

Focus Macomb: A Partnership for Economic Development

Transportation Committee Meeting

July 25, 2007

Anderson, Eckstein and Westrick -- Conference Room

Summary

Members Present:

Lillian Adams – Sterling/Utica/Shelby Twp. Chamber of Commerce
Doug Brown – ASTI Environmental
Richard Doherty – Beztak Companies
Fran Gillett – Road Commission of Macomb County
Ed Hoover – Rizzo Services
Pat Lehman – Consultant
Keith McCormack – Hubbell, Roth & Clark, Inc.
Ralph Maccarone – Shelby Township
Keith Rengert – Macomb County Board of Commissioners
Roy Rose – Anderson, Ekstein & Westrick
Melissa Trustman – Detroit Regional Chamber
Anthony Viviano – Sterling Heights Dodge
Greg Windingland – Lombardo Companies

Members Missed:

Ben Aloia – Aloia & Associates
Dan Dirks – SMART
Chuck Gemayel – Soil and Materials Engineers
Richard Ives – John Carlo
Dave Lakin – Spaulding DeDecker Associates
Marilyn Lane – Roncelli
Angelo S. Lanni – Florence Cement Company
Anthony Lombardo – Lombardo Companies
Jay Shah – Somat Engineering

Staff: John Crumm, Program Manager; Maria Zardis, Grants Coordinator; and Kate Doyle

Opening: Transportation Co-chair Anthony Viviano opened the meeting at 3:15 p.m. with a review and thank you to committee member Fran Gillett and her staff at the Road Commission of Macomb County for hosting the July 10th meeting.

Subcommittee Reports:

Legislation:

Keith McCormack, Chair.

Members: Benjamin Aloia, Doug Brown, Keith McCormack and Roy Rose

Keith McCormack gave a synopsis of the BBR proposals, expressing the committee's opinion of a committed and all-inclusive community/county/regional approach to address the needs of communities and the region as a whole.

Monies and Alternative Funding for Road Construction:

Chair: Ed Hoover

Members: Thomas Christ, Richard Doherty, Ed Hoover, Marilyn Lane, Ralph Maccarone, Angelo Lanni, Keith Rengert and Jay Shah.

The subcommittee has met twice and adopted following recommendations:

- ◆ Presentation by the county finance department giving a historic overview of county finances and projections. Review previous county funded road projects. Also review options by the Regional Better Businesses for Roads.
- ◆ Review possible consolidation of departments and resources to add efficiency and reduce administrative costs. (Planning, Information Technology, Finance, Purchasing, Risk Management, Corporation Counsel; etc.)
- ◆ Review funding restrictions (if any) on using county funds to supplement road projects.
- ◆ Gather information and recommendations from MDOT, cities, villages, townships, and MCRC for recommendations addressing road planning, road funding, maintenance and improvements. How do they feel that federal, state, and county government can assist?

Public Transit:

Chair: Melissa Trustmann

Members: John Crumm, Dan Dirks, Richard Doherty, Chuck A. Gemayal, Dave Lakin and Melissa Trustmann.

The subcommittee has expanded its focus beyond senior transportation to explore the opportunities for mass transit in the County and region, meeting with Hayes Jones, General Manager and Fred Barbret, Community Ombudsperson from SMART to better understand community based and regional mass transit.

Highlights:

- SMART experienced its highest record of users in 2006 but faces future service cuts due to the reduction in funding.
- Macomb County communities overwhelmingly supported SMART in last year's mileage vote and are serviced by full, connector, community transit services. The average cost to a Macomb County homeowner is \$32.00 per year. Regionally, there are approximately 50 communities that have chosen to "opt-out" of SMART.

SMART rider facts:

- 50% of SMART's larger buses are on "fixed routes" -- 90% of SMART riders are fixed route users -- 40% of the riders on these routes are solely dependent on SMART for their transportation needs.
- 50% of the smaller buses service seniors and special needs riders with door-to-door service.

SMART Opportunities:

- Benchmark efficient community service programs.
- Outreach through the Community Partnership program.
- Provide public information about routes, how-to's, and commuter connections.
- Possible shelter sponsorships by private organizations/groups.

Romeo Airport Study:

Chair: Anthony Viviano

Members: Lillian Adams, Fran Gillett, Richard Ives, Pat Lehman, Anthony Viviano and Greg Windingland.

Background Information:

- The State of Michigan purchased the airport in 1998. To date, they have made almost \$8 million in capital improvements.
- The airport was managed and maintained by MDOT until 2001 when the State entered into a 25-year contract with a private management company to perform day-to-day operations.

Advantages to Macomb County assuming control of the airport ~

- It is thought by experts, local air accessibility would entice new businesses to locate in the County.
- The airport contributes more than \$668,000 annually to the county's economy.
- The sale of fuel and use permits could possibly offset the cost of the running the airport.
- Oakland-Pontiac Airport closes its tower at midnight prohibiting private/corporate planes to land. A full functioning airport, operating 24/7, could positively influence the final decision of corporations considering Macomb County as the best location for a new or expanding facility.
- The three Oakland County airports are nearing capacity and would welcome a municipal facility in Macomb.

Disadvantages of Macomb County assuming control of the airport ~

- The airport requires additional land acquisition and major construction to accommodate large private and commercial jets.
- The facility is not currently equipped with an electronic (instrument) guidance system. Without this type of guidance system the planes cannot land during times of severe lack of visibility.

Other Considerations ~

- The contract between the State and the airport's management company would make it difficult for Macomb County to assume control of the facility at this time.
- Due to current economic conditions, it would place an unrealistic financial burden on the County to undertake the project without grants and/or other support from State or Federal agencies.
- St. Clair County International Airport (near Marysville/Port Huron) is an established facility with close proximity to Macomb:
 - Main runways (2): 5,104 x 100 ft. and 4,000 x 100 ft.
 - Offices of the U.S. Customs and Dept. of Agriculture on sight.
 - Electronic guidance system; air traffic support from Selfridge, Lansing & Cleveland; dusk to dawn lights; fuel, mechanic and hanger services.
 - Easy access to I-94 (approximately 25 minutes from downtown Mt. Clemens).

Further Points of Study for the Subcommittee ~

- What is an airport going to do for Macomb County???
- What are the steps the County will have to take to assume control of the airport?

The Airport Subcommittee's Recommendation for the Presentation to the Board of Commissioners ~

"The Committee supports the County's initiative to investigate the potential ownership of the Romeo Airport."

Meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.