

BATTLE CREEK AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Policy Committee

Minutes of October 23, 2024 Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Voting: Richard Bayus, Harry Burdett, Donna Hutchison (for Mallory Avis), Kevin Leiter, Dave Neubauer (for Annjanette Kremer), Kristine Parsons, and Steve Skalski
Non-voting: None

MEMBERS ABSENT: Voting: Deb Belles, Laveta Hardish, Derek King, and Carl Kinzel
Non-voting: Jenny Staroska and Southcentral Michigan Planning Council (SMPC)

OTHERS PRESENT: Jeff Franklin

Chair Burdett called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in the Council Room of the Susan L. Anderson Municipal Building (Springfield City Hall), 601 Avenue A, Springfield MI 49037.

ROLL CALL

Burdett 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 Leiter, to approve the agenda. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-30**

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

It was moved by Parsons, supported by Skalski, to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2024 meeting. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-31**

COMMUNICATIONS

Franklin shared the following communications:

- MDOT has updated JobNet for improved air quality conformity reporting. BCATS was required to reconcile all 2025 and 2026 projects on the BCATS' Transportation Improvement Program after the JobNet update was applied. The reconciliation has been completed, and all of the 2025 local jobs are capable of obligation. The BCATS component of all MDOT jobs is also up-to-date.
- Calhoun County Road Department was successful in the FY2026 Local Safety Program call for projects. Two projects were selected within the BCATS area: a tree removal project along B Drive North from Beadle Lake Road eastward to 12 Mile Road; and a tree removal project along 6 Mile Road from Hickory Hills Drive southward to K Drive South.
- MDOT led BCATS staff through a travel demand forecast model kickoff meeting, as an early step in the overall development of our next Metropolitan Transportation Plan. In Spring 2025, BCATS' local agencies will be asked to review employment and demographic data.
- The actual FY2025 funding allocations have been released by MDOT from FHWA for the BCATS' planning area. The actual amounts differed from the estimated amounts by only a few hundred dollars in either direction (the sum of which is an extra \$400 more than estimated). The affected projects have been administratively modified on the BCATS TIP to reflect these minor changes.
- MDOT has announced that the FY 2026 Federal Aid Buyout Program will not be funded, due to not enough state funding to match the anticipated federal aid in FY 2026.
- The Federal Aid Buyout Program was created by the Michigan legislature in 2023, as a means to buy back local municipality federal aid using state dollars, which are easier for the local municipality to use, while the state can more easily make use of federal aid. The only year so far that MDOT funded the Federal Aid Buyout Program was 2024. It was not funded in 2025 for the same reason as the 2026 announcement.
- Amy Evans, Transportation Authority of Calhoun County board member, and also City of Springfield council member, provided BCATS' with brochure information for Ride Calhoun.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

A. BCATS' Public Participation Plan DRAFT Update - Information

Franklin outlined some forthcoming changes to the BCATS' Public Participation Plan, as a draft, seeking initial feedback from Policy Committee members. The Plan will see an official public kickoff with a special edition of the BCATS' newsletter "The Signal" to be completed and distributed in the

coming months (January target). The newsletter serves as the start of a 45-day window for public feedback on the Plan. Making regular updates to the BCATS' Public Participation Plan is part of the compliance to Federal statute, and is typically completed ahead of the adoption of a new long-range plan, and forthcoming short-range TIP document.

B. Bi-Monthly TIP Amendment Schedule for FY 2025

Franklin reviewed the draft calendar of TIP amendments proposed for Fiscal Year 2025. Franklin highlighted the month of July as being earlier than typical to accommodate BCATS' staff attendance at the annual Michigan Transportation Planning Association conference. Franklin also highlighted the particular calendar changes necessary to accommodate the development and eventual approval of the forthcoming FY2026-2029 TIP.

