

SEMCOG REGIONAL UPDATE

A BIWEEKLY PUBLICATION OF SEMCOG, THE SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Vol. 13, No. 3

January 28, 2008

Upcoming SEMCOG Universities focus on native landscaping and physically active communities

Get Nutty, Go Native: The benefits of native landscaping — February 7, 2008, 9 a.m.-noon (registration begins at 8:30 a.m.) in SEMCOG's Buhl Building office in downtown Detroit. Plants native to Southeast Michigan are easier to maintain, are more tolerant of local site conditions, and have substantial root systems, which help to solve erosion problems. Landscaping with native plants can reduce energy costs and time, as well as improve water and air quality. Additionally, design techniques will be described in detail so that communities can decide what options will work best in their area.

Let's Get Physical: The benefits of active communities — February 20, 2008, 4 p.m.-6:30 (registration begins at 3:30 p.m.) at the Livonia Civic Center Library, 32777 Five Mile Rd, Livonia. Local elected officials can impact the quality of life for residents by promoting physically active communities. Representatives from Canton Twp., Dundee, and Livonia, who have received awards for excellence in this initiative, will share their best practices.

SEMCOG University workshops are for members and partners. There is no charge to attend, but seating is limited. Please respond as soon as possible. You can also register online at www.semco.org. *Contact: Amanda Polanco, SEMCOG University Registrar.*

Brownfields legislation passed

On December 27, 2007, Governor Granholm signed four brownfield bills into law. These public acts — PA 201, PA 202, PA 203, and PA 204 — amend the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act. These changes will now allow every community in Michigan to use tax incentives to redevelop brownfield sites. Under the old law, only 100 "core communities" could take advantage of this reimbursement. The new legislation also allows reimbursement of costs incurred for initial environmental investigations and cleanups more extensive than required by law.

Last fall, SEMCOG testified before the State Senate Committee on Economic Development and Regulatory Reform in support of all four bills as an important first step toward improving the program. SEMCOG was also active on

the statewide Part 201 Brownfield stakeholders group and made several recommendations for improving the program — a few of which are reflected in the legislation. *Contact: Kevin Johnson, Senior Planner, SEMCOG Community and Economic Development.*

View highlights of Executive Committee on SEMCOG's Web site

Highlights of SEMCOG's January 25 Executive Committee can now be viewed on SEMCOG's Web site. From the home page, link to Podcasts in the upper right bar, then look for the Executive Committee link in the center of the page. Highlights include a presentation from Lester Robinson, CEO, Wayne County Airport Authority, on the transformation of Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport over the past few years, as well as the ongoing construction of the new terminal scheduled to open later this year. *Contact: Sue Stetler, SEMCOG Communications Director.*

SEMCOG announces 2008 member outreach workshop schedule

SEMCOG's 2008 member outreach workshops will be held in each of our seven counties during the month of April. Please save the date below and attend the program in your county. Elections to the Executive Committee will be conducted.

- Oakland County — Tuesday, April 8, 4:30 p.m.-6 p.m.; Embassy Suites Detroit-Southfield, Southfield;
- Monroe County — Thursday, April 10, 4:30-6:00 p.m.; Cabela's, Dundee;
- Wayne County — Thursday, April 17, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; Crowne Plaza, Romulus;
- St. Clair County — Tuesday, April 22, 4:30-6 p.m.; St. Clair Inn, St. Clair;
- Washtenaw County — Wednesday, April 23, 4:30-6 p.m.; Weber's Inn; Ann Arbor
- Macomb County — Thursday, April 24, 4:30 p.m.-6 p.m.; Andiamo, Warren; and
- Livingston County — Tuesday, April 29, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; Genoa Woods Conference Center, Brighton.

