

KALAMAZOO AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the March 27, 2024 Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

The March 27, 2024 Policy Committee Meeting was called to order at approximately 9:00 a.m. at Metro in Kalamazoo, by Chairperson Thompson.

INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were made by all present. Greg Kinney, Van Buren County was introduced and joined the meeting virtually.

ROLL CALL

Meeting attendance was recorded on the sign-in sheet.

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING

Curt Aardema	Central County Transportation Authority
David Anderson	City of Kalamazoo
Cheri Bell	Oshtemo Township
Heather Bowden	Michigan Department of Transportation, Planning
Rob Britigan	City of Parchment
Marsha Drouin	Richland Township
John Gisler	Kalamazoo County
Todd Hackenberg	Village of Lawton
Robert Henderson	Van Buren Public Transit
Jeff Heppler	Village of Augusta
Carl Keller	Village of Vicksburg
Greg Kinney	Van Buren County Road Commission
Judy Lemon	City of Galesburg
Pat McGinnis	City of Portage
Sherine Miller	Kalamazoo Township
Pete Pfeiffer	Michigan Department of Transportation, TSC
Jeff Sorensen	Cooper Township
Paul Sotherland	KATS Citizens' Advisory Committee
Randy Thompson, Chair	Comstock Township
Don Ulsh	Schoolcraft Township
Jerry VanderRoest	Charleston Township
Mark Worden	Road Commission of Kalamazoo County

MEMBERS ABSENT

Tracy Locey	Brady Township
Aditya Rama	Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority

OTHERS PARTICIPATING

Megan Mickelson	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Elizabeth Rumick	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Jon Start	Citizen
Steve Stepek	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Ali Townsend	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Bret Witkowski	Van Buren County Road Commission

CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Heppler moved, and it was duly seconded by Drouin, **“to approve the agenda of the March 27 Policy Committee Meeting.”** MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No citizens’ comments were made.

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 FEBRUARY 28, 2024 MEETING

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

TITLE VI PLAN DRAFT

The Title VI Plan draft is included in the packet. Stepek explained no additional comments were received. The Technical Committee and Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Staff recommend approval of the document. Britigan asked for reiteration of the process change incorporated into the plan. Stepek reminded attendees that that the Title VI plan was updated for the new Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration requirement that complaints filed with all local agencies that are subrecipients of federal funds be investigated at an agency one-level up.

Aardema moved, and it was duly seconded by Heppler, **“to accept and approve the Title VI Plan.”** MOTION CARRIED.

FY 2023-2026 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AMENDMENTS

Referring to the amendments included in the meeting packet, Stepek highlighted the projects are mostly preventative maintenance, transit related job changes, bridge projects, and regional pavement markings. The largest project cost is for the Michigan Department of Transportation additional ramp installation from westbound I-94 to northbound US-131.

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

KATS CITIZENS’ ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER REAPPOINTMENT

Steppek explained two members of the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CAC) are up for reelection. They are Paul Sotherland and Kay Chase. Both are willing to continue serving. KATS Staff recommends their reelection. Please let KATS know of any other people interested in participating on the CAC.

Sorensen moved, and it was duly seconded by Worden, ***“to approve the reappointment of KATS Citizens’ Advisory Committee Members Paul Sotherland and Kay Chase.”*** MOTION CARRIED.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT OPERATORS

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is included in the meeting packet. Steppek explained the MOU outlines the federal planning responsibilities for Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS), transit, and the Michigan Department of Transportation. The only change is the addition of a couple words. KATS Staff recommend authorizing KATS Policy Committee Chairperson and KATS Executive Director to sign the agreement on the committee’s behalf. Then it will be forwarded to transit to sign.

Miller moved, and it was duly seconded by Sorensen, ***“to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Michigan Department of Transportation and Transit Operators and for the Policy Committee Chairperson and the KATS Executive Director to sign the agreement.”*** MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION UPDATES

Aardema reported St. Augustine students presented Metro drivers with gift certificates in celebration of Transit Appreciation Week. A banner outside Metro displays March 18, 2024 as National Transit Employee Appreciation Day. Aardema expressed appreciation for the entire Metro staff. Metro’s annual report is available on their kmetro.com website. Aardema invited attendees to Metro’s Microtransit presentation public meeting on April 8, 2024 at Comstock Township Hall. The Microtransit fare structure has been set. It will mirror the current bus system fare structure. The new service, named Metro Link, is an 18-month pilot program. Changes will be made after evaluation of program successes and areas for improvement. All aspects of the Microtransit program will be run by River North Transit, part of Via Transportation. The Central County Transportation Authority (CCTA) / Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority (KCTA) board entered into a unique partnership with the Oakland Drive and Winchell Avenue neighborhoods to install benches at Winchell Avenue and Whites Road bus stops. In 2021 and 2022, the board entered into two contracts to purchase five medium duty buses, each with 12 to 14 seats, for approximately \$100 thousand dollars each. The price of each bus has risen drastically, to approximately \$190 thousand dollars each. One cause of the price increase is fewer manufacturers. This price challenge is not only being experienced locally by Metro and other agencies purchasing large trucks, but nationally as well. Fewer buses will be purchased with less frequency because of the price. The lawsuit filed last year by Crossroads Mall against CCTA, KCTA, the City of Portage, and Kalamazoo County claimed that buses servicing the mall had damaged roads on the property. A judge has

dismissed the lawsuit. Crossroads Mall has now asked Metro to vacate the property. Discussion is ongoing for alternate locations to service the mall and surrounding retail hub.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

