

BATTLE CREEK AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

Minutes of February 26, 2025 Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Voting: Mallory Avis, Richard Bayus, Garrett Gresly (for Tracy Myers), Brian Kernstock (for Kristine Parsons), Derek King, Annjanette Kremer, Steve Skalski, and Erick Stewart
Non-voting: None

MEMBERS ABSENT: Voting: Barry Beamish, Harry Burdett, Laveta Hardish, and Kevin Leiter
Non-voting: Jenny Staroska and Southcentral Michigan Planning Council (SMPC)

OTHERS PRESENT: Jeff Franklin

Vice Chair Avis called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. in the Council Room of the Susan L. Anderson Municipal Building (Springfield City Hall), 601 Avenue A, Springfield MI 49037.

ROLL CALL

Avis asked all members and staff in attendance to introduce themselves. It was determined that a quorum of the voting members was present.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

It was moved by Skalski, supported by Stewart, to approve the agenda. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
25-10**

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

It was moved by Skalski, supported by Kernstock, to approve the minutes of the January 22, 2025 meeting. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
25-11**

COMMUNICATIONS

Franklin shared the following communications:

- The Calhoun County Board of Commissioners reappointed Derek King to the BCATS Policy Committee through December 2026.
- Several federal Executive Orders were issued throughout February that impact BCATS.

An EO (2/6) suspended the approval process for the State of Michigan Electric Vehicle Deployment Plan (and other National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure initiatives). The State Deployment Plan can no longer be federally approved for changes to the plan nor additional obligations in funding. This could affect the previously announced charging station at 11 Mile Road and I-94.

An EO (1/27) temporarily blocked all funding reimbursements under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), however, this EO was overturned by a federal court order (2/3). One week later a federal court ruled that the Administration had not fully complied with that previous court order, and reiterated the “immediate restoration of frozen funding” (2/10). The impact is that, to date, BCATS has not received reimbursement from MDOT for the January 2025 consolidated planning grant billing. MDOT advises that reimbursement is still anticipated soon.

An EO requires all USDOT agencies to operate under White House oversight until further notice. FHWA and FTA are required to submit traditionally independent decisions to a centralized legal counsel. This additional step is required to seek approval of BCATS TIP amendments, including the actions taken by Policy Committee in January (a Marian Burch budget amendment; an MDOT EPE addition). The forthcoming approval of the FY26-29 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the FY26 Unified Planning Work Program (UWP) are also anticipated to require this additional review step. MDOT has advised all MPOs to keep their typical local processes on their typical schedules at this time. Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) provided this language from an FHWA Headquarters memorandum dated 2/21/25: “As is standard in every transition, documents affecting the public are reviewed prior to issuance, to ensure compliance with current Administration priorities. FHWA expects to provide further clarification once administrative review and written guidance are complete.”

The White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has issued an Interim Final Rule to remove the long-standing regulations guiding how agencies implement the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The result is that agencies like USDOT will have greater flexibility in shaping their own NEPA procedures. This change will likely lead to USDOT making revisions that affect how environmental impacts of transportation projects are assessed. The expectation is that NEPA requirements could be eased or eliminated.

- MDOT Statewide Planning has scheduled the BCATS FY26 Pre-Unified Planning Work Program meeting for next Tuesday, March 4, 2025. BCATS and Battle Creek Transit/Transportation Authority of Calhoun County anticipate discussion of next year's BCATS UWP (the planning work and coordination with transit that BCATS' staff will carry out during that fiscal year).
- The Transportation Authority of Calhoun County voted to accept BCATS invitation for financially participating membership as outlined in the BCATS Policy Committee bylaws. TACC Board members had also proposed a rotation of their Board members for attendance at BCATS Policy Committee meetings. BCATS Technical Committee will see a similar draft update to their Bylaws at their March meetings. BCATS Technical Committee Bylaws will require subsequent Policy Committee approval.
- Franklin recently responded to two citizen communications: Jacqueline Hansen, commercial investor, seeking traffic count information on North Ave between Goodale and Morgan; and Joel Gibbons, airline pilot, with a list of recommendations about traffic operations and traffic flow at many BCATS area intersections. Joel stated he intends to participate in a future BCATS Technical Committee meeting. Other members indicated also responding to Joel separately.
- Franklin will attend the free Risk Management Workshop in Lansing, tomorrow, 2/27/25. This Workshop is offered by BCATS' group property and liability insurance provider, Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority. The Workshop will feature sessions on political and legal updates, as well as training on civic engagement; and employee relations.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Request for Letters of Support for FY27 Local Safety Program and FY28 Local Bridge Program

Franklin reviewed requests from City of Battle Creek and Calhoun County Road Department for letters of support for their individual applications to the MDOT call for projects for FY27 Local Safety and FY28 Local Bridge. Sample letters were provided to members for their review ahead of the meeting.

