



West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

February/March 2015

West Michigan Regional Prosperity Alliance Receives Funding

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WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

In early February, Governor Snyder announced funding awards for the Fiscal Year 15 State-wide Regional Prosperity Initiative. The West Michigan Regional Prosperity Alliance (Region 4) was funded in the amount of \$228,750. The FY 15 funds, plus the carry-over dollars from FY 14 (\$193,000), will be used to implement the Region 4 Regional Prosperity Plan and perform several tasks during the remainder of 2015.

At the February 19 meeting of the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA), the 31-member committee discussed each of the top ranked projects and identified avenues to support each. Following is a summary of the projects and how Region 4 will be providing assistance to each.

Port of Muskegon Regional Logistics Hub - A group of regional public and private community leaders, as well as WMSRDC, are working together to further the development of the Muskegon Port as a regional logistic hub and an economic asset to the region. The WMPA will be supporting this effort by helping to fund both an infrastructure analysis of port assets and an organizational structure analysis of port governance structures. The WMPA will also provide other supportive services.

Protecting Lake Michigan Water Quality through Establishment of a Dedicated Revenue Source for Watershed Management - Local watershed organizations will establish a West Michigan Regional Watershed Collaborative. The collaborative will develop a regional water quality plan and a program to generate sustainable financial resources to protect the water quality of Lake Michigan. The WMPA will be supporting this effort by helping to fund the establishment of the collaborative and a consultant to assist with identifying potential sustainable funding models. WMPA will also provide other supportive services.

Connected Community Engagement Program, Technology Action Planning - Connect Michigan, a non-profit entity that helps interested communities identify their technology needs and opportunities, will complete Technology Action Plans for ten counties (Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, and Ottawa) to address local broadband and technology issues. The WMPA will be supporting this effort by helping to fund the creation of the Technology Action Plans in the ten counties. WMPA will also provide other supportive services.

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Muskegon Lake Vision 2020

Muskegon Lake and its shorelines are surrounded by places for recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, public access amenities, residential and commercial uses. How do we maintain these uses and improve Muskegon Lake for all stakeholders into the future? Please watch for details about a public visioning process to happen over the coming year, and plan to participate! The vision will address the entire lake, a portion of the Muskegon River and the Lake Michigan shoreline.



SPOTLIGHT PROJECT: Economic Development Grant Applications

In early February, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced their Fiscal Year 15 Federal Funding Opportunities for the March and June deadlines.

Two grant applications were submitted from the WMSRDC region for the March 12th deadline. Muskegon Community College (MCC) submitted a grant under the EDA Public Works category for the MCC Downtown Muskegon Campus Development Projects. The downtown campus will provide Applied Technology programs including Machining, Welding, CAD/Engineering, Electronics, Materials/

Foundry, Alternative Energy, Entrepreneurship, Robotics/Mechatronics/Automation, and Plastic Forming.

A second grant application was submitted by WMSRDC for the Muskegon Port Regional Logistics Hub project. The project is seeking EDA Technical Assistance funding to complete a two part study to analyze existing infrastructure capacity for the four modes of transportation (roads, rail, water, and air) as well as identify future infrastructure improvements that will need to be addressed in order to move additional goods through the Muskegon Port. Secondly, the study will provide a review of potential organizational structures that would be developed for the management and/or marketing of the Port.

Funding announcements are expected to be received from EDA during the spring of 2015. If funded the projects should be underway sometime this summer.

Since 1976, WMSRDC has been a designated Economic Development District by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. The district includes the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana. As part of that designation, WMSRDC has prepared and maintained regional economic development plans, which are now referred to as CEDS, for nearly forty years.



Invasive Plant Removal & Early Detection

WMSRDC has been selected for a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to address non-native invasive plants within the Muskegon Lake Watershed with emphasis on the shoreline wetland habitats along Muskegon Lake and Bear Lake. The \$153,313 project will implement the Muskegon Lake Watershed Biodiversity Protection and Phragmites Control Strategy WMSRDC developed in 2012 with support from the EPA Lake Michigan Watershed Academy. The project will hire an ecological restoration expert to work with WMSRDC and partners on project activities. The project will strategically address existing stands of phragmites, educate landowners and the public, provide experiential education opportunities for students and carry out early detection monitoring and rapid response activities. The learning events will be held to involve volunteers in the hands-on restoration of Muskegon Lake and Bear Lake fish and wildlife habitat. The project will also review previously restored Muskegon Lake Shoreline habitats to ensure success of those restored habitats.

