



West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

October/November 2019

Asset Management Summit

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On October 15, the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) hosted the fall Asset Management Summit along with representatives from the Michigan Infrastructure Council. The summit was held at Fifth Third Ballpark with more than 70 regional leaders in attendance representing infrastructure assets including transportation, drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, gas, electric, and broadband.

This was the first of 14 summits being held across the state to continue the conversation regarding the principles of Asset Management and the work of the Michigan Infrastructure Council (MIC). WMSRDC is the fiduciary of the WMPA and Erin Kuhn, WMSRDC Executive Director, serves as chair of the WMPA. Erin is also a governor appointee to the MIC.

At the summit, participants learned about the recently developed Transportation Asset Management Plan and Water Asset Management Plan templates. These plan templates were developed by the Transportation Asset Management Council and the Water Asset Management Council. Communities meeting the legislative requirements will be required to complete the plans based on a three year rolling schedule starting in 2020.

During the spring Asset Management Summits, attendees voiced the need for a better way to coordinate projects across the state. As a result, MIC representatives presented a draft state-wide project portal for feedback from the group. The idea of the portal is to have a single point to enter and view future infrastructure projects to encourage project collaboration. This has the potential to save dollars and lessen public inconvenience. The concept of the portal received overwhelming support.



Art Green from MDOT's Service Center in Grand Rapids participates in a mapping activity at the Asset Management Summit

Finally, the group was introduced to an Asset Management Self-Assessment tool.



SPOTLIGHT PROJECT:

Open Data and Analytical Service Coming Soon

WMSRDC is pleased to announce it has contracted Munetrix to provide open data and analytical services to our 127 communities in the region.

Munetrix, a multiple winner of the GovTech 100 honor for innovation among tech companies serving the government sector, is among the nation's largest aggregators of municipal and school district data. The company promotes municipal wellness and sustainability through its cloud-based data management tools and proprietary performance management applications and provides communities and school districts an opportunity to gauge their Munetrix Fiscal Wellness Score.

In addition to its history and reputation in the municipal sector, Munetrix was selected by WMSRDC for its ease of use, with a platform that transforms large amounts of information into easy-to-digest charts and graphs that present a clear understanding of the meaning behind the data.

The partnership with Munetrix also provides WMSRDC members the ability to buy discounted licenses if they want to manage their forward-looking and non-public data, or access other time-saving products and advisory services. Hundreds of communities use Munetrix to make data driven decisions, financial projections, and even benchmark themselves against other communities.

Access to jurisdictional datasets are available on the WMSRDC's website so citizens, policy makers and researchers are now able to navigate key information while supporting an increased commitment to government transparency.



Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve Restoration Project

In April of this year, WMSRDC was awarded a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for the restoration of approximately 7 acres of wetland fish and wildlife habitat.

Those acres were targeted as habitat restoration to help the Muskegon Lake Area of Concern (AOC) reach its habitat restoration goals which are needed to delist Muskegon Lake as an international Area of Concern. Over the past summer, the Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve has been impacted by high water levels as have so many shoreline areas around Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes. This has limited the uses of the property by the owners and has slowed the site characterization needed by the engineers to develop a solid design. Work has progressed despite the water levels.

During this process, it was determined that the project footprint was not as large as it was hoped. The number of acres were slightly smaller than the target acres and a remedy was sought to enlarge the project acres to meet the grant objectives. Fortunately, an adjacent landowner has stepped up to offer additional contiguous wetlands that can be restored and enhanced under this project. WMSRDC can now work with that landowner to develop a design which includes their generous participation and helps Muskegon Lake meet its habitat beneficial use impairment (BUI) removal goals as we move closer to delisting Muskegon Lake as an AOC. This brings the project another step closer to the construction phase which should begin this fall or early spring.

The cooperation of the new landowner will add additional fish and wildlife habitat and provide for a more successful project outcome while also being an example of the importance of concerned shoreline landowners in protecting and enhancing our precious water resources.

Amoco Project Update

The City of Muskegon owns the former Amoco Terminal in the Lakeside neighborhood. Working in partnership, WMSRDC and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)/Great Lakes Commission Regional Partnership for Great Lakes Habitat Restoration, will restore and reconnect the northwestern corner of the property to Muskegon Lake.

A concrete wall that separates the wetland property from the lake will be removed and the bike path will be moved landward to the new shoreline. This opening will reconnect the open water located behind the wall to the lake and allow restoration of the mouth of Ruddiman Creek to a fresh water marsh and delta ecosystem. The project will include removal of industrial fill under portions of the existing bike trail, and tires and debris in the Ruddiman Creek channel and nearshore area of the lake.

