

Participation Plan for the Battle Creek Area Transportation Study

DRAFT



Adopted , 2021

Battle Creek Area Transportation Study
601 Avenue A, Springfield, MI 49037
phone: 269/963-1158 – fax: 269/963-4951
e-mail: bcats@bcatsmpo.org
web: <https://www.bcatsmpo.org>

PARTICIPATION PLAN

Public Participation Process for Transportation Decision Making at the Battle Creek Area Transportation Study

BACKGROUND

The Battle Creek Area Transportation Study was established in May, 1974 as a result of the U.S. Census Bureau designating Battle Creek as an “urbanized area” after the 1970 census. This designation is for urban areas with a population greater than 50,000. The urbanized area population of the greater Battle Creek area as of the 2010 U.S. Census was 78,373. More recent American Community Survey estimates indicate a population of approximately 80,000 for the urbanized area.

Following its organization in 1974, the Study hired its first full-time staff in 1975. From 1975 to 1981, the BCATS staff was part of the Calhoun County Department of Planning and Development Coordination and was housed at the County offices in Marshall - not located within the urbanized area.

In FY1981, BCATS was formally reorganized as an Intermunicipality Committee under Michigan Public Act 200 of 1957. This provided for BCATS to be an independent legal entity, responsible for its own personnel and finances. At the start of FY 1982, another major change went into effect for BCATS. The BCATS Policy Committee was designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (known as a MPO). The MPO is a formal designation, established by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) for the agency responsible, in cooperation with the State, for conducting the transportation planning process in urbanized areas. Prior to 1982, the Southcentral Michigan Planning Council (SMPC) had been designated as the MPO. During that time, BCATS had to forward all of its important documents and decisions to SMPC for transmittal to the state and federal agencies. In 1981, BCATS moved its offices from the County building to the Battle Creek transit administrative offices in downtown Battle Creek. In 1988, BCATS moved to the City of Springfield City Hall Municipal Building. The City of Springfield is one of BCATS’ member agencies and contiguous to the City of Battle Creek on the west side of the urbanized area. The BCATS’ offices remain at this location to-date.

BCATS has an established Metropolitan Planning Area, or MPA, that can change following updates to population data at each U.S. Census. The current BCATS MPA incorporates the entireties of the City of Battle Creek, City of Springfield, and the townships of Bedford, Pennfield, Emmett, Leroy and Newton. Three of the townships (Bedford, Pennfield, and Emmett) are Charter Townships, which gives them different rights and powers than a non-charter township. BCATS addresses transportation and transportation related issues in this geographical area. This document outlines the public participation procedures that BCATS will use when undertaking transportation planning activities.

Since the enactment of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) by Congress in 1991, MPOs have been required to develop and utilize a public involvement process that provides for complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and support for continuing involvement of the public in developing metropolitan transportation plans and transportation improvement program (TIP) project programming documents. The Safe, Affordable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), enacted in 2005, expanded the public involvement provisions by requiring MPOs to develop, advertise, and adopt “Participation Plans.” The 2012 federal legislation, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) continued these requirements, as did the FAST Act of December 2015. The FAST Act has been extended with a continuing resolution as of the update of this Participation Plan.

The USDOT rulemaking for the FAST Act reiterates specific requirements for the public participation plan to address. This includes describing explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:

- providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP
- providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes.
- employing visualization techniques to describe the metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs
- make public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the world wide web
- holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times
- demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and TIP
- seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally under-served by existing transportation systems, such as low income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services
- providing an additional comment opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not have reasonably foreseen from the public involvement efforts
- coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this section of the regulations (coordination with the state)
- periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process

Under the federal regulations, BCATS is required to provide reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process for the following:

- individuals
- affected public agencies
- representatives of public transportation employees
- public ports
- freight shippers
- providers of freight transportation services
- private providers of transportation
- representatives of users of public transportation
- representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities
- representatives of the disabled
- other interested parties

In addition, the FAST Act requirements indicate the interested parties are to be consulted in the development of the Participation Plan.

