



## WASHTENAW AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (WATS)

---

705 N. Zeeb Road  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
phone: 734.994.3127  
website: miwats.org  
email: wats@miwats.org

### NOTICE OF MEETING

#### TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

DATE: March 4, 2015

TIME: 9:30 am

PLACE: Patrick Barrie Conference Room, 705 N. Zeeb Road, Scio Township

Members Present: Ypsilanti Township – Joe Lawson, Vice-Chair  
Washtenaw County Economic Development– Nathan Voght  
TheRide – Julia Roberts (for Chris White)  
City of Ann Arbor Engineering – Nick Hutchinson  
Environmental Representative - Heather Seyfarth  
Village of Dexter – Patrick Droze (for Rhett Gronevelt)  
MDOT Planning - Ola Williams  
University of Michigan – Steve Dolen  
Dexter Township - Zach Michels  
SEMCOG -- Calvin Johnson  
City of Saline – Gary Roubal  
Ann Arbor DDA – Amber Miller  
Washtenaw County Road Commission – Sheryl Siddall  
People with Disabilities - Kathy Homan  
Non-Motorized Representative – John Waterman  
  
Senior Representative – Michealene Pawlak

---

#### POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

City of Ann Arbor • Ann Arbor Transportation Authority • Ann Arbor Township • City of Chelsea • City of Dexter • Dexter Township •  
Eastern Michigan University • Michigan Department of Transportation • City of Milan • Northfield Township •  
Pittsfield Township • City of Saline • Scio Township • Southwest Washtenaw Council of Governments • Superior Township •  
University of Michigan • Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners • Washtenaw County Road Commission • City of Ypsilanti • Ypsilanti Township •  
• Ex Officio: Federal Highway Administration • Southeast Michigan Council of Governments •

An Intermunicipality Committee organized under Act 200 of Public Acts of Michigan (1957)  
representing Washtenaw County

Members Absent: Eastern Michigan University – Dieter Otto  
City of Ypsilanti – Stan Kirton  
City of Milan – Robert Grostick  
City of Ann Arbor Planning - Eli Cooper  
Freight Representative - Jessica Burnside  
City of Chelsea - Christine Linfield, Chair

Others Present: WATS – Ryan Buck, Mark Ferrall, Suzann Flowers, Nick Sapkiewicz  
MDOT University Region – Chris Gulock and Kari Martin  
MDOT - Mark Sweeney, Stephanie Palmer, Tom Hanf, Jack Rick  
MDOT TSC– Lynne Kirby  
Washtenaw County Bicycling and Walking Coalition-Larry Deck  
SEMCOG-Brian Mohr  
HDR Inc - Joshua Salazar  
University of Michigan students - Braden Mitchell, Jenya Abramovich

1. Call to Order/Introductions

Vice-Chair Lawson called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Dolen made a motion to approve the March 2015 agenda, Mr. Williams supported and the motion passed.

3. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Michels noted that he did not attend the previous meeting. Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the February 4, 2015 minutes with the correction noted by Mr. Michels, Ms. Kirby supported and the motion passed.

4. Public Participation

Larry Deck from the Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition addressed the Committee and provided a 1-page handout detailing the group's concerns with the project. *The handout is included following the meeting minutes below.*

Mr. Waterman asked a question regarding the increase in the congestion which could result in a bottleneck elsewhere along the corridor.

Mr. Pickard noted that the comment period is open until March 17, 2015 and that people who want to submit comments can do so until then.

Mr. Buck noted that there had been an additional comment received from the Michigan Environmental Council and provided copies to all attendees. He read the correspondence to the Committee. *The handout is included following the meeting minutes below.*

5. Communications and Announcements

Mr. Buck reported on the following items:

- Obligation authority remains at ¾ until new legislation or continuing resolution
- WATS Policy Committee approved a new agency logo
- WATS will continue to receive comments on projects being added to the 2040 LRP per the agency's public participation plan 45 day review period

6. Old Business

There was no Old Business to discuss.

7. New Business

A. MDOT US-23 Active Traffic Management - Presentation

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is planning a traffic operations and safety project on US-23 between M-14 and Silver Lake Road in Washtenaw and Livingston Counties. The project places general purpose peak-use-only/incident management lanes (referred to as ATM lane) on the inner shoulder of US-23 with overhead signage at half to one-mile increments, indicating the availability of lanes. The system is called Active Traffic Management (ATM) and included many additional features such as crash investigation sights, cameras, sound walls and bridge improvements.

MDOT released an Environmental Assessment of the project and presented their findings to WATS' Technical Committee.

A copy of the presentation is available at the WATS office. After the MDOT presentation the Technical Committee discussed the project with MDOT staff (listed in other present).

