Monitoring the Federal Economic Stimulus Program: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

As the regional convener for transportation and environmental planning in northwest Ohio, and also in our role as an administrator of federal funding for transportation projects, TMACOG is closely monitoring the federal government’s stimulus plans. To keep our membership informed, TMACOG has established a page on www.tmacog.org with the latest information affecting northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan. This page will be continually updated as guidelines are issued and local agencies receive specific information. Click on the What’s Hot button to access the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act page. Also see www.recovery.ohio.gov. This is Ohio’s interactive headquarters and the site where governments and agencies must submit their transportation and environmental projects.

Details of the economic stimulus plan will be sorted out in the federal and state administrations before local governments can turn that money into real projects. However, we have information about what to expect in our region. As of mid-February, ODOT advised TMACOG that our Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will receive $12,460,115. (Note that the total value of projects in our MPO that jurisdictions have submitted as “shovel ready” is approximately $90 million — or more than seven times the stimulus package fund.) TMACOG’s TIP Committee will act as the clearinghouse for compiling, ranking, and recommending transportation projects. Aside from projects that will come through the stimulus plan, ODOT had already scheduled one of its largest highway construction plans ever for northwest Ohio.

The Ohio EPA is also asking jurisdictions to apply to the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund for projects ready to go by November, 2009. These projects should also be submitted through www.recovery.ohio.gov. The EPA is targeting wastewater, stormwater, green infrastructure, and stream restoration projects.

TMACOG will be working closely with area agencies and governments as guidelines are finalized and stimulus funds are distributed. Area agencies are encouraged to monitor the websites to remain well-informed.

Following the March 18 meeting of the TMACOG Board of Trustees, regional representatives from the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives will be available for a question and answer session on the topic of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Staffers from the offices of senators Brown and Voinovich of Ohio and Stabenow and Levin of Michigan; and representatives Latta and Kaptur of Ohio and Dingle of Michigan have been invited to attend. The presentation should begin at 2 p.m. Local elected officials and others concerned with this investment program are invited. Call 419.241.9155 ext. 107 to register.

TMACOG
300 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive
P.O. Box 9508
Toledo, Ohio 43697-9508

Our Vision

TMACOG will be the governmental partner of choice to coordinate regional assets, opportunities, and challenges.

The Big Picture is published by TMACOG

Chair
Tina Skeldon Wozniak
Board of Lucas County Commissioners

Vice Chair
Ted Rutherford, Mayor
Village of Green Springs

2nd Vice Chair
Carol Contrada, Vice chair
Sylvania Township trustees

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Anthony L. Reams

TMACOG
300 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive
P.O. Box 9508
Toledo, Ohio 43697-9508
419.241.9155
FAX: 419.241.9116
E-mail: public.info@tmacog.org
www.tmacog.org

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Northwest Ohio CommuterLINK Update

As of February 1, 2009

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NOTE: CommuterLINK serves people who cannot use public transportation due to their work schedule, child care location(s), or need to access areas outside the public transit area.

Northwest Ohio CommuterLINK

Car Buy’s 500th!

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The Car Buy program grew out of CommuterLINK, another program of TMACOG’s Commuter Services Department. CommuterLINK clients are eligible for 90 days of temporary transportation while they work to establish a reliable transportation plan. It became clear to TMACOG staff that often, a family vehicle was a more cost-effective way to help working parents stay working and manage family concerns.

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TMACOG Officers Elected at Annual General Assembly

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The theme for the General Assembly was “Education Means Business: Building Today’s Local and Global Economy.” Two workshops and a keynote address looked at different aspects of the business/education partnership in our region.

The assembly also tabled the opportunity for members to caucus with fellow members. The cities caucus asked TMACOG for advice on procuring road salt for next year. Salt has been in short supply and the cost has more than doubled since the last purchasing season. At the townships caucus, water supply and treatment continue to be primary concerns, and there was also a discussion of the role and value of Joint Economic Development Districts. Non-profit agencies participating in the non-governmental membership also discussed the need for alternative energy projects that we haven’t yet identified.

