

**KALAMAZOO AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY POLICY COMMITTEE**  
Minutes of the May 26, 2021 Meeting

**CALL TO ORDER**

The May 26, 2021 Policy Committee Meeting was called to order by Chair Randy Thompson at 9:09 a.m.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Introductions were made by all present.

**ROLL CALL**

Meeting attendance and contact tracing data was recorded on the sign-in sheet.

**MEMBERS PARTICIPATING**

Curtis Aardema	Central County Transportation Authority
Rob Britigan	City of Parchment
Marsha Drouin, Treasurer	Richland Township
Jim Frederick	Cooper Township
Todd Hackenberg	Village of Lawton
Libby Heiny-Cogswell, Vice Chair	Oshtemo Township
Lisa Imus	Village of Lawton
Martin Janssen	Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority
Joanna Johnson	Road Commission of Kalamazoo County
Greg Kinney	Van Buren County Road Commission
Tracy Locey	Brady Township
Don Martin	Kalamazoo Township
Nick Loeks	Texas Township
Sherine Miller	Kalamazoo Township
Dennis Olson	Village of Vicksburg
Pete Pfeiffer	Michigan Department of Transportation, TSC
Jeff Sorensen	Cooper Township
Paul Sotherland	KATS Citizens Advisory Committee
Jon Speeter	Pavilion Township
Randy Thompson, Chair	Comstock Township
Michael Tomlinson	Prairie Ronde Township
Don Ulsh	Schoolcraft Township
Jerry VanderRoest	Charleston Township
Mark Worden	Road Commission of Kalamazoo County

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Carol Daly	Village of Mattawan
Jeff Franklin	Michigan Department of Transportation
Jason Gatlin	Wakeshma Township
John Gisler	Kalamazoo County
Jeff Heppler	Village of Augusta
Sarah Joshi	City of Galesburg
Sarah Moyer-Cale	Village of Paw Paw
Chris Praedel	City of Kalamazoo

Patricia Randall

City of Portage

#### **OTHERS PARTICIPATING**

Robert Henderson	Van Buren Public Transit
Nate Henschel	Congressman Upton's Office
Sean McBride	Metro
Megan Mickelson	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Ryan Minkus	Road Commission of Kalamazoo County
Fred Nagler	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Elizabeth Rumick	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Kathy Schultz	Metro
Paul Selden	BFK
Jon Start	Retired Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Steve Stepek	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Paul Selden	Bike Friendly Kalamazoo
Ali Townsend	Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study
Fred Upton	Congressman

#### **CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

Steppek mentioned Congressman Fred Upton is visiting today and will be speaking during the New Business portion of the meeting.

#### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

MOTION by Sorensen, SECOND by Janssen, ***"to approve the agenda of the May 26, 2021 Policy Committee Meeting."*** MOTION APPROVED.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Selden of Bike Friendly Kalamazoo thanked all attendees, agencies, municipalities, and the community who participated in and supported the recently concluded Kalamazoo Bike Week.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA**

- ACCEPTANCE OF THE TREASURER'S REPORT
- ACCEPTANCE OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REPORT (MAY 13, 2021)
- ACCEPTANCE OF THE SOUTHCENTRAL MICHIGAN PLANNING COUNCIL REPORT
- APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 28, 2021 MEETING

MOTION by Johnson, SECOND by Sorensen, ***"to accept and approve the items on the Consent Agenda."*** MOTION APPROVED.

#### **PRIORITIZATION PROCESS DISCUSSION**

Steppek reported the draft Prioritization Process is included in the meeting packet. Prior to the development of the next Transportation Improvement Program, KATS reviews the prioritization process used to assign funding. The Prioritization Subcommittee of the Technical Committee met several times to discuss any potential changes to the currently adopted process. Overall, the changes are minor in scope. The committee felt it was important to incorporate Asset Management into the process. The draft removes 5 points from the multiple funding source category and adds

the points to a new preventive maintenance (PM) category. Submit questions or comments on this draft as soon as possible. The document and the process will be on June's agenda for adoption.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION UPDATES**

Aardema reported the Metro five-year service agreement to provide service in Texas Township, mainly for Kalamazoo Valley Community College, has been extended. Metro's one year agreement to provide bus service for Western Michigan University was also renewed. Metro will begin a Comprehensive Operational Analysis in August with the assistance of a consultant. Citizens are able to provide comments on the system. Discussion for the planned county-wide Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority (KCTA) millage in November will occur at their June meeting. Janssen added KCTA plans to continue reduced service, free fare, and the use of Plexiglas barriers through the end of summer.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Stepek stated all updates are included in the meeting packet. Thompson invited recently retired Executive Director Jonathan Start to speak. Start noted when the results of the 2020 Census Data are known, some road functions included the Federal Aid System may change.

