

# KALAMAZOO AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY POLICY COMMITTEE

DRAFT Minutes of the April 17, 2024 Meeting

## CALL TO ORDER

The April 17, 2024 Policy Committee Meeting was called to order at approximately 9:00 a.m. at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County, in Kalamazoo, by Chairperson Thompson. Johnson welcomed attendees adding information about the facility.

## 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
David Anderson	City of Kalamazoo
Mary Balkema	Kalamazoo County
Cheri Bell	Oshtemo Charter Township
Heather Bowden	Michigan Department of Transportation, Planning
Rob Britigan	City of Parchment
Marsha Drouin	Richland Township
Tim Frisbie	Village of Vicksburg
Jason Gaitlin	Wakeshma Township
Robert Henderson	Van Buren Public Transit
Jeff Heppler	Village of Augusta
Adam Herringa	City of Portage
Joanna Johnson	Road Commission of Kalamazoo County
Don Martin	Kalamazoo Township
Pete Pfeiffer	Michigan Department of Transportation, TSC
Aditya Rama	Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority
Paul Sotherland	KATS Citizens' Advisory Committee
Greg Thomas	Pavilion Township
Randy Thompson, Chair	Comstock Township
Don Ulsh	Schoolcraft Township
Jerry VanderRoest	Charleston Township
Bret Witkowski	Van Buren County Road Commission
Mark Worden	Road Commission of Kalamazoo County

## MEMBERS ABSENT

Lisa Imus	Village of Lawton
Judy Lemon	City of Galesburg
Tracy Locey	Brady Township
Jeff Sorensen	Cooper Township

## OTHERS PARTICIPATING

Tim Culver	Rep. Hall
Lysanne Harma	Richland
Megan Mickelson	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Ryan Minkus	Road Commission of Kalamazoo County
Fred Nagler	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

Stepek reported agenda Item 11-Kalamazoo Commuter Challenge and Love-to-Ride Presentation will be moved up to directly follow Item 7-Consent Agenda.

## APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Heppler moved, and it was duly seconded by Johnson, **“to approve the agenda of the April 17 Policy Committee Meeting.”** MOTION CARRIED.

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

No citizens’ comments were made.

## CONSENT AGENDA

- ACCEPTANCE OF THE TREASURER REPORT
- ACCEPTANCE OF THE SOUTHCENTRAL MICHIGAN PLANNING COUNCIL REPORT
- APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MARCH 27, 2024 MEETING

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

## KALAMAZOO COMMUTER CHALLENGE AND LOVE TO RIDE PRESENTATION

Sotherland provided information on the Kalamazoo Commuter Challenge program and Love to Ride app. The challenge will run from May 17, 2024 through May 30, 2024. All residents of Kalamazoo County are invited to participate using the free Love to Ride app available for download via the QR code on the flyer or the Love to Ride Kalamazoo County (lovetoride.net) website. The program encourages cycling to shop, dine, and commute to work. All rides, even short ones, will be tracked via the app. The tracking app will allow access to data dashboards, analytics, and exports. An anonymized heatmap of rides over the entire county can be used to assist with future nonmotorized planning. Soon riders will be able to rate the routes using the app. Further public outreach opportunities were discussed. Electronic versions of the event flyer and poster were emailed to committee members. Stepek added the City of Kalamazoo is funding the program for the first year. Then, cost sharing across entities may be explored. Additional questions were raised and answered.

## FY 2024 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM AMENDMENT

A link to the Fiscal Year 2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Amendment is included on the agenda. Stepek explained this is the annual midyear amendment. Costs are shifted to better

align with expected needs since the budget is initially approved several months prior to the beginning of the fiscal year. The proposed transit fare study was removed. Overall, there is no change in funding.

Johnson moved, and it was duly seconded by Heppler, **“to approve the FY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program Amendment.”** MOTION CARRIED.

## **FY 2025 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM**

Referring to the document linked in the meeting packet, Stepek explained the FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is issued for public comment and available on the katsmpo.org website. This represents the proposed budget and work activities for Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) for FY 2025. Included in the budget is a microtransit implementation study for Metro. Please let KATS Staff know of any questions or comments you have. The UPWP will be presented for adoption next month.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REVIEW**

The members of the Finance and Personnel Subcommittee conducting the Executive Director Stepek review are Aardema, Britigan, Thompson, Anderson, and Sorensen. Aardema explained that the review process included gathering feedback from internal staff, external staff, other Metropolitan Planning Organizations, statewide and regional contacts, Technical Committee leadership, and the Finance and Personnel Subcommittee. Feedback was remarkably received from everyone asked. Attendees were thanked for submitting feedback. A great level of general respect was portrayed for what Stepek has done within Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS), the region, and the state. The Subcommittee reviewed comments and met with Stepek. Britigan explained based on Stepek’s leadership, and consideration of cost-of-living adjustments, the Subcommittee recommends an increase of 6% effective on October 1, 2024, KATS new fiscal year. Stepek’s performance was praised.

