

## Chapter 9

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The *Participation Plan in Transportation Decision Making for the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study* was adopted by the KATS Policy Committee on December 30, 2006.<sup>14</sup> Below are excerpts from that plan that identify how KATS presents information to the public.

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](http://www.KATSmpo.org).

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:<sup>15</sup>

- 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; and
- Seeking out and considering needs of traditionally underserved populations.

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 comment by mail, telephone, or e-mail and during committee meetings. KATS will strive to implement the emphasis in SAFETEA-LU related to stakeholder participation.

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<sup>14</sup> *The Participation Plan in Transportation Decision Making for the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study* is available from the KATS office or on-line at [www.KATSmpo.org](http://www.KATSmpo.org).

<sup>15</sup> Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users; 23 CFR Part 450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation.

Stakeholder organizations that represent the interests of:

- The elderly (Senior Services, Area Agency on Aging)
- The disabled (MRC Industries, Disability Resource Center)
- Nonmotorized transportation users (SMART, Kalamazoo Bicycle Club)
- Minority populations (Neighborhood Associations, Northside Association for Community Development)
- Low income populations (Kalamazoo Poverty Reduction, Housing Resources)

Types of organizations located in the KATS area:

- Conventional and unconventional transit providers
- Representatives of public transportation employees
- 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
- Indian Tribes (Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi & Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Potawatomi Indians (Gun Lake Band))

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.

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 and comment is encouraged during committee member discussion periods on the agenda.

Monthly meeting notifications, including agendas and location, are sent to the local newspaper and to local government units for public posting. The KATS website 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.

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 has a presence on the internet. Local public libraries have computers available for public use so access to the internet will not necessitate personal ownership of a computer. Meeting schedules and minutes, planning studies, the KATS Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement

Program, newsletters, and other applicable documents will be posted on the KATS website. The KATS's website address is [www.KATSmpo.org](http://www.KATSmpo.org).

Local public libraries also receive copies of documents published by KATS. In addition, KATS staff participates in public forums and conducts presentations upon request. KATS meets with the Citizens Advisory Committee to share information and receive input and provides information to the Kalamazoo County Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee.

Significant planning initiatives include, but are not limited to, updating the Transportation 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:

- Geographic Information System produced maps and charts
- Interactive computer applications
- 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.), consideration 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.

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.

### **2035 TRANSPORTATION PLAN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

During the development of the 2035 Transportation Plan, information was provided to the Technical Committee and Policy Committee and to the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Citizen's Advisory Committee. The monthly meetings of the Technical Committee and Policy Committee were noticed to the public, and minutes were provided on the KATS website for comment.


On the KATS website, information about upcoming meetings, as well as opportunities for comment on the Non-Motorized Plan and potential capacity projects, were posted. The fall newsletter for the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study presented information on the development of the 2035 Transportation Plan.

Public participation on the 2035 Transportation Plan was done through several means. A newsletter was sent to over 300 groups on the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study mailing list noting that comments were being sought on the 2035 Transportation Plan's development.

Presentations on the 2035 Transportation Plan were given to the following groups:

- Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority (KCTA)
- Kalamazoo County Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee
- Kalamazoo County Road Commission

KATS also made available a survey on-line at the KATS website inviting the public to comment on what areas of focus should be identified within the KATS study area. Postcards announcing the availability of the survey were made available to the KATS mailing list (approximately 300). Those on the mailing list were asked to share the information via their own mailing lists. The survey ran the month of July, 2010, with 66 responses received. Twelve questions were asked of the survey participants, ranging from what was the biggest transportation issue facing the Kalamazoo area to funding for transportation improvements.



**Postcards Mailed: 300**

Announcements made to Technical Committee and Policy Committee as well as email lists. Chamber of Commerce emailed to their member list.

