

**The Participation Plan
in Transportation Decision Making
for the
Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study**



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The Participation Plan in Transportation Decision Making for the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study

I. INTRODUCTION

The Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Kalamazoo County. Kalamazoo County is the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) for KATS. Public participation in the transportation planning process has been an important part of the activities of KATS since its early years. In 1972, a Citizens Advisory Committee was organized and remained active, providing valuable input into the transportation plans and programs within the study area. This committee and other public participation efforts have been part of the transportation planning process utilized by KATS and predates the requirements of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. Further history on the public participation efforts of KATS is available at www.KATSMPO.org.

Since the enactment of ISTEA in 1991, MPOs have been required to develop and utilize a proactive public participation process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing metropolitan transportation plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs). The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) legislation expanded the public participation provisions by requiring MPOs to develop and adopt participation plans.

II. REQUIREMENTS

SAFETEA-LU, while retaining the previous public participation characteristics noted above, has placed additional emphasis on extensive stakeholder "participation." Highlights of the SAFETEA-LU requirements for public participation include:

- # Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points;
- # Employing visualization techniques;
- # Making information accessible in various formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;
- # Holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- # Seeking out and considering needs of traditionally underserved populations;



- # Coordinating with statewide transportation planning public participation and consultation processes; and
- # Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies in the Participation Plan.

The full text relating to the public participation process within SAFETEA-LU can be found under Appendix B.

III. THE PUBLIC

The regulations identify “citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, agencies or entities responsible for safety/security operations, providers of non-emergency transportation services receiving financial assistance from a source other than Title 49, U.S.C. Chapter 53, and other interested parties” for inclusion in the input process for transportation decision making. KATS is open to and encourages input from any individual, group, organization, agency, business, municipality, or service provider. Activities encouraging the open dialogue between these groups and KATS include maintaining and updating a mailing list of interested parties as well as KATS receiving contact by mail, telephone, or e-mail and during committee meetings. KATS will strive to implement the new emphasis in SAFETEA-LU related to stakeholder participation.

KATS will work to encourage the participation of persons who have been traditionally underserved, as well as to meet the requirements of Executive Order 12898 related to Environmental Justice. KATS, through written communication, e-mail, or phone, will endeavor to notify some or all of the groups listed below that are known when a particular agenda item directly impacts an organization or the clientele they represent, a major planning project is initiated, such as the update of the Long Range Plan, or at the request of any KATS Policy Committee member.



Stakeholder organizations that represent the interests of:

- # The elderly
- # The disabled
- # Nonmotorized transportation users
- # Minority populations
- # Low income populations

Types of organizations located in the KATS area:

- # Conventional and unconventional transit providers
- # Representatives of public transportation employees
- # Affected public agencies
- # Private providers of transportation
- # Law enforcement agencies and fire departments
- # Freight shippers and providers of freight transportation services
- # Railroad companies
- # Airport operators
- # Environmental organizations
- # Major employers
- # Chambers of commerce
- # Economic development
- # Interested citizens
- # Human service agencies

Some of these organizations are non-voting members of the Technical Committee. They receive meeting agendas and minutes and are encouraged to participate and provide input.

IV. MEETINGS

All regularly scheduled meetings of the KATS Policy and Technical Committees are open to the public and are held at sites which comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations. Time is allotted at Technical and Policy Committee meetings for any person wishing to address committee members.

The annual schedule of regular Policy Committee and Technical Committee meetings showing dates, times, and locations is included on the KATS Web site. A list of regularly scheduled Policy and Technical Committee meeting dates, times, and locations will be posted in the KATS office and distributed to each member unit of government for posting.

Monthly meeting notifications, including agendas and location, are sent to local newspaper reporters and to the cities, townships, villages within Kalamazoo County and the county administration building for public posting. The KATS Web site also contains meeting notifications, locations, and agendas. Interested citizens may have their name added to the mailing list for meeting materials by



contacting KATS. KATS Policy and Technical Committee meetings comply with the Open Meetings Act.

Special meetings, such as Public Information Meetings and Public Hearings, will be held at convenient and accessible locations and times where most people could attend.

V. INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION AND REVIEW

KATS recognizes that, in order for the public to participate in transportation decision making, it must understand the transportation system's problems, processes, and potential solutions. Information must be provided in a timely manner, be easily understandable, and be reasonably accessible.

KATS will make available to the public the agency's library and map files. Copies of all KATS planning documents, meeting minutes, and maps are available for review during normal business hours. KATS receives news coverage within the study area, and the Executive Director meets with local media representatives to inform them of major planning initiatives and to elicit their support in publicizing them. Articles written by local news reporters are clipped and filed.

