

Rural Task Force #3 Meeting

March 2, 2016

Road Commission of Kalamazoo County - Kalamazoo, MI

Members in Attendance:

Christopher Bolt	Calhoun County Road Department
Trent Arver	Branch County Road Commission
Ryan Minkus	Road Commission of Kalamazoo County
Jake Welch	Barry County Road Commission
Chris Minger	St. Joseph County Road Commission
Darrell Harden	Michigan Department of Transportation

Others in Attendance:

Jeff Sorensen	Cooper Township
Don Ulsh	Schoolcraft Township
Brandon Mersman	City of Bronson
Mark Worden	Road Commission of Kalamazoo County
Garrett Myland	St. Joseph County Road Commission
Brad Lamberg	Barry County Road Commission
Angela Kline	Calhoun County Road Department
Steve Stepek	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Fred Nagler	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study

Call to Order

Chair Bolt called the meeting to order at 1:37 p.m. at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County, followed by roll call and introductions of Task Force member representatives. Harden explained that he has accepted a new position with MDOT in Lansing where he is replacing Jim Koenig and will be working on RTF planning for the entire state. There is currently no replacement in his former position at the Southwest Region.

Approval of Previous Minutes

No comments or changes were presented to minutes from the January 12, 2016 meeting.

MOTION by Arver, SUPPORT by Welch, ***“to approve the January 6, 2015 Rural Task Force #3 Minutes as presented.”*** Motion passed.

Discussion of Potential Increases in Funding Levels

Harden stated that the Michigan Department of Transportation is currently awaiting details on funding levels resulting from the federal Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act in order to determine how any increases in funding will be distributed. There is no change since the February 2, 2016 MDOT letter that was shared with Region member representatives via email on February 3.

Review of 2016 and 2017 Projects

Welch opened discussion by stating that upon reflection and having discussed the matter with representatives of some other Region #3 counties at the County Engineers' Workshop, Barry County is not satisfied with the solution to addressing cuts in target funding levels that was passed at the January 12, 2016 RTF #3 meeting. He stated that he believes it puts the onus for making up shortfalls disproportionately on those counties with projects programmed in years 2016 and 2017. He said that the reason some agencies had higher programmed amounts was that they had foregone funding in previous years that was used to program larger projects in earlier years by those counties that now have little to no funding programmed for 2016 and 2017. He stated that he would prefer to base the size of funding cuts on target amounts instead of programmed amounts.

Minkus pointed out that Kalamazoo County already had no project programmed for 2017 and therefore had no program to cut that year.

Welch responded that Kalamazoo County had already received the increased funding in earlier years and suggested that the make-up in funding could be done in 2018.

Minkus questioned how far back in the funding history for Region #3 would one would have to consider in order to truly get all agencies back to "even."

Arver said that there was no balance carried forward from previous years. He would prefer to continue the "rolling" spreadsheet that had been used prior to 2013.

Harden summarized how changes made since 2013 mean that federal aid – rural (STL) funding not obligated by RTF members by August will be used on MDOT trunklines to ensure that the money is spent that fiscal year. MDOT would then reimburse the money to state-wide RTF program in the next fiscal year, up to 5% of the total RTF amount. Harden stated that this meant the previous practice of "banking" federal funding from one fiscal year to another in order to program larger projects is no longer possible.

Steppek stated that the changes made after 2013 were done to meet federal requirements, as the previous practice were not acceptable and threatened federal funding.

Referring to the spreadsheet of funding shortfall makeup options used in the January 12, 2016 meeting, MOTION by Welch, SUPPORT by Arver, ***"to use Option 1 for 2016 and Option 5 for 2017 with the understanding that counties with no projects programmed for 2017 will make up the difference between Option 1 and Option 5 in 2018."***

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During discussion Minkus stated that Kalamazoo County is in opposition to the proposal as they are the only county with no projects programmed for 2017 and are therefore already contributing \$500,000 toward balancing the Region.

Myland questioned whether the programming approved at the end of 2013 made all counties whole. Discussion ensued and it was generally agreed that the 2014 – 2017 program essentially balanced the previous give and take to the best of the Task Force's ability.

Bolt questioned whether votes had to be unanimous in order to pass.

Nagler and Harden pointed out that the Rural Task Force Oversight Board prefers decisions be made by consensus but that where that is not possible, votes can be used with majority prevailing.

A vote was held: **For:** Bolt, Minger, Arver, Welch. **Against:** Minkus

Motion Passed

After the vote Harden noted that per Task Force guidelines EDD funding is not required to be balanced with the four-year Transportation Improvement Program cycle, unlike STL. The only requirement is that EDD must be obligated within 3 years of its programming being officially approved.

Arver suggested that there is supposed to be a report of what has been obligated so that member agencies can be informed.

Harden stated that there is an obligation balance sheet that shows programmed and bid amounts. He will work to make sure that it is distributed so that counties can tell as quickly as possible whether there are balances due to favorable bid results and they can try to get another project obligated using left over funding. This is why he regularly encourages agencies to include illustrative projects in their TIP's.

Harden said the he is required to have projects programmed and submitted for a state-wide "snapshot" by March 15.

MOTION by Minkus, **SUPPORT** by Welch , ***"to allow member counties to make adjustments to their 2016 and 2017 programs in excess of administrative amounts by March 15 with the understanding that KATS will post the changes to the Southcentral Michigan Planning Agency's Transportation web page for public notification."*** Motion passed unanimously.

Updates of 2018 - 2020 Projects

There were no updates to 2018 to 2020 projects

Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

Other Business

Welch asked what the maximum allowable amount is for Force Account work using STL funding. Arver replied it is \$400,000 or 5 projects, the total of which cannot exceed \$400,000. Several members said that the current limit is too restrictive and would like to see it changed

Harden asked that Welch send him an email with his concerns so that he can pass it on for consideration.

A meeting time of 1:30 p.m. on June 15 was set for the full Task Force to meet again at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County if there are issues that require it.

Adjourn

MOTION by Welch, SUPPORT by Minkus, **"to adjourn the meeting."** Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 2:59 p.m.

Minutes approved: April 26, 2016

Questions or comments on these minutes can be directed to:

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