



West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

August/September 2018

WMSRDC to Lead West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (RPI Region 4)

As of October 1, 2018, the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission will assume fiduciary leadership of the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) Region 4. In addition, Erin Kuhn, WMSRDC executive director will serve as chair of the WMPA steering committee.

The RPI was created by Governor Snyder over six years ago. The WMPA, also known as RPI Region 4, encompasses 13 counties in West Michigan covering a total of 8,163 square miles, equivalent to the State of New Jersey. The region also includes 130 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline and a population of over 1.5 million people. The 35 member WMPA steering committee includes representatives from a variety of sectors including regional planning, metropolitan transportation planning, adult education, workforce development, economic development, higher education, and philanthropic agencies.

Over the past six years, the WMPA was led by the Grand Valley Metro Council A(GVMC) and chaired by John Weiss, the GVMC executive director. During those six years the WMPA worked together to organize, build trust, and increase collaboration across the 13 county region. These efforts have received recognition for providing leadership within the region and serving as a model for other regions in the state. The WMPA was the first to develop a public process to share RPI funding and award projects. This process included organizing a public meeting that determined evaluation criteria. The process established a public voting procedure and invested almost one million dollars in the region over two rounds of funding and involved hundreds of people. To learn about the current third round of WMPA funding see page 4 of this newsletter.

Some of the higher profile projects supported by the WMPA are listed below:

- Port of Muskegon Regional Logistics Hub
- Connected Community Broadband Engagement Program
- West Michigan Watershed Collaborative
- West Michigan Regional Dashboard
- Infrastructure Asset Management Pilot Project

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SPOTLIGHT PROJECT:

WMSRDC Executive Director Appointed to Michigan Infrastructure Council

On July 19, 2018, Governor Rick Snyder announced the initial appointments to the Michigan Infrastructure Council (MIC). Erin Kuhn, WMSRDC executive director, was named as one of five appointees by Governor Snyder. The MIC was created within the Department of Treasury. The council consists of nine voting members; five of which are appointed by the Governor and four appointed by leaders of the legislature.

The council will bring together local utility and infrastructure owners, regional representatives, finance and policy experts, and state department leaders to coordinate infrastructure-related goals and develop a long-term strategy for Michigan's infrastructure assets. The council will construct the statewide asset management database, facilitate the data collection strategy and produce a 30-year investment and management strategy for the state of Michigan.

WMSRDC served as one of the West Michigan regional leaders for the Governor's Infrastructure Asset Management Pilot project during 2017 and 2018. To learn more about the pilot project, please see past issues of the WMSRDC newsletter available at www.wmsrdc.org.

Erin is honored to be appointed by Governor Snyder and is looking forward to serving on the Michigan Infrastructure Council to accomplish outlined tasks. Erin will be a voting member on the MIC until her term expires in 2021.

Fiscal Year 2019 Work Program & Budget

The WMSRDC Board is expected to pass the fiscal year 2019 Work Program and Budget during their regularly scheduled meeting on September 17, 2018. The document outlines work and projects to be accomplished during the fiscal year in the designated WMSRDC program areas. These areas include air quality, transportation asset management, community development & local government services, economic development, environmental program, geographic information systems services, homeland security, information & communications, transportation metropolitan planning organization – management, metropolitan transportation data assistance, metropolitan area transportation planning, regional transportation planning, rural transportation planning, and transit planning. The proposed budget for fiscal year 2019 totals \$14,840,900.00.

All Things Trees

WMSRDC staff has been busy working on three tree grants during the past several months. The Urban Stormwater Runoff Remediation Grant through the US Forest Service and the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly is almost complete and has seen to the planting of 300 large street trees within the cities of Muskegon and North Muskegon. Six hundred seedlings have also been planted with an additional 800 to be planted this fall, which will complete the work on this project. A portion of the seedlings will be planted in the Fremont and Newaygo areas as part of a United Way Day of Caring which is being coordinated by WMSRDC Chair James Rynberg, Mayor of the City of Fremont.