Ulsh moved, and it was duly seconded by Martin, **“to accept the Subcommittee’s recommendation of KATS Executive Director Steve Stepek’s six percent rate increase effective October 1, 2024.”** MOTION CARRIED.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION UPDATES**

Aardema reported the Central County Transportation Authority (CCTA) / Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority (KCTA) board met recently at the new Comstock Township Hall. External financial audit firm Maner Costerisan issued a clean audit opinion. The organization is well funded, well managed, and the budget is in good shape. The Metro Link 18-month pilot program started Monday, April 15, 2024. The Link minivan-type vehicles have an ADA accessibility component. The microtransit program operates in three zones within the current CCTA boundaries. Data collected will be analyzed to make tweaks to the program. The app-based service offers on-demand rides within zone boundaries and can connect riders to a main haul bus route. When signing up on the app, the first ten rides are free. After that, the fare is \$1.50, the same as a bus fare. Thompson added there were about 20 rides the first day. Even though some glitches can be expected, rollout went fairly well. The External Relations Committee has additional outreach planned after the soft opening trial is running smoothly. Since the entire microtransit program is run by River North Transit, part of Via Transportation, any issues can be addressed internally. Via has 12 similar programs in the state. Bell mentioned McBride made a presentation to the Oshtemo Charter

Township board and recommends other municipalities schedule one. For the safety of riders, Bell recommended cameras be installed in the vehicles.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

In addition to the memo in the meeting packet, Stepek reported he had the pleasure of attending the grand announcement with the State Governor and the Federal Highway Administration for the \$38-million-dollar City of Kalamazoo PROTECT Grant award. Funding will be used for the Arcadia Creek storm management project from Westnedge Avenue to Waldo Stadium. Stepek added it is Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) season. Reach out to Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study for any assistance with the grant process, letter of support, or other questions.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

No new business was brought forth.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No Citizens' comments were made.

## **MEMBER COMMENTS**

Witkowski reported there is a Van Buren County Road Commission millage renewal coming up for the first time since 1978. The man who killed Rene Rangel in a construction work zone in March of 2023 was sentenced Monday, April 15, 2024 to a minimum of seven years and a maximum of 15 years in prison.

Pfeiffer noted that this is National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week. Michigan Department of Transportation has asked everyone to wear orange today, Wednesday, April 17, 2024 in support of all those who risk their lives working on the roads. Pfeiffer urged attendees to pass along the message, to use caution and be aware of the dangers.

As a member of the Airport Board, Aardema clarified the recent news story that Avelo Airline discontinued service from Kalamazoo to Orlando. This is actually a planned seasonal cutoff due to lack of demand during the summer. The same cutoff occurred last year and is customary at many regional airports. As scheduled, service will resume in the fall.

Britigan congratulated Stepek for a positive review.

Johnson appreciated the public support and team effort for the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County's (RCKC) move to its new facility. RCKC is completely out of the old facility and will be closing on it tomorrow. Routine maintenance projects and Hot-Mix Asphalt Wedging are well underway. Paving started Monday, April 15, 2024. Hard copies of RCKC's 2023 Annual Report were made available. An electronic version of the report is available on the RCKC website [kalamazoocountyroads.com](http://kalamazoocountyroads.com). RCKC received \$700,000 grant funding from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) for the rubber chip seal program that utilizes scrap tires. Partnership with townships is appreciated. RCKC is completing an application for the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program. RCKC finished a Safety Transportation Plan highlighting ideas to help mitigate safety concerns in the county. As others mentioned, this is National Work Zone Awareness Week. In addition to wearing orange today, RCKC will pause for a moment of silence Friday, April 19, 2024 for the Van Buren County Road Commission worker Rene Rangel who was

killed on the job, and those across the state and nation that have lost their lives in public service on our roads. Share information on work zone awareness and practice safe driving.

Heppler appreciates awareness being brought for National Work Zone Awareness Week especially as his brother was hit on I-94. Heppler echoed for attendees to practice safe driving. Roadway engineering, education, and enforcement, or the “Three-E’s” can impact road safety. Preparation is underway for the Village of Augusta Washington Street Bridge project. The Parks Department is planning the continuation of the Kal-Haven Trail from Galesburg to Battle Creek.

VanderRoest reported Charleston Township in partnership with the Michigan Department of Transportation, and the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County, is hosting a public hearing for the proposed \$1.4-million-dollar improvement on I-94. Phase 2 of the project at Exit 92 will begin soon.

Frisbie reported the Village of Vicksburg is hosting a Citizen’s Academy. Tonight is the first of six free classes designed to teach citizens how their local government works.

Sotherland congratulated the City of Kalamazoo and staff for obtaining the \$38-million-dollar grant, noting the challenges of the process.

Bell reported Oshtemo Township is in the process of an easement acquisition. Design is underway to extend non-motorized pathways. Oshtemo Township is working internally on public notifications for road closures this season. Oshtemo’s last dirt street will be paved this year. Bell thanked the many entities involved with the West Main corridor traffic improvements.

Anderson announced there is a power outage now on the north side of the City of Kalamazoo due to an equipment failure. Anderson recognized the major effort of the team to obtain the \$38-million-dollar PROTECT Grant award.

Ulsh mentioned the Township Supervisor’s meeting immediately follows this meeting.

## **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, May 29, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.*