The design is being developed by OBG/Ramboll and is based on new monitoring and engineering information and several decades of soil and groundwater data collected by the property owners with oversight by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. The relocated bike path will be constructed at a slightly higher elevation to prevent flooding in years of very high lake levels (as we are experiencing now) and with better line of site to improve safety for all residents enjoying the trail and shoreline.



The concrete wall slated for removal.

Economic Development District Evaluation

On September 25th, WMSRDC participated in an Economic Development District (EDD) evaluation. WMSRDC maintains an EDD designation from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). The WMSRDC district includes Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties.

Results of the evaluation will be presented to WMSRDC sometime within the next few months. EDA must evaluate each District Organization at least once every three years, and the evaluation must include the participation of at least one peer reviewer.

Performance evaluations of the District Organizations are not punitive actions, but rather a means of strengthening the program. These evaluations are tools for outreach, program enhancement and communication with the District Organizations. Evaluations also are designed to identify challenges in the EDD program and aid the Chicago Regional Office in better allocating technical assistance and support to its District Organizations.

CEDS Strategy Committee Fall Meeting

The Fall Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee meeting took place on September 27 at Chase Creek Smokehouse near Baldwin in Lake County. The meeting was hosted by Lake County and the Lake County Economic Development Alliance.

Economic development representatives from across the WMSRDC region were in attendance. The group gathered over lunch to discuss the latest economic news and events from across the region. The next CEDS Strategy Committee meeting will take place in March in Newaygo County.

The CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development, and is the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of a region. The CEDS is required to maintain the region's designation as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). This designation enables communities within the WMSRDC region to remain eligible for EDA funding programs.

Economic Development Planning Grant

In September, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) invited WMSRDC to renew its three-year planning grant which is used to support regional economic development efforts and the WMSRDC economic development program. The economic development planning grant provides WMSRDC with resources to maintain a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) and provide technical assistance to local units of government. Maintaining a CEDS is required as an Economic Development District, a designation which enables local units of government and other eligible entities to apply for assistance from EDA.

The EDA works directly with local economic development officials to make grant investments that are well-defined, timely, and linked to a long-term, sustainable economic development strategy. EDA grants are designed to leverage existing regional assets to support the implementation of economic development strategies that advance new ideas and creative approaches to achieve economic prosperity particularly in distressed communities. A pillar of the WMSRDC economic development program is to help link local governments with EDA and other sources of state and federal resources.

Annual Road Ratings Completed

WMSRDC recently completed the process of collecting data for its annual Asset Management program. Asset management is a planning tool for public officials, planners, engineers, and others. Asset Management is based on an inventory of the Federal Aid eligible road network within the region. It provides data that will allow transportation officials to monitor, plan, and strategically improve the road network.

In 2002, the Michigan Transportation Commission formed an Asset Management Council and enacted the Asset Management Program. Its goal is to inventory all 39,000 miles of federally eligible roads in Michigan, and determine future distribution of ACT 51 transportation funds.

Each year, WMSRDC, along with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the various county road commissions, collect data for at least half of all the federal aid roads in the region. The data collected includes three items: road condition rating, surface type, and the number of lanes. The road rating assessment rates the road surface condition for a given segment on a scale of 1-10.

In addition to rating the Federal Aid roads, WMSRDC will also rate a local government's local roads on request when time allows. During 2019, staff rated local roads for the City of Muskegon, the City of Ludington, and the Muskegon County Road Commission. During 2019, WMSRDC staff rated over 1,800 miles of Federal Aid and local roads combined.

New TIP Approved

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have approved the FY2020-2023 TIP for the West Michigan Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (WestPlan). With this approval, federal and state agencies have concurred that the plan is in compliance with requirements outlined in federal transportation legislation. Throughout the process of developing the plan, WMSRDC staff worked closely with the WestPlan Technical and Policy committees, as well as state and federal partners. The WestPlan Technical and Policy committees approved the plan at their meetings in May of 2019.

The TIP is a short range planning document that covers a four-year span of project programming for the WestPlan area. The TIP includes federally funded highway and transit projects that will be completed in Muskegon County and Northern Ottawa County. Federal TIP Funding is determined by the FHWA and the FTA and funding is distributed through MDOT to the MPO. It is expected that the WestPlan MPO will program approximately \$97 million in transportation projects in FY2020-2023.

During the entire TIP development process, the MPO followed guidance from the Public Participation Plan for the MPO which outlines the process to include and engage the public throughout the decision making process. The TIP document can be viewed on the WMSRDC website.

