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ITEM II: ATTACHMENT A

MINUTES

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
Transportation Division

TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMMING STUDY GROUP

Thursday, November 29, 2012

Grand Valley Metro Council

678 Front Ave NW

Zull called the meeting to order at 9:32 am. The Committee members, staff, and guests present introduced themselves.

I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Voting Members Present

Chris Zull (*Chair*)

Ron Carr

Tim Cochran

Scott Conners

Mike DeVries

Rick DeVries

Ken Feldt

Wayne Harrall

Roy Hawkins

Jan Hoekstra

Jack Klein

*Proxy for
Brett Laughlin*

Terry Schweitzer

Tom Stressman

Dan Strikwerda

Steve Warren

City of Grand Rapids

City of Grandville

City of Wyoming

City of Walker

Grand Rapids Township

City of Grand Rapids

City of East Grand Rapids

County of Kent

GRFIA

ITP-The Rapid

OCRC

OCRC

City of Kentwood

City of Cedar Springs

City of Hudsonville

KCRC

Staff and Non-Voting Guests Present

Bryan Armstrong

Andrea Faber

Abed Itani

Alex Nikoloff

Steve Redmond

Darrell Robinson

Mike Smith

Jim Snell

George Yang

Mike Zonyk

MDOT

GVMC Staff

GVMC Staff

MI Fitness Foundation

MDOT

GVMC Staff

MDOT

GVMC Staff

GVMC Staff

GVMC Staff

Voting Members Not Present

Jerry Alkema

Sandy Ayers

Allendale Township

Village of Caledonia

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Jamie Davies
Sharon DeLange
Bill Dooley
Mark Howe
Brett Laughlin
Ray Lenze

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City of Rockford
Village of Sparta
City of Wyoming
City of Lowell
OCRC
MDOT

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Zull entertained a motion to approve the June 20, 2012 Transportation Programming Study Group meeting minutes.

MOTION by Schweitzer, SUPPORT by DeVries, to approve the June 20, 2012 Transportation Programming Study Group meeting minutes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

None

IV. TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM

Referring to **Item IV: Attachment A**, Robinson informed the Committee that under MAP-21, the new federal transportation bill, there is a new program—the Transportation Alternatives Program, or TAP. Under this program, GVMC will receive 50% of the TAP funding (approximately \$668,000), while MDOT will receive the remaining 50%. He noted that GVMC has the option of selecting TAP projects with an MPO determined criteria the same way as MDOT does, or some version thereof. Robinson then distributed several handouts, which showed (1) the State of Michigan’s TAP project selection criteria, (2) how the State scores TAP projects, and details about Safe Routes to School (SRTS) competitiveness and eligibility.

Robinson noted that the Committee would need to move fast in selecting FY2013 projects since it is so late in the year. They would also need to determine the following: (1) TAP program goals, (2) an application process, (3) a project selection process, (4) how the MPO will prioritize projects now and in the future, (5) a list of FY2013-2014 TAP projects, and (6) an illustrative list of TAP projects.

Itani began the discussion, stating the Committee would need to make a decision about whether to prioritize projects. He noted that the Committee can use the system MDOT uses and either send the applications to MPO staff or to MDOT. Or staff can look at the applications themselves and the Committee can decide which projects to move forward using the same methodology that’s used today. He added that the Committee would need to make sure that there’s regional equity.

Smith noted that, over the past 20 years, an average of \$44 has been spent per

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person on these types of projects, and that number is used in determining regional equity. Smith also noted that projects must be eligible and competitive to be considered for funding.

Zull asked for clarification on how funding has changed with the new transportation bill. Armstrong responded that overall, funding for these types of projects went from \$37 million to \$26 million with the new transportation bill. Discussion ensued.

Itani recommended that applicants for Safe Routes to School projects contact MDOT directly and not go through the MPO process. Armstrong responded that MDOT requires that sponsors of Safe Routes to School projects go through the planning process in order to be eligible for funding. He noted that MDOT would support anyone who wants to go through the process. He added that he was hoping to get MPOs to fit in with the planning process, and noted that schools typically receive \$200,000 per grant. Discussion ensued.

