

**MINUTES**

**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council  
Transportation Division  
POLICY COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, April 15, 2009  
Kent County Road Commission  
1500 Scribner NW      Grand Rapids, MI**

Varga, Chair of the Policy Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

**I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Voting Members Present**

Peter Varga	<i>(Chair)</i>	The Rapid
Alex Arends		Alpine Township
Pat Bush		City of Grand Rapids
Rick DeVries	<i>Proxy for Mark DeClercq</i>	City of Grand Rapids
		City of Grand Rapids
Jeff Dood		City of Rockford
Ken Feldt		City of East Grand Rapids
Don R. Hilton, Sr.		Gaines Township
Jim Holtrop		Ottawa County
Rich Houtteman		City of Kentwood
Jim Koslosky		GRFIA
Ken Krombeen		City of Grandville
Dal McBurrows		MDOT
David Pasquale		City of Lowell
Jon Rice	<i>Proxy for Bob Homan</i>	KCRC
		Plainfield Township
Darrel Schmalzel		City of Walker
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
Erick Kind	MDOT
Darrell Robinson	GVMC Staff
Norm Sevensma	WMEAC-RWBC
Don Stypula	GVMC Staff
Steve Warren	KCRC

**Voting Members Not Present**

Jerry Alkema	Allendale Township
Larry Bruursema	OCRC
Christine Burns	City of Cedar Springs

Dick Davies  
 Mark DeClercq  
 Sharon DeLange  
 Mike DeVries  
 George Haga  
 Bryan Harrison  
 Dennis Hoemke  
 Bob Homan  
 Jim Miedema  
 Dale Mohr  
 Audrey Nevins  
 Sandi Frost Parrish  
 Rich Pastoor  
 Steve Peterson  
 Jack Poll  
 Chuck Porter  
 Toby VanEss

Cannon Township  
 City of Grand Rapids  
 Village of Sparta  
 Grand Rapids Township  
 Ada Township  
 Caledonia Charter Township  
 Algoma Township  
 Plainfield Township  
 Jamestown Township  
 Georgetown Township  
 Byron Township  
 Kent County Commissioner  
 City of Wyoming  
 Cascade Township  
 City of Wyoming  
 Courtland Township  
 Tallmadge Township

## II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Varga entertained a motion to approve of the March 18, 2009 Policy Committee meeting minutes. Sevensma stated one correction to the minutes.

**MOTION by Krombeen, SUPPORT by Bush, to approve of the March 18, 2009 Policy Committee meeting minutes with Sevensma's correction. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## III. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Sevensma stated that he had seen an article in *National Geographic* about global warming. He asked if, as the evidence of global warming mounts, the Grand Valley Metro Council plans to be more proactive in dealing with this issue. Itani responded that the policies and practices currently in place contribute to a reduction in emissions. Varga stated that this issue should be called "climate change" instead of global warming. Varga also asked Staff to highlight the things that Metro Council has done to deal with CO2 emissions, including the Action Day program, at the next meeting. Itani agreed to come up with numbers, add them to the web site, and share them with the Committee.

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

Speaking on **Item IV: Attachment A**, Robinson informed the Committee of three TIP amendment requests. The first request, from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), was seeking to amend the General Program Accounts (GPAs) for EPE/PE/ROW and Highway Safety Trunk line for cost changes. The second request, from the Kent County Road Commission (KCRC), was to delete their 2009 Belmont Avenue relocation project from the TIP and replace it with a different CMAQ project—the Knapp Street at Pettis Avenue Intersection project from the FY2010 CMAQ Project list. The last request, from the City of Hudsonville, was to no longer advance construct their 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue project, and instead move forward with the project in FY2010, the same year that the funding was available.

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

**MOTION by Rice, SUPPORT by Holtrop, to recommend to the GVMC Board approval of amending the FY2008-2011 TIP to include the amendment requests from the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Kent County Road Commission, and the City of Hudsonville, as identified by Staff.**

Dood asked if the Belmont Avenue project was going to be deleted permanently. Rice responded that it is being delayed until the KCRC is able to secure right of way needed for the project. Discussion ensued.

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

**V. PROGRAMMING OF STIMULUS PROJECTS, FY2010-2013 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

Referring to **Item V: Attachment A**, Robinson discussed several changes that had been made to the previously programmed FY2010-2013 TIP because of the ARRA, or stimulus, funding package. Robinson stated that since some of the projects originally listed in the FY2010-2013 TIP were funded with ARRA funds, there was funding in the TIP that was available for additional projects. The Transportation Programming Study Group had recently met to select new projects for the TIP that would utilize this remaining funding. He discussed the changes that had been made to the TIP at this meeting and added that the current TIP draft is financially constrained. Itani stated that the Technical Committee approved this draft list at their last meeting and asked for a motion for preliminary approval of this draft list so that Staff could move forward with an environmental justice analysis and an air quality analysis.

Varga entertained a motion to recommend approval of the FY2010-2013 draft TIP to the Metro Council Board.

**MOTION by Schmalzel, SUPPORT by Krombeen, to recommend approval of the FY2010-2013 draft TIP to the Metro Council Board so that Staff can move forward with an environmental justice analysis and air quality analysis. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Itani stated that the funding levels for FY2010 and FY2011 in the TIP for STP Rural and Urban were essentially the same as in FY2009. For FY2012 and FY2013, Itani continued that MDOT and the Federal Highway Association had agreed that the amount of funding should be increased by 2% per year. Itani concluded that while SAFETEA-LU expires on September 30, there are discussions occurring about the new transportation bill, and that there is a possibility that the MPO area will receive additional funding. Discussion, comments, and questions ensued.

