

**Oakland County – Downtown Pontiac Transportation Assessment
Project Advisory Team Meeting #3
Oakland County
Executive Office Building
4th Floor Conference Room**

**March 1, 2012
9:00AM – 11:00AM
Meeting Minutes**

- 1. Introduction of Attendees:** Nina Misuraca (Oakland County Planning) started the meeting with introductions. Attached is the list of attendees from the meeting. She mentioned that the name of the study has been changed to “Downtown Pontiac Transportation Assessment”. She stated that livability was confusing to many people and the word transportation was added to the name of the project to help people understand that it is more of transportation study. She stated that the website (www.pontiaclivability.org) is active and there is a facebook page as well. Barb Arens (Parsons Brinckerhoff) indicated that this is the 3rd PAT meeting and the first public meeting is set for Saturday, March 17, 2012. The next CAG meeting is next week. Bret Resegan (Oakland County Planning) stated that one of the purposes of this meeting is to vet all the information presented here before it goes to the CAG and to the public meeting. All comments are welcome on the presentation and materials submitted.
- 2. Public Involvement Activities:** Elnora Austell (E Austell Associates) said the team has been busy with Public Involvement. There was a presentation at the Pontiac Symposium meeting on February 28. They received a list of 100 people from the meeting and are continuing to expand the list of contact. There is a facebook page and have been utilizing the Oakland County Twitter feed. On Monday, announcements for the public meeting will go out and 5,000 flyers are printed and will be distributed. Letters went out to 160 churches in the area and a commercial will be taped to play on Pontiac Public Television. There has been outreach to the business community including a presentation to the DBA. There has also been some outreach to the homeless population as well to try to get them involved. A schedule was handed out at the meeting detailing the public involvement activities. There is also a newsletter available as well.
- 3. CAG #2 Recap:** Barb indicated that there were three alternatives presented to the CAG at the last meeting. There were three additional hybrid alternatives that were the result of the meeting. Barb went through the descriptions of each of the alternatives that were presented in the presentation. Bret asked if the alternatives had to stay within three-lane section between Cesar Chavez and Cass Avenue or if there was additional right-of-way that could be considered. Barb stated that alternatives will be presented that would stay within the curb lines and also those that would go outside existing curb lines but within and outside of right-of-way as well. He also asked if Water Street or Wayne Street were considered to go through to Woodward Avenue. Barb stated that the team is looking at large alternatives with Woodward Avenue but will eventually look at the internal downtown Pontiac street system as well. There was a question on whether additional access could be given along Woodward Avenue. Jeff Pitt from MDOT stated that they would need to get approval from FHWA on any changes in access points on Woodward Avenue due to the roadway classification. This would include reconnecting Saginaw Street in the south as well.
- 4. CAG #3 Meeting Discussion:** A question was asked on how to proceed on analyzing these alternatives. Barb stated that first they would need to determine future roadway volumes and then use the model to determine where vehicles would go with the roadway changes. The team

will look at keeping the alternatives within existing pavements and then also outside existing pavement and the cost of that.

There was discussion on where the original three alternatives were derived. It was stated that these came out of previous plans. Sue Datta indicated that any additional alternatives should be included and anything should be on the table. It should also be kept in mind that when documenting this project, that parts of it could be used as part of the NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act) process if this ever moves forward to an Environmental Assessment. She also suggested that the County look to other grants to continue funding for the project so that it doesn't stop after this project.

There was a question on whether there has been any consideration of how westbound M-59 connects and interacts with downtown Pontiac. Barb indicated that the team is aware of the interactions between M-59 and Woodward Avenue and downtown Pontiac and could be a challenge in the study.

Sue asked if there will be any short-term improvements as part of the study. Barb stated that there will be phased recommendations from short-term to long-term.

Barb stated that the May 17th PAT meeting will have the results from all the alternatives.