You can register online now for these meetings on SEMCOG's calendar. Look for the calendar link on the top navigation bar of SEMCOG's home page at www.semco.org and watch your mail for additional information. *Contact: Amy Malmer, SEMCOG Membership Manager.*

Taubman Fellowship applications available

Local elected officials and appointed staff from SEMCOG's member communities are eligible to apply for a fellowship to the prestigious program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Sponsored by the Taubman Company since 1991, the fellowships cover the costs of tuition, room, and board; travel is not included. Taubman Fellowships offer local government officials opportunities to improve their leadership skills and broaden their awareness of effective approaches to public sector problems during the three-week program in June or July. Completed applications are due to SEMCOG by 3 p.m. on Monday, March 3, 2008. *Contact: Amy Malmer, SEMCOG Membership Manager.*

Grant opportunities for local governments

FY 2009 Safety Program — The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and SEMCOG are requesting projects for the FY 2009 Safety Program (beginning October 1, 2008). Safety funds are intended for highway safety improvements. Federal funding of up to \$400,000 per project is available. A minimum 20 percent local share of project costs is required. Application packets for the 2009 Safety Program were regionally distributed by SEMCOG in late 2007. Cities, villages, and road commissions are eligible to submit applications to SEMCOG by February 1, 2008. In the past, MDOT has awarded at least one safety project to each county and to the City of Detroit. *Contact: Stephen Brudzinski, SEMCOG Transportation Policy Analyst.*

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) — Several grant opportunities for projects that contribute to encouraging and supporting artistic creativity, preserving our diverse cultural heritage, and making the arts more widely available have been announced. The Opportunity Titles are NEA FY2009 Access to Artistic Excellence, Deadline 1 (March 10, 2008), and NEA FY2009 Access to Artistic Excellence, Deadline 2 (August 11, 2008). These grants are between

\$5,000 and \$100,000. The NEA has also announced a grant opportunity for distinct projects that take place over limited periods of time and involve limited geographic areas. The grant is for \$10,000. The Opportunity Title is NEA Challenge America Fast-Track Review Grants, FY2009. The deadline is June 2, 2008. For more information go to www.grants.gov and click on Grant Search under Quick Links; type in 45.024 under Search by CFDA Number. The grants are chronologically arranged by the deadlines noted above. You may also call 800-518-4726.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources — The *MDNR 2008 Grant Programs Booklet* has been released. It can be accessed at www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants or request a copy by calling 517-373-9125.

New SEMCOG member

SEMCOG welcomes Van Buren Township (Wayne County) as its newest member; membership now totals 155. *Contact: Amy Malmer, SEMCOG Membership Manager.*

SEMCOG is a regional planning partnership of governmental units serving 4.9 million people in the seven-county region of Southeast Michigan striving to enhance the region's quality of life. *Regional Update* is a publication of SEMCOG, financed through funds from state and federal grants and dues from member communities.

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January 14, 2008

SEMCOG plays key role in obtaining funding to control spread of invasive species in Lake St. Clair

SEMCOG is pleased to announce that on January 7, 2008, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awarded a grant of more than \$379,000 to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to control the spread of Phragmites in Lake St. Clair. This grant will be used to restore more than 800 acres of wetlands that have been greatly affected by Phragmites (or, the Common Reed), a harmful invasive plant species that has been degrading Lake St. Clair resources for some time.

SEMCOG and MDNR jointly drafted the grant proposal and enlisted the support of the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Parks Authority, Harrison Township, and Ducks Unlimited. This is one of many ongoing efforts SEMCOG is facilitating with the Lake St. Clair watershed communities to clean up and protect the lake. SEMCOG will now work with its local government partners in the watershed to secure the necessary match funding. *Contact: Chuck Hersey, SEMCOG Environmental Programs Manager.*

Executive Committee meets January 25

SEMCOG's Executive Committee will meet at 1 p.m. on Friday, January 25, 2008, in SEMCOG's downtown Detroit office. The committee will consider the following action item:

- Approving SEMCOG staff involvement in the Metropolitan Affairs Coalition's 2008 program agenda.

Lester Robinson, CEO, Wayne County Airport Authority, will discuss the dramatic transformation of Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW) over the past few years, including a new terminal; a sixth runway; a south entrance road; new parking garage; and a luxury class Westin Hotel. Mr. Robinson will discuss the Airport Master Plan and its impacts on the region, as well as the ongoing construction of the new terminal scheduled to open later this year. *Contact: Amy Malmer, SEMCOG Membership Manager.*

SEMCOG invites public comment on amendment to long-range transportation plan

SEMCOG announces the public comment period for projects being considered for amendment to the region's long-range 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Three projects are proposed to be added to the RTP:

- Detroit River Rail Tunnel, construct replacement rail tunnel between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario (Wayne County);
- I-96 Latson, construct new interchange, remove rest area, widen Latson from two to five lanes from I-96 to Grand River (Genoa Twp, Livingston County); and
- Commuter Rail Service, construct and operate commuter rail between Howell and Ann Arbor (Livingston and Washtenaw Counties).

