funding using 44<sup>th</sup> St. as a template. DeVries suggested that the Committee consider designating Michigan St. as a high priority corridor and decide what the investment level will be at a later date. Discussion ensued.

Robinson suggested that the Committee revisit the idea of creating a network of high priority corridors in the future and simply consider the City of Grand Rapids' Michigan St.

request today. Itani added that this issue was debated 12 years ago, and there was no consensus. He added that every facility should be addressed based on its own criteria and circumstances. Because of Michigan St.'s importance to the area, Itani stated that it made a lot of sense to designate Michigan St. as a high priority corridor. Discussion ensued.

Conners noted that the Committee has the option to approve the City of Grand Rapids' request outright, approve it with conditions, ask the City of Grand Rapids to come back at a later date with more information, or deny the request.

Belknap added that Michigan St. between the Grand River and Plymouth does look different and recommended that the high priority designation be limited to this segment.

Conners entertained a motion to designate Michigan St. as a high priority corridor.

**MOTION by Belknap, SUPPORT by Pasquale, to recommend approval to the Policy Committee of designating Michigan Street from the Grand River to Plymouth as a high priority corridor.**

Schweitzer noted that there should be a provision in the motion that speaks to further definition of right-of-way investment, that there be a multimodal approach to the corridor, and that the surrounding street system be addressed. Conners asked if the right-of-way investment should be listed at 50/50. Itani recommended keeping the policy on this open at this time. Conners noted that since addressing the corridor through a multimodal approach and analyzing the surrounding network are parts of the study, they did not need to be included as a condition in the motion. Discussion ensued. Belknap and Pasquale agreed to amend the motion as follows:

**MOTION by Belknap, SUPPORT by Pasquale, to recommend approval to the Policy Committee of designating Michigan St. from the Grand River to Plymouth as a high priority corridor with the condition that further definition of right-of-way investment will need to be provided in the coming months. MOTION CARRIED. Harrall opposed.**

Harrall requested that staff work on draft language for a policy related to funding right-of-way for the Michigan St. corridor. Itani agreed that a TPSG meeting would be held after the holidays to address this.

**VI. FY2012 CMAQ PROJECT: MICHIGAN AT COLLEGE**

Referring to **Item VI: Attachment A**, Zull explained that the City of Grand Rapids is requesting that the Michigan at College FY2012 CMAQ project be delayed until FY2014. Robinson noted that there are some big projects in FY2013 that could possibly move forward from FY2013, such as several projects from the City of Grand Rapids, an OCRC project, and the KCRC's 4 Mile at Alpine project. Itani noted that he is still exploring ideas for moving projects forward. Zull stated that the City of Grand Rapids may be able to move up the ITS signal optimization project from FY2013 to FY2012. Harrall confirmed that the KCRC could move forward with the 4 Mile at Alpine project. Itani also suggested that Staff talk to ITP-The Rapid and see if bus projects could be moved forward.

Harrall recommended that an emergency TPSG meeting be held as soon as possible. Conners asked staff to talk to ITP-The Rapid, as well as others not in attendance, and to come back to the TPSG committee with a template for how projects may be moved around. He noted that this item would be acted on at the next meeting.

**VII. UPDATE ON TRANSPORTATION FUNDING AND SAFETEA-LU**

Speaking on **Item VII: Attachment A**, Itani noted that the SAFETEA-LU extension expires March 31<sup>st</sup> and that the House will push their discussion on the new transportation funding bill until February. The Senate bill, MAP 21, proposes to change how MPOs are created, designated, and operated. MPOs will be designated if they have a population of 200,000 or more with the new law instead of 50,000. MPOs with populations of 1 million or more would then be designated as Tier 1, with smaller MPOs being designated as Tier 2. Tier 1 MPOs will need to have their TIPs and Plans adhere to various performance measures whereas Tier 2 MPOs will not. Itani also noted that MAP 21 is a two-year bill and that funding levels would be similar to FY2009. Safety and CMAQ funding would remain.

Itani also announced that, last month, Staff informed the Committee that the EPA allowed for an extension of the old air quality modeling program—Mobile 6—until March 2013. However, they have since rescinded this. As of March, 2012, all air quality analyses will need to be run through MOVES. Discussion ensued.

Stypula announced that, at noon today, the State House Transportation Committee is going to take testimony on House Bill 4739. This bill allows, under certain circumstances, for local agencies to receive or be eligible for federal transportation funding to match federal dollars if the state does not have the ability to match the federal dollars. Stypula noted that he would forward information on House Bill 4739 to Faber to send on to the Committee.

**VIII. DRAFT MDOT FIVE YEAR PROGRAM (FY2012-2016)**

Referring to a handout, Kent updated the Committee on MDOT's FY2012-2016 5-year program. He noted that MDOT is currently looking at this year's projects and will be moving some to FY2013 due to a shortage of funds. He also added that MDOT may not be able to match federal aid dollars in the future. However, it is unknown how much federal aid MDOT will receive. Lastly, Kent stated that the project list is subject to change and that the public comment period for MDOT's 5-year-plan is open until December 29<sup>th</sup>. Discussion ensued.

**IX. OTHER BUSINESS**

Harrall stated that he attended a conference recently and that one of the issues that came up was that in rural counties, rural task forces are being dissolved and brought into the MPOs. He asked if anyone could expound upon this and if any rural task forces were being brought into this MPO. Itani responded that GVMC has a rural TIP committee that addresses these issues but that it is not legal for the MPO to spend federal funds on activities outside of the MPO area. Itani also noted that if the senate transportation bill passes, rural task forces will certainly be changing. Lenze added that this issue is being discussed currently in Lansing.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

Connors adjourned the December 7, 2011 Technical Committee meeting at 11:04 am.