

KALAMAZOO AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the September 27, 2023 Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

The September 27, 2023 Policy Committee Meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m. at Metro in Kalamazoo, by Chairperson Thompson.

INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were made by all present.

ROLL CALL

Meeting attendance was recorded on the sign-in sheet.

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING

Curt Aardema	Central County Transportation Authority
Rob Britigan	City of Parchment
Clare Buszka	Oshtemo Township
Marsha Drouin	Richland Township
John Gisler	Kalamazoo County
Jeff Heppler	Village of Augusta
Joanna Johnson	Road Commission of Kalamazoo County
Judy Lemon	City of Galesburg
Don Martin	Kalamazoo Township
Pat McGinnis	City of Portage
Pete Pfeiffer	Michigan Department of Transportation, TSC
Chris Praedel	City of Kalamazoo
Aditya Rama	Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority
Randy Smith	Brady Township
Jeff Sorensen	Cooper Township
Paul Sotherland	KATS Citizens' Advisory Committee
Randy Thompson, Chair	Comstock Township
Jerry VanderRoest	Charleston Township
Bret Witkowski	Van Buren County Road Commission

MEMBERS ABSENT

Heather Bowden	Michigan Department of Transportation, Planning
Tim Frisbie	Village of Vicksburg
Robert Henderson	Van Buren Public Transit
Lisa Imus	Village of Lawton
Don Ulsh	Schoolcraft Township

OTHERS PARTICIPATING

Sean McBride	Metro
Megan Mickelson	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Elizabeth Rumick	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Steve Stepek	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Ali Townsend	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study

CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

McGinnis moved, and it was duly seconded by Sorensen, **“to approve the agenda of the September 27, 2023 Policy Committee Meeting.”** MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

- ACCEPTANCE OF THE TREASURER REPORT
- ACCEPTANCE OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REPORT
- ACCEPTANCE OF THE SOUTHCENTRAL MICHIGAN PLANNING COUNCIL REPORT
- APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 30, 2023 MEETING

Johnson moved, and it was duly seconded by Drouin, **“to accept and approve the items on the Consent Agenda.”** MOTION CARRIED.

FY 2023 – 2026 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AMENDMENTS

Referring to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendments included in the meeting packet, Stepek explained this is the second month in a row of amendments due to several projects being rushed in before fiscal year end. The TIP Amendments include cost increases on both the US-131 bridge over Amtrak and KL Avenue, and Augusta’s Washington Street bridge project. The City of Portage has shifted funding from their proposed Centre Avenue traffic signal project to their Portage Road project. Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) Staff and the KATS Technical Committee recommend approval of the amendments as presented.

Johnson moved, and it was duly seconded by Martin, **“to approve the FY 2023 – 2026 Transportation Improvement Program Amendments.”** MOTION CARRIED.

CENTRAL COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY PASS-THROUGH AGREEMENT

It was noted that the draft agreement is included in the meeting packet. This is an update of an annual agreement to continue the partnership Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) has had with Metro to pass through funds to them for their software purchase. The agreement fulfills the Michigan Department of Transportation requirement. KATS staff recommend approval of the updated agreement and authorize the Policy Committee Chair to sign on your behalf.

McGinnis moved, and it was duly seconded by Sorensen, ***“to approve the Central County Transportation Authority Pass-Through Agreement as presented.”*** MOTION CARRIED.

BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW DISCRETIONARY PROGRAM PRESENTATION

Steppek gave a presentation on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the applicable discretionary programs for KATS.

DRAFT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN AND DRAFT TITLE VI PLAN

Links were provided to both the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) Public Participation Plan and the KATS Title VI Plan. They are also available on the KATS website at katsmpo.org. Copies of the plans were provided at the meeting. Steppek explained there were very little changes made to the draft plans. Let KATS Staff know of any feedback you have. A log of any comments and changes will be prepared. The finalized draft plans will then be presented for approval.