The 2030 RTP serves as a guide for developing a transportation system that is accessible, safe, and reliable. The 2030 RTP enables federal funding to be spent in the Southeast Michigan region to improve roads, bridges, and nonmotorized systems and to maintain transit services. The proposed amendments are needed to reflect changing priorities and take advantage of new project funding.

The amendment process requires all proposed projects to undergo the same evaluation as the original RTP — identification of financial resources, analysis of air quality conformity, an environmental justice analysis, and a public comment process.

Public comment is being sought on the proposed amendment. Comments on projects should be mailed, phoned, or faxed to SEMCOG Information Center. Address e-mail comments to infocenter@semcog.org. Comments can also be made in person at the following meetings:

- Transportation Advisory Council, Wednesday, January 23, 2008, 9:30 a.m., SEMCOG offices;
- Executive Committee, Friday, February 22, 2008, 1 p.m., SEMCOG offices; and
- General Assembly, Thursday, April 3, 2008, 4:30 p.m., Rock Financial Showplace, 46100 Grand River, Novi.

Contact: SEMCOG Information Center.

SEMCOG University: Battling Foreclosures: What can elected officials do?

SEMCOG University presents Battling Foreclosures: What can elected officials do? on Wednesday, January 30, 2008, 12:30 p.m. - 4 p.m. (registration begins at noon), SEMCOG Ambassador Room (third floor of Buhl Building, 535 Griswold, Detroit). *Please note the time change from previous announcements.*

This workshop will feature presentations from Dan Kildee, Treasurer, Genesee County; Greg Sterns, Lighthouse Community Development; and Catherine McClary,

Treasurer, Washtenaw County. SEMCOG University aims to educate local officials on policies and programs being implemented by certain communities and the need to advocate for policies to help reverse the rising trend of foreclosures in Southeast Michigan. *Contact: Amanda Polanco, SEMCOG University Registrar.*

Funding available for safety projects

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Application packets for the 2009 Safety Program were regionally distributed by SEMCOG in late 2007. Cities, villages, and road commissions are eligible to submit applications to SEMCOG by February 1, 2008. In the past, MDOT has awarded at least one safety project to each county and the City of Detroit. *Contact: Stephen Brudzinski, SEMCOG Transportation Policy Analyst.*

Governor approves legislation creating task force to review alternative road funding

On December 31, 2007, Governor Jennifer Granholm approved Senate Bill 59, which creates a statewide committee to review the alternative transportation funding and investment, as well as strategies to replace or supplement the state's gas tax.

SEMCOG is pleased with the passing of this legislation and worked with the legislature to advocate for an examination of alternatives to the gas tax as a source of road funding. Increasing the state's gas tax is a short-term solution to maintain our roads. SB 59 will hopefully work towards a long-term solution to our transportation funding dilemma.

A graphic describing this transportation funding dilemma can be found on the home page of SEMCOG's redesigned

Web site – www.semco.org under Hot Topics. *Contact: Carmine Palombo, SEMCOG Transportation Director.*

D Brand Summit is February 1

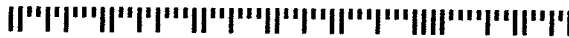
You've probably heard Detroit referred to as "the D." This is the region's new official tourism and community development brand. Use of this new regional brand is the subject of an important summit scheduled for Friday, February 1, 2008 from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. at Lovett Hall (The Henry Ford, Dearborn). The D Brand Summit represents a bold new approach to marketing synergy and success at an important time in the life of the region. Communities in Southeast Michigan will find this summit useful for recruiting and retaining talent and increasing visitor and sponsor dollars. John Kao, bestselling author of *Innovation Nation*, will be the keynote speaker, discussing how Detroit and the region can redefine itself as one of America's innovation hubs. Additional information, including how to register for this summit, can be found on the Web at www.dbrandsummit.com.

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