

County Administrator's Digest

September 28, 2012 Alan G. Vanderberg, County Administrator

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WEST MICHIGAN TRANSIT LINKAGES STUDY (Pam VandenHeuvel)

The West Michigan Transit Linkages Study has been completed. The Final Report for the Study, including recommendations, was presented to the Transit Coordination Committee and the Ottawa County Planning Commission on Monday, September 24, 2012. The Planning Commission accepted and approved the Final Report and Recommendations.

This Study was conducted to assess existing transportation services, determine the need for expanded regional commuter transportation services between major urban centers in Ottawa, Muskegon, and Kent Counties, and determine the feasibility of developing, implementing, and operating a regional transportation network.

Based on the findings of the Study, the consultant recommended that the regional transit system not be implemented at this time. There were several factors that contributed to the final recommendation including, but not limited to, the following: Travel time on average would double for most commuters; Operational expenses would require local funds to sustain the system and there was little interest/ability for local units to contribute at this time; The most popular route (Holland to Grand Rapids) would generate an average of 9 riders per hour and all proposed routes combined would average approximately 5 riders per hour.

The consultant also recommended that the four existing transit providers in the region continue to discuss service connections where feasible, and consider the possibility of operating a pilot program to test regional service on a limited basis. Finally, it was recommended that another study be completed in 10 years to ascertain whether enough factors had changed to increase the need and feasibility of a regional commuter service.

WATER QUALITY FORUM (Misty Cunningham)

I am pleased to announce that Ottawa County will hold its Seventh Annual Water Quality Forum on Thursday, November 1, 2012 at 9 a.m. The Forums are designed to provide participants with an opportunity to learn more about the initiatives and research that is being conducted to positively impact one of our State's



most valuable resources – Water.

In addition to receiving beneficial updates on water quality projects and ongoing research, the Forums provide participants with an opportunity to network with project managers and academic leaders who are addressing water quality issues and working to improve our environment. A distinguished group of speakers is again being featured at this year's event. The agenda will be available soon at miOttawa.org!

If you would like to attend, you may register online at miOttawa.org or by completing the enclosed ([click here](#)) registration form and returning it with your registration fee by Friday, October 24, 2012. Registration is limited to the first 150 individuals.

If you have any questions about the Forum or the registration process, please contact me at 616-738-4898 or at mcunningham@miottawa.org.

FALL QUADRANT MEETINGS

We are hosting two meetings in County facilities once this year instead of the normal practice of holding four meetings twice per year in the four quadrants of the County. The first quadrant meeting is October 2nd at 8:30 a.m. at the Fillmore Complex in the Main Conference room and the second meeting will be held on October 4th at 8:30 a.m. in the Jury Assembly/Community Room located on the ground level of the Ottawa County Courthouse in Grand Haven.

OUT AND ABOUT

Michigan House Judiciary Committee. Circuit Court Administrator Kevin Bowling and I testified before the House Judiciary Committee last Wednesday against HB 5804, the indigent services legislation. Though the bill has some lofty intent and there are certainly problems that need fixing in other areas of the State, we remain opposed to bills that reduce County authority and cost the County more in unfunded mandates. Later that day I was involved in a meeting with State officials on personal property tax reform and that was a productive discussion as well.

Commissioners Holtrop, Rycenga, Swartout, Ruiters, and Disselkoe; Bob Spaman; Keith Van Beek and I attended the MAC Conference at Shanty Creek earlier this week. I participated on a panel entitled "County Finance for the Future: Exploring the new reality of government finance in the new economy and current political climate." Misty Cunningham helped me create a power point presentation along the theme of a David Letterman Top Ten - recommendations for future finance strategies. The panel presentations were well received and I received many comments throughout the rest of the day. Keith was part of a panel entitled "County Veterans Services: Fighting on the front lines" later in the afternoon. This was also a good session and Keith did an excellent job of providing a different viewpoint than the other panelists on how Ottawa County provides services to veterans. The power point presentations that Keith and I did are available on miOttawa.org.

We divided forces and I made a day trip out of the MAC conference so I could present the budget to the Grand Haven Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors Tuesday morning. We had a great discussion and this group was appreciative of the Board's work to reduce pension and health care benefit expense.