Zull asked the Committee if they wanted to develop their own guidelines or use MDOT's. Conners stated that MDOT's guidelines are a great starting point and recommended they be used. Smith recommended that the committee use a defensible system that is not arbitrary in order to defend chosen projects.

As for projects, Conners stated that there are \$50 million worth of projects in the Nonmotorized Plan. Itani noted that bicycle and pedestrian projects should come from the Nonmotorized Plan, but there are other eligible activities that do qualify that are not in any plan, and that MPO staff will not say "no" to these eligible projects at this point.

Robinson proposed that the Committee adhere to the following process: (1) Committee members send in their applications to MDOT; (2) MDOT gives the applications a preliminary review and provides feedback to the applicants and staff about project eligibility; and (3) using the applications and feedback from MDOT, the TPSG Committee prioritizes the eligible projects. The Committee would be able to program and prioritize projects through FY2017, and Robinson noted that the Committee could have a list of projects prioritized for both MPO funding and State of Michigan funding. Lastly, Robinson added that the Committee would be able to overprogram, and if earlier projects can't get funded, the Committee could just plug in a different one.

Redmond asked if applicants need to formally send in their applications to MDOT. Smith replied that this is a service that MDOT offers and that an eligibility review is necessary at some point anyway. He added that one of the benefits of using this system is that the MPO doesn't end up awarding funding for ineligible projects. Discussion ensued.

Itani asked the Committee if they wanted to use a 50/50 federal/local match for projects, or an 80/20 match. Smith noted that applicants can apply for any rate they

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want. DeVries added that the exact percentage will likely slide up and down, depending on the number of projects and available funds. He suggested leaving the match flexible within the guidelines. He noted that the Committee doesn't want to be put in the position of leaving money on the table because they decided on a 50/50 match. Conners suggested that the Committee agree to keeping the funding split flexible, with 80/20 being the highest an applicant would receive, and 50/50 the lowest. He noted that the actual funding split would be dependent on competitiveness. The Committee agreed to this.

Itani brought the Committee's attention to a handout that described competitive and eligibility details for TA projects. He recommended that the Committee agree that all pedestrian and bicycle projects must be in the Non-Motorized Plan for the MPO to accept them, and that, if necessary, the Non-Motorized Plan could be amended to include the project. Itani added that there is no plan for other projects, including turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas, and that regional equity would be considered in evaluating and selecting these projects.

Zull asked if the state or the MPO selects TA projects first. Smith recommended that the MPO select projects first because the MPO funds are limited while state funds are not. Itani agreed that the MPO should go first in selecting projects. There would be a meeting, and the Committee would decide which of the projects they wanted to fund with MPO money. Any projects that did not receive MPO funding would still be submitted for state funding. If any of the projects are unfunded, they would be added to the illustrative list. Itani suggested submitting \$2.4 million in projects every year to ensure that funding is not lost. Discussion ensued.

Smith noted that the Committee would need to publish something up front about how they choose projects in order to defend their choices.

Snell asked if it is possible to use funding from another area if one of their projects falls out. Armstrong replied that this is not possible. Every area must use their dollars every year or they are returned to Washington.

Itani encouraged the Committee to select TA projects for FY2013 immediately, and select projects for further years during the development of the FY2014-2017 TIP. Smith noted that there were four projects in the pipeline for the City of Grand Rapids that could be funded with TA money. Itani asked if the Committee didn't use the \$667,000 this year, if they could use it next year. Smith stated that he couldn't guarantee this. Armstrong added that if the Committee chooses to use their money to fund a pipeline project in FY2013 and gives them a project, or projects, to use that money in FY2014, then they have, in effect, a guarantee. However, if they decide to fund a pipeline project without selecting a replacement project, they cannot guarantee that the money will still be there.