Responses: 66 (some incomplete)

48 of 51 responses frequently take personal motor vehicle as their mode of transportation

41 of 51 responses never or rarely take transit (bus or demand response)

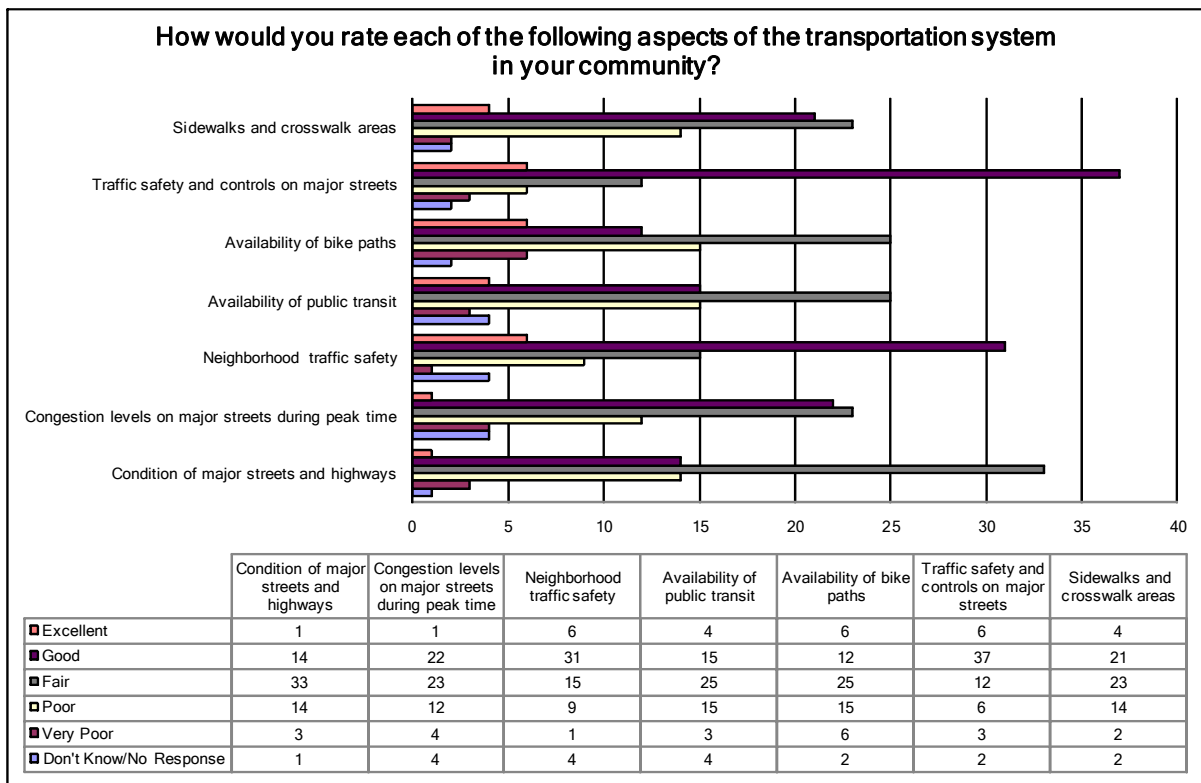
45 of 51 walk frequently or occasionally walk as their mode of transportation

Comments regarding the biggest transportation issue facing Kalamazoo area:

“Lack of funding for transportation projects.”

“Maintaining road surfaces, providing more pedestrian/non-motorized facilities.”

“Balancing the need, in the urban areas, for public transit, walkability, and bike lanes (at substantial cost) with the vehicle efficiency needs in the suburban and rural areas (good safe roads).”