Last Friday I presented to the Spring Lake Rotary Club at their regularly scheduled luncheon meeting. It was a good session with questions and discussion after my presentation, which is also available to view on miOttawa.org. The last time I had attended a Spring Lake Rotary Club meeting was when I worked as an Administrative Intern for Eric DeLong during the summer of 1984 when I was in between finishing my bachelor degree at the University of Michigan and starting my Master of Public Administration degree program at Michigan State University, 28 years ago!

LEGISLATIVE FORUM

We hosted the Legislative Forum this morning at the Fillmore Complex. We had excellent attendance with 56 present including County Commissioners and staff, newly nominated County Commissioner candidates, local unit officials, court officials, and others. State Representatives Agema, Haveman, and Price attended as well as Congressman Huizenga. Joining them at the table was Jim Miller, the County's lobby representative with GCSI. Jim Byrum also contributed a five-minute presentation on agricultural initiatives.

Agenda items included: Indigent Defense, Revenue Sharing/EVIP, Personal Property Tax & Revenue Replacement, State Remonumentation Program Reimbursements, Community Mental Health Restructuring, US 231 Bypass, Lame Duck Session, Electronic Case Management, the recently introduced Freedom of Information Act amendments, and a federal update from Congressman Huizenga. There were also several questions from the audience.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING – SKUBICK COLUMN

Tim Skubick: Roads need fixing, but don't expect quick action by Michigan legislature

Published: Friday, September 14, 2012, 6:24 AM Updated: Friday, September 14, 2012, 8:47 AM



By [Tim Skubick](#) | [Politics Columnist for MLive.com](#)

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According to the road building guys, the gas tax that funds road repairs is collecting \$500 million fewer dollars due to higher gas mileage and therefore less fuel consumption.

All those in favor of repairing our roads and bridges, raise your hand.

Everyone in favor of spending your money to do it, raise your hand.

Yep. There's the problem: No hands on the second question.

Actually this is nothing new. It's been like this in the legislature since 1994 the last time a guy named John Engler was pulled, kicking and screaming, to endorse a gas tax hike that has long outlived its usefulness.

According to the road building guys, who clearly have a dog in this fight, the gas tax is now collecting \$500 million fewer dollars due to higher gas mileage and therefore less fuel consumption.

Way back last October, the new gov on the block waded into this mess calling for \$1.4 billion in new bucks to get moving on this repair work. He's still wading.

Here we are almost one year later and what has the governor accomplished? Not much and as for lawmakers, they've refused to even whisper about new revenue. After all this is an election year for the house and raising taxes, no matter how deep the potholes, is verboten.

Which means once the election is over and the Lame Duck, post-election legislative session begins, surely law-makes will all muster up the courage to do this because they will all be safely re-elected.

Right?

Not even close. Instead the senate GOP leader, courageously, has instructed a new committee to determine if there is a problem and determine "if what we are doing does not work."

Surely Sen. Randy Richardville (R-Monroe) jests.

More study?

If one took all the dust collecting on all the previous studies of this issue, there would be enough to pack into every pot hole in the state.

Yet Senator Roger Kahn (R-Saginaw) ,who is chairing this "new" (old) study, says he's been told to stay away from the revenue question and maybe that might be addressed next year.

This is not to endorse or denounce a gas tax hike but merely to say, at what point will lawmakers get up the nerve to either vote it up or down and be done with it already?

GVMC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOHN WEISS WEEKLY REPORT

[Click here](#) to read the latest weekly update from GVMC Executive Director John Weiss.

Registration Form



Ottawa County Seventh Annual Water Quality Forum

Thursday, November 1, 2012
9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
(Registration at 8:00 a.m.)
Registration Fee: \$10.00
Ottawa County Administrative Complex
Main Conference Room
12220 Fillmore Street, West Olive, Michigan

NOTE: If paying online, you do not need to return a registration form. You will receive a follow-up email confirming your registration.

Registration Information:

Please provide the following information as you would like it to appear on a name badge.

