

BATTLE CREEK AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
Policy Committee
Minutes of March 24, 2021 Meeting
Zoom Meeting Format

VOTING MEMBERS PARTICIPATING: Mallory Avis, Amy Robertson (for Deb Belles), Harry Burdett, Annjanette Kremer, Don Mayle, John Midgley, Greg Rickmar, and Bill Scutt

NON-VOTING MEMBERS PARTICIPATING: None

VOTING MEMBERS NOT PARTICIPATING: Laveta Hardish, Derek King, and Kevin Leiter

NON-VOTING MEMBERS NOT PARTICIPATING: Andy Pickard and Southcentral Michigan Planning Council

OTHERS PARTICIPATING: Deb Belles (joined the meeting later into the agenda), Pat Karr and Andrew Tilma

Chair Burdett called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. via a Zoom conference meeting. The meeting was held virtually due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

ROLL CALL

Karr conducted a roll call of members and any guests. Members indicated their presence for the purpose of establishing a quorum. It was noted that all members are participating virtually and, per the Open Meetings Act Amendment, each member participating virtually indicated their physical location, which is to be included in the minutes.

Members participating remotely and location: Avis (City of Battle Creek, MI), Robertson (Emmett Charter Township, MI), Burdett (City of Springfield, MI), Kremer (City of Pottersville, MI), Mayle (Conway Township, MI), Midgley (Summit Township, MI), Rickmar (City of Battle Creek, MI), and Scutt (Bedford Charter Township, MI)

It was determined that a quorum of the voting members were participating.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

It was moved by Rickmar, supported by Scutt, to approve the agenda. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY to approve the agenda.

Res.
21-09

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

It was moved by Midgley, supported by Scutt, to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2021 meeting, as presented, subject to any additions, corrections or changes. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
21-10**

COMMUNICATIONS

Karr reported the following items of communication:

- BCATS received correspondence from MDOT about new HIP and HIP-COVID funding programs available. This is an information item later on the agenda.
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #10 has been approved by FHWA and FTA.
- A public notice was published earlier this month for this month's TIP Amendment #11.
- A special edition of BCATS' newsletter was prepared, posted, and distributed which deals with the BCATS updated Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).
- BCATS staff met with MDOT and FHWA staff on March 8th for the annual Pre-Unified Work Program (UWP) meeting. This meeting covers work to-date on the current UWP and development of the new FY 2022 work program.
- It is being announced from MDOT that the CMAQ funding that has been coming to the limited orphan maintenance areas (LOMAs) for air quality will be allowed to continue for development of the next Transportation Improvement Program (FY 2023-2026). Calhoun County is under LOMA status.
- BCATS staff submitted the safety, bridge, and transit state of good repair targets to MDOT in February, as required.
- BCATS staff has received information about the federally proposed changes to Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) designations and "urban" designations, the latter as determined by the U.S. Census. These items will be discussed later on the agenda.
- BCATS received notification that the ability to obligate funds for local projects in the urbanized areas has run out for this fiscal year. This process is administered by MDOT. MDOT will be borrowing obligational authority from state programs to maintain the local program at this time.
- BCATS can continue to hold its Committee meetings virtually under Calhoun County's resolution regarding this subject that was adopted in October 2020, with no sunset to the resolution. Any changes to get back to an in-person format for BCATS are being evaluated on a month-to-month basis.
- Another sad passing has occurred for BCATS. Former staff member Yvonne Harris, BCATS' secretary for over 10 years, passed away in late February. She was instrumental in helping with the move and setting up of the BCATS offices at the City of Springfield city hall in the late 1980's.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

A. FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #11

Tilma reviewed the projects submitted for this month's amendment, including a large MDOT rail project for preliminary engineering and environmental work.

It was moved by Rickmar, supported by Kremer, to approve Amendment #11 to the FY 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program, as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
21-11**

B. FY 2022 Unified Work Program Preliminary Issues and Outline

Karr discussed the summary of focus areas and outline of work activities proposed for the FY 2022 Unified Work Program (UWP). She indicated that this is the first step in the development of the FY 2022 UWP and that a draft of the full document is anticipated to be presented to the Committee in April, with final approval scheduled for May. The new UWP needs to be submitted to MDOT by June 1, 2021. The new fiscal year starts October 1, 2021.

This was an information/discussion item not requiring action.

C. Goals and Objectives - 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

Karr noted that a summary of the goals and objectives as proposed from the 2040 MTP were provided to the members in advance, and that any changes or additions were requested. She stated that no changes to the goals and objectives were offered from the Technical Committee earlier this month.