The overall goal of this grant is to plant trees in urban areas with a high number of impervious surfaces that will allow the trees to soak up and store an estimated 583,000 gallons of stormwater runoff before draining into local lakes and streams, therefore mitigating flooding and erosion. This grant will be completed after the fall plantings are installed this November.

Another tree grant being administered by WMSRDC is the Lake Michigan Coastal Zone Reforestation Project. This grant will aim to plant approximately 3,000 trees along the coastal zone in the counties of Muskegon, Mason and Oceana and is in partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in Ludington, Charles Mears, Silver Lake, Hoffmaster and Muskegon state parks. These trees will replace trees lost due to damage from storms, and Emerald Ash Borer and Dutch Elm disease.

The coastal zone along Lake Michigan is a particularly sensitive ecological area where massive losses of trees can lead to land and dune erosion and loss of habitat. The replacement of native Michigan trees will help restore habitat, regulate climate and

secure dunes and natural areas. The locations for the trees within the state parks and the City of Muskegon have been selected and a contractor has been chosen to begin the selection of tree types and coordination of the parks for plantings to begin in the fall of 2018 and the spring of 2019.

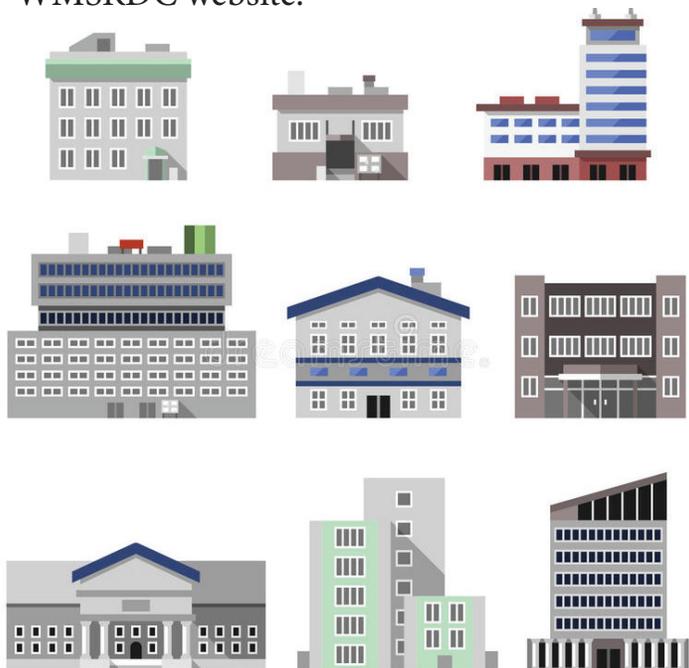
The third tree grant is focused on the rapid response and treatment of the invasive insect, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), that is attacking native hemlock trees. This grant includes surveying the hemlock trees in Ottawa, Muskegon, and Oceana counties to determine the extent of the infestation and to begin treating the trees to slow the spread of this destructive pest.

Much of the survey work has been completed and the outer limits of the infestation have been determined by our survey team and the HWA Task Force. Treatment has also begun in the outermost extents of the HWA area to kill the insects and to stop them from spreading further north along Lake Michigan. The first round of treatments is finishing up and a second round will begin in the fall and next spring. The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is responsible for massive hemlock die-off in forests along the Atlantic Coast. The HWA is thought to have come to West Michigan through nursery stock and if left unchecked could have devastating effects on our forests, trout fisheries and habitat. This grant is provided by the Environmental Protection Agency and is being assisted by the Ottawa County Parks, Ottawa Conservation District, and the West Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA). This grant is scheduled to be completed in the Spring of 2019.

Industrial & Business Park Survey

WMSRDC has begun the process of updating its inventory of industrial and business parks. There are 23 industrial parks or business parks identified in the inventory in the counties of Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo and Oceana. Lake County does not have any designated industrial or business parks at this time. Information included in the inventory for each park includes millage rates and local incentives; available utilities, infrastructure and acreage; and current tenants and contact information.