Clearing, TMACOG’s successful track record and strong relationship with ODOT will be instrumental as stimulus dollars are distributed to entities with a proven ability to pull the right people to the table to get the job done. Water and sewer projects will also be targets for stimulus money and TMACOG is working with members to identify and rank those projects. There may be more potential for funding alternative energy projects that we haven’t yet identified.

As communities in our region navigate this difficult time and hope to find opportunities in the challenges we face, the vision for TMACOG in 2009 will be to remain committed to our core areas, focusing on what we do best. TMACOG’s role in regional planning has positioned us to take an essential role as an advocate for stimulus dollars for our region.

We will continue to work hard, identifying key projects with the potential to transform our region. From shovel ready projects, to the next Veterans’ Glass City Skyway, TMACOG has been a leader for the past 40 years and will remain the governmental partner of choice for the next 40.

I look forward to working with all of you to strengthen and retain our economy, find ways to be more efficient and effective, and foster cooperation that transforms our region.

To respond to this letter, email perspectives@tmacog.org
News Files...

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The March 30 workshop is a review course for CPESC certification. Continuing professional development documentation will be provided for Ohio PEs. The optional CPESC exam (separate registration and fee) will be given in Toledo April 8. For more information about the workshop contact Kurt Erichsen at 419.241.9155 ext. 126 or kurt@tmacog.org.

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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Plaza
Bike Week
May 11-15, 2009, region-wide activities
2009 Ohio Conference on Freight
September 22-23, 2009, Hilton Hotel Toledo and Dana Conference Center, Toledo

Molitoris Appointed Director of ODOT
On January 30, Ohio Governor Ted Strickland appointed Jolene Molitoris to be the director of ODOT upon the retirement of James Beasley. Molitoris had been ODOT’s assistant director and is the first woman to lead the agency. Her background includes extensive experience with rail transportation. She has been the chair of the Ohio Rail Development Commission and, under President Bill Clinton, was the head of the Federal Railroad Administration. In 2008, Molitoris coordinated the Ohio 21st Century Transportation Priorities Task Force, a program that consulted with transportation professionals and citizens around the state. Molitoris appointed TMA COG President Tony Reams as chair of the task force sub-committee on multimodal transportation. She spoke recently to TMA COG about ODOT’s multimodal initiatives.

“During this biennium, we will aggressively pursue the development of our state’s multimodal system. That begins with developing a first-ever multimodal Statewide Transportation Futures Plan, which examines all modes of transportation and identifies optimum ways for each to function in our state. By supporting multimodal planning, partnership research, and project development, ODOT and its partners will create affordable choices for travelers and shippers. A fully developed, safe and reliable multimodal transportation network will serve as a catalyst for economic growth and prosperity.”

Final Report – Transportation Priorities Task Force
The challenge to the Ohio 21st Century Transportation Priorities Task Force from Governor Strickland was to: “envision and champion the optimum transportation system for Ohio’s future and recommend the resources and financial tools needed to build and sustain it.” For more than seven months, members of the task force met with the public, convened expert sub-committees, and deliberated. The group recently completed and published their final report. The report emphasizes that the need for action is urgent if Ohio is to capitalize on its existing assets. The changes are described in four “game-changing” strategies and 13 recommendations. To see the report, see the link on the home page of www.dot.state.oh.us.

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Negotiations have been completed and have resulted in a revised permit fee schedule which is still an increase but will be significantly less than the original. The Port of Toledo and regional steel commerce agree that the revised fees will allow them to remain competitive with other business on the Great Lakes. The discussions to resolve these issues involved private industry, ODOT, transportation trade groups, elected officials, and staff from the Ohio Governor’s office.
Regional Ad Hoc Committee Addresses Economic Impact of CSOs

The waters of the Great Lakes have become much cleaner over the last several decades, mostly because point-source pollution – from industry and wastewater treatment plants – has been greatly reduced. However, in low wet northwest Ohio, southeast Michigan, and northern Indiana, stormwater is still a major problem that affects wastewater treatment. When stormwater infiltrates the sanitary system, whether through leaks, combined stormwater/sanitary sewers, or illegal connections, a heavy rain can cause discharge of untreated sewage to rivers and lakes. The Clean Water Act requires that communities that do not meet performance standards must repair systems and may also have to pay fines.

