

BATTLE CREEK AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

Minutes of March 27, 2024 Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Voting: Mallory Avis, Richard Bayus, Deb Belles, Brian Kernstock (alternate for Kristine Parsons), Annjanette Kremer, Kevin Leiter, and Steve Skalski
Non-voting: None

MEMBERS ABSENT: Voting: Harry Burdett, Laveta Hardish, Derek King, Dennis McKinley
Non-voting: Jenny Staroska and Southcentral Michigan Planning Council (SMPC)

OTHERS PRESENT: Jeff Franklin

Acting Chair Avis called the meeting to order at 1:32 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 Leiter, supported by Skalski, to approve the agenda. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-05**

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

It was moved by Skalski, supported by Leiter, to approve the minutes of the January 24, 2024 meeting. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-06**

COMMUNICATIONS

Franklin shared the following communications:

- MDOT Local Agency Programs has announced the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Local Safety Program and the FY 2027 Local Bridge Program. Applications for safety projects are due May 1, 2024 and applications for bridge projects are due April 1, 2024. BCATS has received information about local safety and bridge project applications from City of Battle Creek and Calhoun County Road Department, to be discussed later on today's agenda.
- The FY 2025 Pre-Unified Planning Work Program meeting was held by MDOT on March 4th. MDOT gathered subject matter experts together for BCATS staff benefit in developing the work program for FY 2025. BCATS staff has a draft prepared which will come to Committees in April for a comment period, with approval requested at May Committee meetings.
- BCATS staff is considering a new website as part of FY 2025 work. BCATS staff is looking for further feedback about the existing website and what members would want from a new website. Please send additional feedback to BCATS email.
- BCATS staff has altered the way of sending out meeting notices. A single packet will now be emailed with the meeting notice. Voting members will no longer have to logon to the website to retrieve the meeting handouts, unless the handout is sensitive in nature. Handouts will continue to be stored on the website for archival purposes should members wish to still use the member logon area.
- At the January meeting, Policy Committee supported BCATS and its member agencies in applying to the Transportation Asset Management Council for extra Asset Management (AM) funding for Pavement and Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) work on Non-Fed Aid (NFA) roads. The Calhoun County Road Department submitted a proposal, which BCATS completed an application for. BCATS has been awarded this additional AM funding. Our existing BCATS AM contract will be amended to provide the additional funding, and BCATS staff will participate in NFA PASER data collection later this summer.
- Later this spring, BCATS will be kicking off the development of the FY 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program. The Michigan Transportation Planning Association will finalize a schedule for the overall Statewide Transportation Improvement Program development in May, with revenue estimates due to BCATS by July, and our local Call For Projects (CFP) occurring from that moment through September (Local CFP due back to BCATS October 1st to stay on the expected timeline). BCATS Principal Planner, Andy Tilma, expects to lead this local CFP.

- Kris Martin, Battle Creek Unlimited, contacted BCATS concerning a Congressional earmark for Dickman Road related to an overall Kalamazoo River naturalization project. The \$2,000,000 earmark was part of a past federal budget bill of Highway Infrastructure Program funding. Kris inquired what BCATS might know about the earmark and the Dickman Road proposal project. BCATS was part of a discussion in January 2023 with MDOT, where it was determined the scope of any Dickman Road project was very early, and the earmark was not finalized by FHWA nor MDOT in any real context. Since then, BCATS continues to wait for updates. BCATS recently learned that City officials are speaking with MDOT once again on this earmark.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. FY 2023 Audit

Franklin received the FY 2023 Audit final documents in late January. With the cancellation of February Committee meetings, the FY 2023 Audit final document is presented to Policy Committee today. There were no findings of significance, and the Audit has been shared with City of Battle Creek Finance. The request is to receive and file the FY2023 Audit document.

It was moved by Belles, supported by Kernstock, to receive and file the FY 2023 Audit final document, as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-07**

NEW BUSINESS

A. FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #9

Franklin reviewed the list of items proposed for Amendment #9 to the current TIP. Kremer provided clarification on the priority changes regarding the MDOT project abandonments on the list.