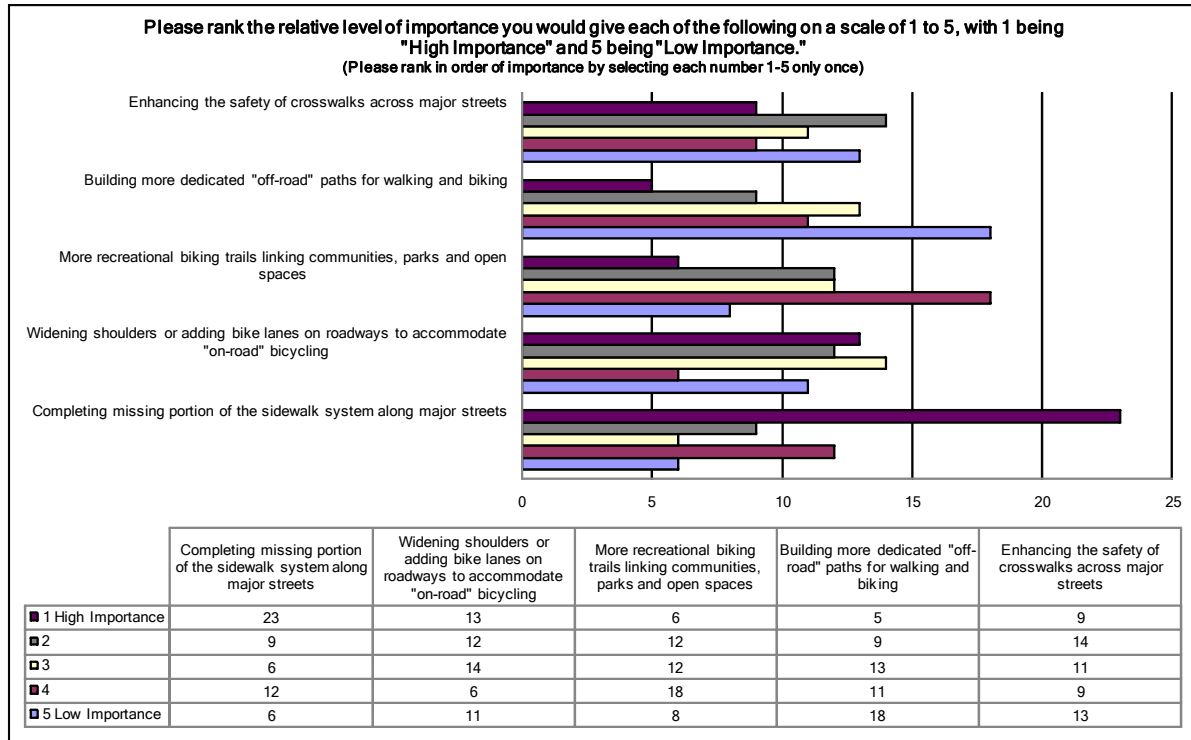


One goal of the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study focuses on providing a safe and secure transportation system. Work continues in Kalamazoo County to upgrade intersections within the county with current traffic control equipment. Annually, the local road agencies are anticipated to request safety funds from the Michigan Department of Transportation. Safety improvements in the 2035 Transportation Plan are identified where known.

There is approximately \$485,704,000 identified for local/secondary street maintenance, operations, and construction in the 2035 Transportation Plan. There are approximately \$519,980,963 identified for major/primary street operations and maintenance for non-MDOT streets in the plan. This figure does not include construction or heavy maintenance on the primary/major street system. There are additionally approximately \$855,350,000 identified in the 2035 Transportation Plan for construction and heavy maintenance activities to preserve the major/primary/state trunkline street system.

A significant amount of public transportation capital expenditures is being planned over the life of the Transportation Plan for Public Transportation. These capital expenditures will improve the transit system within the urban area and the rural areas of Kalamazoo County.

