

# SEMCOG REGIONAL UPDATE

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

Vol. 13, No. 23

October 27, 2008

## Get on Board with SEMCOG: General Assembly is November 20

Please join us on Thursday, November 20, 2008, beginning at 4:30 p.m. for SEMCOG's Fall General Assembly meeting, featuring a progress report to the region on transit in Southeast Michigan. There is much positive news to report. The keynote speaker will be Edsel Ford, Lead Champion of the One D Transforming Regional Detroit initiative. Also featured will be John Hertel, CEO, Regional Transit Coordinating Council. The meeting will be held at the Sterling Inn, 34911 Van Dyke, Sterling Heights. Watch for additional information in the mail and at [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org). Contact: Kathleen Lomako, SEMCOG Deputy Executive Director.

## SEMCOG University: The Aging Region

SEMCOG University presents *The Aging Region: Challenges and opportunities for local governments* on Thursday, November 13, 2008, from 9 a.m.-noon (registration begins at 8:30 a.m.) in the Ambassador Room of SEMCOG's Buhl Building office in downtown Detroit.

By 2035, one in four people in the region is expected to be age 65 or older. At this workshop, local elected leaders, city managers, planning managers, policy makers, and community and economic development staff will learn about demographic changes over the next 30 years and ways to start planning for the opportunities and challenges a growing aging population brings to Southeast Michigan.

Those interested in this workshop are encouraged to attend in person or online via Webinar. When registering online at [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org), please indicate whether you plan to participate on-site or online by noting your preference in the "additional comments" section of the registration form.

This SEMCOG University is free-of-charge for members and partners; there is a \$75 charge for nonmember local governments. Seating is limited; please reserve yours by November 6. Parking at the Larned/Griswold garage will be validated. Contact: Amanda Polanco, SEMCOG U Registrar.

## SEMCOG coordinating MCDA Neighborhood Stabilization conference

On behalf of the Michigan Community Development Association (MCDA), SEMCOG is coordinating a conference — *Neighborhood Stabilization Program: How to Make it Work*. The conference is scheduled for Wednesday, December 3, 2008, at

the Lansing Center. The conference will focus on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), a new initiative to combat foreclosures which brings \$263 million to Michigan communities. At the conference, HUD and MSHDA staff will be available to answer questions on implementing the program, and NSP grantees will talk about their plans, priorities, and partnerships. Contact: Ken Bishop, SEMCOG Community and Economic Development Assistant Planner.

## Quick Facts: Community Fiscal Capacities

Taxable values lag property values by two years, so based upon significant drops in real estate values — especially for residential properties — it is safe to plan on lower property tax revenue for at least the next two years. For local governments, this means less revenue from property taxes.

This is based on a recent SEMCOG parcel-by-parcel assessment analysis. The assessment analysis, which is found in the latest installment of SEMCOG's Quick Facts, *Community Fiscal Capacities: Initial Findings*, discusses changes in taxable value data between 2006 and 2008. Quick Facts highlights demographic and economic trends in the Southeast Michigan region, and can be viewed at [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org) (look for the link under "Hot Topics"). Watch future issues of *Regional Update* for new Quick Facts pages. Contact: Xuan Liu, SEMCOG Data Center Manager.

## SEMCOG's AgileGov database growing with new cost reduction and efficiency ideas

The AgileGov database on SEMCOG's Web site now includes more than 400 successfully implemented cost reduction ideas by our members. The newest additions came from SEMCOG's recent outreach meetings, and include: Ferndale's new vacant building ordinance to more quickly address blight issues and recover maintenance costs; Pittsfield Township's integration of records management in GIS making it easier to search records; savings resulting from consolidated dispatch services between Walled Lake and Wolverine Lake and Mt. Clemens and Macomb County; the Grosse Pointe communities sharing a common health care provider resulting in approximately 15 percent lower premiums; and the \$14,000 in annual savings when Southfield changed from paper to automatic hand dryers. Go to [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org); click on Programs and Projects, then Local Government Effectiveness, then AgileGov. Contact: Dave Boerger, SEMCOG Consultant.