As part of the project, shoreline landowners, teachers, students, volunteers and the public will be invited to a training program to learn to recognize and control the non-native invasive plants that can threaten the integrity of Great Lakes ecosystems and native habitats. In addition to the training, partners including landowners and volunteers will be encouraged to develop a sustainable control protocol into the future.

Project partners include the Local Governments, Muskegon Area Intermediate School District, West Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, Muskegon Conservation District, private and public landowners, Great Lakes Commission, The Nature Conservancy, Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership and others. The project partners kick-off event was held on March 4th.

Green Infrastructure & Water Quality

The WMSRDC and the City of Muskegon are partnering on a green infrastructure project to control stormwater and improve water quality in Muskegon Lake. The MDEQ awarded WMSRDC a grant to plan and design stormwater best practices and it was used as non-federal match for the City of Muskegon EPA Shoreline Cities Green Infrastructure grant proposal. The partnership project will perform preliminary engineering and produce eight conceptual site plans to control stormwater through green infrastructure. Full engineering and construction will be carried out at a minimum of one of the eight sites. The two-year project includes public outreach and site tours. Participants of an August 4 and 5 West Michigan Green Infrastructure Conference will hear a presentation about the project and be offered the opportunity to tour green infrastructure projects throughout West Michigan. Watch the WMSRDC website and electronic updates for conference details and information about how to register.

Bear Creek/Bear Lake Fish & Wildlife Habitat Restoration

WMSRDC received funding approval for construction of the Bear Creek Hydrologic Reconnection and Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) in January 2015.

WMSRDC will manage the \$7.9 million restoration project under a grant sub-recipient agreement with the GLC. The GVSU Annis Water Resource Institute and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) will carry out ecological and water quality monitoring. The project will remove phosphorous-laden muck from behind a former celery farm dike, restore aquatic habitat, and reconnect Bear Creek to the restored floodplain habitat. The project will provide benefits for a wide variety of native fish and wildlife. A portion of the former celery farm was acquired by Muskegon County for the purpose of restoration. The project will also reduce a water quality threat to Bear Lake with the removal of phosphorous-laden muck that lies behind the aging, former celery farm dike.

WMSRDC Welcomes New Staff Member

Gale Nobes joined the WMSRDC staff as an environmental planning technician in February. Gale's experience and technical skills as a former USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service soil technician, watershed group organizer, conservation volunteer and award-winning photographer will serve WMSRDC and the West Michigan Region very well. Welcome, Gale!

CEDS Update

In January 2015, the WMSRDC Board approved updates to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS provides detailed information regarding WMSRDC's five-county region including a regional profile complete with economic and demographic information, goals and objectives, regionally significant economic development projects, and a detailed work program.

The CEDS 2015 Update features two new Regionally Significant Economic Development Projects; Lake County Economic Development Capacity Building, and Muskegon County Recycling Center; as well as recently updated economic and demographic projections that were released by WMSRDC in June 2014.

EDA Representative Visits WMSRDC Region

Lee Shirey from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) visited the WMSRDC region on Tuesday, February 10, 2015. Shirey is the EDA Economic Development Representative for Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

During his half day visit, Shirey met with several local leaders regarding a variety of potential EDA projects. The projects included the Muskegon Community College Downtown Muskegon Campus, The Agri-Business Academy Project, the Lake County Economic Development Organization Capacity Building Project, the Port of Muskegon Regional Logistics Hub, and the Muskegon County Recycling Project. As a result of the meeting, two projects have moved forward with grant applications.



The former Muskegon Chronicle building was visited by the EDA rep. and others. The building is now owned by Muskegon Community College for a future downtown Muskegon campus project.

Governor's Economic & Education Summits

WMSRDC staff attended Governor Snyder's Economic and Education Summits, which took place March 2nd and 3rd in Detroit, Michigan. This year the two summits were combined into one event for the first time to demonstrate and enhance the links between education and the economy.

WMSRDC staff was able to network with economic and education professionals, as well as discuss many of the local and regional initiatives that are underway. WMSRDC staff also assisted in the organization of two breakout sessions during the Summit. The sessions focused on the activities of the West Michigan Regional Prosperity Alliance (Region 4).

Rural Transportation

The five-county Rural Transportation Task Force, which WMSRDC administers, met on March 9th to review and approve changes to projects and discuss additional rural transportation issues. WMSRDC facilitated the discussion as task force members chose new transportation projects. Earlier in the day, a number of the members met with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for a training on the State of Michigan's update to the National Functional Classification of roads.