MEETINGS

All regularly scheduled meetings of the Battle Creek Area Transportation Study (BCATS) Policy and Technical Committees are open to the public and held at sites which comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, BCATS also has the capability to hold “virtual” meetings, as has been necessary during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. For all Policy and Technical Committee meetings, a specific agenda item is identified at the beginning and at the end of each meeting for public comment from

any person wishing to address Committee members. For virtual meetings, members of the public are offered the opportunity to address the Committees at the same points in each meeting. Both BCATS' Committees have established policies for the public to offer comment at their meetings. These policies are posted at the entrance to the meeting room and copies are made available for individuals attending as a member of the public. The policies are also posted on the BCATS website. The agendas for meetings are posted at the BCATS office, outside the meeting room at Springfield City Hall, and in the entry lobby of Springfield City Hall in advance of each meeting. Some interested parties have requested to receive a copy of Policy Committee meeting agendas at the time the agenda is made available to the Policy Committee members. These persons are on an e-distribution list with BCATS and receive advance copies of each agenda. In addition, BCATS posts each meeting's agenda, for both Technical and Policy Committees on its website, approximately one week prior to each meeting. The website also lists upcoming meetings in a sidebar calendar for each committee.

A list of regularly scheduled Committee meeting dates is adopted each year by the Technical and Policy Committees in December for the coming calendar year. Since BCATS meetings are generally held the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, individuals wishing to participate can plan on this established meeting schedule. This list of meeting dates, once approved, is provided each year to the known private transportation providers, is posted to the BCATS website, and is physically posted at the BCATS office and in the entry lobby of Springfield City Hall.

OUTREACH TO IDENTIFIED GROUPS FOR PARTICIPATION

BCATS strives to implement the emphasis in the federal regulations related to stakeholder participation. BCATS encourages the involvement of persons who have been traditionally under-served, as well as works to meet the requirements of Executive Order 12898 related to Environmental Justice. BCATS, through written communication, its website, phone, or electronic communication, endeavors to notify as many as practical of the groups listed below when a particular project, study, or meeting agenda item directly impacts an organization or the clientele they represent. This applies to: the update of the metropolitan transportation plan; the development of, or a specific change to, the TIP; or at the request of any BCATS Committee member.

Stakeholder groups/organizations include those who represent the interests of:

- the elderly
- the disabled
- the non-motorized transportation user (pedestrian and bicycle)
- minority populations
- low income populations
- transit users
- transit dependent populations

The following additional groups in the BCATS area are to be notified of metropolitan transportation plan and TIP development, at a minimum:

- representatives of public transportation employees
- affected public agencies
- private transportation providers
- public safety departments, law enforcement agencies, fire departments and any other agency or entity responsible for safety/security operations
- freight shippers and providers of freight transportation services
- railroad companies
- environmental organizations
- major employers

- chambers of commerce
- tourism offices
- human service agencies
- schools
- interested citizens

Specific organizations in the BCATS area identified to-date as related to these listed categories include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Eight City of Battle Creek Neighborhood Planning Councils
- Urban League of Southwest Michigan
- Battle Creek Chapter of the NAACP
- The ARC
- Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce
- Battle Creek Unlimited (provides link to major employers in Fort Custer Industrial Park)
- Community Action Agency
- Area Agency on Aging - Region 3B
- Battle Creek Bicycle Club (if still in existence)
- All area schools (Intermediate School District, plus 5 districts, and charter and private schools)
- CIR and Marian Burch Adult Day Care Center
- unions for Battle Creek Transit vehicle operators, mechanics and office staff
- Battle Creek Executive Airport at Kellogg Field
- Calhoun County Parks
- North Country Trail
- Disability Resource Center
- Norfolk Southern Railroad
- Canadian National Railroad
- City of Battle Creek Police and Fire Departments
- City of Springfield Fire
- City of Battle Creek Environmental Department
- Charter Township of Bedford Fire Department
- Leroy Township Fire Department
- Charter Township of Emmett Public Safety Department
- Calhoun County Sheriff Department
- Michigan State Police
- Calhoun County Human Services and Health Departments
- Calhoun County Senior Services
- Marian Burch Adult Day Care Center/Calhoun County Medical Care Facility
- Calhoun Soil Conservation District
- Battle Creek Calhoun County Visitor and Convention Bureau
- Bronson Battle Creek Health System
- Behnke, Inc. (trucking)
- Kellogg Corporation
- Denso Manufacturing Michigan, Inc.
- General Foods/Post
- Kellogg Community College
- Western Michigan University Kendall Center
- Western Michigan University College of Aviation
- Department of Defense Hart/Dole/Inouye Center
- Willard Public Library Central
- Willard Public Library Helen Warner Branch

INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION AND REVIEW

To the extent feasible, BCATS will utilize available media and electronic means to make information available about its plans and programs. BCATS also maintains materials and a public review area at its offices for use by interested citizens. In addition, BCATS provides digital copies of plans, studies, brochures, surveys, etc. to the local public library and its branches for access by the general public. Some materials have been published in a weekly “free” distribution newspaper that is received at almost every residence and business in the urban area. BCATS staff participates in making presentations about the transportation program to interested groups during the update of its Metropolitan Transportation Plan and upon request. These activities will continue.

BCATS has a web presence at <https://www.bcatsmpo.org> where information about BCATS’ plans, programs, Committees and other material can be accessed by the public. Agendas for the BCATS Committees current and past meetings and approved minutes from past meetings can all be viewed on the website. BCATS makes the address for its website available on all newsletters and publications developed by BCATS. BCATS’ website can be linked from the Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MTPA) website, which is the statewide association of Michigan’s metropolitan planning organizations and federal and state partners.

BCATS Committee meetings are usually audio taped and available for review by contacting the BCATS office up until the date of the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee in question. The audio is not kept past the next meeting date of each Committee.

BCATS currently utilizes static maps, charts, and graphs, videotape/CD presentations and PowerPoint programs within the arena of presentation medium, as deemed appropriate. Other more dynamic or interactive techniques will be added when they can provide value to presenting information to the public. On an ongoing basis, BCATS will monitor new techniques that become available for their applicability to the BCATS program.

SIGNIFICANT PLANNING INITIATIVES

The development/update of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (which has a horizon of 20 years) and the development/amendment of the Transportation Improvement Program (which is a 4-year project programming document) are the most significant planning initiatives undertaken by any MPO and are specifically addressed in federal legislation. Other efforts such as corridor studies, subarea studies, transit studies, freight studies, non-motorized studies, etc. are also efforts of a significant nature for specific geographic or topical areas. As such, all of these types of activities will involve appropriate levels of information presentation utilized by BCATS at the time of the planning initiative.

Various means will be considered when seeking public input in the development of these initiatives. Some possible means of garnering public input in these cases will be: public informational meetings, surveys, direct mailings and efforts through electronic means. These efforts will take place at various points in the development of these projects as is appropriate to the efforts involved. For example: public input is generally conducted at the start of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan update process as staff evaluates any changes in the direction that the Plan should take. This input would be reflected in the goals and objectives that are developed. In contrast, public hearings and/or open houses are generally held toward the end of the process for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan development and give the public a formal mechanism to make their comments known to the Policy Committee before it takes final action. Material pertinent to the development/update of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan is posted to the BCATS website as well.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan Public Participation Process

Milestone	Public Participation Procedure	Notification Date	Length of Public Participation Period (minimum)
Draft project lists developed	<p>Draft MTP project list developed and initial review and approval of the projects completed by the BCATS Technical and Policy Committees - notification to participation plan individuals and organizations via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - special edition of BCATS' newsletter, The Signal, detailing draft MTP project list and anticipated MTP development schedule, either through email or regular mail - special edition of BCATS' newsletter, The Signal, posted to BCATS' website <p>Note: this will occur concurrently with consultation organization distribution of this newsletter, allowing for all comments to be incorporated in the next phases of MTP development</p>	Date special edition of the newsletter is distributed and posted to the website is considered the first day of the public participation period	30 days
Draft final document complete	<p>Final Draft MTP document, pending final approval of the BCATS Technical and Policy Committees - notification to participation plan individuals and organizations via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - second special edition of BCATS' newsletter, The Signal, listing the Committee approved final draft MTP project listings, other aspects of the MTP document, and the schedule for final approval of the document, either through email or regular mail - special edition of BCATS' newsletter, The Signal, posted to BCATS' website <p>Note: this will occur concurrently with consultation organization distribution of this newsletter as part of the overall public participation efforts at this time.</p>	Date special edition of the newsletter is distributed and posted to the website is considered the first day of the public participation period	14 days