Repairing Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) infrastructure is expensive. In our region, CSOs account for 70% of sewerage capital improvement needs. The current system of unfunded mandates is not effective in helping communities repair sanitary systems and protect clean water. However, sewer infrastructure repair is part of the economic stimulus plan passed in Washington D.C. TMACOG has partnered with the Northwest Ohio Mayors and Managers’ Association (NOMMA) and the Maumee River Basin Partnership of Local Governments (MRBPLG) to make recommendations for federal legislation on financing of sanitary sewerage infrastructure.

- The Ad Hoc Committee recommends that at least a base percent of federal funding be in the form of grants rather than loans and be directed to sewerage infrastructure projects.
- Mandates for sewerage improvements should take a cost/benefit analysis of environmental benefit for expense.
- Communities that do not receive federal grant funds should instead be granted a moratorium on CSO mandates until a new schedule can be developed that accounts for community economic impact.

Representatives from the groups in the Ad Hoc Committee will be taking their recommendations to state and federal legislators as federal infrastructure programs and economic stimulus plans are being debated. For more information, contact Kurt Erichsen at 419.241.9155 ext. 126 or kurt@tmacog.org.

Lake Erie - Subject of Study and Monitoring in 2009

Great Lakes researchers in the U.S. and Canada coordinate their efforts and agree on one of the Great Lakes each year. In 2009, Lake Erie is designated for intensive monitoring and study. Scientists have collectively decided that the area of research more specifically should be near-shore areas and include study of algal blooms and their causes. The shallow Maumee Bay will be among the most intensively studied areas.

When Lake Erie was heavily polluted by industry, algal blooms were a common blight. With the reduction in point-source pollution since the 1980s, problem algae were greatly reduced. However, in low wet northwest Ohio, southeast Michigan, and northern Indiana, stormwater is still a major problem that affects wastewater treatment. When stormwater infiltrates the sanitary system, whether through leaks, combined stormwater/sanitary sewers, or illegal connections, a heavy rain can cause discharge of untreated sewage to rivers and lakes. The Clean Water Act requires that communities that do not meet performance standards must repair systems and may also have to pay fines.

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The Lake Erie Protection Fund is funding research projects for 2009. Researchers have submitted applications for the study of algal blooms and dissolved reactive phosphorus, and for analysis of soil testing laboratories. A final decision on funding will be announced at the March meeting of the Lake Erie Commission. The selected projects should get underway by May 1, 2009.

A Regional Leader in Environmental Planning for 25 Years

Before 1984 when Kurt Erichsen began his career at TMACOG, funding from the Ohio EPA supported a large staff in the Environmental Planning department. However starting in the mid ’80s, Kurt says federal funding “sank, plateaued, sank some more, and finally plunged.” Now in addition to his planning work, a large part of Kurt’s job is chasing funding for his three-person department. But although finding and applying for grants can be time consuming and challenging, Kurt says that losing state and federal funding had benefits for TMACOG members. “To focus on the EPA agenda was to risk isolating us somewhat from our members,” he says. “Grantsmanship as we practice it now means that we connect national policy to the local needs of members.” Kurt emphasizes that the success of every grant project is due to leadership at the local level: mayors, township trustees, or health department personnel who take charge. He also cites the value of TMACOG’s non-governmental members. “Public advocacy groups and engineering firms who join TMACOG are important partners who have added great expertise and energy.”

Those local leaders appreciate working with Kurt. Kenneth Fellows, former mayor of Haskins and chair of the Environmental Council at TMACOG cites Kurt’s expertise. “A quarter century of informed service to the environment in northwest Ohio has made Kurt Erichsen the ‘go to’ person for the final word in what’s current and necessary in all aspects of environmental rectitude for the region and all its constituents.”

Kurt is committed to fostering local decision-making. One example is the 208 Plan, the Areawide Water Quality Management Plan. The 208 Plan is a flexible, constantly updated document that describes sewerage plans for a wide area of northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan. If we did not have a 208 Plan, Kurt says local jurisdictions would be taking direction from Columbus, instead, we have cooperative agreements among neighbors.

