

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION

BCATS ORGANIZATION

The purpose of the Battle Creek Area Transportation Study (BCATS), as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the greater Battle Creek area, is to establish and maintain a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process. While meeting the appropriate Federal and State requirements, this process promotes the development of a safe, effective, efficient, and environmentally sensitive multi-modal transportation system for moving people and goods in the metropolitan area, while promoting livability, sustainability, reliability and resiliency.

The Study lies in the northwest corner of Calhoun County, Michigan (Figure II-1). The Study area (or Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA)) is comprised of a land area of approximately 216 square miles and includes the Cities of Battle Creek and Springfield, the Charter Townships of Bedford, Emmett and Pennfield and the non-charter Townships of Leroy and Newton. The study area, shaded in Figure II-2, includes areas anticipated to have the potential to become urbanized over the time period covered by this long range Plan. The population trends from the 2000 U.S. Census resulted in extensions of the “urbanized area” that showed growth primarily to the south of the pre-2000 urbanized area. Results of the 2010 U.S. Census showed very little growth over the previous decade. However, the 2010 Census urbanized area boundary extended the Battle Creek urbanized area along an unpopulated corridor for approximately two miles to the west to include some of the Village of Augusta and a very small portion of Ross Township. However, since Augusta is located within Kalamazoo County and has political and social ties to the Kalamazoo area, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed with the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) regarding transportation planning responsibilities for the urbanized area associated with the Village of Augusta and the immediately surrounding land. While this area is in the KATS countywide MPA, it is not located within the Kalamazoo urbanized area. Since the recession of 2008, urban growth in the metropolitan area has been near non-existent. Housing starts remain very sluggish in 2016. Therefore, BCATS does not see any justification for expanding its Metropolitan Planning Area at this time.

Relative to the development and adoption of the *BCATS 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan*, the decision-making body of BCATS is the Policy Committee. The Policy Committee, an Intermunicipality Committee formed under Act 200 of the Michigan Public Acts of 1957, has final local approval and authority on all major transportation decisions, policies, and programs of BCATS.

BCATS also maintains a Technical Committee which provides advice to the Policy Committee and staff on technical methods, procedures, and standards that are used in the development of transportation plans and programs. The coordination and management of BCATS' activities is the responsibility of the BCATS staff. The staff also conducts the majority of the technical studies of the BCATS program. Listings of the current Committee memberships and staff are included in the Appendix of this document.

LONG RANGE PLAN BACKGROUND

The first long range transportation plan (LRTP) for the BCATS area was developed in the late 1970's and early 1980's and was adopted by the BCATS Policy Committee in June, 1983. The Plan contained specific recommendations for improvements to the highway system which addressed safety-related and capacity deficiencies. Other modes of transportation, such as public transportation and parking, were dealt with in a cursory manner in the Plan and were addressed in subsequent separate studies to determine the optimal role for each in the transportation network.

The 1983 LRTP listed 30 major roadway improvements in three phases of implementation. Many of these improvements had been completed by the time an updated planning process was utilized to develop the 2015 *Long Range Transportation Plan*. This totally new *Plan* was adopted by the BCATS Policy Committee in 1995. The 1995 *Plan* contained recommendations for approximately sixty-eight (68) projects for both highways and transit. Of the forty-five (45) projects scheduled from 1995 to 1999, thirty-five (35) were completed on-time. The completion of these projects was beneficial to the transportation network and to the mobility of the community as a whole.

The "Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act" (ISTEA) which was signed into law on December 18, 1991 changed many aspects of the way transportation plans were to be developed and dramatically influenced the preparation of the 2015 Plan. ISTEA added many more factors and facets to the long range planning process. Specifically, the Federal Highway Administration regulations implementing ISTEA (October 28, 1993) stated:

"The metropolitan transportation planning process shall include the development of a transportation plan addressing at least a twenty-year planning horizon. The plan shall include both long-range and short-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods...."