DRAFT ADJUSTED CENSUS URBAN BOUNDARY (ACUB) MAPS

The Adjusted Census Urban Boundary (ACUB) maps are included in the meeting packet. Contact Steppek if you would like digital forms of them. Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) hosted a regional ACUB meeting in August. The Michigan Department of Transportation created these maps using feedback from the ACUB meeting. The maps represent the adjusted urban boundaries that were changed in the recent census. The ACUB maps are for planning purposes and do not impact funding. After the maps are out for feedback, they will be presented to the Policy Committee for approval. Please refer any questions or comments to KATS Staff.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION UPDATES

Aardema reported the two-year budget for 2024 and 2025 was approved at the last Central County Transportation Authority (CCTA) / Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority (KCTA) board meeting. Included in the budget is funding to implement Microtransit, an on-demand service intended to better service areas not fully linked to the fixed route system. Aardema may give a presentation on Microtransit at a future meeting. A successful hiring event held last month has led to new employees at Metro. Metro remains optimistic that service levels can be added back. Metro attended the Western Michigan University Bronco Bash to educate students on transportation services. Bus routes to serve the campus community have resumed. Metro hired a private security firm for the Kalamazoo Transportation Center. Metro has had success and a good working relationship with the new security provider so far. Rama added KCTA has successfully hired a full-time and a part-time driver. Two additional full-time drivers are being trained. McBride elaborated that due to the effort put into Metro's last Driver Hiring Fair in August, a record 70 applications were received. However, the challenge is getting applicants through the entire hiring process. Recently a group of 10 new hires were in the final phase of training when 7 dropped out. Hiring drivers remains a challenge. Metro plans to increase service in November. Ridership on both the fixed route and the Metro Connect system is getting closer to pre-COVID levels. McBride thanked agencies for support and for continuing to keep Metro informed of projects early in the planning process when bus routes will be impacted.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Although the updates are included in the meeting packet, Steppek highlighted the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) Certification Review will be in October. Steppek invited attendees to the

public participation portion of the review which will be during the KATS Technical Committee meeting on Thursday, October 12, 2023. The Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration will give presentations.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business was brought forth.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No citizens' comments were made.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Sotherland brought Friend to Cyclists vinyl window clings and informational cards with a QR code to the friendtocyclists.com website. The group grew out of concern about the pushback from the public on non-motorized improvements in the region, especially the addition of bike lanes on downtown streets. Friend to Cyclists collective will encourage and support bicycling for transportation, fitness, and pleasure. Many organizations and agencies have already become a Friend to Cyclists. Sotherland invited all agencies to become a Friend to Cyclists.

Aardema gave an update on the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport. Demand for airline seats is becoming closer to pre-pandemic levels, especially with the addition of the new carrier Avelo. Flights over the summer have been full or nearly full.

McGinnis reported housing availability and affordability in the City of Portage and surrounding areas remains in crisis mode. While incentivizing developers is difficult, public pushback on all proposed projects in Portage have made progress extremely challenging.

Pfeiffer thanked Stepek for the presentation noting that his Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) office has applied to two grants mentioned in the presentation. One is for a rural grant in the Paw Paw area and one is for an infrastructure grant in Benton Township. Yesterday MDOT announced a \$450 million dollar reduction in planning statewide over 5 years. The Southwest Michigan portion of the reduction is \$38 million dollars. The I-94 Portage Road project completion date continues to be pushed back. The project is now anticipated to be completed on October 18, 2023.

Gisler provided positive feedback on yesterday's Transportation Asset Management Council 2023 Conference he attended.

Sorensen announced this year's Michigan Township Association annual banquet will be held November 9, 2023 at The Fountains in Parchment. Invitations will be sent out soon.

Johnson congratulated City of Kalamazoo Traffic Engineer Dennis Randolph for receiving an award at yesterday's Transportation Asset Management Council 2023 Conference. The Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) projects are continuing. RCKC is fielding many service requests and drainage related issues. RCKC is hiring and is getting ready for winter.

Heppler reported that the Village of Augusta water project is nearly complete. Paving will be completed over the next two weeks. Plans continue for next year's bridge project.

Lemon extended an invitation to attendees to develop two large properties in the City of Galesburg.

Thompson reported that Comstock Township has moved into its new Township Hall. An open house will be planned soon.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairperson Thompson adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

*The next meeting of the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Policy Committee will be held on
Wednesday, October 25, 2023 at 9:00 a.m.*

Approved 10/25/23 (er)