Bret asked what the current levels of service are within the study area. Barb indicated that level of service is an intersection grading system for the amount of congestion. It ranges from a LOS A which is good to a LOS F which is considered severely congested. She stated that most intersections are operating at a LOS C or better, which is very good, with only a few at a LOS D, which is still acceptable. Any intersection with a LOS E or LOS F is considered not to be acceptable.

Barb next reviewed the estimated employment change from the year 2005 to 2035. There was some decreases within downtown Pontiac and increases outside of downtown Pontiac. This information will be utilized to determine future traffic growth in the study area. This information is from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) and utilizes this information to determine future traffic growth. There was a question on whether or not the model takes into account any impact that changes in the roadway would have on the downtown. Barb indicated that it does not and typically looks at previous trends and does not take into account speculation. She indicated that any known developments that have happened in the last year or expected to happen in the next few years can be taken into account. She stated that it is a balancing act and in order to meet with any kind of future NEPA process, that huge speculation can not be put into the model.

There was a question on whether there has been any pedestrian and bicycle analysis or if that was being ignored. Barb indicated that it is part of the whole analysis and it is not being ignored. Right now, we are focusing on the Woodward alternatives, but the Team will definitely recommend future non-motorized elements as part of the plan. She also stated that we will need to consider SMART and the upcoming BRT plan as well.

A question was asked on whether there are any radical ideas that should be considered. Barb stated that the team is going to look at different treatments, such as roundabouts and various intersection and roadway treatments. If the team has any ideas, please feel free to submit them.

A question was asked if SMART routes or pedestrian access will be shown at the meeting. Barb indicated that there will be information on the routes and stops and show different pedestrian treatment options.

Fred Phillips (Clinton River Trail) stated that there is a campaign going on right with the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance now to coordinate bicycle trails across Michigan with Amtrak stations. Within Pontiac, this is a good point since the Clinton River Trail and the Amtrak station are so close. Amtrak is working on how to take bikes onto the trains.

Mayor Jukowski (City of Pontiac) indicated that the Clinton River Trail currently ends at Bagley Street and then picks back up on Opdyke Road. There are various ways to get from one point to the other point. The City is looking to acquire some land, some of it is already city owned, other parts have been sold.

Bret indicated that part of this plan is to look at how to incorporate the Clinton River Trail into downtown Pontiac.

A question was asked if there is a possibility to get funding to put a non-motorized bridge over Woodward Avenue, much like the one over Telegraph Road. Bret indicated that they are trying to draw those using the trail into downtown, either with dedicated lanes or pathways and signage. It was acknowledged that there is a lack of signage within downtown on the trail.

Brian Pawlik (SEMCOG) indicated that SEMCOG will be conducting a non-motorized plan for the region. The purpose of the plan is not only for recreational bicyclists, but to try to get people to change modes from their vehicles to walking or bicycling. This project should consider bicycle boulevards, which are pathways on roadways that do not go through, but bicycles go through.

There was a suggestion that a median be put in place on Woodward Avenue to safely allow pedestrians to cross mid-way and stop, since the distance is so long to cross.

Barb then reviewed the estimate population changes from 2005 to 2035 and indicated that there wasn't much within downtown Pontiac to start with and any changes shows large percentage change. Around downtown, there are some positives and negatives.

She then showed the project traffic change from 2010 to 2035, which utilizes the population and employment changes that was previously shown. It shows that there would be some increases along Woodward Avenue and M-59, but no additional trips going into or out of downtown. Overall, there is an expected four-percent growth for the whole study area.

A question was asked if travel time was being looked at. Barb indicated that travel time is one of the measures that will be reviewed.

Kevin Thompson (Pontiac COFC) is putting together a tour of the Pontiac Transportation Center. The group will start in Pontiac, go through Birmingham, and then stop for lunch in Royal Oak. There will be a presentation on the service, they have around 60 seats, but can get more if there is more interest.