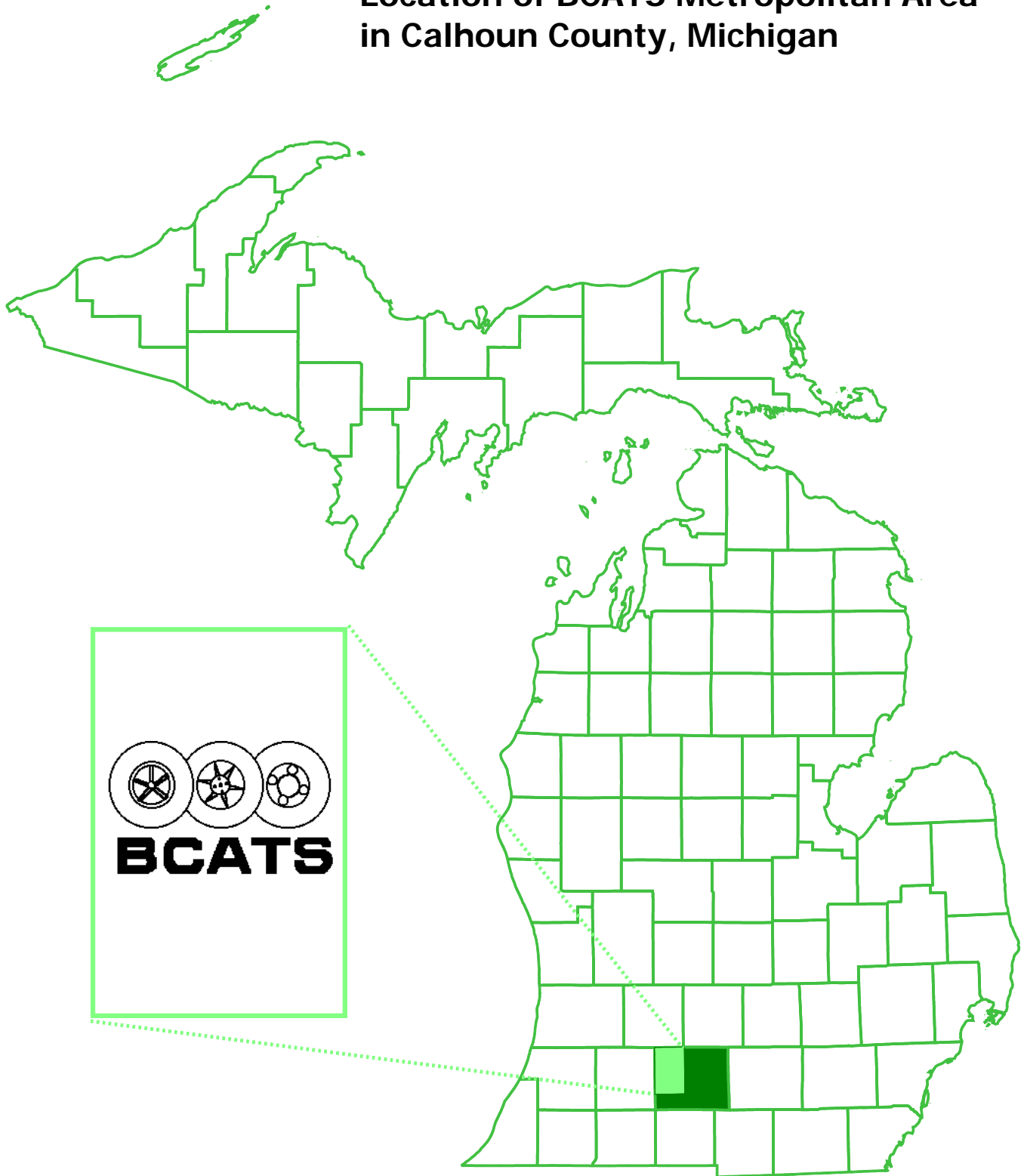
In addition, the regulations identified eleven specific areas that were to be addressed within the plan process. It also provided for public involvement and air quality conformity requirements. The next federal legislation, titled "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century" (TEA-21), distilled the "factors" to seven.


In 1999, BCATS undertook an update of the 2015 long range plan. The resulting 2025 Plan was adopted by the BCATS Policy Committee in September, 2000.