**SEMCOG and Lt. Gov. Cherry host meeting seeking input on The Great Lakes Framework**

Local officials from Southeast Michigan met with Lt. Governor John Cherry to give perspectives on the need to protect and restore the Great Lakes on October 20, 2008 in SEMCOG's downtown Detroit offices. At the meeting, it was noted that Michigan's long-term economic prosperity hinges on the quality of the Great Lakes. It was emphasized that the Great Lakes should be viewed as an economic asset — to be nurtured and protected because of the value they provide. In addition, educating the public on the benefits of the Great Lakes was also recommended as an important component in Michigan's plan for restoring and protecting the Great Lakes. *Contact: Chuck Hersey, SEMCOG Manager of Environmental Programs.*

will air in the Detroit area on the High Definition Channel 56.1 on Monday, November 10, 2008 at 11 a.m. A trailer for the program and a community toolkit to assist in public outreach are available at <http://liquidassets.psu.edu/>.

**SEMPeople**

Huntington Woods Mayor **Ronald F. Gillham** is the first recipient of the Michael A. Guido Leadership and Public Service Award from the Michigan Municipal League. The award is named for the late mayor of Dearborn, Michael A. Guido, in recognition of his passion, professionalism, and leadership on behalf of Michigan's cities. Gillham has been Mayor of Huntington Woods since 1981 and is a tireless advocate for Michigan local government. He received SEMCOG's Regional Ambassador Award in 2000.

**Stephen Cassin**, Executive Director of the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development, was named "Member of the Year" at the 2008 Automation Alley Awards.

**MDEQ grant opportunity for municipalities**

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality has announced the availability of \$470,000 in state funding to identify and correct illicit connections to municipal separate storm systems (MS4). MDEQ is now accepting proposals from owners or operators of MS4s, including sub-state units of government, counties, cities, townships, and villages, as well as public and private colleges and universities. Eligible activities include only programs to identify and correct illicit connections to separate storm sewer systems. Applications are due November 17, 2008. Full text of the Request for Proposals, as well as forms and instructions, can be found on MDEQ's Web site — [www.Michigan.gov/deqnp](http://www.Michigan.gov/deqnp). *Contact: Robert Sweet, MDEQ, 517-335-6967.*

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**Mary Blackmon**, Chairperson  
Treasurer,  
Wayne County Regional Education Service Agency  
**Paul E. Tait**, Executive Director  
**Susan L. Stetler**, Editor

**Penn State University program seeks to educate public on the value of water infrastructure**

Penn State University — in attempt to educate the public on the value of our drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater infrastructure — has developed a 90-minute program titled *Liquid Assets: The Story of Our Water Infrastructure*. The program

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## TIP amendments announced

SEMCOG announces the public comment period for an amendment to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is a short-range planning tool used to implement the projects found in the long-range 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Projects must appear in the TIP in order to receive federal transportation funding.

Projects in a TIP amendment must undergo the same scrutiny as original projects (details are available from SEMCOG), and must be constrained to reasonably available funding. The amendment to the 2008-2011 TIP adds 98 projects and removes nine for a net increase of \$269 million. The FY 2008-2011 TIP has an estimated expenditure of \$3 billion.

Comments can be made in person at the following meetings, all held at SEMCOG offices:

- Transportation Improvement Program Development Committee (TIPDC), Tuesday, November 18, 2008, 10:00 a.m.;
- Transportation Advisory Council (TAC), Wednesday, December 3, 2008; 9:30 a.m.; and
- Executive Committee, Friday December 12, 2008; 1 p.m.

A complete list of all the projects is available from the SEMCOG Information Center, (313) 324-3362, or on SEMCOG's Web site at [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org). Mail or fax comments to SEMCOG Information Center (see back for address information) or e-mail [InfoCenter@SEMCOG.org](mailto:InfoCenter@SEMCOG.org). Contact: SEMCOG Information Center.