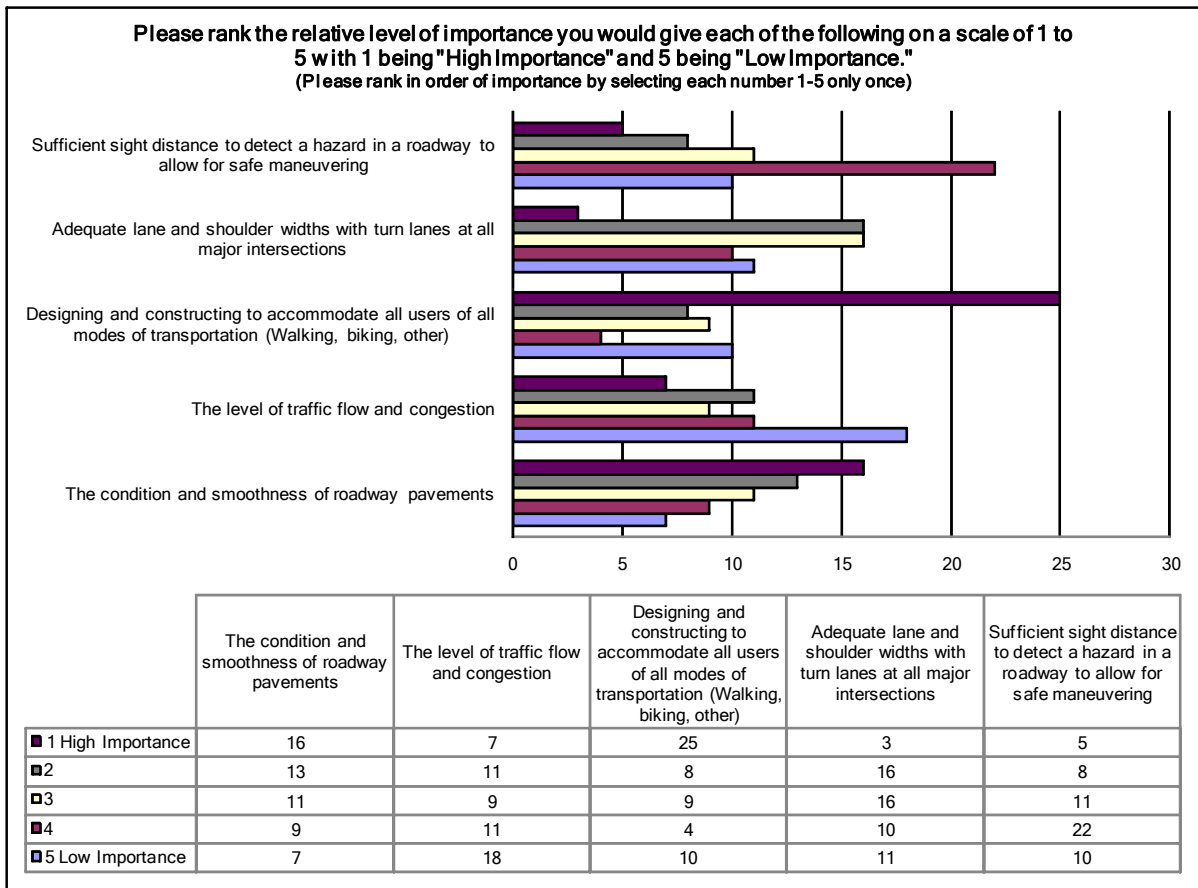
The non-motorized system in Kalamazoo County has been increasing over the last several years, with several plans to build more trailway connections and extensions over the life of the Transportation Plan.



This question focused on the walkability and non-motorized aspect of the transportation system in Kalamazoo County.

Those responding to the survey ranked completing missing portions of the sidewalk system along major streets as the most important, second being the widening of shoulders or adding bike lanes on roadways to accommodate “on-road” bicycling. As of the adoption of the 2035 Transportation Plan, the cities of Kalamazoo and Portage, along with the Kalamazoo County Road Commission, have policies in place to add non-motorized bike lanes where possible to projects being reconstructed. Several roadways in the past have been reconfigured (going from 4 lanes to 3 lanes with bike lanes) where it is feasible. Comment from the public is solicited during this consideration as is the review of on-street parking availability.

Within the 2035 Transportation Plan, the completion of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trailway is anticipated. Off road trails are frequently used for recreational purposes, and the Kalamazoo County Parks Department as well as the Kalamazoo River Valley Trailway partners continues to monitor the trailway usage.