Mr. Waterman asked if non-motorized improvements would be provided at all of the bridges and how people without access to single-occupancy vehicles were considered in the project, since the HOV lane with the potential to provide consistency and predictability for transit service was dismissed. Ms. Martin explained that an ATM lane was shown to operate slightly better than an HOV lane and that many bridges would have non-motorized upgrades. Mr. Waterman also asked whether an increase in speeding was anticipated with the extra capacity. Ms. Palmer offered that the ATM lane would not be wide enough for speeding to be easy.

Mr. Ferrall asked if a decision was made regarding roundabouts at 8 Mile. Ms. Palmer explained that the roundabouts are shown to work better and MDOT will continue to accept public comment on their installation.

Mr. Voght acknowledged the time constraints noted by MDOT during the presentation and asked what implications that constraint has for funding the project. He also asked MDOT to discuss the performance of a HOV lane rather than a general purpose lane. Mr. Sweeney explained that the project contains many coordinated improvements along the corridor, particularly to bridges with weight restrictions. MDOT has funds available for the improvements in 2016, but may not have those funds available for future years. Mr. Voght also asked why HOV was dismissed. Ms. Palmer explained that MDOT spoke with the Michigan State Police (MSP), and enforcement of a general purpose lane rather than an HOV lane is more manageable. Ms. Palmer added that increased policing activity during peak times is necessary with HOV and can have the effect of causing congestion. Mr. Voght asked MDOT to clarify whether or not MSP ruled out an HOV lane. Mr. Sweeney stated that MDOT is trying to put forward the best solution for the corridor to facilitate predictability and consistency of travel and that taking no action to reduce congestion on US-23 is an option. Mr. Sweeney added that MDOT will continue discussing options for providing transit service in the corridor with AAATA.

Mr. Dolen asked if the decision regarding general purpose vs. HOV lanes was based solely on enforcement. Ms. Palmer stated that modeling shows the travel time benefits of general purpose lanes was marginally better. Mr. Dolen went on to say that WATS and local governments have promoted innovative transportation solutions and suggested that MDOT

reflect that innovation by including HOV in this project. Mr. Sweeney explained that a general purpose ATM project is innovative, and the project being put forward is the least restrictive option.

Ms. Roberts thanked MDOT for including TheRide in project planning., She clarified that TheRide's focus on implementing their Five Year Service Improvement Program limits their ability to implement north/south commuter service, rather than previous MDOT statements about corridor congestion. Ms. Roberts asked MDOT staff if beginning operations as an HOV lane would be easier than trying to change to HOV later. She also asked how HOV is enforced in other states. Ms. Martin explained that MDOT's research showed that other states experience consistent challenges enforcing HOV. Ms. Roberts suggested that MDOT move forward with the project keeping HOV on the table as an option to implement.

Mr. Hutchinson asked what downstream impacts MDOT anticipated in Ann Arbor and at other entrances to the city. Ms. Palmer explained that MDOT extended the study area south to the Barton/Main St. exit and modeling shows that ATM improves stop-and-go conditions but that the currently congested conditions on westbound ramp to Ann Arbor remain as traffic is no longer filtered along US-23 and arriving at the current bottleneck faster. Ms. Palmer added that southbound US-23 traffic is able to get through the congested area faster with the proposed improvements. Mr. Hutchinson asked how traffic at the east tri-level bridge would be affected by the improvements. Ms. Palmer stated the east tri-level US-23/M-14 interchange was not included in the study.

Ms. Miller asked what assumptions were made of potential HOV users in project modeling and how land use changes were handled in the model. Ms. Martin explained that MDOT assumed 100% of potential HOV users would use the lane. Mr. Buck explained that modeling includes forecasted land use changes, but not those induced by the project. Mr. Voght noted effects such as commuters from north of the projects moving away from staggered shifts and into peak periods as a result of the project.

Ms. Roberts noted the difficulty of shifting to an HOV lane after the general purpose ATM lane is in place and questioned the long term effects of not having HOV in place. Ms. Palmer explained there is no sufficient background data on HOV lanes to answer the question. Mr. Buck added that a more modern way of evaluating the effectiveness of a route is person throughput rather than vehicle throughput. Ms. Seyfarth noted the potential of the WALLY commuter rail service. Ms. Roberts stated WALLY is still in the feasibility stage and therefore could not be included in the US-23 ATM EA.

Ms. Flowers asked how MDOT considered the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan for Washtenaw County. Ms. Martin stated that WATS modeling work helped inform the overall project. Ms. Sapkiewicz asked how maintaining traffic during construction would be addressed. Mr. Sweeney noted that maintaining traffic would be a significant challenge addressed during project design, and presented via public meetings. Mr. Michels explained that Michigan does not allow camera enforcement whereas other states currently using HOV lanes do.