## Metro Airport station location chosen for Ann Arbor to Detroit regional rail project

SEMCOG is coordinating an effort with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Amtrak to establish commuter rail service in the Ann Arbor to Detroit corridor. Stations will be located in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Metro Airport, Dearborn, and Detroit (New Center); all stations currently exist, except the station to serve Metro Airport. SEMCOG and MDOT, with assistance from Amtrak, reviewed several locations along the corridor that could provide access to the airport. The analysis indicates that the location at the corner of Michigan and Henry Ruff best serves the needs of this project given the current project and constraints. The goal of the current project is to prove that service will be successful and exhibit ridership and costs that will allow us to seek federal funds through the New or Small Starts Program. Contact: Carmine Palombo, SEMCOG Director of Transportation Programs.

## New on SEMCOG's Web site

SEMCOG is pleased to announce two multimedia additions to its Web site. The first is a new video message to SEMCOG members from Executive Director, Paul Tait. The second addition is a PowerPoint presentation, "Improving Local Government Effectiveness and Collaboration," fully narrated by Dave Boerger, SEMCOG's efficiency expert. Both of these additions can be found on the Members page; click on the Members link on the top navigation bar of SEMCOG's home page — [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org). On the Members page, look for the links. Contact: Sue Stetler, SEMCOG Communications Director.

## SEMCOG University on winter road maintenance a big hit

More than 90 people from 43 SEMCOG member communities recently attended a SEMCOG University workshop focussing on managing winter maintenance programs. Why so much interest on this topic? With tight budgets, increasing prices of salt, and high expectations of the public, keeping roads driveable during winter storms is an increasingly complex and challenging endeavor. Here are some of the lessons learned:

- Cost-effective and environmentally friendly methods of snow and ice removal were discussed, including pre-wetting salt, improving equipment calibration, salt fine gradation, advanced GPS/AVL for salt trucks, deicing

prior to the storm, improving spreader controls and salt routing design.

- Research which investigates how deicing chemicals can chemically attack concrete and negatively impact service life of concrete.
- How winter road maintenance activities can be integrated into the Low Impact Development program.
- The possibility of integrating the winter road maintenance program into the Southeast Michigan Regional Concept for Transportation Operations program to enhance interagency coordination and cooperation for snow and ice removal.

This and all other SEMCOG University workshops are videotaped and are available for viewing or listening to podcasts on SEMCOG's Web site. *Contact: SEMCOG Information Center.*

**300<sup>th</sup> vanpool in Michigan celebrated**

A milestone was reached on October 28, 2008, when the 300<sup>th</sup> MichiVan commuter van was delivered to employees at the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center in Detroit. Each month in Michigan, vanpooling saves approximately 152,000 gallons of fuel, reduces about 1,500 tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and takes 40,430 vehicles off the road.

SEMCOG actively promotes vanpooling and carpooling as part of its free and easy program called MIRideshare, that matches commuters for the daily ride to work. MIRideshare works closely with MichiVan to promote carpooling and vanpooling in the region by working with employers and planning events to inform residents of these alternative commute options. Also, MIRideshare provides vanpoolers and carpoolers with the Guaranteed Ride Home program.

SEMCOG member governments are encouraged to inform their residents of these helpful, moneysaving programs available from SEMCOG. *Contact: Iris Steinberg, Communications Senior Specialist.*

**Michigan safety belt use jumps again in 2008**

According to a direct observation statewide survey conducted by the Wayne State University Transportation Research Group, safety belt use in Michigan is now at 97.2 percent. The study, conducted at the end of the summer 2008, showed a one percent increase in safety belt use since the last study, conducted earlier this year. Michigan's safety belt use far exceeds the national average. The national rate stands at 83 percent of vehicle occupants using seat belts during daylight hours. In 2007, Michigan was one of the 10 states with a safety belt use of 90 percent or higher. *Contact: Tom Bruff, SEMCOG Transportation Coordinator.*

**Rouge is SEMCOG's newest member**

SEMCOG welcomes the City of River Rouge as its newest member. The eastern Wayne County community has a population of 9,565 (SEMCOG October 2008 estimate). SEMCOG membership now totals 161. *Contact: Amy Malmer, SEMCOG Membership Manager.*

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