It isn’t all sewers for Kurt. Although when he graduated from OSU (in Corvallis OR, not Columbus OH), he thought he would be designing wastewater treatment plants for a living, his work at TMACOG has been much more diverse. “We have a broad ecological approach,” he says. “The environmental health of the region is ultimately the health of Lake Erie and that means that we are concerned with stormwater, industrial pollution, and the effects of agricultural practices. Living as we do in the Great Black Swamp, people in this region also have big concerns with erosion and flooding from areas rivers.” Kurt has been involved in clean up of the Ottawa River for his entire tenure at TMACOG. After working to assess the impacts of landfills on the river, and pushing for extensive sediment testing, Kurt takes satisfaction in knowing that contaminated sediments are now scheduled for removal by a consortium of regional partners.

TMACOG President Tony Reams agrees that members have been well-served by Kurt’s tenure: “Kurt has the technical expertise and historical perspective for the environmental issues in our region. His leadership and diplomacy are invaluable as he and his staff work with all our partners to facilitate solutions to our environmental challenges.”
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In 2007, the Ohio EPA formed a Phosphorus Task Force to gather information from a variety of sources including soil scientists, people working in agriculture, and the Ohio Division of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife. Julie Letterhos, of the Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water Lake Erie Unit, said that members of the task force learned that the relationship of phosphorus and other nutrients to algal production is complex. The task force is looking at many possible sources of phosphorus including failed home sewage treatment systems (septic tanks), animal feeding operations (AFOS), and agricultural use of fertilizers. They have determined that industry and water treatment plants do not seem to be a primary source of phosphorus. The task force continues to seek the connections and will be working to make recommendations of management actions that can be taken to reduce the inflow of phosphorus.

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The assembly also asked TMACOG to facilitate a seminar on grant writing and alternative energy projects that we haven’t yet identified. Communities that collaborate together will benefit greatly, and there is no better example of the benefits of cooperation than TMACOG.

As communities in our region navigate this difficult time and hope to find opportunities in the challenges we face, the vision for TMACOG in 2009 will be to remain committed to our core areas, focusing on what we do best. TMACOG’s role in regional planning has positioned us to take an essential role as an advocate for stimulus dollars for our region.

Clearly, TMACOG’s successful track record and strong relationship with ODOT will be instrumental as stimulus dollars are distributed to entities with a proven ability to pull the right people to the table to get the job done. Water and sewer projects will also be targets for stimulus money and TMACOG is working with members to identify and rank those projects. There may be more potential for funding alternative energy projects that we haven’t yet identified. Communities that collaborate together will benefit greatly, and there is no better example of the benefits of cooperation than TMACOG.

We will continue to work hard, identifying key projects with the potential to transform our region. From shovel ready projects, to the next Veterans’ Glass City Skyway, TMACOG has been a leader for the past 40 years and will remain the governmental partner of choice for the next 40.

I look forward to working with all of you to strengthen and retain our economy, find ways to be more efficient and effective, and foster cooperation that transforms our region.
Monitoring the Federal Economic Stimulus Program: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

As the regional convener for transportation and environmental planning in northwest Ohio, and also in our role as an administrator of federal funding for transportation projects, TMACOG is closely monitoring the federal government’s stimulus plans. To keep our membership informed, TMACOG has established a page on www.tmacog.org with the latest information affecting northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan. This page will be continually updated as guidelines are issued and local agencies receive specific information. Click on the What’s Hot button to access the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act page. Also see www.recovery.ohio.gov. This is Ohio’s interactive headquarters and the site where governments and agencies must submit their transportation and environmental projects.

Details of the economic stimulus plan will be sorted out in the federal and state administrations before local governments can turn that money into real projects. However, we have information about what to expect in our region. As of mid-February, ODOT advised TMACOG that our Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will receive $12,460,115. (Note that the total value of projects in our MPO that jurisdictions have submitted as “shovel ready” is approximately $90 million – or more than seven times the stimulus package fund.) TMACOG’s TIP Committee will act as the clearinghouse for compiling, ranking, and recommending transportation projects. Aside from projects that will come through the stimulus plan, ODOT had already scheduled one of its largest highway construction plans ever for northwest Ohio.

The Ohio EPA is also asking jurisdictions to apply to the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund for projects ready to go by November, 2009. These projects should also be submitted through www.recovery.ohio.gov. The EPA is targeting wastewater, stormwater, green infrastructure, and stream restoration projects.