Assistance to Traverse City in Transportation Planning Process

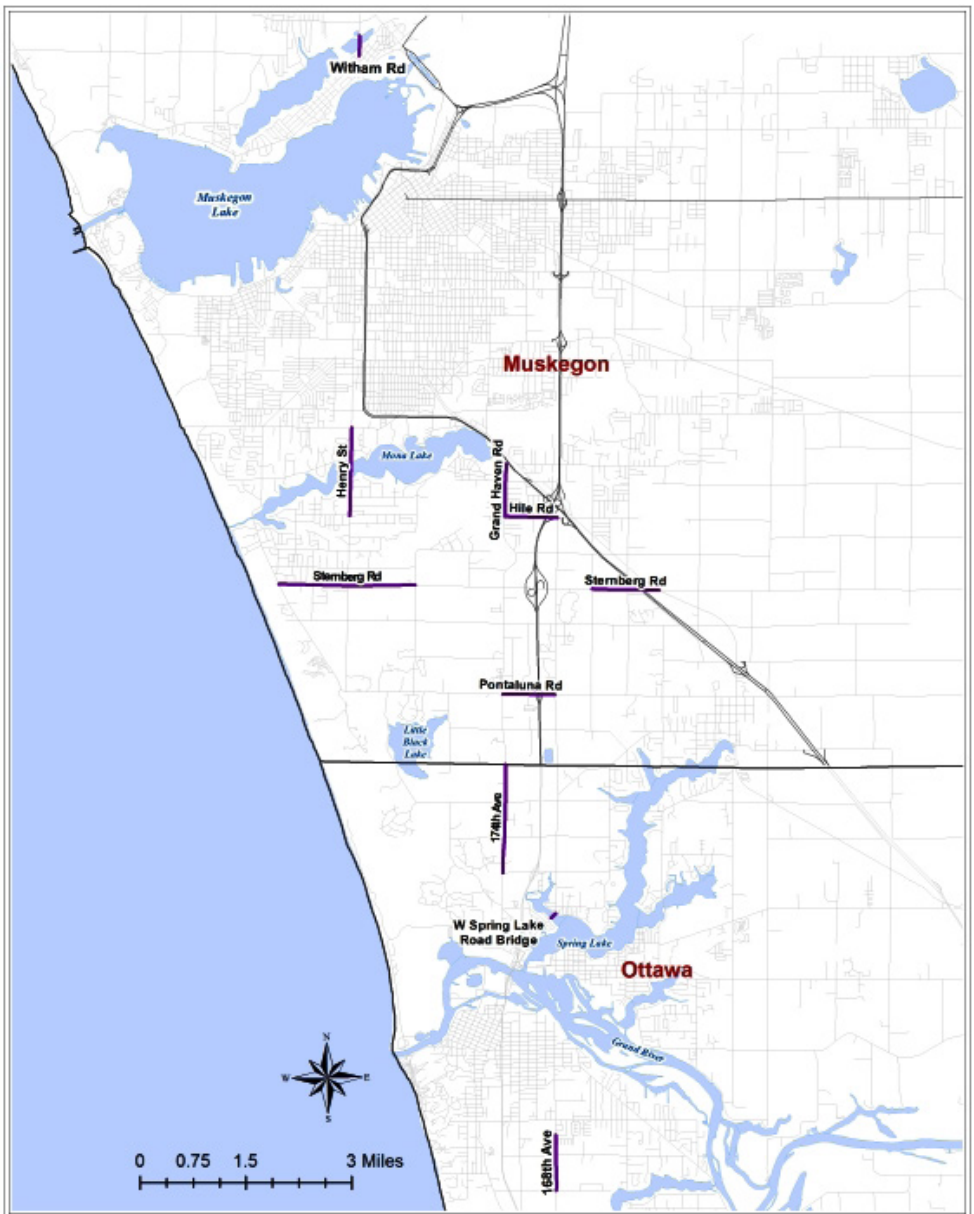
WMSRDC staff traveled to Traverse City to meet with officials from the Networks Northwest organization at their monthly board meeting. WMSRDC was asked to attend and give a presentation about the West Michigan Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (WestPlan), which is the official name of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Muskegon and Northern Ottawa counties. It is anticipated that with the next U.S. Decennial Census, the Traverse City area will be established as a small MPO based on increased population numbers. The presentation included details about the MPO and the process to program federal jobs as well as other duties that are taken on by the agency.