Making Michigan a Great Place to Live Well and Age Well

WMSRDC will be participating with state and local agencies to help develop a plan for Governor Snyder's message on aging, titled "Making Michigan a Great Place to Live Well and Age Well."

Staff will be working with neighboring MPOs and transit partners throughout the region to develop an assessment of current conditions and needs for regional transit mobility, and how to coordinate with all of the local transit agencies to streamline the system and fill any gaps that may be identified in the network. The project is expected to be completed in FY2015.

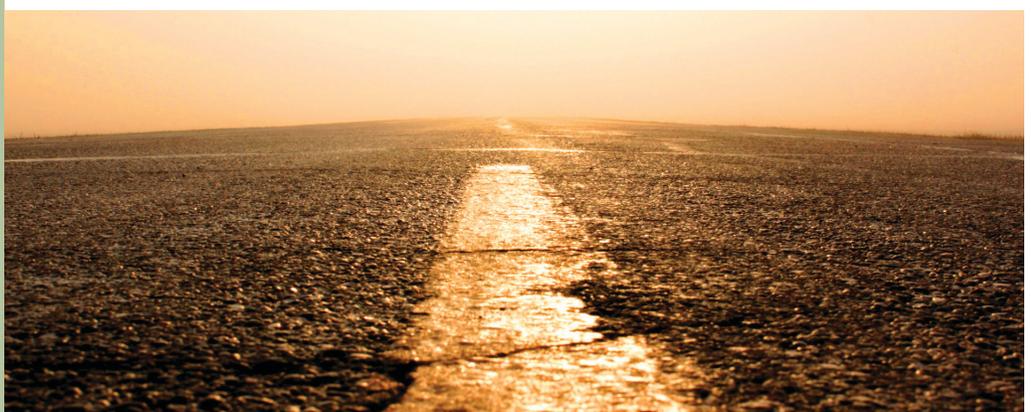
Progress on the Long Range Transportation Plan

Progress continues on the West Michigan Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (WestPlan) 2040 Transportation Long Range Plan update. A draft of the plan is expected to be acted on by the MPO Technical and Policy Committees at the May meetings. MPO staff has been working with local transit and road agencies, as well as the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to revise the plan chapter by chapter. The financial chapter and a chapter that details the existing transportation network in the MPO are nearly complete, which will leave the modeling portions as the last remaining sections to complete before the draft is presented to the public for a 30 day public review period. The public review period is expected to begin sometime in May.

WMSRDC Participating in Rural Task Force Oversight Board

WMSRDC Executive Director Erin Kuhn was recently invited to participate in the newly created Rural Task Force (RTF) Process Oversight Board. Voting members of this new board include: Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) – Bureau of Transportation Planning, MDOT – Bureau of Highway Development, MDOT - Officer of Passenger Transportation, the County Road Association, the Michigan Municipal League, and local transit representatives. WMSRDC is participating as a non-voting member representing the Michigan Association of Regions (MAR).

The duties of this new committee are to establish the general direction and goals of the RTF Program and ensure consistency in the program's implementation and administration. Over the next few months the board will be reviewing and revising RTF processes, as well as creating procedures for communication and education among those affected by the RTF process.



Department of Homeland Security/ Federal Emergency Management Agency Begin Project Level Monitoring with the FY 2014 Homeland Security Grant Program

The Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management (DHS/FEMA) will implement project level monitoring beginning with the Fiscal Year 2014 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP). This means that all FY 2014 HSGP grant funds must be associated with a specific project. Higher level reporting detail information will be required on individual projects, with less emphasis being placed on extensive investment details in the grant application.

To obtain the above information, Michigan State Police/Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (MSP/EMHSD) created a FY 2014 Homeland Security Grant Project Workbook that Region 6 and all other regions in Michigan were required to complete and submit by February 13, 2015 to account for all FY 2014 HSGP projects.

After the Project Workbooks have been received, MSP/EMHSD will enter all projects into the federal Biannual Strategy Implementation Report (BSIR), which was due in January 2015. Region 6 and all others must account for 100 percent of their FY 2014 HSGP allocation(s) in the projects submitted to MSP/EMHSD.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2014, in an effort to further increase insight into grantee activities, DHS/FEMA have begun the implementation of project-level grant applications, on a recommendation from the U.S. Government Accountability Office for all preparedness grant programs. These project-level grant applications will provide DHS/FEMA with a superior level of information about how grantees are intending to utilize grant funds.

This unprecedented level of information will improve the Department's ability to ensure that grant spending is not duplicated, will provide the Department with a clearer understanding of the actual use of preparedness grant funds, and will enable the Department to better measure and document the progress that grantees are making towards filling capability gaps.