TMACOG will be working closely with area agencies and governments as guidelines are finalized and stimulus funds are distributed. Area agencies are encouraged to monitor the websites to remain well-informed.

Board of Trustees to Hear from Federal Delegation

Following the March 18 meeting of the TMACOG Board of Trustees, regional representatives from the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives will be available for a question and answer session on the topic of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Staffers from the offices of senators Brown and Voinovich of Ohio and Stabenow and Levin of Michigan; and representatives Latta and Kapur of Ohio and Dingell of Michigan have been invited to attend. The presentation should begin at 2 p.m. Local elected officials and others concerned with this investment program are invited. Call 419.241.9155 ext. 107 to register.
### March 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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| Monday, March 2 | National Train Day Planning Team  
    Time: 12:00 p.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Library  
    Contact: Diane Reamer-Evans, ext. 117 |
| Wednesday, March 4 | Transportation Council  
    Time: 3:00 p.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Boardroom  
    Contact: Warren Henry, ext. 129 |
| Monday, March 9 | Car Buy Review Committee  
    Time: 10:30 a.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Library  
    Contact: Tiffany Banks, ext. 157 |
| Wednesday, March 11 | Stormwater Action Group  
    Time: 10:00 a.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Boardroom  
    Contact: Kurt Erichsen, ext. 126 |
| Thursday, March 12 | Wabash Cannonball Coordinating Committee  
    Time: 3:00 p.m.  
    Location: Maumee Municipal Building  
    Contact: Diane Reamer-Evans, ext. 117 |
| Friday, March 13 | Leadership Development Committee  
    Time: 9:00 a.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Library  
    Contact: Tony Reams, ext. 179 |
| Wednesday, March 18 | Air Quality Committee  
    Time: 8:00 a.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Boardroom  
    Contact: David Gedeon, ext. 125 |
| Thursday, March 19 | System Performance and Monitoring Committee  
    Time: 2:00 p.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Boardroom  
    Contact: Lisa Householder, ext. 124 |
| Saturday, March 21 | Professional Development Day  
    Time: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon  
    Location: Owens Community College  
    Contact: Cindy Bland, ext. 107 |
| Monday, March 23 | Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Committee  
    Time: 9:00 a.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Boardroom  
    Contact: Tony Reams, ext. 129 |
| Tuesday, March 24 | Freight Committee  
    Time: 11:30 a.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Boardroom  
    Contact: Warren Henry, ext. 129 |
| Thursday, March 26 | Environmental Council  
    Time: 1:30 p.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Boardroom  
    Contact: Kurt Erichsen, ext. 126 |
| Monday, March 30 | Stormwater Erosion and Sediment Control Workshop  
    Time: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
    Location: Home Builders Association of Greater Toledo  
    Contact: Kurt Erichsen, ext. 126 |

### April 2009

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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| Wednesday, April 1 | Transportation Council  
    Time: 3:00 p.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Boardroom  
    Contact: Warren Henry, ext. 129 |
| Thursday, April 2 | FEMA Floodplain Management Committee  
    Time: 10:00 a.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Boardroom  
    Contact: Kurt Erichsen, ext. 126 |
| Wednesday, April 8 | Stormwater Action Group  
    Time: 10:00 a.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Boardroom  
    Contact: Kurt Erichsen, ext. 126 |
| Friday, April 10 | Leadership Development Committee  
    Time: 9:00 a.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Library  
    Contact: Tony Reams, ext. 129 |
| Monday, April 13 | Car Buy Review Committee  
    Time: 10:30 a.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Library  
    Contact: Tiffany Banks, ext. 157 |
| Tuesday, April 14 | Freight Committee  
    Time: 4:00 p.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Library  
    Contact: Greg Gettum, ext. 132 |
| Wednesday, April 15 | Air Quality Committee  
    Time: 8:00 a.m.  
    Location: TMA COG Boardroom  
    Contact: David Gedeon, ext. 125 |
| Thursday, April 16 | Portage River Basin Council  
    Time: 2:00 p.m.  
    Location: TBD  
    Contact: Elaine Moebius, ext. 139 |

TMACOG Phone: 419.241.9155