Itani asked the Committee if anyone has a project for FY2013 for the TA program. He noted that the MPO would be flexible this year if need be, adding that,

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considering the time frame, the project doesn't need to be in the Non-Motorized Plan in FY2013 or FY2014 if it's a good project. Smith noted that the project must be obligated by September. DeVries added that Committee members would need to be able to deliver a package to construct the project in January.

Snell noted that the Committee can't make that choice today, and that they will need to reconvene in a couple of weeks to discuss this further. Armstrong added that the Committee will need to be careful to fund quality projects that have strong local support and will sway the legislature if somebody calls to complain about the project.

Robinson asked what the deadline would be if the Committee elected to fund a project in the pipeline and choose a replacement project for FY2014. Armstrong responded that the deadline could almost be up to the point where they have to obligate, but that they would prefer not to wait that long.

Robinson asked the Committee if any members have a project they will be submitting soon. Carr, Harrall, and Strikwerda noted that they had projects. Carr noted that his city council wants an 8' pedestrian refuge built before school starts with a current budget of \$120,000. Smith noted that the timeline for this project is impossible to meet with federal funds.

Itani recommended a January 15 deadline for the Committee to submit applications to MDOT for FY2013 projects. However, the Committee members can submit projects for future years as well. DeVries suggested keeping a five-year rolling list. Conners suggested setting a date to talk about the applications in April.

DeVries asked how funding sidewalks would be handled. Robinson noted that the Policies and Practices document states that the MPO will not allow federal funds to be used for sidewalks. Itani stated that sidewalks would be discussed on a case-by-case basis. Discussion ensued.

Itani stated his preference that schools with Safe Routes to School projects apply directly to the state for funding. That way, the \$668,000 can be used for other priorities. Smith noted that if the Committee elects to use this process, the schools will be competing statewide. If they were to go through the MPO, they would be guaranteed funding. Conners suggested that, instead of going to the state level, the schools have to go through the MPO and make their project just as competitive. Warren noted that the MPO would need to inform the school districts about the process for applying for Safe Routes to School funds. Itani responded that the MPO doesn't have the staff to have a planning process in place to negotiate grants with the schools. Smith added that schools currently work with the Michigan Fitness Foundation (MFF) on Safe Routes to School projects.

Conners stated that it makes sense to have all Safe Routes to School projects submitted at the state level first. If the project is denied funding because it is not competitive, the second step would be to bring the project to the MPO and convince

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the group that the project has regional importance and is appropriate.

Zull entertained a motion to approve a submittal process for Safe Routes to School applications.

MOTION by Conners, SUPPORT by Cochran, to approve a policy whereby Safe Routes to School project applications would be submitted first to the state for funding, and if denied, they could then be brought to the MPO for consideration. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Zull suggested that the committee meet around January 15th to talk about a potential project swap. Smith noted that if the Committee meets that early, MDOT will not have a chance to review the applications for eligibility before the meeting, which meant that the Committee may select an ineligible project.

Itani strongly recommended once again that the Committee be flexible in selecting projects and noted that TA projects do not need to come from the Non-Motorized plan for FY2013. Zull entertained a motion to this effect.

MOTION by Feldt, SUPPORT by Carr, that TA projects submitted for FY2013 and FY2014 do not need to be in the Non-Motorized Plan. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Conners noted that any projects that were accepted would be amended into the Non-Motorized Plan.

V. **OTHER BUSINESS**

Robinson stated that programming of the FY2014-2017 TIP will begin soon, and he noted several changes to funding programs. He also added that there is \$1.6 million in remaining funding in FY2013 that will need to be programmed soon. Itani suggested that the Committee consider moving projects from FY2014 to FY2013 or changing the match amount. He noted that it would be very difficult to add new projects to the TIP at this point. The Committee agreed to meet in the next week or two to discuss this further.

VI. **ADJOURNMENT**

Zull entertained a motion to adjourn the November 29, 2012 TPSG Committee meeting.

MOTION by Feldt, SUPPORT by Zull, to adjourn the November 29, 2012 TPSG Committee meeting at 11:11 am. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.