The purpose of this newsletter is to provide the public with information regarding the activities of the Battle Creek Area Transportation Study (BCATS). The public is encouraged to contact BCATS at the above address or telephone (269) 963-1158, fax (269) 963-4951 or e-mail: bcats@bcatsmpo.org concerning issues in The Signal or other transportation matters.

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The process for developing a new Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) extends over many months. After preparing a preliminary project list for the four-year program, BCATS requests public comment on the proposed list.

At the present time, the list of projects may have to undergo an assessment related to air quality impacts for ozone. While the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek area is currently considered in attainment for air quality issues, a federal court case has required the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to require areas designated as non-attainment under the 1997 ozone standards to conduct air quality conformity computer modeling on their project lists. However, the implementation of this ruling is still under development. The financial soundness of the total TIP is also required to be evaluated. BCATS also must consider federally identified performance measures and state set performance measure targets for safety, pavement and bridge condition, and others.

In addition, BCATS reviews the project list to see if there will be any disproportionate impacts on areas of the community which are designated as “environmental justice” areas. These are areas where there are higher than average percentages of persons who are considered low income or traditionally underserved, such as minority communities. Once all of the reviews are complete, an updated final project list and all supplemental materials are compiled into a draft final TIP document. In early spring 2019, this document will be available for public review and comment.

Please offer comments on the preliminary list of projects shown on the front of this sheet before the BCATS Policy Committee meeting on February 27, 2019. In May or June, 2019, it is expected that the BCATS Committees (the Technical and the Policy Committees) will formally act on adopting a finalized new TIP document with all of the necessary supporting information, as well as project lists for 2020 to 2023. As noted above, comments are solicited throughout the process and there will be an opportunity at the May or June BCATS Policy Committee meeting when action is scheduled for final comments to be offered.

Following action by the BCATS’ Policy Committee, the new TIP will be submitted to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the federal funding agencies for their review and approval. This process takes several months. Once approved, the FY 2020-2023 TIP is scheduled to be effective as of October 1, 2019 (which is the start of the 2020 fiscal year).

The process for maintaining the new Transportation Improvement Program is ongoing. The document is currently being fully updated every three years, but changes occur between updates. Projects can change, be removed and/or new projects added. Certain categories of federal funding are only awarded on an annual basis. In order for the funds to be spent, the projects selected for those funds need to be added to the existing TIP. All of these types of changes are done through “amendment” or “administrative modification” processes. The more formal amendment process requires a re-evaluation of financial soundness (called fiscal constraint), a double check of environmental justice issues, and a review of air quality impacts (if required, depending upon the type of project). Amendment details are published in the local newspaper and posted to the BCATS website prior to BCATS’ Committee action and subsequent state and federal review. The administrative modification alternative does not require state and federal review and approval and is for changes that are less significant and do not meet the threshold or definition of a formal amendment.

Reminder: Public input is welcomed at each phase in the development of the new TIP document. Please contact the BCATS office for further details or see the BCATS’ website at https://www.bcatsmpo.org