It was moved by Leiter, supported by Belles, to approve the FY 2023-2026 TIP Amendment #9, as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-08**

B. Request for Letters of Support for FY2026 Local Safety Program and FY2027 Local Bridge Program

Franklin provided the proposed bridge project applications by the City of Battle Creek, and the proposed bridge and safety project applications by the Calhoun County Road Department.

It was moved by Skalski, supported by Kernstock, to approve letters of support for local agency applications to the FY26 Local Safety Program and the FY27 Local Bridge Program, as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-09**

C. Reassessment of Legal Counsel

Franklin discussed the current status of potential replacement legal representation following the announcement of BCATS former attorney's discontinuation of municipal law from their practice. Given BCATS' use of legal services is minimal, Franklin argued against a set budget for legal services in FY 2025. Franklin addressed questions on the budget savings, value of past legal services, and BCATS' other risk management strategies.

It was moved by Belles, supported by Skalski, to approve the request to sever legal representation, and no longer set a budget for Legal Services starting in FY 2025, to be monitored annually, with other professional services budget available should legal services need ever arise. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-10**

D. Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Federal Grant

Franklin discussed the SS4A Federal Grant opportunity available to both MPO applicants and individual municipal applicants. BCATS does not have the local match available to successfully apply for an SS4A Planning grant, which could be used to hire a consultant to complete a Safety Action Plan. Having a Safety Action Plan at the MPO (or at an individual municipality) would have its benefits for further available federal transportation grants. Battle Creek Transit proposed a possible combined transit agency/MPO application. This was a discussion item.

E. Study Management Committee Items

1. Probationary Review for J. Franklin, BCATS Executive Director

Skalski reported from the Study Management Committee (SMC) that the probationary review for Franklin indicates that he performs all tasks with excellence and professionalism. The SMC suggested a salary increase, however Franklin advised that he preferred to see the FY2024 budget remain as-is through September, and SMC could reevaluate such an option at that time. SMC did grant 40 hours of Vacation Leave, and 28 hours of Sick Leave, per BCATS Personnel Policies allotments to employees completing the orientation period.

It was moved by Leiter, supported by Kernstock, to accept the probationary review of J. Franklin, BCATS Executive Director, as presented, and allot the appropriate Vacation Leave and Sick Leave. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-11**

COMMENTS

A. Next Meeting

Acting Chair Avis announced that the next meeting of the BCATS Policy Committee is scheduled for April 24, 2024 at 1:30 p.m.

B. Committee Member Comments

Kremer reported I-94 roadwork has commenced. Work this year includes reconstruction of four bridges on westbound I-94.

Kernstock reported that Newton Township passed a millage for a local roads program, with some of the gravel road resurfacing to begin this summer. The N Wattles Road project is underway.

Avis reported on a Senator Peters earmark for \$1,500,000 for startup capital for the Transportation Authority of Calhoun County (TACC) through City of Battle Creek. TACC will have an operating funding ballot proposal in August. Battle Creek Transit (BCT) is applying to MDOT's Equitable Mobility Challenge for a carpool program pilot. BCT will neither own any carpool vehicles nor operate the program, but will facilitate the platform in which employers would use to connect their employees to carpools.

Belles reported on the progress of the Verona Road water main project, which includes current roadwork on Michigan Ave near Ackerson Drive. The Emmett Township board has opted out of the B Drive North/Beckley Road traffic signal study.

Skalski reported that Capital Avenue roadwork from Rebecca Road to Van Buren Street has commenced. Skalski stated the City of Battle Creek won an American Public Works Association award for the Union Street bridge project.

Bayus complimented BCATS and BCT staff on a professional Pre-Unified Planning Work Program meeting. Bayus mentioned a couple newer MPO webpage options for BCATS to consider with their proposed website overhaul.

Franklin expressed gratitude to BCATS Policy Committee for their support during the past six months and is excited to be working for this group.

C. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting Chair Avis adjourned the meeting at 2:32 p.m.