

**MINUTES**

**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council  
Transportation Division  
POLICY COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, September 17, 2008  
Kent County Road Commission  
1500 Scribner NW Grand Rapids, MI**

Varga, Chair of the Policy Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

**I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Voting Members Present**

Peter Varga	<i>(Chair)</i>		The Rapid
Sandra M. Cornell-Howe		<i>Proxy for</i>	MDOT
		<i>Dal McBurrows</i>	MDOT
Rick DeVries			City of Grand Rapids
Jeff Dood			City of Rockford
Don Hilton, Sr.			Gaines Township
Jim Koslosky			GRFIA
Ken Krombeen			City of Grandville
Sandi Frost Parrish			Kent County Commissioner
Dave Pasquale			City of Lowell
Rich Pastoor			City of Wyoming
Jon Rice		<i>Proxy for</i>	KCRC
		<i>Bob Homan</i>	Plainfield Township
Keith VanBeek			City of Kentwood
Don VanDoeselaar			City of Hudsonville

**Staff and Non-Voting Guests Present**

Andrea Dewey	GVMC Staff
Andrea Faber	GVMC Staff
Abed Itani	GVMC Staff
Dennis Kent	MDOT
Darrell Robinson	GVMC Staff
Norm Sevensma	RWBC-WMEAC
Don Stypula	GVMC Staff
George Yang	GVMC Staff

**Voting Members Not Present**

James Beelen		Allendale Township
Marta Brechting	<i>(Vice Chair)</i>	Alpine Township
Larry Bruursema		OCRC
Christine Burns		City of Cedar Springs
Pat Bush		City of Grand Rapids
Bill Cousins		Cascade Township
Dick Davies		Cannon Township

Sharon DeLange  
Mike DeVries  
Ken Feldt  
George Haga  
Bryan Harrison  
Dennis Hoemke  
Bill Holland  
Jim Holtrop  
Bob Homan  
Dal McBurrows  
Jim McIntyre  
Jim Miedema  
Audrey Nevins  
Jack Poll  
Darrel Schmalzel  
Bill Wiersma

Village of Sparta  
Grand Rapids Township  
City of East Grand Rapids  
Ada Township  
Caledonia Charter Township  
Algoma Township  
Georgetown Township  
Ottawa County  
Plainfield Township  
MDOT  
Courtland Township  
Jamestown Township  
Byron Township  
City of Wyoming  
City of Walker  
Tallmadge Township

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Varga entertained a motion to approve of the July 23, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes.

**MOTION by Pastoor, SUPPORT by Krombeen, to approve of the July 23, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

Sevensma declared that he recently rode the Heartland Trail that runs from near Greenville to Edmore and asked anyone who was interested in learning more about the trail to see him after the meeting.

**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, \$1,148,500 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.

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

**MOTION by Pasquale, SUPPORT by Rice, to recommend to the GVMC board approval of amending the FY2008-2011 TIP to include the Village of Sparta and MDOT's projects as identified.**

Rice asked if replacing the freeway lighting will fit into the long-term reconstruction of I-196. Discussion ensued.

Varga called into question the motion on the floor. **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 county-wide 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 provided additional clarification about the project. Discussion, comments and questions ensued.

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

**MOTION by Koslosky, SUPPORT by VanBeek, to recommend to GVMC's board approval of amending the FY2008-2011 TIP to include the SDNT grant as identified by Staff.**

VanBeek asked for clarification regarding the timeline for the study. Itani responded that, hopefully, the money would be received in March or April. The study would take a year, so results would likely be ready in 2010. Varga stated that what this study will do is provide a good analysis of what services are needed outside of where services currently are. He also mentioned several additional studies that will be taking place in nearby areas. Discussion, comments and questions ensued.

Varga called into question the motion on the floor. **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 discussed 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](http://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. Dewey stated that she is currently working on this and that Amtrak fare is currently about \$28 to \$40 each way, depending on how packed the train is.

#### **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 insolvency of the Highway Trust Fund in 2009 and the decline in gas tax revenue. An additional challenge is the increasing cost of supplies, such as asphalt and concrete. SAFETEA-LU will expire September 30, 2009, but not much is known about reauthorization at this point. The long term impact of this could be the loss of federal funds if MDOT can't match them. MDOT is currently looking at strategies to adjust the program, and the Transportation Funding Task Force is investigating viable transportation funding options. The Task Force will likely have their final report completed the end of October.

Itani stated that GVMC is fortunate to be a Transportation Management Area (TMA), so this doesn't impact the organization as much as it could. However, the EDFC program is cause for concern. Itani also stated that GVMC was conservative when programming the TIP, so it is not likely that any projects will be deleted, other than some MDOT projects. Kent stated that MDOT is working internally on various scenarios, but that it is unlikely that all of MDOT's projects will stay in the TIP. Cuts will be balanced around the region. Varga provided an update on the work of the Transportation Funding Task Force. Koslosky stated that all modes of transportation are the backbone of the state and that Michigan will have pavement falling below the minimum service levels in 3-4 years if nothing is done. Therefore, the state can't turn around economically if there is no investment in infrastructure. Discussion, comments and questions ensued.

#### **VII. OTHER BUSINESS**

None

APPROVED

APPROVED  
ITEM II: ATTACHMENT A

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Varga entertained a motion to adjourn the Policy Committee Meeting.

**MOTION by Pastoor, SUPPORT by Koslosky, to adjourn the September 17, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

Varga adjourned the Policy Committee Meeting at 10:24 am.