KATS has a presence on the World Wide Web. Local public libraries have computers available for public use so access to the Web will not necessitate personal ownership of a computer. Meeting schedules and minutes, planning studies, the KATS Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program, newsletters, and other applicable documents will be posted on the KATS Web site. The KATS's World Wide Web address is <http://www.katsmpo.org>.

Local public libraries also receive copies of many documents published by KATS. In addition, KATS staff participates in public forums and conducts presentations upon request. KATS will meet with the Citizens Advisory Committee to share information and receive input.



VI. SIGNIFICANT PLANNING INITIATIVES

Significant planning initiatives include, but are not limited to, updating the Long Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Program, corridor studies, subarea plans, transportation demand management studies and transit plan implementation activities. When

describing a significant planning initiative to the public, KATS shall employ one or more of the following visualization aids:

- # Maps and charts
- # Interactive computer applications
- # Geographic Information System (GIS) produced maps
- # Aerial photo manipulation and/or computer simulation

Additional training on visualization techniques that could be used to provide information to the public will be utilized by KATS staff.

Various avenues will be considered when seeking public participation in these initiatives including, but not limited to, public informational meetings, surveys, mailings, and notices. In an effort to reach populations traditionally underserved (minorities, low income, senior citizens, disabled, etc.), emphasis will be made to inform such populations using various methods including the use of translation software for the Web site documents as well as placement of notices in senior citizen centers and other agencies who provide services to populations that have been traditionally underserved by the existing transportation system. Consideration of non-English language notices and public service announcements will also be made.

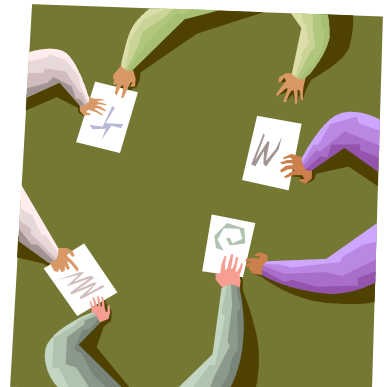
Specific participation milestones for major planning activities are contained in appendices:

- A. Participation Plan Update/Revision
- B. Transportation Plan Update/Revision
- C. Transportation Plan Amendments
- D. Transportation Improvement Program Development
- E. Transportation Improvement Program Amendments
- F. Major Corridor Study/Plan

The timelines are general and may change as needed.

VII. TREATMENT OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

When public comments are received on plans, studies, or other activities, they will be summarized and forwarded to the Policy Committee prior to any formal action to adopt or approve a plan or study. A copy of all comments will be filed and made available for public review. Comments that request a formal response will be answered in a timely



manner. The comments, or a summary of the comments, will be included in the document along with a discussions of how the comments were addressed prior to the adoption of the plans, major studies, and programs.

VIII. REVISIONS TO PARTICIPATION PLAN

The public is invited to comment on this plan prior to final adoption by the Policy Committee. A review of this Participation Plan will periodically (at a minimum bi-annually) be undertaken by the Technical and Policy Committees. Major revisions will necessitate undertaking various measures as described in Section V.

Comments or questions concerning this Plan should be directed to:

Jonathan Start, Executive Director
Kathy Schultz, Office Administrator
Steve Stepek, Senior Transportation Planner

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Exhibit A

Participation Process for Participation Plan Adoption and Revisions

<u><i>Task</i></u>	<u><i>Time Period</i></u>	<u><i>Method</i></u>
KATS stakeholder list review and update	Month 1	Review and update stakeholder contact information list as necessary. Use list to contact stakeholders informing them of the initiative and how they can participate.
Make draft Participation Plan available for review and comment	Month 2-3	Distribute draft Participation Plan to cities, villages, and townships in Kalamazoo County, as well as public libraries and community groups. Post on KATS Web site.
Input at Policy & Technical Committee meetings	Through entire process	All KATS regularly scheduled Technical and Policy Committee meetings have time reserved for public comments.