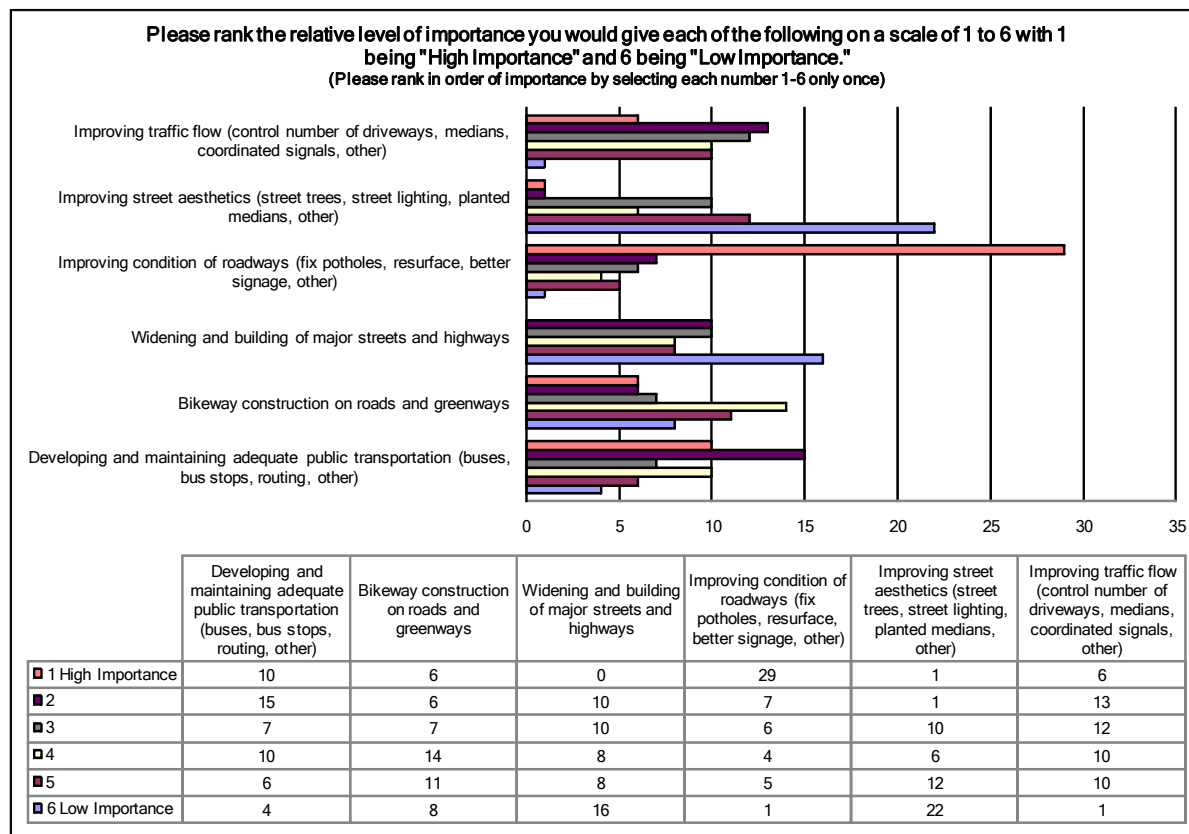


This question asked survey participants to rank their opinion of the roadways (shoulders, congestion, surface condition).

The highest ranked item was designing and constructing to accommodate all users of all modes of transportation (walking, biking, other). Within the Goals and Objectives outline in the 2035 Transportation Plan, several of the objectives include the improvement and expansion of the bikeway/pedestrian facilities on the transportation system. This includes making ramps at intersections ADA accessible. Coordination is encouraged between the local road agencies and utility agencies to have upgrades completed during the reconstruction of an intersection or roadway.

Recently, the State of Michigan passed a Complete Streets Law (PA 134 & 135), requiring the Michigan Department of Transportation to adopt a Complete Streets Policy by 2012. Complete Streets is a concept that applies to road project planning, where consideration is given to all of the legal users of roadway during the planning and design phases to determine if any relevant accommodations are necessary or appropriate within the project. This new law will assist in accommodating all users within the road right-of-way.

