

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Kalamazoo urbanized area. The purpose of the Study is to fulfill the Federal, State, and Policy Committee directives to ensure distribution of transportation funding in Kalamazoo County to best benefit the transportation system, as well as plan for the future of the transportation network within financially feasible goals.

Within the federal guidelines of SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users), KATS is responsible for the development of a Transportation Plan. Following those federal requirements, the metropolitan transportation plan shall, at a minimum, include:¹

- (1) The projected transportation demand of persons and goods in the metropolitan planning area over the period of the transportation plan;
- (2) Existing and proposed transportation facilities (including major roadways, transit, multimodal and intermodal facilities, pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities, and intermodal connectors) that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system, giving emphasis to those facilities that serve important national and regional transportation functions over the period of the transportation plan. In addition, the locally preferred alternative selected from an Alternatives Analysis under the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grant program (49 U.S.C. 5309 and 49 CFR part 611) needs to be adopted as part of the metropolitan transportation plan as a condition for funding under 49 U.S.C. 5309;
- (3) Operational and management strategies to improve the performance of existing transportation facilities to relieve vehicular congestion and maximize the safety and mobility of people and goods;
- (4) Consideration of the results of the congestion management process in Transportation Management Areas (TMA) that meet the requirements of this subpart, including the identification of Single Occupant Vehicle (SOV) projects that result from a congestion management process in TMAs that are nonattainment for ozone or carbon monoxide;
- (5) Assessment of capital investment and other strategies to preserve the existing and projected future metropolitan transportation infrastructure and provide for multimodal capacity increases based on regional priorities and needs. The metropolitan transportation plan may consider projects and strategies that address areas or corridors where current or projected congestion threatens the efficient functioning of key elements of the metropolitan area's transportation system;
- (6) Design concept and design scope descriptions of all existing and proposed transportation facilities in sufficient detail, regardless of funding source, in nonattainment and maintenance areas for conformity determinations under the Environmental Protection Act's (EPA) transportation conformity rule (40 CFR part 93). In all areas (regardless of air quality

¹ Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users; 49 CFR Part 613 Title 23 Sec. 450.322

designation), all proposed improvements shall be described in sufficient detail to develop cost estimates;

- (7) A discussion of types of potential environmental mitigation activities and potential areas to carry out these activities, including activities that may have the greatest potential to restore and maintain the environmental functions affected by the metropolitan transportation plan. The discussion may focus on policies, programs, or strategies, rather than at the project level. The discussion shall be developed in consultation with Federal, State, and Tribal land management, wildlife, and regulatory agencies. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) may establish reasonable time frames for performing this consultation;
- (8) Pedestrian walkway and bicycle transportation facilities in accordance with 23 U.S.C. 217(g);
- (9) Transportation and transit enhancement activities, as appropriate; and
- (10) A financial plan that demonstrates how the adopted transportation plan can be implemented.

KALAMAZOO AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY HISTORY

Planning for urban systems was always a part of the transportation process, but to varying degrees. It was not until 1962 that there was benchmark federal legislation for urban transportation planning.² In summary, the Federal Highway Act mandated that “. . . after July 1, 1965, the Secretary of Transportation shall not approve . . . any project in any urban area of more than 50,000 population unless he finds such projects are based on a continuing, comprehensive transportation planning process carried on cooperatively by the state and local communities.” Features of the Act emphasized:

- The requirement of creating an intergovernmental committee made up of principal elected officials of general purpose local government to facilitate cooperation and coordination.
- The identification of a formal comprehensive process with inherent flexibility to reflect local issues, goals, and policies.
- All activities be fully coordinated between the State (Michigan Department of Transportation) and local governments to assure proper integration of the respective state and local systems.

In 1966, in response to the regulations, the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Policy Committee was created through agreements by and between local units of government in the Kalamazoo urban area and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).³ This organizational effort was led by MDOT. Although fully vested with responsibility for carrying out the requirements of the legislation, the Policy Committee was not formally designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) until 1978. Prior to that action, the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Policy Committee acted to incorporate as an “Intermunicipality Committee” under Act 200 of the Public Acts of Michigan of 1957.

² Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962.

³ At that time, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) was officially the Michigan Department of State Highways and Transportation (MDSHT).

The Intermunicipality Committee Act provides for the cooperative establishment of a forum (the KATS Policy Committee) by local units of government for the purposes of conducting specifically designated intergovernmental activities in a coordinated manner. KATS continues to be organized under the Intermunicipality Committee Act. In 1993, under the provision of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, the KATS Policy Committee extended its area boundaries to include all of Kalamazoo County within the Metropolitan Area Boundary (MAB).

The organization and concept of an Intermunicipality Committee fully supports and addresses the clear intent of the federal legislation's reference to "cooperative." The KATS Policy Committee represents "principal elected officials of general purpose local government" working cooperatively in the transportation decision making process.

All work and activities of the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study are initiated and conducted under the policy direction of the KATS Policy Committee. Activities are conducted cooperatively either by working with the Technical Committee or, as appropriate, with the individual planning or public transportation agencies. Agency staffs work in the cooperative conduct of these activities within this framework. Their efforts are integral, in fact, are critical to the successful conduct of the process.

The following tables indicate representation on both the KATS Policy and Technical Committees. The Policy Committee organizational emphasis is on the representation of the units of general purpose local government. Although they must work in cooperation and coordination with a range of other forums, decision making is the collective responsibility of these elected officials.

The Technical Committee, made up of professional and technical representatives of the transportation responsible agencies, acts both collectively and individually to provide evaluation, analysis, and product for the consideration of the Policy Committee. The individuals and agencies jointly making up the Technical Committee are involved in the Study on a continuing basis.

KALAMAZOO AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY STAFF

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

Policy Committee Voting Membership

Michigan Department of Transportation
Bureau of Transportation Planning

Michigan Department of Transportation
Kalamazoo Transportation Service Center

City of Kalamazoo
City of Parchment
City of Portage

Alamo Township
Brady Township
Climax Township
Cooper Charter Township
Comstock Charter Township
Kalamazoo Charter Township
Oshtemo Charter Township
Pavilion Township
Prairie Ronde Township
Schoolcraft Township
Ross Township
Richland Township
Texas Charter Township

Village of Schoolcraft
Village of Vicksburg

Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority

Kalamazoo Metro Transit Authority Board

Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners

Board of County Road Commissioners of
Kalamazoo County

Western Michigan University

Technical Committee Voting Membership

*(indicates more than 1 individual representing
the organization)*

Michigan Department of Transportation
Bureau of Transportation Planning
Kalamazoo Transportation Service Center
Southwest Region Office

City of Kalamazoo
Department of Public Services (3)
Department of Economic Development &
Planning
Metro Transit

City of Portage
Transportation and Utilities (3)
Community Development

Kalamazoo County
Planning and Community Development
Road Commission (3)

City of Parchment

Oshtemo Township
Schoolcraft Township