Fiscal Year 2014 Homeland Security Grant

The Region 6 Planning Board and its members approved a budget for the FY-2014 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) at their meeting in Big Rapids on Monday, January 26, 2015. Region 6 was awarded \$1,250,408 under the Fiscal Year 2014 HSGP. The 2014 Homeland Security Program Grant Agreement was signed by WMSRDC on Thursday, October 2, 2014 and all work on the grant is required to be completed by May 31, 2016.

WMSRDC is responsible for the management and administration of the homeland security program for the counties of Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa.

WMSRDC Working with Local Communities on Recreation and Master Plans

In late 2014 and early 2015, WMSRDC coordinated with the Oceana County Parks & Recreation Commission to update the Oceana County Recreation Plan. The plan will help Oceana County prioritize current and future recreational resource development needs and help the community maintain eligibility for state and federal recreation grants. Community recreation plans are typically updated every five years. The Oceana County Recreation Plan is available by navigating to the Oceana County website at www.oceana.mi.us.

WMSRDC has also been working with Big Prairie Township and Fruitport Township on their recreation plans. WMSRDC assisted in holding community meetings in Big Prairie Township and Fruitport Township in November to discuss current and future recreation needs in each community. WMSRDC staff led township officials and community members in each township through a successful visioning exercise and gained useful insights, which will help prioritize future recreation investments. Both of these plans are expected to be completed by fall 2015.

WMSRDC continues work on the Oceana County Master Plan, which kicked-off in late 2014. Since the last update, WMSRDC coordinated two community meetings, one taking place November 11th in Walkerville and the other taking place November 12th in Hart. Two previous meetings were held in late October. During these meetings, WMSRDC staff led county officials and community members through guided visioning sessions to evaluate the County's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). Aggregated information from each of these sessions was presented to the Oceana County Planning Commission at their February 5th meeting. Work on the plan is expected to be completed by fall of 2015.

WMSRDC & Connect Michigan

Recently, WMSRDC staff began partnering with Mason County on a project related to expanding broadband services within the underserved areas of the county. WMSRDC is working with local representatives, as well as employees of Connect Michigan on this initiative.

Connect Michigan is a non-profit subsidiary of Connected Nation in the state of Michigan. Connect Michigan is partnering with the Michigan Public Service Commission to comprehensively plan for broadband mapping and expansion of access to broadband.

Mason County has engaged the public and will be creating a survey to gauge the interest and need for additional broadband services within the county. WMSRDC staff will receive the completed surveys and then map the results.

WMSRDC staff has also been assisting on similar projects in Lake County and Newaygo County. Lake County recently completed their Lake County Technology Action Plan, which outlines actions needed to move forward. Newaygo County is gearing up to present their survey to County residents and WMSRDC staff will perform the same mapping function once it receives that data.

The ultimate goal of this project is to increase technological transformation through innovation, job creation, and entrepreneurship through the expansion of broadband technology and increased usage by Michigan residents.

Hazard Mitigation Plans in Final Stage

WMSRDC has entered the final stage in updating the hazard mitigation plans for the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana. This will involve seeking approvals from the Michigan State Police (MSP) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Once approved at the state and federal levels, WMSRDC will work with each community to secure adoptions of its plan at the county local levels. WMSRDC has already received a favorable review of the Oceana County Hazard Mitigation Plan by MSP and FEMA. Efforts to secure local adoptions in Oceana County are expected to begin in March 2015. WMSRDC's hazard mitigation project ends in July 2015.



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Michigan Work Ready Communities - The Michigan Work Ready Communities (MiWRC) initiative assists employers to find work-ready individuals. MiWRC focuses on enhancing fundamental credentials of young people who are ready to enter the workforce, as well as adults who have two years or less in a post-secondary education. The WMPA will be supporting this effort by helping to fund a marketing and public relations campaign to increase employer engagement in the MiWRC and certify all counties in the WMPA as a Certified Work Ready Community by September 2016. WMPA will also provide other supportive services.

Emerge West Michigan Website Portal/Mentor Connect – Emerge is a group of public and private organizations working to provide services to entrepreneurs. The WMPA will be supporting this effort by helping to fund a web portal that helps entrepreneurs get the right resources at the right time and the Mentor Connect Program which matches mentors with entrepreneurs. WMPA will also provide other supportive services.

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission is a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serving 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana Counties. WMSRDC is also responsible for the management and administration of the homeland security program for the counties of Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa. WMSRDC is also the planning agency for the metropolitan transportation planning (MPO) program for Muskegon and Northern Ottawa Counties.

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