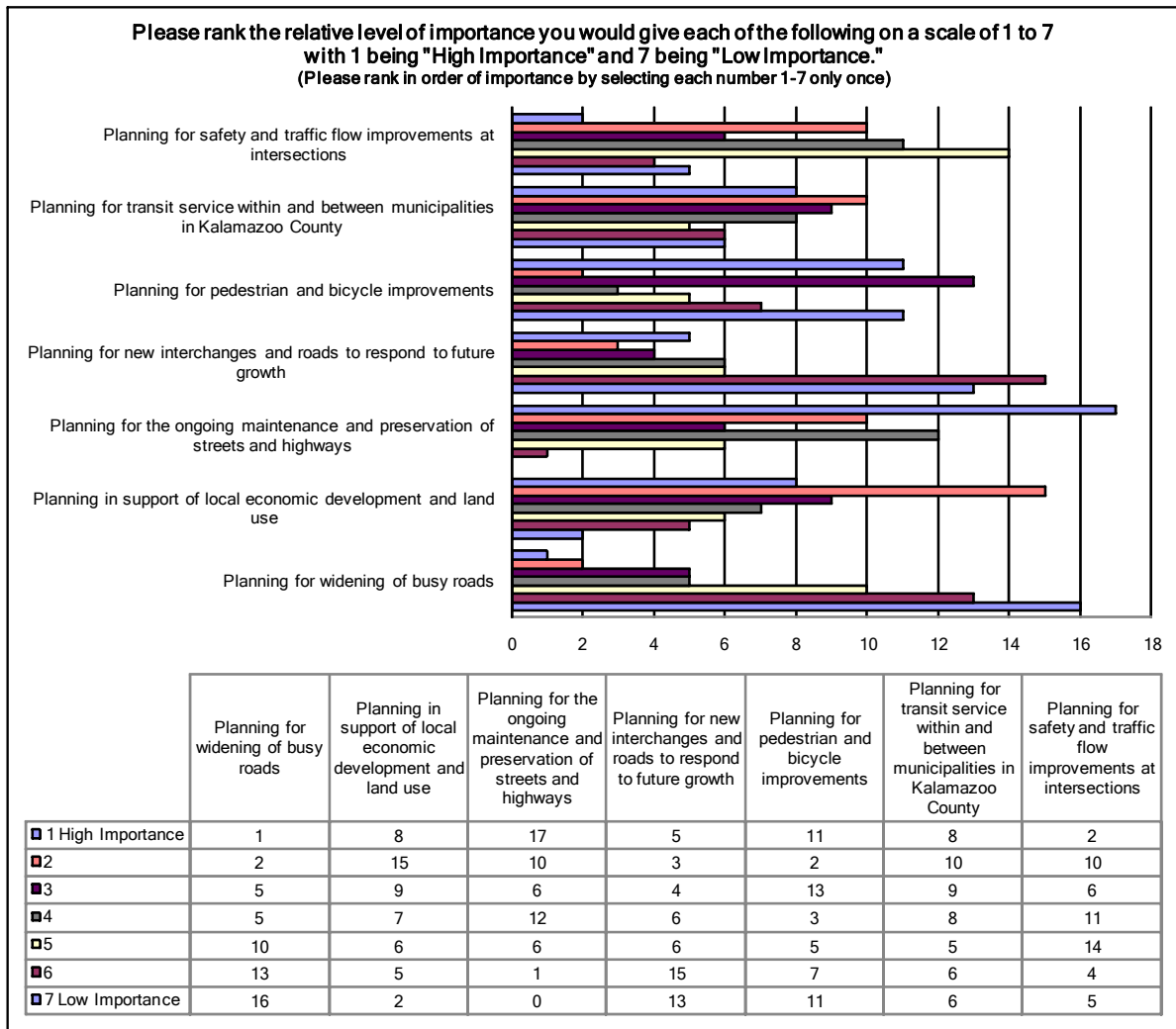
The road agencies continually update their Capital Improvement Programs to identify road segments that need to be improved to maintain a smooth pavement for the motoring public. Use of the information collected through the PASER data efforts will also help focus improvements to roads needing improvement in Kalamazoo County



This question focused on improvements to the road network in Kalamazoo County and the developing and maintenance of public transportation and non-motorized facilities.

Improving condition of roadways (fix potholes, resurface, better signage, other) was ranked as high when looking at the transportation system. Preservation of the system is a goal of the 2035 Transportation Plan. Additional funds are spent to upgrade signal equipment, signage, and repairing pot holes. The Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study receives Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds that are used for both capacity improvements and preservation of the existing transportation system.