It was moved by Rickmar, supported by Robertson, to approve the Goals and Objectives, without modification, for use with the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
21-12**

D. Census Defining of Urban Areas from 2020 Census Data

Karr stated that there have been two recent Federal Register notices impacting urban areas in the country. The first is a proposal from the federal Department of Management and Budget to increase the population level for designation as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) from 50,000 to 100,000. This will impact economic and industry data reports for several areas in Michigan that would lose MSA status, including Battle Creek.

The second issue is related to the methodology that the U.S. Census Bureau will utilize to determine “urban” areas using the 2020 census data. A lengthy summary of the proposed changes was provided to the members in advance of the meeting. Karr thanked Avis for providing the summary. Comments can be made to the Federal Register for this topic until May 20, 2021. Karr encouraged members who may see an impact of the proposed Census Bureau changes to their units of government to submit comments. She noted that there is also the issue of a new federal transportation bill being needed to replace the continuing resolution extending the previous bill that expired last September.

Karr asked Mayle to comment on MDOT’s response to this census issue. Mayle indicated that MDOT has established a committee to review this issue and that the Department plans to submit comments to the docket. Comments are not yet finalized. He noted that many of the current smallest urban areas (under 10,000 population) in the state would be defined as rural under the new proposal. Mayle’s understanding is that June of 2022 is when the 2020 census figures will be released.

This was an information/discussion item not requiring action.

E. FY 2021 Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP) Fund Announcement and Potential Identification of Projects

Karr stated that the Technical Committee discussed this topic extensively at its March 10th meeting. She reviewed the content of the memo that was provided in advance of the meeting. This is the first time, with the addition of the HIP-COVID component of funding, that the amount of the funding is more than \$100,000 for the HIP program. Karr stated that with the addition of a special category of “special eligibilities” under the HIP-COVID category more direction is needed from FHWA before it is advisable to allocate any funds for that option. After Karr asked the local agencies to submit projects for both HIP categories in February, one traditional project was submitted by Battle Creek Transit for a major passenger shelter project.

Mayle added that discussion has been occurring across several MDOT departments about the financial issues and documentation associated with the “special eligibilities” option for the HIP-COVID funding. He will provide updates on this as soon as information is available. He added that it is up to the MPO to determine how they wish to utilize the new funding. Mayle indicated that it should be expected that the funds will be fully audited.

There was further discussion on this issue.

This was an information/discussion item not requiring action.

F. Letters of Support for Calhoun County Road Department Bridge Applications for FY 2024 MDOT Call for Projects

Karr reviewed the memo on this subject which detailed the bridges in question and the amount of funding sought with each application. It was noted by Belles that the Raymond Road bridge over the Kalamazoo River is quite new. All of the applications are to support preventative maintenance work. The deadline for submittal of these applications to MDOT is April 5, 2021, which is earlier than in prior years.

It was moved by Scutt, supported by Kremer, to authorize Karr to prepare letters of support for the three local bridge applications being developed by the Calhoun County Road Department. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
21-13**

**G. Study Management Committee Report
Annual Review for P. Karr, Executive Director**

Avis reported for the Study Management Committee, which had met the day before the Policy Committee meeting. She indicated that many completed reviews were received by the Committee and all were very positive relative to Karr's performance as BCATS Executive Director. She further stated that the Study Management Committee is recommending a salary increase of 2% for Karr, effective as of her anniversary date of March 25th.

It was moved by Midgley, supported by Scutt to approve the Study Management Committee's recommendation for a salary increase of 2% for Karr, effective as of March 25, 2021. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
21-14**

COMMENTS

A. Next Meeting

Chair Burdett announced that the next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 28, 2021, 1:30 p.m.

B. Committee Member Comments

Karr asked if there has been any movement on the proposed housing development on 6½ Mile Road south of B Drive North. Belles indicated that the Township has not heard recently from the developer. She will provided an update when one is available.

Mayle announced that MDOT has posted the notice for his former position of Unit Supervisor and it is expected that interviews will be held at the end of April, with the position hopefully filled in May.

Kremer indicated that work is now well underway on the Eaton County portion of the I-69 project and indicated that there is a website that provides updates about the project. She posted the website information in the Chat box for the members. Karr asked if Kremer would provide the link to the BCATS office so that it can be provided to the BCATS Technical Committee members as well. Kremer indicated that she would do this.

Karr thanked the Committee for their continuing support. She stated that the BCATS office will gradually be returning to pre-pandemic conditions, as improvements in the public health situation warrant. However, at this time Committee meetings will continue on Zoom.

C. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Burdett adjourned the meeting at 2:23 p.m.