

MINUTES

**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
Transportation Division
POLICY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, March 21, 2012
Kent County Road Commission
1500 Scribner NW Grand Rapids, MI**

Varga, chair of the Policy Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. Guests Elhort, Wash, Lenze, and Ecklund introduced themselves. Itani noted that Van Buren would be participating over the phone.

I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS**Voting Members Present**

Peter Varga, <i>Chair</i>		The Rapid
Mark DeClercq		City of Grand Rapids
Tom Ecklund	<i>Proxy for Phil Johnson</i>	GRFIA
		GRFIA
Tom Elhort	<i>Proxy for Tim Grifhorst</i>	OCRC
		OCRC
Don R. Hilton, Sr.		Gaines Township
Jim Holtrop	<i>Proxy for Don VanDoeselaar Jim Miedema</i>	Ottawa County
		City of Hudsonville
		Jamestown Township
Rich Houtteman		City of Kentwood
Mark Howe		City of Lowell
Ray Lenze	<i>Proxy for Dal McBurrows</i>	MDOT
		MDOT
Dave Pasquale		Grand Rapids Township
Richard Pastoor		City of Wyoming
Jon Rice	<i>Proxy for Dick Bulkowski</i>	KCRC
		Kent County Commissioner
Frank Wash	<i>Proxy for Darrel Schmalzel</i>	City of Walker
		City of Walker

Staff and Non-Voting Guests Present

Andrea Faber	GVMC Staff
Abed Itani	GVMC Staff
Dennis Kent	MDOT
Erick Kind	MDOT
Joshua Lungert	GR Chamber
Darrell Robinson	GVMC Staff
Norm Sevensma	WMEAC-RWBC
Sarah Van Buren	FHWA
Steve Warren	KCRC
John Weiss	GVMC Staff
Mike Zonyk	GVMC Staff

Voting Members Not Present

Jerry Alkema
 Alex Arends
 Dick Bulkowski
 Christine Burns
 Dan Carlton
 Dick Davies
 Jamie Davies
 Eric DeLong
 Mike DeVries
 Ken Feldt
 Tim Grifhorst
 George Haga
 Bryan Harrison
 Dennis Hoemke
 Bob Homan
 Phil Johnson
 Ken Krombeen, *Vice Chair*
 Dal McBurrows
 Jim Miedema
 Audrey Nevins-Weiss
 Steve Peterson
 Jack Poll
 Chuck Porter
 Darrel Schmalzel
 Martin Super
 Don VanDoeselaar
 Toby VanEss

Allendale Township
 Alpine Township
 Kent County Commissioner
 City of Cedar Springs
 Georgetown Township
 Cannon Township
 City of Rockford
 City of Grand Rapids
 Grand Rapids Township
 City of East Grand Rapids
 OCRC
 Ada Township
 Caledonia Charter Township
 Algoma Township
 Plainfield Township
 GRFIA
 City of Grandville
 MDOT
 Jamestown Township
 Byron Township
 Cascade Township
 City of Wyoming
 Courtland Township
 City of Walker
 Village of Sparta
 City of Hudsonville
 Tallmadge Township

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Varga entertained a motion to approve the January 18, 2012 minutes.

MOTION by Rice, SUPPORT by Pastoor, to approve of the January 18, 2012 Policy Committee meeting minutes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

IV. FY2011-2014 TIP AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS

Referring to **Item IV: Attachment A**, Robinson explained that MDOT, Hope Network, the City of Grand Rapids and Staff were requesting to amend/modify the FY2011-2014 TIP.

MDOT was requesting an administrative modification to the FY2011-2014 TIP for the US 131 Leonard Street to Ann St. project in order to increase the project amount.

The Hope Network requested to add several 5310 funded projects for FY2013 to the FY2011-2014 TIP.

The City of Grand Rapids requested to add two conditionally approved Transportation

Enhancement Grant projects to the FY2011-2014 TIP. The first project is for a pedestrian bridge. The second is a bike route and brick rehab project for Cherry St.

Lastly, Robinson noted that, due to unused obligational authority in FY2011, MDOT is allowing local agencies to convert advance construction projects within the current TIP, among other very limited possibilities. The City of Kentwood has two advance construction projects (built in FY2011) that are scheduled to convert in FY2013 and FY2014. Staff is asking the Committee to approve Advance Construction Conversion for their two projects in FY2012.

Itani explained the difference between appropriation amounts and obligational authority to the Committee. He noted that, for a long time, the appropriated amount has been higher than the obligational authority. He added that, currently, the state has around \$54 million in unused obligational authority, but because GVMC programs projects at 100% appropriation, GVMC cannot use the money because the TIP needs to be financially constrained. However, advance construction projects in the TIP can be moved forward and converted today, which will save jurisdictions in interest. Itani also added that the reason why this \$54 million remains in unused obligational authority is because many rural areas have been unable to spend it. This remaining STP rural funding cannot be used within an urban area.

Rice clarified that if this funding is used for advance construct, then the money allocated toward the project in the future is lost. He asked why this money couldn't be used now on new projects so that the money is not lost in the future. Itani responded that this can't be done because GVMC does not have appropriation authority to spend this additional funding, and that the only way to increase the appropriation amount is through Congress. DeClercq asked if members could use their congressional delegates to help authorize spending. Itani responded that he would not discourage any activities that would increase GVMC's appropriated amounts. Rice noted that the state has until 2014 to spend this \$54 million, and that he wasn't in favor of rushing to spend it with a new bill pending. He also asked if MDOT was saying that the \$54 million could only be used for advance construct projects. Lenze responded that the biggest problem is the category of the funds. For example, the majority of this \$54 million is rural funding, and, by federal law, rural funding cannot be spent in urban areas. An exact breakdown in how much funding is left in each category is not available yet. Itani concluded that staff has explored every possible way to spend the remaining \$54 million in funding, and there is none at this time. He added that staff used every available cent when developing the TIP, so the TIP is already financially constrained. Varga asked if any funding could be moved to transit. Itani replied that it could. Discussion ensued.