Name:

Title:

Organization:

Email Address:

Registration is limited to the first 150 participants

Lunch Information:

Please check the box to the right if you will NOT be staying for lunch

Please list any special food requirements:

Please mail this form and payment to:

County of Ottawa
Administrator's Office, Attn: Misty Cunningham
12220 Fillmore Street., Suite 310
West Olive, Michigan 49460

OR

Fax this form to 616-738-4888 and mail payment to the address above.

Online Payment Instructions:

Go to miottawa.org. Click on "Online Services" from the menu at the top of the page or use the scrolling menu. Select "Payment Center". Use the arrow on "Category/Service" to select "Water Quality Forum Registration". Complete all of the fields on the first page, and click "Continue" to enter your credit card information.

A \$2.00 convenience fee will apply. Please call Misty Cunningham at 616-738-4898 with questions.



Washington DC

This week I had the opportunity to participate in a very intensive trip to Washington DC to meet with members of Congress, the Department of Transportation and representatives of the Canadian Embassy. The Grand Rapids and Detroit Chambers and the Governor's Office organized the meeting. It gave participants the opportunity to spend time with all of the Michigan Congressional Delegation, senior members of the Department of Transportation and to hear first hand from government and business leaders their perspective on the NITC. (New International Trade Crossing)

Participants in the session included representatives of GVMC, the Detroit and Grand Rapids Chambers of Commerce, Warner Norcross and Judd, The Economic Alliance for Michigan, the International Union of Operating Engineers, URS Corporation, Amway, Herman Miller, City of Grand Rapids, General Motors, Chrysler, Ford and the Michigan Farm Bureau.

We had the opportunity to meet personally with Members of Congress and senior staff including,

Representatives Gary Peters, Dave Camp, Bill Huizenga, Hansen Clarke, Sander Levin, Candice Miller, Tim Walberg, Dale Kildee, Fred Upton, Justin Amash and John Dingell. House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers met with us as well. Both Senators Stabenow and Levin met with the group to discuss the issues. In addition, we spent significant time at the United States Department of Transportation and were briefed on the importance of the transportation funding and the NITC from Deputy Secretary of Transportation John Porcari and his senior team.

Over 8,000 trucks per day cross the Windsor-Detroit boarder. General Motors reported that they ship over \$6.5 billion in vehicles and auto parts every year across the boarder and Chrysler makes over 600 truck crossing per day. The Michigan Farm Bureau reported that 30% of all Michigan farm products are sold to Canada.

The U.S. and Canada are the two largest trading partners in the World. The actual value of trade crossing the Ambassador Bridge exceeds \$120 billion and at this single point it exceeds the value of all trade between the U.S. and Great Britain. One-quarter of all U.S.-Canada trade crosses at this single point. This is the single most important international crossing anywhere in the world and 1 in 7 jobs in our area and 1 in 8 in southeastern Michigan are involved in trade crossing the boarder in Detroit. The United States exported more goods last year to Canada than it

did to China, Japan, England, Brazil and Russia combined.

Representatives of the Canadian Embassy told us the NITC is the top priority infrastructure project for their entire nation. Currently, trucks moving from the U.S. to Canada must travel on Windsor city streets and through 18 traffic signals before they can reach the expressway. From Canada's national security perspective, if a secondary inspection of a vehicle is required, they have to travel several miles through the City of Windsor to reach the secondary inspection point.

Through a negotiation with the Department of Transportation, the State of Michigan and the Canadian government, the investment in the project by Canada of \$550 million will be credited toward the requirement for 20% local match on other projects in our state. That means that in these difficult times Michigan will be able to use the Canadian investment as matching funds to leverage federal funding for other Michigan projects. This will directly help our area by providing additional funding for our critical projects.

In addition, in the agreement with Canada, an international authority will be created and through a competitive process a private sector firm will be selected to design, build, operate and maintain the NITC. Michigan has no risk, and will bear no liability for any costs. Our group was very well received by our congressional delegation, USDOT and others we had the opportunity to meet with. I was pleased that GVMC was represented at these very important meetings.

Reserve Your

Quarterly Luncheon Tickets

for

Oct. 8th with

Attorney General Bill Schuette

Price: \$25.00 per person

RSVP to Gayle at mccrathg@gvmc.org