It was moved by Skalski, supported by Neubauer, to approve the Bi-Monthly TIP Amendment Schedule for FY 2025, as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-32**

C. Update on FY 2024 Year-End for BCATS - Information

Franklin gave an update on the Fiscal Year 2024 year-end status. An audit date with Rehmann Robson has been set for November 12th. The final billing to MDOT has been submitted, covering the period of September 2024. All expected invoices for FY 2024 had been received and expenses paid.

D. BCATS' Record Retention Policy

Franklin presented a new BCATS' Record Retention Policy to the group. With as much archival documentation that BCATS' currently stores within the office, it was determined an official Record Retention Policy was necessary and overdue. Franklin discussed using the existing Federal Highway Administration record retention guidance as a template, with other MPO and BCATS specific language and proposed retention standards added to the Policy document. Franklin solicited feedback on the document.

It was moved by Parsons, supported by Skalski, to approve adopting a BCATS' Record Retention Policy, to guide the MPO Director on document retention, as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-33**

E. Staff Insurances for FY 2025

Franklin presented information about staff insurances provided by the City of Battle Creek for the 2025 Calendar Year. Medical insurance rates through the Blue Cross Simply Blue plan will increase about 7.5%, and dental insurance rates through a new City chosen carrier will increase those rates by about 5%. Vision insurance is 100% covered by the employee. The FY2025 budget did

appropriately provide for these expected increases in coverage. Franklin asked the committee to consider approving these rate increases for staff insurances in 2025, as well as keep a typical Health Savings Plan (HSA) contribution in place, as in years past, given the budget expectations allowed for it.

It was moved by Parsons, supported by Skalski, to approve the medical insurance rate increases for BCATS staff insurances for 2025, with the typical HSA contribution, as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Res.
24-34**

F. Report from Study Management Committee

Chair Burdett reported to the Policy Committee that the Study Management Committee (SMC) had completed an annual performance evaluation of Andy Tilma, BCATS Principal Planner. SMC placed Andy on administrative leave effective October 17, 2024, while SMC conducts an ongoing investigation into alleged violations of BCATS' Personnel Policies. Burdett answered questions from members of Policy Committee.

COMMENTS

A. Next Meeting

Chair Burdett announced that the next meeting of the BCATS Policy Committee is scheduled for November 20, 2024 at 1:30 p.m.

B. Committee Member Comments

Neubauer reported the ongoing I-94 bridge project is nearing completion with winter restoration work ongoing near the Kalamazoo River, and out in Marshall at Old-27. Some minor pavement marking/painting work is left to do on trunkline routes that saw summer resurfacing work (M-37, M-66, M-78). Neubauer also reported that the pre-construction services contract on the Marshall megasite project is about to commence, with most work occurring first in Marshall Township. The Emmett Township work would come along at a later date. Neubauer also reported on the pedestrian crossing improvement for Dickman at Barberry. MDOT is working on either the contractor doing work yet this year, or spring 2025, weather dependent.

Leiter expressed gratitude to the MDOT resurfacing work on both M-66 and M-78.

Parsons reported that the County will contract with AECOM on the Verona Road/15 Mile/11 Mile work related to the Marshall megasite. The County received a Transportation Economic Development Funding Category A grant from the State of Michigan for these corridors. The timeline proposed design through 2025, with construction in 2026. Traffic impacts ought to be minimal. Tree removal projects for winter 2024-2025 should commence shortly. Parsons answered questions

about tree removal projects throughout the BCATS area. Parsons also stated the 11 Mile Road and Verona Road stoplight is currently in four-way flasher mode, and ought to be treated as an All-Way stop, while construction continues along Verona Road.

Skalski reported that the neighborhood repaving project east of Riverside is wrapping up. A culvert project on Watkins Road over Minges Brook ought to commence soon.

Bayus offered assistance on the review of the BCATS' Public Participation Plan update. Bayus reported that the statewide drunk driving penalty (from USDOT against State of Michigan) will be in effect for Fiscal Year 2025 (which impacts/decreases all MPO funding statewide). However, Michigan legislature should act to prevent any consequence for Fiscal Years 2026 and beyond.

C. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Burdett adjourned the meeting at 2:06 p.m.