Rice asked if MDOT can spend the money if GVMC cannot. Lenze replied that MDOT has projects in the rural area that it can put the funding toward. Discussion ensued.

Varga asked that the TIP requests by MDOT, Hope Network, and the City of Grand Rapids be handled in one motion, with Staff's TIP request addressed in a separate motion. Varga then entertained a motion to amend the FY2011-2014 TIP.

MOTION by DeClercq, SUPPORT by Holthrop, to approve the FY2011-2014 TIP amendments requested by MDOT, Hope Network, and the City of Grand Rapids, as identified. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Houtteman expressed his concern that accepting the advance construction funding would potentially take away from funding down the road. Itani clarified that this won't damage future allocation amounts. Discussion ensued.

Varga noted that if Congress increased appropriation with a new transportation funding bill, more funding could be spent in FY2013. He added that another option would be to see what the state can do to move other projects forward that aren't financially constrained, which in this case doesn't help the Committee except for the rural areas in Kent County. Varga suggested that MDOT look at the possibility of moving funding to transit. Discussion ensued.

Lenze informed the Committee that MDOT is now allowing jurisdictions to put bid savings from one project toward other projects. Itani noted that this was discussed during the Technical Committee meeting and recommended that, in order to take advantage of this, entities send in their projects by April so that staff has time to react and program more projects. Discussion ensued.

Varga entertained a motion to approve Staff's request to the FY2011-2014 TIP.

MOTION by Rice, SUPPORT by Pasquale, to approve the administrative adjustment to the FY2011-2014 TIP requested by Staff, which would involve eliminating the advance construction conversion for the City of Kentwood's project in FY2013-2014 and allowing the advance construction conversion to take place this year instead.

Rice noted his disapproval of the process for handling the remaining \$54 million, since the only option is to put it toward advance construction projects like the City of Kentwood's now. Lenze clarified that if MDOT can get a breakdown on the funding left in each category, more options could become available. Discussion ensued.

Varga returned the motion in question to the floor. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Varga entertained another motion to ask MDOT for more information on this topic.

MOTION by Hilton, SUPPORT by DeClercq, to ask MDOT to provide the Policy Committee with information to determine how the remaining \$54 million in funding can be used. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

V. FY2014-2017 STIP/TIP DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

Referring to **Item V: Attachment A**, Robinson noted that Staff will soon begin to develop the FY2014-2017 TIP. After revenue estimates are received, the process of developing the TIP will start in August by identifying deficiencies. Federal approval of the document will be October 1, 2013.

VI. STATUS UPDATE ON REGIONAL ACCESS TO HIGH SPEED RAIL

Referring to **Item VI: Attachment A**, Itani informed the Committee that, at the beginning of the month, Amtrak and MDOT came and presented to the Board regarding the City of New Buffalo's application for a TIGER 4 grant of approximately \$56 million. If awarded, the grant would go toward track improvements, including extending the Dowagiac siding

to Niles, Michigan (14 miles) and about \$800,000 would go towards the design phase for track improvements that join CSX and Amtrak track in New Buffalo. The Pere Marquette used to serve a station in New Buffalo until 2010 when it was discontinued.

Itani noted that Metro Council did debate this, but ultimately made the recommendation to support this project. GVMC will support this as long as an EIS is done on the route between Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids, since that will open more mobility options. Discussion ensued.

Varga clarified that this is an informational item only and noted that there are a lot of competitors for this grant, so if this project is not chosen, nothing will happen. He added that the advantage of this would be that the Pere Marquette rail could be connected to the high speed corridor between Kalamazoo and Porter, Indiana.

Sevensma asked if we would get to the point where the Pere Marquette would start in Holland, go to Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and then down to Chicago. Kent responded that this would be looked at during an alternatives analysis, but there is no funding currently for this project. Discussion followed.

VII. UPDATE ON TRANSPORTATION FUNDING AND SAFETEA-LU

Itani informed the Committee that, last week, the Senate passed the Senate transportation bill, MAP 21, which covers FY2012-2013. The bill is for \$109 billion, and it took 90 different programs and condensed them into 30. Many of the discontinued programs, including STP, enhancement, and Safe Routes to Schools, are now grouped under "transportation mobility." The CMAQ program still exists, but there will likely be a cut. Currently, the EPA plans to classify the entire state of Michigan as "unclassifiable" for air quality, which means that Michigan will be able to use CMAQ money anywhere within the state. Also, according to MAP-21, smaller MPOs will disband, and all remaining MPOs will be designated as Tier 1 or Tier 2. GVMC would be a Tier 2 MPO. However, it may be possible for the organization to be redesignated as a Tier 1 MPO.

Lastly, Itani stated that the House will likely use MAP-21 as a base bill, and that there will probably be another short extension. Discussion ensued.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

Kent noted that he had distributed 2012 construction maps for the Grand Region before the meeting. He also passed out a handout detailing the Grand Region's proposed additional road and bridge projects from FY2013-2017. He provided details about some of the larger projects.

Lenze announced that, from now through August, MDOT will be revising its current 2035 MI Transportation Plan so that the planning horizon reaches 2040.

DeClercq announced that the City of Grand Rapids has a Sustainable Streets Task Force and explained their current activities.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Varga adjourned the March 21, 2012 Policy Committee meeting at 10:53 am.