Exhibit B

Participation Process for the Transportation Plans

<u><i>Task</i></u>	<u><i>Time Period</i></u>	<u><i>Method</i></u>
KATS stakeholder list review and update	Month 1	Review and update stakeholder mailing list as necessary. Use list to contact stakeholders informing them of the initiative and how they can participate.
Review environmental justice analysis area	Month 2-3	Meet with staff from appropriate agencies to confirm accuracy of environmental justice area. Update as necessary. Discuss strategies for gaining input from their constituencies.
Solicit input from public during development of alternatives	Month 4-5	A select “package” of network solutions will be developed once transportation system deficiencies and potential solutions to those deficiencies have been selected and tested. Consideration of one or more of the following methods for information distribution and public input: Citizens Advisory Committee, Web site, newspaper, presentations to interested groups, and mailing.
Consultation with other agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities affected by transportation	Month 4-6	Consult with federal, state and local agencies/organizations impacted by transportation plan. This may include, but is not limited to, agencies responsible for economic growth, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movement, natural resources and historic preservation.
Air quality conformity/environmental justice public comment period	Month 6-9	Public comment on air quality and environmental justice analysis.
Transportation Plan public hearing	Month 11	This is the formal public hearing on the draft Transportation Plan. Newspaper notices will be placed announcing this meeting.
Postings on KATS World Wide Web page	Throughout entire process	As the plan is being developed, various documents will be posted on the KATS’s Web page. These postings will also invite the public to comment on what they see.
Input at Policy & Technical Committee meetings	Throughout entire process	All KATS regularly scheduled Technical and Policy Committee meetings have time reserved for public comments.

Exhibit C

Participation Process for the Transportation Plan Amendments

<u><i>Task</i></u>	<u><i>Time Period</i></u>	<u><i>Method</i></u>
KATS stakeholder list review and update	Month 1	Review and update stakeholder mailing list as necessary. Use list to contact stakeholders informing them of the initiative and how they can participate.
Review environmental justice analysis area	Month 1+	Meet with staff from appropriate agencies to confirm accuracy of environmental justice area. Update as necessary. Discuss strategies for gaining input from their constituencies.
Air quality conformity/environmental justice public comment period	Month 1+	Public comment on air quality and environmental justice analysis.
Amended Transportation Plan public hearing	Month 3	This is the formal public hearing on the amended Transportation Plan. Newspaper notices will be placed announcing this meeting.
Postings on KATS World Wide Web page	Throughout entire process	The Plan amendment(s) will be posted on the KATS's Web page. These postings will also invite the public to comment on what they see.
Input at Policy & Technical Committee meetings	Throughout entire process	All KATS regularly scheduled Technical and Policy Committee meetings have time reserved for public comments.

Exhibit D

Participation Process for Transportation Improvement Programs

<u><i>Task</i></u>	<u><i>Time Period</i></u>	<u><i>Method</i></u>
KATS stakeholder list review and update	Month 1	Review and update stakeholder mailing list as necessary. Use list to contact stakeholders informing them of the initiative and how they can participate.
Review environmental justice analysis area	Month 2-3	Meet with staff from appropriate agencies to confirm accuracy of environmental justice area. Update as necessary. Discuss strategies for gaining input from their constituencies.
Public review of preliminary project list	Month 4	A preliminary project list is released for public review and comment.
Consultation with other agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities affected by transportation	Month 4-5	Consult with federal, state and local agencies/organizations impacted by transportation plan. This may include, but is not limited to, agencies responsible for economic growth, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movement, natural resources and historic preservation.
Air quality conformity/environmental justice public comment period	Month 6	Public comment on air quality and environmental justice analysis.
Transportation Improvement Program public hearing	Month 8	This is the formal public hearing on the draft Transportation Improvement Program. Newspaper notices will be placed announcing this meeting.
Postings on KATS World Wide Web page	Throughout entire process	As the Transportation Improvement Program is being developed, various documents will be posted on the KATS's Web page. These postings will also invite the public to comment on what they see.
Input at Policy & Technical Committee meetings	Throughout entire process	All KATS regularly scheduled Technical and Policy Committee meetings have time reserved for public comments.

Exhibit E Participation Process for Transportation Improvement Program Amendments

<u>Task</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Method</u>
Determine if amendment is significant (add a new federal fund project, adversely impact financial constraint, major scope change, delete a federally funded project)	Month 1	Discuss project with local agencies
If Not Significant . . .		
Give notice of proposed amendment	Month 1	Web site, inclusion in agendas routinely posted with local cities, villages, and townships in Kalamazoo County
Receive comments	Throughout entire process	All KATS regularly scheduled Technical and Policy Committee meetings have time reserved for public comments
Take action on amendment	Month 1+	Technical Committee and Policy Committee regular meetings
If Significant . . .		
KATS stakeholder list review and update	Month 1	Review and update stakeholder mailing list as necessary. Use list to contact stakeholders informing them of the initiative and how they can participate.
Review environmental justice analysis area	Month 1	Meet with staff from appropriate agencies to confirm accuracy of environmental justice area. Update as necessary. Discuss strategies for gaining input.
Consultation with other agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities affected by transportation	Month 1+	Consult with federal, state and local agencies/organizations impacted by transportation plan. This may include, but is not limited to, those identified in Section III.
Air quality conformity/environmental justice public comment period	Month 1+	Public comment on air quality and environmental justice analysis.
Amended Transportation Improvement Program public hearing	Month 2+	Notices will be placed announcing this meeting at cities, villages and townships in Kalamazoo County as well as noticed on the KATS Web site.
Postings on KATS World Wide Web page	Throughout entire process	Amendments will be posted on the KATS Web site. These postings will also invite the public to comment on what they see.
Input at Policy & Technical Committee meetings	Throughout entire process	All KATS regularly scheduled Technical and Policy Committee meetings have time reserved for public comments.