It was moved by King, supported by Skalski, to approve Letters of Support for City of Battle Creek and Calhoun County Road Department applications to the MDOT FY27 Local Safety and FY28 Local Bridge program(s), as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
25-12**

B. FY2024 Audit

Franklin discussed the completed FY2024 Audit of BCATS Financial Statements performed by Rehmann Robson Inc. Franklin asked for a motion to accept and file the completed Audit with State Department of Treasury and City of Battle Creek Finance Department.

It was moved by Skalski, supported by Stewart, to accept and file the FY2024 Audit, as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
25-13**

C. Report from Study Management Committee – Annual Review for J. Franklin

On behalf of the BCATS Study Management Committee (SMC), Skalski reported that the SMC had completed the annual performance evaluation of BCATS Executive Director Jeff Franklin. SMC recommended a 4% merit salary increase, and asked that Policy Committee accept the recommendation of SMC.

It was moved by Kernstock, supported by Stewart, to accept the recommendation of SMC and file the completed annual performance evaluation into BCATS Personnel Files, as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
25-14**

D. Report from Study Management Committee – Request for Equipment Purchase

Skalski reported that Study Management Committee reviewed a request for a computer purchase for the forthcoming recruitment of a BCATS Finance Director. Executive Director Franklin presented a quote for a Dell laptop computer and software not to exceed \$3,000 in total cost, and that would be a 100% reimbursable cost through an allowance in the BCATS Asset Management program. SMC asked that Policy Committee accept the recommendation of SMC to have Franklin make this computer purchase.

It was moved by King, supported by Kremer, to accept the recommendation of SMC and to have BCATS Executive Director complete this equipment purchase, as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
25-15**

E. Report from Study Management Committee – Recruitment Update for Finance Director

Skalski and Franklin gave an update on the recruitment process for a BCATS Finance Director position.

COMMENTS

A. Next Meeting

Vice Chair Avis announced that the next meeting of the BCATS Policy Committee is scheduled for March 26, 2025 at 1:30 p.m.

B. Committee Member Comments

Kremer reported that the Marshall TSC reports work on the Marshall Modernization projects to support the MAJOR campus continues. Work is still expected to be performed in Marshall Township foremost, with Emmett Township work coming along at a later date. An open house is scheduled for March 11, 2025 on the Marshall projects. Tree clearing is being performed to meet the April 15th deadline for completion (restrictions related to bat migration). MDOT will also be meeting with Emmett Township for a Q&A session related to forthcoming work.

Kernstock reported that this would be his last BCATS' meeting, as he is departing the Calhoun County Road Department for another position. Kernstock also reported seasonal weight restrictions are in effect in the County.

Avis reported that Battle Creek Transit has applied for a BUILD grant (formerly RAISE), although the application process changed in the eleventh hour for the program with the new Federal administration. BCT/TACC seeks \$31.25 million in combined Federal/State funding to build a new facility. BCT also is seeking Congressionally Designated Spending funding (\$500,000) for rehabilitation of the train station in downtown Battle Creek.

Stewart thanked the BCATS Policy Committee for welcoming TACC to BCATS. Stewart outlined passions for economic development, the Battle Creek area, and transit that led to his involvement with TACC.

Skalski reported on the ongoing Kalamazoo River naturalization study with the USACE, and the possibility that Dickman Road may not be as highly impacted as once thought. Prior earmark funding intended for the realignment of Dickman Road may be repurposed for Fountain Street bridge removal in the area. MDOT and City of Battle Creek will continue to coordinate on this ongoing long-term project.

King complimented Franklin on his job performance to date. King welcomed Stewart (TACC) to the BCATS Policy Committee. King congratulated Kernstock on his new position, wishing him luck and lamenting the loss to the County.

Bayus reported that MDOT is working through the latest USDOT/Executive Orders to determine impacts to various grant programs related to electric vehicles and diversity/equity/inclusion programs. Bayus reported that MDOT is meeting with FHWA Michigan Division to discuss next steps.

Franklin commented on the existing BCATS Regionally Significant definition as it relates to TIP amendment delays (Franklin seeks to avoid delays whenever reasonable). Franklin thanked the Committee for their support.

C. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Avis adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.