



2022 TMACOG General Assembly Special Districts & Authorities Caucus Notes Monday, April 25, 2022

Call to Order/Welcome – The Special Districts and Authorities Caucus met on Monday, April 25, 2022, at 8:15 a.m. in Parlor D at the Hilton Garden Inn in Perrysburg, Ohio. Allen Gallant, director of community development for Metroparks Toledo and the moderator of the caucus, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present. He explained the purpose of the caucus for anyone who may be new to TMACOG.

Caucus members in attendance included:

- Kattie Bond-Hancock, Lucas Metropolitan Housing
- Joe Cappel, Vice President of Business Development, Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority
- Jayne Ferreira, Western District Toll Supervisor, Ohio Turnpike
- Meghan Gallagher, E-ZPass Retail Program Manager, Ohio Turnpike
- Allen Gallant, Director of Community Development, Metroparks Toledo
- Rex Huffman, Chief Counsel, Wood County Port Authority
- Cher Johnson, Chair, Wood County Port Authority
- Laura Koprowski, CEO, TARTA
- David Mann, President and CEO, Lucas County Land Bank
- Charles Odimgbe, COO, TARTA
- Tim Porter, Chair, Northwest Ohio Passenger Rail Association, and Chair, TMACOG Passenger Rail Committee
- Chris Smalley, Director, Wood County Park District
- Tom Uhler, Vice Chair, Wood County Port Authority

TMACOG staff members in attendance included:

- Lance Dasher, Transportation Planner
- Alex Aspacher, Public Information Specialist

Election of Representatives to the TMACOG Board of Trustees – The first order of business on the agenda was the election of caucus members to this year's Board of Trustees. A ***motion*** was made by David Mann and ***seconded*** by Cher Johnson to elect the following members to represent the Special Districts and Authorities Caucus on this year's Board of Trustees. The motion passed unanimously.

Trustees

Chris Smalley, Wood County Park District
Cher Johnson, Wood County Port Authority

Alternates

Allen Gallant, Metroparks Toledo
Tom Uhler, Wood County Port Authority

Discussion Topics –The following topics were discussed by the caucus.

- **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Opportunities**
 - Allen Gallant and Lance Dasher reviewed the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The \$1.2 trillion bill includes \$550 billion in new spending over a five-year period. Money was appropriated

beginning in March and is tied to new and existing programs and grants. Some are beginning now and come with quick deadlines.

- Cher Johnson and Rex Huffman discussed Wood County projects and plans in response to growth over the last 15 years, especially involving water and wastewater utilities. Infrastructure needs including improved roadways are expensive and important for economic development.
- Joe Cappel said the airports will see some program and formula funding, and the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority is updating its plans. Some grants require lots of time for planning and implementation. The Port Authority will apply for \$20 million through the port infrastructure development program, and it will seek letters of support for the request, due in mid-May.
- Allen Gallant said grants can be difficult to seek and administer without advance planning and local matching funds in place. Metroparks Toledo will seek some grants for planning that needs to happen before seeking capital improvement grants.
- Laura Koprowski said TARTA is looking at several aspects of the infrastructure bill, including alternative-fuel and low-emission vehicles. Vehicles can be difficult to purchase even when grants for them are secured. Newer-technology vehicles also require charging stations and other upgrades.
- Joe Cappel noted that applications for even basic projects can have many requirements, such as environmental justice and climate change information. He suggested members work together to have some items ready to meet these types of requirements.
- Allen Gallant said TMACOG's new map portal was helpful in seeking a RAISE grant. Lance Dasher provided an overview of the types of data TMACOG can access, analyze, and provide, including maps, environmental justice, and census/demographic information. The Transportation Department will review its plans to see which projects may fit with certain funding programs.
- Tim Porter noted that Ohio must opt-in to a federal program to fund Amtrak improvements and suggested caucus members contact the governor's office to encourage this.
- The caucus discussed the difficulty many grant applicants have in providing local matching funds. Rex Huffman noted that partnerships were important with a recent \$5 million Amazon project, and that partnering can result in better application scores.
- Tim Porter said that loans could be available through a national infrastructure bank if pending legislation is approved.

- **Downtown Riverwalk Update**

- Allen Gallant discussed recent progress on the \$200 million project, noting that the next milestone is 75 percent design and engineering plans. The project includes an aggressive timeline to make use of grant funding awarded in 2020. Glass City Metropark is now in phase 2 of construction, and Metroparks Toledo will next shift into Riverwalk construction, which will create a path through Glass City and International parks.

- Private partnership and financial support are also an important part of the project, which many agreed has the potential to connect Toledo neighborhoods and spur downtown development and tourism.
- Rex Huffman said projects like the Riverwalk are critical for economic development and job creation because they improve quality of life and make the entire region more attractive to potential developers.

- **TARTA Update**

- Laura Koprowski reported that TARTA is working on its TARTA Next initiative, a comprehensive study of all of its routes and services. This study looks at the need for specific route coverage and frequency. People are drawn to consistent transit, which also benefits employers, she said.
- TARTA will look at increased microtransit, which will allow people to request rides on demand that do not need to be scheduled in advance. This works well with rural and suburban locations. An important aspect is how to plan for bottlenecks and special events.
- Information will be released in June, and TARTA's board will begin to study how to implement the study.
- Charles Odimbe said TARTA can work with employers on providing transportation service to specific areas or workplaces. Rex Huffman asked if this could be done outside of TARTA's service area, and Laura Koprowski offered to discuss the issue in further detail.

Next Steps – No other business was discussed.

Adjournment – Allen Gallant adjourned the meeting.