In an effort to make the inventory a better resource for local officials and site selectors, the new version will include more specific details regarding the capacity and capabilities of utilities at each industrial and business park. This update is expected to be complete in calendar year 2018. The updated information will be a highlight of the new online maps on the WMSRDC website.



RPI Call for Projects

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA), of which WMSRDC is a partner, recently held its third Call-For-Projects during the month of August. Submitted projects will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- The long-term impact & sustainability of the project
- The regional impact – proportion of the region potentially impacted by the project
- The employment opportunities that will be provided to people with a variety of skill levels in a variety of employment sectors
- The recognition of the region's strengths and challenges
- Explanation of how the project promotes and supports public and private partnerships and fund leveraging
- Addressing of one of the key indicators in the West Michigan Regional Dashboard with narrative explaining how the project will move dashboard indicator forward

The WMPA has budgeted approximately \$170,500 for this project call. Submitted projects will be reviewed and ranked by a selection committee during the month of September. A community forum will be held in late September/early October where attendees will have the opportunity to vote on the projects. Funding decisions will be announced following the community forum.

To learn more about the funding opportunity, go to <http://wmsrdc.org/west-michigan-prosperity-alliance-call-for-projects/>.

Berry Junction Trail Complete

After nearly fourteen years of meeting, planning, designing, and fund seeking, the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail has finally been completed. On July 20, 2018, a ribbon cutting ceremony took place in the City of North Muskegon to celebrate the completion of Phase II of the project. The first phase from Whitehall to McMillan Road in Dalton Township, was completed in 2011. The final phase completes the 4.6 mile gap from McMillan Road south to the City of North Muskegon.

Approximately 50 people attended the ceremony including representatives from the Fred Meijer Foundation, as well as many state and local elected officials. Special thanks was given to the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail Commission and other major financial contributors which include the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Fred Meijer Foundation, the West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition, the Community Foundation for Muskegon County, the Consumers Energy Foundation, the City of North Muskegon, and the townships of Dalton, Fruitland, Laketon, and Muskegon. The Muskegon and Kent County road commissions also contributed planning and engineering services to help complete the project. WMSRDC staff assisted with planning and wrote several of the grants that helped fund the project.

The trail is considered a regionally significant facility that connects several trails throughout the region and state. Over 144 miles of trails connect directly and many of those trails have connections that reach further into the state of Michigan. Direct connections include the William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail State Park, the White Lake Pathway, the Muskegon Lakeshore Trail, the Laketon Trail, and the Muskatawa Trail. From there, connections can easily be made to trail networks in Ottawa and Kent counties. Plans also continue for several spurs that will offer non-motorized transportation options into areas along the trail.

The Friends of the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail have taken on the role of promoting and maintaining the trail into the future. Information on that group can be found by following them on Facebook.

Asset Management Continues

WMSRDC staff has been working throughout the summer on the process of collecting data for the annual Asset Management program. Asset management is a planning tool that is based on an inventory of each local road network within the region. It provides data that will allow transportation officials to monitor, plan, and strategically improve the road network.

WMSRDC is required to collect data on the Federal Aid eligible road system, but also rates local roads as a service for local road agencies. So far in 2018 Federal Aid data collection has been completed for the counties of Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana, as well as for the Village of Fruitport in Muskegon County and the Village of Shelby in Oceana County.

Transportation Planning Conference

WMSRDC transportation staff attended the Michigan Transportation Planning Association's (MTPA) annual conference from July 24-27. The conference was held in Detroit where attendees were briefed about new transportation initiatives in Detroit and learned about best practices from numerous transportation agencies and professionals from across the state and beyond.

MTPA is a voluntary association of public organizations and agencies which are responsible for the administration of transportation planning activities throughout the State of Michigan. The Association dedicates itself to professional development and the improvement of urban transportation planning in Michigan. These dual goals are achieved by providing educational opportunities for, and fostering communication among, the practitioners of urban transportation planning in Michigan.

Updated Interactive Maps Available on WMSRDC Website

WMSRDC has been working in coordination with the Muskegon County's GIS Department to develop new interactive online maps of WMSRDC's main projects.