2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Under Development

The West Michigan Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (WestPlan) is pleased to announce that it has begun developing the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Muskegon/Northern Ottawa County area. The 2045 LRTP is a federally mandated document that provides for a multi-jurisdictional, multi-year look at the Muskegon and Northern/Ottawa County area future transportation network. The plan is used as a guide for investment of public funds that provides a list of capital improvement projects to the highway and transit transportation systems within the area. Technical modeling and analysis of the current transportation system provides a guide to plan for future deficiencies of the network. One of the goals of the plan is to address these deficiencies with projects that will allow the network to run more efficiently. The plan also includes local, state, and federal transportation goals and objectives to guide transportation plans and projects. The plan must be financially constrained, and must adhere to other federal requirements such as performance based planning, air quality conformity, environmental mitigation, environmental justice, and public involvement.

WestPlan will keep the public informed during the development of the LRTP, which is expected to be completed by April of 2020, and offer numerous opportunities for area residents to get involved in the planning process or provide input. WestPlan will send out email updates to the Interested Citizen/Agency Group and host public meetings to get community and stakeholder feedback. To join the mailing list or submit a comment, please send an email to ahaack@wmsrdc.org or call (231) 722-7878 x 19. The public is encouraged to submit comments in person, online, over the phone, or by mail, at any time during the development of the LRTP.

The map to the right shows the location of capital improvement projects contained in the LRTP.



WMSRDC Assisting in Recreation Plan Updates for Several Communities

WMSRDC is concurrently helping three communities update their recreation plans. Doing so will ensure their eligibility to apply for recreation grants through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources during the five year period from 2020 through 2024. After that period, the plans will once again need to be updated to maintain eligibility. See below for more information pertaining to the status of each project. Questions regarding these projects may be directed to Stephen Carlson by email at scarlson@wmsrdc.org or by calling 231-722-7878 ext 11.

New Era Recreation Plan

The New Era Village Council, with assistance from WMSRDC, has made updates to the community's recreation plan. The draft plan will be made available to the public for review this November and December. A public meeting will follow the review period to receive comments on the proposed draft. After the public meeting, and once comments from the public are reconciled, the Village Council will be able to adopt the updated recreation plan.

New Era owns and maintains two prominent parks in the community: the New Era Ball Field, which was spruced up with a 2015 DNR Trust Fund Grant; and Depot Park, which provides public space in the downtown district and serves as a trailhead for the Hart-Montague Trail State Park.

Fruitport Village Recreation Plan

The Fruitport Village Council, with assistance from WMSRDC, has also made updates to the community's recreation plan. The draft plan will be made available for public review this November and December at the Village of Fruitport's website at <http://villageoffruitport.com/>. A public meeting will follow the review period to receive comments on the proposed draft. After the public meeting, and once comments from the public are reconciled, the Village Council will be able to adopt the updated recreation plan.

The Village of Fruitport owns and operates three small community parks and the prominent Pomona Park. Pomona Park is an 8.5-acre waterfront park that offers a variety of uses, access to boating on Spring Lake, and temporary space for carnivals and special events.

Big Prairie Township Recreation Plan

Big Prairie Township held a public meeting on October 10 to engage the public regarding recreation opportunities provided by the township. In addition, a recreation survey was developed and made available to the public at <https://www.newaygoparks.com/post/make-your-voice-heard>. The online survey will be available through November. Input gathered through these efforts will be used to review and update the existing Big Prairie Township Recreation Plan. The updated draft will be made available for public review and comment this coming December and January.

Big Prairie Township is home to the Hardy Dam Pond on the Muskegon River. The location boasts a wealth of recreation opportunities; including a state park, two county parks, a township-owned day park, and two campgrounds that are owned and operated by the Big Prairie Township Parks Commission. In addition, officials recently broke ground on the 47-mile mountain biking and pedestrian adventure loop trail. The trail is expected to be completed in the year 2020.



Asset Management continued from page 1

The tool is another outcome of the spring summit. It is intended to be used by asset owners to help establish a baseline level and to identify opportunities to advance asset management within communities and organizations. The MIC is asking asset owners to voluntarily complete the self-assessment to use internally and to share with the regions and state. This will allow the MIC to identify where the state stands as a whole in asset management, and help direct where additional resources are needed.

To assist in the collection of the self-assessments, staff from the WMSRDC, Grand Valley Metro Council, and the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission attended a two-day asset management training event on October 9 and 10 in Lansing.

More information regarding the work of the Michigan Infrastructure Council, the Project Portal, and the Asset Management Self-Assessments will be reported on in future issues of this newsletter.

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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