

**WEST MICHIGAN METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROGRAM  
(WESTPLAN)  
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**MEETING MINUTES**

August 1, 2019

**Members Present:** Matt Farrar, Muskegon County (Chairperson)  
Paul Bouman, MCRC  
Craig Bessinger, City of Ferrysburg  
Derek Gajdos, City of Grand Haven  
Tom Doyle, MDOT Lansing  
Tyler Kent, MDOT Grand Region  
Leo Evans, City of Muskegon  
Doug Kadzban, City of Muskegon Heights  
James Koens, MATS  
Brian Armstrong, City of Whitehall  
Scott Beishuizen, City of Montague  
John Nash, Spring Lake Township

**Members Absent:** Ben VanHoeven, Village of Spring Lake  
Tony Barnes, Muskegon Urban Township Rep  
Andrea Dewey, FHWA (Non-Voting)  
Steven Patrick, Harbor Transit  
Valerie Shultz, MDOT- OPT  
Mark Disselkoen, City of North Muskegon  
Wally Delamater, Village of Spring Lake  
Brett Laughlin, OCRC  
Marcia Jeske, Rural Township Rep  
James Murphy, City of Norton Shores  
Vacant, City of Roosevelt Park

**Others Present:** Laird Schaefer, Citizen Grand Haven Township  
Suzanne Mulder, MDOT - Muskegon TSC  
Ryan Gladding, MDOT- Lansing  
Joel Brown, Consumers Energy  
Rich Houteman, Consumers Energy  
Eleanor Cantor, Citizen  
Darma Cantor, Citizen  
Brian Dian, Citizen  
Faye Redmond, Citizen

**Staff Present:** Brian Mulnix, WMSRDC  
Amy Haack, WMSRDC  
Joel Fitzpatrick, WMSRDC

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Farrar called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. Mr. Farrar asked all attending to introduce themselves.

## **II. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed. After discussion a motion was made and supported to approve minutes of the June 6, 2019 Technical Committee meeting. Motion approved. *M/S Bessinger/Kadzban*

## **III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

The WestPlan Public Participation Plan procedure was followed to achieve public participation for this meeting. There were no comments from the public.

## **IV. TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

- **FY2017-2020 TIP Amendment R** - Mr. Mulnix discussed FY2017-2020 TIP Amendment R, which was emailed with the agenda packet. Mr. Tyler Kent gave a further explanation on the project. After discussion, a motion was made to approve Amendment R. Motion carried. *M/S Bessinger/Nash*
- **2019 CMAQ Funding** – Mr. Leo Evans stated that the City of Muskegon was unable to utilize their 2019 CMAQ funding. Discussion ensued. A motion was made to amend the TIP to abandon the City of Muskegon’s 2019 CMAQ project in the amount of \$80,000 and to approve any transit projects which may be able to use that funding. After discussion, a motion was made to approve. Motion carried. *M/S Bessinger/Nash*
- **HIP Funding** – Brian explained the available HIP funding in the amount of \$180,000 which needs to be obligated before the end of FY 2021. Discussion ensued. It was agreed that a subcommittee would be put together to review options.

## **V. MDOT STATEWIDE LONG RANGE PLAN & TRAVEL DEMAND MODEL UPDATE**

Mr. Ryan Gladding presented the future SE Data. He did note that he added an estimated 1200 jobs in case the casino in Fruitport Township opens. After discussion, a motion was made to approve the SE data. Motion carried. *M/S Bessinger/Nash*

## **VI. MPO ROUNDTABLE**

- John Nash mentioned that the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail was phenomenal.
- Leo Evans noted that Peck and Sanford are being converted to two-way.
- Rich Houteman from Consumers Energy introduced Joel Brown, ROW Specialist from the same agency.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS** – There was no new business to discuss.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS** – There was no old business to discuss.

## IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The WestPlan Public Participation Plan procedure was followed to achieve public participation for this meeting. Two members of the public spoke.

