

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Kalamazoo urbanized area which includes all of Kalamazoo County and four townships in Van Buren County including Almena Township, Antwerp Township, Paw Paw Township, and Waverly Township. The purpose of the study is to fulfill the Federal, State, and Policy Committee directives to ensure distribution of transportation funding in the Metropolitan Planning Area to best benefit the transportation system, as well as plan for the future of the transportation network with financially feasible goals.

Within the federal guidelines of Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) and continuing with the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, KATS is responsible for the development of a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The Metropolitan Transportation Plan discusses the goals, investment decisions, policies, and priorities for the transportation system in the KATS Metropolitan Planning Area. Overall, this plan provides the backbone for the KATS planning activities and the future transportation system of the Metropolitan Planning Area.

Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study History

Planning for transportation systems has always been a part of the transportation planning process, but to varying degrees. It was not until 1962 that there was a benchmark federal legislation for urban transportation planning (Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962). In summary, the Act mandated that

“...after July 1, 1965, the Secretary of Transportation shall not approve...any project in any urban area of more than 50,000 population unless he/she finds such projects are based on a continuing, comprehensive transportation planning process carried on cooperatively by the state and local communities.”

Features of the Act emphasized:

- The requirement of creating an intergovernmental committee made up of principal elected officials of general-purpose local government to facilitate cooperation and coordination.

- The identification of a formal comprehensive process with inherent flexibility to reflect local issues, goals and principles.
- All activities be fully coordinated between the State (Michigan Department of Transportation) and local governments to assure proper integration of the respective state and local systems.

In response to the regulations, in 1966, the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Policy Committee was created through agreements by and between local units of government in the Kalamazoo urban area and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). At that time, MDOT was officially the Michigan Department of State Highways and Transportation (MDSHT). This organizational effort was led by MDOT. Although fully vested with responsibility for carrying out the requirements of the legislation, the Policy Committee was not formally designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization until 1978. Prior to that action, the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Policy Committee acted as an “Intermunicipality Committee” under Act 200 of the Public Acts of Michigan 1957.

The Intermunicipality Committee Act provides for the cooperative establishment of a forum (the KATS Policy Committee) by local units of government for the purposes of conducting specifically designated intergovernmental activities in a coordinated manner. KATS continues to be organized under the Intermunicipality Committee Act. In 1993, under the provision of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, the KATS Policy Committee extended its area boundaries to include all of Kalamazoo County within the Metropolitan Area Boundary (MAB). In 2012, the Policy Committee took action to extend the planning area to include Alma Township, Antwerp Township, Paw Paw Township, and Waverly Township, and the villages of Lawton, Paw Paw, and Mattawan in Van Buren County.

The organization and concept of an Intermunicipality Committee fully supports and addresses the clear intent of the federal legislation’s references to “cooperative.” The KATS Policy Committee represents “principal elected officials of general-purpose local government” working cooperatively in the transportation decision making process.

All work and activities of the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study are initiated and conducted under the policy direction of the KATS Policy Committee. Activities are conducted cooperatively either working with the Technical Committee or, as appropriate, with the individual planning or public transportation agencies. Agency staffs work in the cooperative

conduct of these activities within this framework. Their efforts are integral to the successful conduct of the process.

The Policy Committee organizational emphasis is on the representation of the units of general-purpose local government. Although they work in cooperation and coordination with an array of other forums, decision making is the collective responsibility of these elected and appointed officials.

The Technical Committee, made up of professional and technical representatives of local transportation agencies, acts both collectively and individually to provide evaluation, analysis, and projects for the consideration of the Policy Committee. The individuals and agencies jointly making up the Technical Committee are involved in the Study on a continuing basis.