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) federal legislation was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bush on August 10, 2005. New final rules to implement the SAFETEA-LU legislation were published by FHWA and FTA on February 14, 2007. The new regulations still required a 20-year horizon for the long range plan. The stated goal of such plans was modified slightly as follows:

"The transportation plan shall include both long-range and short-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated multi-modal transportation system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand."

**Figure II-1
Location of BCATS Metropolitan Area
in Calhoun County, Michigan**



 Calhoun County

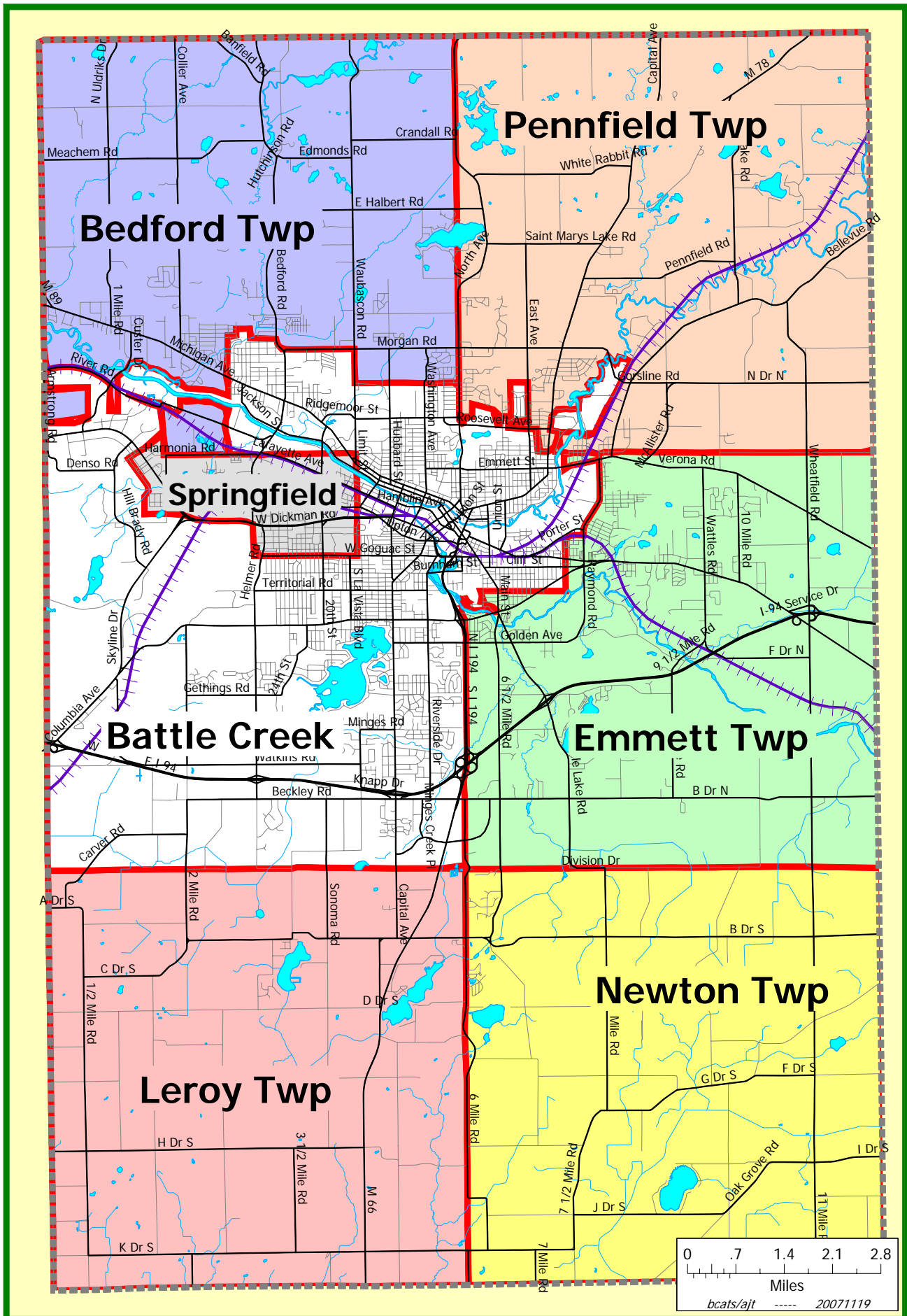
0 20 40 60



Miles



**Figure II-2
BCATS Metropolitan Area & Jurisdictional Boundaries**



The regulations set the time for updating a long range plan at a minimum of every four to five years (depending upon air quality status) to confirm the plan's continuing relevance to actual developments. At the time of any update, the plan horizon is to be extended to again cover at least a 20-year period into the future.