Mr. Buck noted that HOV and general purpose lanes provide comparable benefits, and asked if MDOT considered implementing HOV without targeted enforcement. Mr. Sweeney explained that MDOT has put forward an EA for the proposed general purpose lanes, at this point should represent the project as stated in the EA. Mr. Buck explained that based on the 2009 feasibility study the east tri-level interchange is currently at level-of-service F during peak times and the proposed ATM lane will add an estimated 300-400 vehicles to that interchange during the peak

hour. Not including these in the EA fails to address local concerns about the project expressed during early coordination phases of the project. Mr. Buck added that with the complete project, general purpose lanes would extend to I-96, and the EA doesn't address the full scope of MDOT's desired improvement. Mr. Waterman added that WATS wouldn't be able to vote on any future phases of the project that occur in Livingston County. Ms. Martin reminded the Committee when such a project, currently not in MDOT's five-year-plan, were to be introduced, SEMCOG members would have a vote on the project's addition to the RTP.

#### B. 2nd Call FY 2015 TIP Amendments

Mr. Sapkiewicz explained that WATS received 41 projects for amendment to the TIP, including 31 additions, nine deletions and one cost change. The projects add \$87,129,000 and delete \$10,305,000 with the federal portion at 67% or \$61,257,000, the state portion at 16% or \$14,393,000 and the local portion 17% or \$15,185,000. Mr. Sapkiewicz noted significant changes in the amendment include MDOT's addition of US-23 Active Traffic Management and the addition of TheRide's projects in preparation for increased urban core service.

Mr. Voght asked MDOT to clarify their timing needs for TIP approval, including SEMCOG approval in April 2015, to be able to move the project forward. Ms. Martin stated the funds come together in 2016 and without approval in the amendment the resources may be reallocated. Ms. Miller asked what the typical matter of course is for such large projects on such a tight timeline. Mr. Buck responded that he was not aware of a precedent. Ms. Martin stated that FHWA would not sign a Finding of No Significant Impacts statement (FONSI) without the project being in the TIP. Mr. Dolen suggested making a motion on the amendments including the Committee's reservations on the US-23 ATM project. Ms. Seyfarth explained that per the project's timeline for public comment responses, etc., the Committee would have no additional information to react to in making a recommendation to the Policy Committee.

Ms. Martin asked if the amendment could be considered in April and suggested that members may benefit from additional time. Mr. Buck clarified that based on SEMCOG's TIP amendment approval schedule, WATS Committees could take action on the amendments in April. Mr. Johnson affirmed the SEMCOG approval dates would allow April action by WATS.

Ms. Roberts made a motion to recommend the Policy Committee approve the TIP amendments with the exception of MDOT projects, which the committee recommends be voted on in April. Mr. Waterman supported and the motion passed.

#### C. 2nd Call FY 2015 TIP Modification

Mr. Sapkiewicz explained that administrative modifications are small changes to the TIP that staff make which do not require committee approval and can include changes such as minor cost or limits update, or change in year. Mr. Sapkiewicz noted that modifications include increases to TheRide's operating funds as a result of TheRide's 2014 millage passage and in preparation for increased urban core service.

#### D. National Functional Classification (NFC) of Roads Review

Mr. Sapkiewicz explained that a statewide NFC review follows the decennial census urban boundary adjustment. The NFC review gives local road agencies the opportunity to refine the classification of their road network and adjust the roads that are eligible to receive federal funds based on their functionality.

Mr. Sapkiewicz introduced Mr. Mohr from SEMCOG and explained that Mr. Mohr was managing the NFC review at the regional level and would provide an overview of the review

process and requirements. Mr. Mohr noted that additional requirements including ample justification noted and 48 hour traffic counts be taken. Mr. Mohr also clarified that changes in the NFC do not affect the amount of funds agencies receive, but only the routes road funds can be spent on.

Mr. Sapkiewicz detailed the list of additions and deletions to the Washtenaw NFC network (provided in packet), including 7.7 miles of roadway added and 11.9 miles removed. Removals include deleting 8.9 miles of future, unbuilt routes.

Mr. Hutchison made a motion to recommend the Policy Committee approve the NFC changes. Ms. Miller supported and the motion passed.

8. Agency/Interests Reports

Vice-Chair Lawson asked, due to the duration of the meeting, that agencies hold their reports until the April 2015 meeting.

City of Ann Arbor - Mr. Hutchison distributed a list 2015 Ann Arbor projects.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Waterman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Voght supported and the meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.