Policy Committee Voting Membership

Michigan Department of Transportation Bureau of Transportation Planning

Michigan Department of Transportation Kalamazoo Transportation Service Center

City of Kalamazoo

City of Parchment

City of Portage

Almena Township

Antwerp Township

Brady Township

Charleston Township

Comstock Township

Cooper Township

Kalamazoo Township

Oshtemo Township

Pavilion Township

Prairie Ronde Township

Richland Township

Schoolcraft Township

Texas Township

Village of Augusta

Village of Climax

Village of Lawton

Village of Mattawan

Village of Paw Paw

Village of Richland

Village of Schoolcraft

Village of Vicksburg

Central County Transportation Authority

Kalamazoo County Transportation
Authority

Kalamazoo County

Road Commission of Kalamazoo County

Van Buren County

Van Buren County Road Commission

Van Buren Public Transit

Western Michigan University

Technical Committee Voting Membership

(Indicates more than 1 individual representing the organization)

Michigan Department of Transportation Bureau of Transportation Planning

Michigan Department of Transportation Southwest Region Office

Michigan Department of Transportation Service Center

City of Kalamazoo (4)

Department of Public Services

Department of Community Planning
& Economic Development

City of Parchment

City of Portage (3)

Transportation & Utilities
Community Development

Almena Township

Antwerp Township

Brady Township

Charleston Township

Comstock Township

Cooper Township

Kalamazoo Township

Oshtemo Township

Pavilion Township

Prairie Ronde Township

Richland Township

Schoolcraft Township

Texas Township

Village of Augusta

Village of Climax

Village of Lawton

Village of Mattawan

Village of Paw Paw

Village of Richland

Village of Schoolcraft

Village of Vicksburg

Central County Transportation Authority

Kalamazoo County Transportation
Authority

Kalamazoo County

Road Commission of Kalamazoo County
(2)

Van Buren County

Van Buren County Road Commission

Van Buren Public Transit

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Map 1: KATS Urban, Rural and Small Urban Funding Areas

Financial Outlook

The Kalamazoo MPO is committed to investing in a transportation system that enhances the livability of our region and adds value for our residents and visitors. The MPO will continue to look for new and innovative funding sources through fostering partnerships between agencies to fund mutually beneficial transportation projects.

Making improvements to transportation infrastructure and services represents an investment in our community. Major interstate and highway infrastructure projects are expensive and depend heavily on federal funding. Federal transportation funds for roads, bridges, transit, rail, and bikeways come from the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). Our region also funds transportation projects through state funding sources, millages, and local funding sources.

The cost to realize our region's transportation needs over the next 30 years exceeds \$529,497,473 million; however, the estimated available funding over that time period is \$239,032,000 million. This shortfall in transportation funding requires our region to make strategic policy and project selection decisions to maximize our investments. Further financial analysis is outlined in Chapter 10.

Performance Based Planning

Performance-based planning is a strategic approach to transportation planning that uses analyzed data to determine how effectively transportation investments are working toward achieving the identified transportation goals. Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) is the current federal transportation funding and policy bill. It

emphasizes performance-based planning, establishes performance measures and targets, and identifies seven national goals that states and MPOs are to work toward. Agencies seeking federal funds will demonstrate their progress toward achieving local goals and the national goals included in MAP-21. States and MPOs that don't demonstrate adequate progress toward achieving the goals will be required to take corrective action.

MAP-21

Seven national goal areas:

- Safety
- Infrastructure condition
- Congestion reduction
- System reliability
- Freight movement and Economic vitality
- Environmental sustainability
- Project delivery delays

Kalamazoo metro area's transportation system brings value to many aspects of our personal lives and community including personal mobility, movement of goods, public health, economic vitality, and preservation of our environment. But funding to maintain and upgrade our system is limited. Performance-based planning affords a structure for this MTP to ensure that scarce resources are used effectively and equitably. The community values of transportation are woven into the goals, objectives, performance measures, and ultimately, evaluation criteria used to identify high priority transportation projects.

Emerging trends that affect the way we travel have been considered in developing this MTP. Many of the trends signify an increased emphasis on alternative travel modes, such as bicycling, walking, and transit. Performance-based planning is a new approach for our region that helps evaluate our system and prioritize our investments. This MTP includes a range of performance measures that reflect the expressed community values of our region, while honoring national and state standards. The vision of this plan is to move the Kalamazoo region forward with a sustainable, interconnected, multimodal network that aims to provide safe and secure access for all users.