SAFETEA-LU expanded the planning factors back to eight by breaking out "security" as its own factor.

The eight considerations were consistent with the goals for the long range plans that were adopted subsequently by BCATS. The Plan components still had to meet a financial constraint requirement first prescribed under ISTEA. For the first time, the SAFETEA-LU legislation allowed for the identification of "illustrative projects" which did not have to meet the strict fiscal constraint requirements. However, these projects were not considered available for programming until funding was identified and they were programmed into the constrained portion of the Plan. This option remains currently.

BCATS updated the 2025 Plan to a 2030 horizon year with adoption of a new Plan by the BCATS Policy Committee in November, 2007. The next update to a 2035 time horizon for the Plan was considered a minor update since the previous major update had been completed only three years prior. The goals and objectives were reaffirmed, and minor changes were made to reflect a federal emphasis on liveability, sustainability, and climate change. The *2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan* for BCATS was approved by the BCATS Policy Committee in June, 2011.

In July, 2012, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) was signed into law to replace SAFETEA-LU. This legislation included a specific focus on performance-based planning and the development of systems to support that planning. MAP-21 was only a 2-year bill and when it expired in 2014, it was extended until a new 5-year bill was passed in December, 2015. The new legislation is termed the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) and it continues the provisions of MAP-21 as far as the emphasis on performance-based planning. Some of the DOT regulations to implement many of the provisions of MAP-21/FAST Act have been finalized, including the planning provisions, but others have not yet been published. The planning rules were not published until May, 2016, at the point that this current update of the Plan was nearing completion. The May, 2016 planning rules added two new planning factors to the eight previously identified for consideration in the metropolitan planning process. The transportation planning factors now are:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
4. Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
7. Promote efficient system management and operation;
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system;
9. Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and
10. Enhance travel and tourism

CURRENT PLAN UPDATE

The April, 2010 U.S. Census data was available and was used for the travel demand forecast model analysis conducted for the 2040 plan update. Due to the stagnant nature of socio-economic conditions in the BCATS area, and the lack of all of the final regulations implementing the MAP-21/FAST Act legislation at the time that most work on the new Plan took place, the BCATS *2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan* update is also being considered a minor update.

The results of the current Plan update will be the guide for the development of future Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) documents. The TIP is a four-year programming document for Federal transportation funds. The TIP has generally been updated in Michigan every two to three years. The current TIP includes the fiscal years 2017-2020 and was adopted locally in May, 2016. All projects in the BCATS area receiving Federal transportation funds must be included in the TIP.

As of May 12, 2012, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) revoked the 1997 8-hour 0.080 ppm ozone standard for the purposes of regional transportation conformity. On May 21, 2012, the USEPA issued designations for the new 2008 8-hour 0.075 ppm ozone standard. This resulted in the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek, MI area being designated attainment under the 2008 standard. This Attainment/Maintenance area includes the counties of Kalamazoo, Calhoun and Van Buren.

Effective July 21, 2013, the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek, MI attainment/maintenance area is no longer required to demonstrate regional transportation conformity of Long Range Plans or Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) until such a time as the EPA publishes a notice designating the area as non-attainment again. Therefore, the *2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan* for BCATS does not include an air quality conformity analysis.

The USEPA has announced new standards (0.700 ppm ozone) that will likely impact the development of future MPO Plans and TIPs. However, the implementation time frame for the new standard is a couple of years into the future and does not impact the develop of the current Plan update. In addition, the Kalamazoo and Battle Creek metropolitan statistical areas are now considered two separate areas for air quality, and may not be tied together for future air quality determinations.

FUTURE PLAN DEVELOPMENT

It is expected that the Plan will be updated next in the 2019-2020 time period. That update will be based on the requirements of the federal legislation, and rules and regulations, in effect at that point in time.