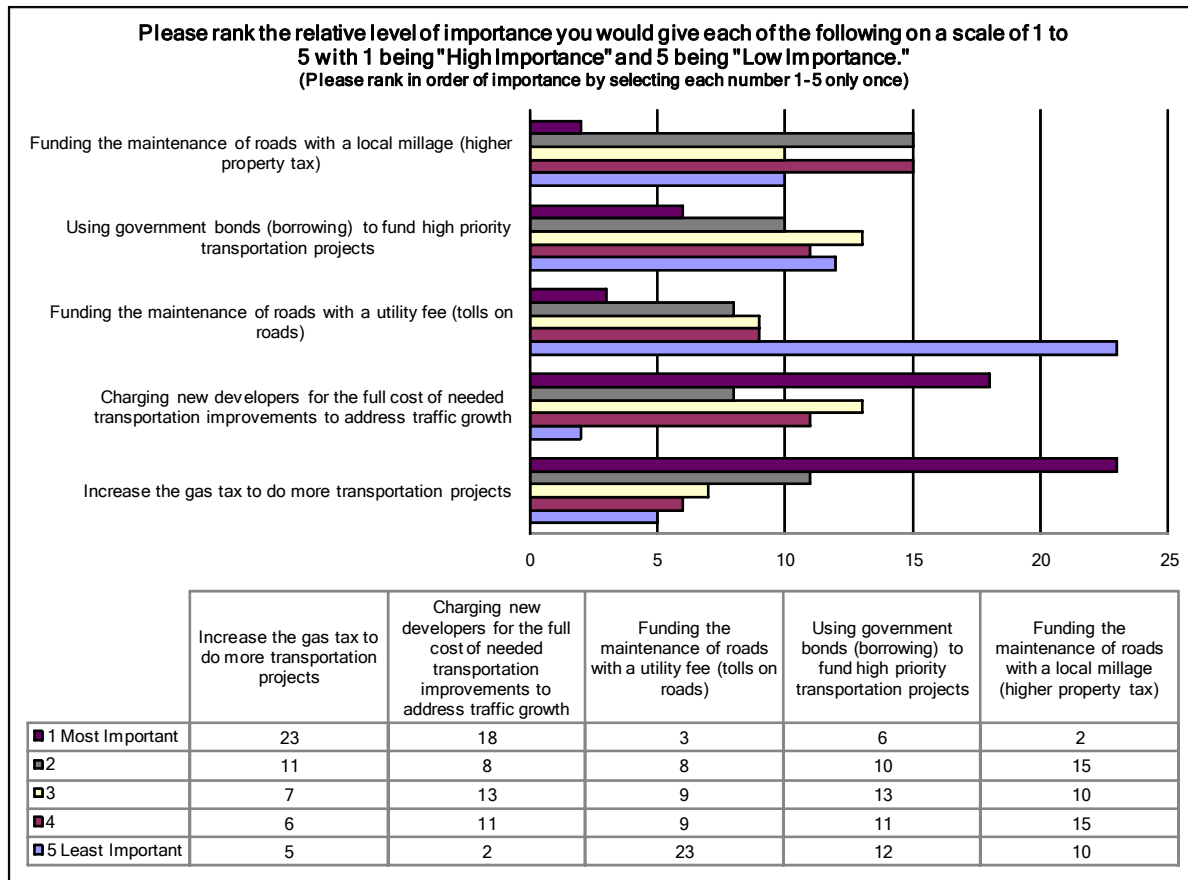
Improving traffic flow (control number of driveways, medians, coordinated signals, other) has been previously accomplished in Kalamazoo County through local access management plans, as well as signal coordination projects. Several signal coordination projects have been previously funded using Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding. Funding in the 2035 Transportation Plan has been identified for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality as long as Kalamazoo County is considered a maintenance or non-attainment area under the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality guidelines. CMAQ funding is anticipated at \$40,037,793 over the life of the Transportation Plan.



This question asked participants to rank the importance of planning efforts in Kalamazoo County. These efforts ranged from safety and traffic flow to planning for street widening.

Planning for the ongoing maintenance and preservation of streets and highways and the planning for pedestrian and bicycle improvements were identified as being of high importance. The Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Goals and Objectives emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system by preserving the functional integrity and capacity of the transportation network as well as maintaining the current non-motorized facilities. Use of the management systems developed by the Michigan Department of Transportation as well as the use of the Roadsoft PASER system is encouraged by the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study. The local agencies also identified within their Capital Improvement Programs various preservation projects both on the major streets as well as the local street network.

The Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study continues to encourage coordination between local planning organizations and road agencies when looking at improvements to the street network.



This question asked survey responders to rank the funding options for improving the transportation system in Kalamazoo County.

When looking at the future funding of improvements to the transportation network in Kalamazoo County, responses indicated the support for a gas tax increase as well as charging developers for the full cost of needed transportation improvements to address traffic growth. Within the 2035 Transportation Plan, no assumption was made for a gas tax increase for the State of Michigan to increase funding levels. Should that be adopted by the State of Michigan, funding for the local road agencies will increase. No forecasting has been done at the county level to address how much will be made available and where that increase would be spent. The local road agencies have policies in place for new developments, and developers work closely with the road agencies to design and construct safe, efficient roadways.

Support was also shown for funding the maintenance of roads with a local millage (higher property tax). No forecast was made within the 2035 Transportation Plan for future funding using this mechanism.