**VI. SAFETEA-LU REAUTHORIZATION UPDATE—HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS PROGRAM (HPPP) UPDATE**

Speaking on **Item VI: Attachment A**, Itani informed the Committee that he had received a phone call from Congressman Ehlers' office soliciting earmark projects for the next transportation bill. These projects would need to be submitted by April 27th. Itani

continued, stating that Staff had looked at protocol for determining past earmark projects as well as current projects that have a regional significance on the network. Based on this, he recommended several projects to Congressman Ehlers and the Committee and provided two handouts—a list and a map—that specified them. These projects included a preservation project in Kent County, Fuller Avenue at I-196, M-11 from South of M-45 to 28<sup>th</sup> Street, US-131 from West River Drive to Post Drive, M-37/44 from Cascade Avenue to Knapp Street, the Forest Hills Avenue Bridge over I-96 and approaches from Burton Street to Cascade Road, and ITS projects. Also included on the list were two projects for Ottawa County that will be submitted to Congressman Hoekstra. Itani stated that all of these projects are all currently listed in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and encouraged the committee members to submit their own earmark projects for their communities. Itani said that all representatives are expected to receive \$50 million for earmark projects. However, since the bill has not yet been written, the amount may change.

Rice stated that while the list is a start, he did not agree with the list of projects in its entirety, since he believed that there were local agency projects that were more important to the agencies from a regional standpoint than the projects listed. He expressed his concern that all of the projects listed were MDOT projects and questioned the fairness of this list, since MDOT is the biggest recipient of federal and stimulus funds. Itani responded that, as an MPO, Staff is responsible for the system as a whole, and therefore, he could not justify spending funding on roads that are less regionally significant than others. Itani continued that the process is to look at projects that reduce congestion and improve mobility. Rice responded that the KCRC's criteria is equally important and that the guidelines should not be determined by Staff. Itani clarified that once the cost benefit analysis is completed, Staff can vote on which projects are priority projects. He added that not many projects contribute to the objectives of improving mobility or reducing congestion. Rice stated that possibly the criteria for determining projects needs to change. Discussion, comments, and questions ensued.

Stypula stated that he had been in Washington D.C. the previous week, and during that time, he had met with Congressman Ehlers and his staff. From this meeting, Stypula determined that they would like the MPOs to have a significant role in discussing or working through their processes in place and agree on what projects they are going to move forward. Stypula stated that Staff does not set the process, and that the committee members are welcome to discuss amongst themselves the projects to select. He encouraged committee members to “horse-trade” for the projects that they want for their communities. Rice questioned if the map provided had gone to Congressman Ehlers. Stypula responded that only the illustrative spreadsheet had been sent as an illustration of projects that the MPO could have in place. Warren expressed his concern that the preliminary list had not gone to the Technical Committee or the Transportation Programming Study Group. He added that congestion mitigation shouldn't be the only criteria used in determining projects, since the KCRC's projects deal with economic development and safety. Discussion ensued.

Kent stated that MDOT is resistant to earmarks because, historically, the funding has been given to projects that haven't begun the project development process. However, MDOT also realizes that earmarks are a reality. He added that MDOT priorities are likely to be focused on I-196, I-96, and the East Beltline. Kent added that historically, what has been most effective for MDOT is to focus on one or two high priority projects and to get as much money for them as possible. Discussion, comments, and questions ensued.

Varga suggested that the Policy Committee schedule an additional meeting to discuss projects that would be submitted to the congressmen. He stated that this meeting should be scheduled as soon as possible in order to meet the May 8<sup>th</sup> deadline. Otherwise, the local agencies would be responsible for submitting projects on their own and the project selection process would be up to the Congressmen. The Committee elected to have a meeting, which was scheduled for 8:00 am on Monday, April 20 at the KCRC. The meeting would also include the Technical Committee and the Transportation Programming Study Group. Varga volunteered to chair the meeting. Itani clarified that, during the course of the meeting, the committee would identify a list of projects. After that point, a 50-question questionnaire would need to be completed for each project. Once this is completed, the preliminary list would be sent to the congressmen. The list would be official when it was approved by the Metro Council Board. Questions, comments, and discussion ensued.

**VII. CLEAN AIR ACTION PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

Referring to **Item VII: Attachment A**, Faber provided the committee with an update on the transition of the Ozone Action program to the Clean Air Action program and gave an overview of recent program activities, which included developing new program materials and a year-round radio campaign, and participating in TV and radio interviews. Faber also gave an overview of upcoming activities, which included hosting a Clean Air Action Luncheon on May 1<sup>st</sup>, participating in local events, and rotating the new display throughout several communities. She passed around a sign-up sheet and asked interested committee members to sign up to host the display during the summer. She also asked that committee members keep her informed of upcoming community events in which she could participate. Questions and discussion ensued.

**VIII. OTHER BUSINESS**

Referring to a handout, Varga informed the committee about the Silver Line, the Rapid's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. Questions, comments, and discussion ensued.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Varga adjourned the April 15, 2009 Policy Committee Meeting at 11:04 am.