The new online project maps can be viewed on WMSRDC's website and accessed from each project's homepage. While some maps will feature a basic outline of a project area such as Blue Lake Township's master plan, other maps such as the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative or the Muskegon Port Regional Logistics Hub will have detailed information that can be explored through various map layers and informational pop-up windows.

Once all of the maps are live they will automatically update as changes are made to projects and plans. This new platform of online maps will also be capable of story maps, site images, and external website links. The maps can be accessed from project homepages on WMSRDC's website: www.wmsrdc.org.



Homeland Security Physical Inventory Underway

WMSRDC Staff is working with the Region 6 Board to conduct its biannual inventory of equipment purchased through the Homeland Security Planning Grants.

The physical inventory will take place during the last part of August and last through the end of September. The process includes WMSRDC staff traveling to each of the 13 counties within Region 6 to conduct the inventory. The final inventory report is due to the Michigan State Police Emergency Management Homeland Security Division in October 2018.

As the designated fiduciary, WMSRDC is responsible for the management and administration of the Homeland Security Grant Program for the counties of Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa.

Local Planning Update

This summer, WMSRDC has received a number of requests to provide local governments with planning assistance. In particular, these entities are proactively seeking help to update their master plans and recreation plans.

WMSRDC takes pride in supporting local governments in the region and strives to be a resource for local planning. For over 40 years, WMSRDC has helped local governments develop and implement plans for the future. WMSRDC offers technical assistance to local governments in the region, especially those with few resources for planning activities. Services range from guidance and advice, to public facilitation and plan development, to GIS mapping.

WMSRDC is currently assisting Blue Lake Township in Muskegon County and Golden Township in Oceana County in updating their respective master plans. WMSRDC staff is available, upon request, to meet in person or to attend local board and planning commission meetings to discuss how WMSRDC may be of service. Please contact the WMSRDC offices anytime for more information or to arrange a meeting.

Golden Township Master Plan

With assistance from WMSRDC staff, the Golden Township Planning Commission held its first public meeting to solicit public input for the Golden Township Master Plan. The meeting coincided with the Planning Commission's regular meeting on July 31, and was advertised in the Oceana Herald-Journal. The meeting was well attended by the public, and provided a venue for discussion of a wide range of issues facing Golden Township, such as: seasonal tourism, a potential sewer system, road maintenance, and the aging population.

Additional public input will be sought through two means: mail-in survey, and a booth at the annual Apple & BBQ Festival in September. Golden Township residents and visitors are encouraged to complete and submit the mail-in survey, currently available at www.goldentownship.org, before September 30, 2018.

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WMSRDC would like to thank the Grand Valley Metro Council and John Weiss for the leadership provided to the WMPA since its inception. Over the past six years, WMSRDC and Erin Kuhn have been active partners in the WMPA and look forward to leading the effort into the future and build upon its past successes.

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.

- James Rynberg, Chairperson, Mayor, City of Fremont
- Wally Taranko, Vice-Chairperson, Mason County Commissioner
- Bonnie McGlothlin, Secretary, Councilperson, City of Muskegon Heights
- Kay Beecham, Councilperson, City of Norton Shores
- James Brown, Oceana County Commissioner
- Benjamin Cross, Muskegon County Board of Commissioners
- Dean Gustafson, Oceana County Board of Commissioners
- Jennifer Hernandez., Supervisor, Muskegon Township
- Susie Hughes, Muskegon County Commissioner
- Charles Lange, Mason County Commissioner
- Andrea Large, WMSRDC Appointee
- Joe Lenius, Councilperson, City of Ludington
- Howard Lodholtz, Lake County Commissioner
- James Maike, Newaygo County Commissioner
- Chris McGuigan, WMSRDC Appointee
- Dale Nesbary, Muskegon Community College
- Chris Ortwein, Newaygo County Commissioner
- Ron Steiner, WMSRDC Appointee
- Byron Turnquist, Commissioner, City of Muskegon
- Rillastine Wilkins, Muskegon County Commissioner
- Crystal Young, West Shore Community College

Erin Kuhn, Executive Director

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