As with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, BCATS also solicits public input at the beginning of the development process for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In addition, to the stakeholder notification at the start of the process, a preliminary list of projects for the four-year span of the TIP is also made available for public comment. BCATS staff conducts an environmental justice analysis of the planned program of projects to assess impacts on minority and low-income communities. Material pertinent to the development of the TIP is posted to the BCATS website as part of the process.

Transportation Improvement Program Public Participation Process

Milestone	Public Participation Procedure	Notification Date	Length of Public Participation Period (minimum)
Draft project lists developed	<p>Draft TIP project list developed by TIP Subcommittee, pending approval of BCATS Technical and Policy Committees - notification to participation plan individuals and organizations via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - special edition of BCATS' newsletter, The Signal, detailing draft TIP project list and anticipated TIP development schedule, either through email or regular mail - special edition of BCATS' newsletter, The Signal, posted to BCATS' website <p>Note: this will occur concurrently with consultation organization distribution of this newsletter, allowing for all comments to be incorporated before BCATS Committee action on the draft project list</p>	Date special edition of the newsletter is distributed and posted to the website is considered the first day of the public participation period	30 days
Draft final document complete	<p>Final Draft TIP document, pending final approval of the BCATS Technical and Policy Committees - notification to participation individuals and organizations via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - second special edition of BCATS' newsletter, The Signal, listing the Committee approved final draft TIP project listings, other aspects of the TIP document, and the schedule for final approval of the document, either through email or regular mail - special edition of BCATS' newsletter, The Signal, posted to BCATS' website <p>Note: this will occur concurrently with consultation organization distribution of this newsletter as part of the public participation efforts at this time.</p>	Date special edition of the newsletter is distributed and posted to the website is considered the first day of the public participation period	14 days

In an effort to address the non-English language population of the area, in the past BCATS has utilized locally published Spanish language newspapers to promote to reach this audience. However, the local Spanish language newspaper has ceased publication. BCATS will seek out alternate means of connecting with that community. Through its outreach efforts, BCATS seeks to reach agencies and centers providing services to populations that have been traditionally under-served in the community.

TREATMENT OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

When public comments are received on plans, studies, or other activities, they will be summarized and forwarded to the Policy Committee prior to any formal action to adopt or approve a plan or study. A copy of all comments will be filed and available for public review. Comments that request a formal response will be answered in a timely manner.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THIS UPDATE OF THE BCATS TRANSPORTATION PARTICIPATION PLAN (TPP)

The public was invited to comment on this plan prior to final adoption of the updated BCATS Participation Plan (PP) by the BCATS Policy Committee. An at least 45-day comment period was noticed in the general circulation local newspaper, published December 9, 2020 (a copy of the *Battle Creek Enquirer* notice is to be included in the final PP document, provided below this section of text). In addition, BCATS included notice of the update to the PP in an addition of its newsletter, “The Signal”, to reach a wider audience during the comment period. This newsletter was distributed to the list of groups and organizations list earlier in this Plan. The draft PP update was also posted for viewing on the BCATS website. A copy of the newsletter is included as Appendix A to this final PP document.

Comments or questions concerning the PP were to be directed to the BCATS staff by means of e-mail (preferable), phone, or fax.

There were XX comments received regarding the PP update during the comment period, which ended on January 26, 2021.

Copy of Public Notice to be added

REVISIONS TO THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS/PARTICIPATION PLAN

Following adoption of this updated Participation Plan, the Plan will be periodically reviewed for continued relevance and applicability. Any major revisions will necessitate undertaking the same measures used to develop the initial Plan, including providing a 45-day public comment period.

Appendix A

**(Copy of newsletter distributed in December 2020
to be added)**



BCATS