Exhibit F
Participation Process for Major Planning/Corridor Studies

<u><i>Task</i></u>	<u><i>Time Period</i></u>	<u><i>Method</i></u>
KATS stakeholder list review and update	Month 1	Review and update stakeholder mailing list as necessary. Use list to contact stakeholders informing them of the initiative and how they can participate.
Postings on KATS Web page	Throughout entire process	As the Major Corridor/Planning Study is being developed, various documents will be posted on the KAT's Web page. These postings will also invite the public to comment on what they see.
Input at Policy & Technical Committee meetings	Throughout entire process	All KATS regularly scheduled Technical and Policy Committee meetings have time reserved for public comments.

Acronyms

ADA.....	Americans with Disabilities Act
GIS.....	Geographic Information Systems
ISTEA.	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act
KATS.....	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
MPA.....	Metropolitan Planning Area
MPO.....	Metropolitan Planning Organization
SAFETEA-LU..	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
TIP.	Transportation Improvement Program

Appendix

SAFETEA-LU Participation Plan Regulations

23 CFR Part 450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation.

(a) The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, agencies or entities responsible for safety/security operations, providers of non-emergency transportation services receiving financial assistance from a source other than title 49, U.S.C, Chapter 53, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

(1) The participation plan shall be developed by the MPO in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:

(i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;

(ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;

(iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;

(iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;

(v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;

(vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;

(vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;

(viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was initially made available for public comment;

(ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and

(x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

(2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.

(3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) and the FTA (Federal Transit Administration) for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.

(b) In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO shall consult, as appropriate, with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation. To coordinate the planning functions to the maximum extent practicable, such consultation shall compare metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, as they are developed, with the plans, maps, inventories, and planning documents developed by other agencies. This consultation shall include, as appropriate, contacts with State, local, Indian Tribal, and private agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movements, land use management, natural resources, conservation, and historic preservation. In addition, transportation plans and TIPs shall be developed with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

(1) Recipients of assistance under title 49, U.S.C., Chapter 53;

(2) Governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and

(3) Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 204.

(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(e) The MPOs are encouraged to develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under § 450.314.

Appendix C Comments on Participation Plan

Numerous places “public involvement” or “public involvement process” was used. The new buzz word with SAFETEA-LU is “participation”. Make sure to make the change to read “public participation” or “public participation process.”

Response: The word “involvement” was replaced throughout the document with “participation to reflect the participation needed from the public.

Page 4 is the first time the MPO website is given. This may need to come earlier since the first time the KATS website is mentioned is on page 3.

Response: The KATS website is on the title page and was added to the introduction with the history of the participation process of KATS. The website address is www.KATSMPO.org.

The top of page 5 mentions the type of visualization (maps, charts, etc.). Are all of these things already available to KATS? With things that the MPO would like to do, but need additional training in, it may be beneficial to state that.

Response: The visualization techniques were separated into individual bullets and the following sentence added:

Additional training on visualization techniques that could be used to provide information to the public will be utilized by KATS staff.

The sentence starting with “In an effort to reach populations traditionally underserved...”, in the first full paragraph, sounds like you are saying that all traditionally underserved populations don’t speak English. Let’s work together on coming up with some other wording.

Response: This paragraph was reworded and underserved populations were identified (minorities, low income, senior citizens, disabled, etc.).

Page 5, Section VII, states “a copy of all comments will be filed and available for public review”. These should also be included in the plan (or summary of) and a discussion of how they were addressed.

Response: The following sentence was added:

The comments will also be taken into consideration within the document prior to the adoption to the plans, studies, or other activities.

Page 5, Section VIII, states “a review of this Participation Plan will periodically be undertaken...”. It would be good to specify what “periodically” actually means.

Response: Staff will review the Participation Plan at a minimum bi-annually to determine if there are changes needed to what is being done to address the needs of the public.

Exhibit E, your definition of “significant” for a TIP amendment, is this what the MPO would consider a “formal” amendment?

Response: Not all formal amendments to the TIP would be considered “significant.” Amendments that:

- add a new federally funded project
- adversely impact the financial constraint
- have major scope changes, and/or
- delete a federally funded project within the TIP would be significant.

As noted, new projects or project changes that would affect air quality conformity would be significant.