As outlined in the memo in the meeting packet, Stepek pointed out that the April Policy Committee meeting will be held one week earlier than normal. The meeting will be held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County at 4400 South 26th Street instead of at Metro. Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study's (KATS) mid-year Unified Planning Work Program Amendment will be presented for adoption at the April meeting. It includes realignment of expenses and slightly more money for Region PASER Rating. At the May meeting, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration will present the KATS Certification Review results. The Certification Review Report is available on the KATSmpo.org website.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business was brought forth.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Citizens' comments were made.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Pfeiffer of the Michigan Department of Transportation reported lots of projects will be starting up in April in the area.

Miller reported 63 acres in Kalamazoo Township on Douglas is in the process of being sold.

Worden thanked those that attended the recent open house for the new Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) facility. RCKC looks forward to hosting the next meeting. RCKC was awarded a Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Scrap Tire Grant of approximately \$500 thousand dollars. Press releases will announce where and when the used tires will be used in the chip seal process. In response to Heppler's request for further information, Worden responded RCKC has used scrap tires in chip seal projects in 2018 and 2023. Evaluation of the use of tires showed the pavement did not fail. Results of the Safe Streets for All Study are available on the kalamazoocountyroads.com website.

Sorensen reported Cooper Township is selling a 1991 model year 3,300-gallon tanker firetruck if anyone is interested in purchasing it. Replacement of the firetruck was planned for in the township's Capital Improvement Plan. Reconstruction of the Cooper Township Hall is ongoing. All attendees are welcome to attend this year's Kalamazoo County Chapter of the Michigan Township Association annual golf outing on June 28, 2024.

Anderson announced he has been reappointed as the City of Kalamazoo representative to the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Policy Committee.

Britigan reported the City of Parchment closed on a U.S. Department of Agriculture loan to repair, replace, and extend the useful life of its stormwater and wastewater pipe system throughout the city. Priority of the work will be based on the impact of failure as opposed to the age of the line. Three lift stations will be repaired, replaced, or refurbished.

Gisler has Avelo Airline coupons available for anyone interested. The downtown Kalamazoo Justice Center dedication ceremony will be held September 7, 2024.

Heppler reported the Village of Augusta continues working on the Washington Street Bridge project. The village is in the final phase of videotaping all sewer infrastructure lines to look for breaks. Most were installed in the 1980s. M-96 improvements are planned for the summer. A Comprehensive Rezoning Map Process is ongoing.

Aardema reminded attendees that construction is impacting key Metro bus routes. Refer to the kmetro.com website for route detours and pickup location adjustments.

McGinnis reported that the City of Portage will be wrapping up the Shaver Road project this year. The extensive Portage Road project will start on Monday and last all summer. The city is looking for an Assistant City Engineer.

Bell stated Oshtemo Township is looking for a Civil Engineer. The Private Streets and Mobility Ordinance and the Mixed-Use Ordinance both passed. The West Main and 7th Street sewer project is wrapping up. The township is awaiting a final decision by the Michigan Court of Appeals for its U.S. Department of Agriculture loans. Alternate funding will be pursued to continue progress on the sewer project. Microtransit was discussed at last night's board meeting. Also at the meeting, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) discussed major bridge projects planned in 2024, 2025, and 2026. Seeco Drive will be extended with the expectation that property to the east will develop significantly over the next year or two. The township is planning an extension of 8th Street. Staff have been working with MDOT for traffic calming on M-43.

Sotherland, Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Citizens' Advisory Committee reported that bike corrals for bike parking will be installed in downtown Kalamazoo starting on April 10, 2024. At a prior meeting Gisler asked what percentage of people ride bikes and how many bicyclists are in Kalamazoo. In following up on the question, Sotherland responded that the answer is unknown, but an upcoming Commuter Challenge may help provide answers. Sotherland brought flyers for the Kalamazoo Commuter Challenge. This two-week event in May encourages as many people as possible to ride their bikes to work, shop, or dine. Riders will use the Love to Ride app to record rides. Data from the app can be collected and used to answer questions about ridership including the number of cyclists, and where people cycle.

Sorensen added he will be attending an Affordable Housing Meet and Greet tomorrow at the Kalamazoo County LandBank Office at 3:00 p.m. to discuss funds available to local units of government to help people in need. Members weighed in with their agency experiences related to housing assistance.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairperson Thompson adjourned the meeting at 10:03 a.m.

The next meeting of the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Policy Committee will be held on Wednesday, April 17, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

Approved 4/17/24 (er)