5. **Public Meeting – March 17, 2012:** Barb went over the information on the Public Meeting and the proposed layout of the room. Sue asked if the Complete Streets area will be interactive. She suggested having individual maps for people to capture where people are walking or want to walk.

Bret indicated that there is a charette scheduled in the Spring to capture non-motorized information as well.

Brian asked if the information will be available on the website if people aren't able to attend. Barb said that all the information will be on the website from the public meeting.

The project website is expected to be launched at the beginning of February; it is currently being reviewed by Oakland County Planning. The website will have presentations, reports, as well as an interactive map feature. A link will be sent out to the group once the website is live.

6. **Near Term Projects:** Tad Krear (Land Design Studio) gave a presentation on Tactical Urbanism. This gives ideas on near-term projects that can be done and based primarily on volunteerism. They reviewed the Downtown Master Plan and there was a section on the blight within downtown. Part of Tactical Urbanism is to change things quickly, often overnight or over a weekend. Funding is typically available and often times they need professional assistance. Some ideas are to change large parking lots to temporary greening or meadows. There is already interest in doing urban farming in downtown. One idea is to paint bike lanes. Tad indicated that the Team will do more image overlays of some of the suggestions to put into the report, so it allows the DBA to go after additional funding and get support.

He also said that fencing may be needed for security in some areas but standards could be developed to prohibit chain link fencing. He said that downtown Pontiac is currently lacking in green areas, so pocket parks or getting easements to vacant land to do something is a possibility.

One other option is to paint murals that are significant to Pontiac or the history on the sides of large buildings. Adopt-a-block is also another program that could be implemented.

Glen Konopaskie (Pontiac Downtown Business Association) stated that all the DDA activities have been folded into the DBA. They are currently working with the Detroit Institute of Arts to do some murals within downtown, they are working with some of the businesses within downtown, but need more support. The DBA is currently running the Main Street program. He asked if Tad could make this presentation to the DBA on March 22nd. They currently have paint and volunteers, but don't know where to start. Another event that they do is the Friday night car cruise in the summertime. They have a jazz band and have some art displays. They also try to do weekend events one or two times of month in the summer. There was also mention of the pancake breakfast that takes place.

Kevin stated that they have enough volunteers but need to include other organizations other than businesses, such as churches. They need to get more monetary resources. They could go after grants, but they have difficulty trying to find people to write them. Bret offered to help them with grant writing.

Brian indicated that some of these ideas are very quick, but others require authorization. He said that one other option for fences is to put up ivy or fast growing shrubs to hide the fencing.

He suggested pop-up micro-parks as well. Another option that is being done around the country is called "Open Streets", which involves closing sections of roadways to make awareness of something, such as physical fitness. Another suggestion is to ask skilled trades to assist with a project, such as make benches or bike racks within downtown. There are also seed bombs, that are packets of seeds that can be thrown into empty lots that will grow wildflowers or moss milkshakes that will promote the growth of moss in some areas.

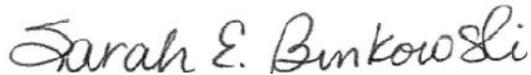
Tad indicated that there is a charette planned in the Spring, and could have some examples at the event or even plan something after the Charette.

Fred indicated that there is information on Trail Towns, which details what downtowns can do to leverage trails that are nearby, this includes adding bike racks, adding signage, and having businesses offer free shipping for bicycles who can't take good with them. There was also a suggestion that the group visit the American League of Bicyclists website to get more information on making communities more bicycle friendly.

7. **Next Steps and Other Business:** There was no other business. The next CAG meeting is set for the Crofoot, on March 8th, with continental breakfast at 7:30 AM and the meeting will be 8 AM to 10 AM.

**Next PAT Meeting is Thursday, May 17th, 2012
9:00 AM – 11:00 AM**

The meeting concluded at 11:00 AM.



Sarah E. Binkowski, PE, PTOE