**Eleanor Canter:** My name is Eleanor Canter and I am with Disability Justice League West Michigan.

We submitted a list of improvements we would like to see made to the MATS system and were told by County staff that no changes could be made without more funding. Even simple, cost-free solutions like a public input committee were rejected outright. We were told that we couldn't "rush into" basic, common sense solutions to improve transportation in Muskegon County.

In the MATS Title VI Plan, we found a reference to WMSRDC as the entity responsible for long-term planning. If proposed solutions cannot be implemented in the short-term, then we will have to ask that they be included in long-term planning.

So my question is, "Does the proposal to eliminate two routes that disproportionately serve low-income, disabled, and senior citizens match with WMSRDC's long-term plan for transportation in our community?" If it does not, I ask that you speak up regarding Title VI responsibilities for transit providers.

MATS has no Title VI Policy, no policy for responding to complaints, and no public complaint form. The MATS Title VI Plan is extremely dismissive of its responsibilities under Title VI. *It is not a plan at all.*

Additionally, I have very serious concerns that the route study being conducted by FourSquare has been heavily influenced by MATS management and will not result in an independent study.

As a planning organization, we need you to start paying attention to this stuff. We've been to the County Commission, to MATS, to FourSquare, and now to WMSRDC. That's four entities responsible for transportation planning and everyone is pointing us toward someone else. No one can tell us how we can meaningfully participate in the design and delivery of public transportation in our community.

We have collected the following suggestions from riders so far:

- Investing in public transportation
- Properly cleaned busses
- Operate smaller busses where feasible
- Polite, respectful drivers who are willing to provide information about the system
- Ability to contact MATS after 4:30 p.m. for scheduling and route information
- Bus stops that are cleared of snow in the winter
- A consistent and accessible complaint system and complaint resolution process to address issues as they arise. The current system is, in practice, not satisfactory and complaints often go unresponded to.

**Darma Canter:** I attended the WMSRDC Transportation meeting on Aug 1, 2019. My purpose was to express a concern for the proposed reduction in public transportation services performed by Muskegon Area Transit System, and to register my shock that the MPO, specifically designed to plan, prepare and budget for our transportation future, seemed silent on the issue vital to so many people in the Metropolitan area.

In preparation I reviewed the LRP 2040 and the Title VI policy addressing disparate impact and public participation. While I haven't worked with programs funded by DOT, I know all federal / state funding is linked to principles of equity and inclusion for all the people. What I discovered in the agency's

planning documents is a statement that nothing being planned would impact low-income or minority neighborhoods. With all the public dollars being passed around now, and in the future, how is it possible that none of the future projects would address problems in the large minority community?

The MATS bus routes are primarily serving an area with the highest population density along with a high concentration of seniors living in subsidized housing or assisted living facilities, it has a poverty rate above 30% and serves inner-city schools serving minority youth. The manager called them transportation dependent; meaning young people, seniors and low-income families don't own or drive automobiles. I think that is an attitude that implies they have less value when planning for Muskegon's growth and economic expansion. Appearance isn't necessarily reality, but it deserves a closer inspection for patterns of discrimination.

Likewise, documents from MATS and WMSRDC respond to LEP requirements simply from the number of languages spoken in the region. So, a plan to provide language assistance is basically "we don't have many non-English speakers." The approach only considers spoken language and ignores all the conditions that influence proficient communication. It ignores the members of the community who have conditions affecting hearing, listening, speaking, or communication; whether it is an intellectual, physical or emotion impairment the barrier to understanding isn't related to ethnicity or native language, but they are entitled to information that everyone else is getting. A much more comprehensive population study needs to be completed before the DOT recipients can say they don't need an LEP plan.

At the heart of Title VI is a public participation plan. WMSRDC has a great plan on paper, and they report that they follow the plan, but it hasn't produced public involvement. When an agency creates a plan to comply with any policy or regulations, it is necessary to measure the plan's outcomes for the intended impact. No matter how polished it looks, if it doesn't deliver results, it must be updated and refined to reach your target. Based on a limited search it appears WMSRDC isn't getting either quality or quantity public participation; people representing the municipal units receiving DOT dollars have a point of view, but it can be improved with a more diverse and democratic process for resident involvement.

**X. ADJOURN-** Meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.