## **NEW BUSINESS – CONGRESSMAN FRED UPTON**

Chair Thompson introduced Congressman Fred Upton. One big issue recently resolved is dredging of the St. Joseph Harbor. Freighters bringing construction materials for road projects were unable to pass through the shallow water from low lake levels. An emergency allocation of \$500,000 was found to complete the dredging. Freighters are now able to navigate the waterway. Congressional Committees have brought back earmarks. Upton supported bringing them back under the condition they are fully transparent and have local support. Upton supports earmarks for the highway bill, which authorizes spending on roads, bridges, rail and transit. Locally, this earmark would benefit construction on US-131 to divert semis from the Graphic Packaging expansion away from downtown Kalamazoo. Upton invited attendees to review past Kitchen Table updates on his website [upton.house.gov](http://upton.house.gov), and to join future talks. Drouin asked if agencies can expect guidance on how to spend any potential American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds. The risk is that agencies may unknowingly spend the funds in an unallowed manner and have to repay them. Upton answered more guidance will be given on that. VanderRoest reported Charleston Township is working with architects for a building addition. The architects did not think Rescue funds were eligible for construction projects even though the addition is COVID-19 related. Henschel reported rules are in-process and will communicate further guidance. Pfeiffer asked if broadband updates can be funded with the Rescue money. Upton responded the American Rescue Plan can be used to upgrade broadband infrastructure. In addition, projects related to protecting the electric/energy grid are eligible. Johnson asked Upton's outlook on whether there would be a new Highway Bill, or an extension of the current bill. Upton stated the Surface Transportation law, one-year extension of the 2015 act expires September 30, 2021. We will know more next month. Johnson stated the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County is attempting to find a long-term funding solution for infrastructure. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act can be used for water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. Ulsh reported Cooper Township may receive 1 million dollars of ARP funds without guidance on how to spend them. Britigan pointed out President Biden is pro-electric vehicle (EV) and asked Upton where he sees the future of EV. Upton responded Biden plans to eliminate carbon emissions by 2035. Upton added that although there are lots of incentives offered for EV, a mere 2 percent of vehicles on the roads are EV. Upton pointed out the challenges of EV including:

- Infrastructure does not exist to support EV transportation
- Currently, state laws do not allow charging customers for the cost of electricity at charging stations making little incentive for businesses to support them.
- Installing enough charging stations will cost tens of millions of dollars

Even though many people have EVs, Upton is skeptical that a full transition will occur by 2035. Some of the hurdles include:

- Cars are more fuel efficient than they used to be
- Gas prices have not kept up with inflation
- People are driving less due to COVID

Sorensen mentioned new building codes are in the process of requiring an Electrical Vehicle ready infrastructure. Aardema asked for a status update on the Letter of Support written to Upton on the City of Kalamazoo Downtown one-way Street Conversion. Upton responded, there were not enough funds to cover all the earmark requests they received. Upton is instead moving forward with the US-131 project for the Highway Bill. Johnson added that whatever Upton could do to bring attention to the shortage of employees for skilled labor, skilled trade, or commercial drivers would be appreciated. Upton agreed the labor shortage is a huge issue not only here but all over America. Many restaurants and companies are struggling with staff shortages.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Selden of Bike Friendly Kalamazoo, offered praise to Start for his involvement with KATS, positive leadership and other skills, and wished him luck on his retirement. Members echoed Selden congratulating, thanking, and applauding Start.

## **MEMBER COMMENTS**

Sorensen reported he is Chair of a new Sub-Committee along with Township Supervisors, to work on community broadband needs. Richland and Cooper Townships have known broadband upgrade needs. The Sub-Committee is soliciting broadband information from agencies. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds can support broadband upgrades and we are starting to see dollars allocated to that.

Pfeiffer suggested attendees refer to the Technical Committee Report in the packet for Michigan Department of Transportation updates. In addition, work has picked up on US-131 north of M-43. The M-343 and G Avenue Roundabout project is on-going. The traffic signal at M-96 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street is functioning after a very long project delay due to complications with Amtrak. There is a traffic signal project at US-131 and D Avenue. The M-96 project funded with winter savings is from Augusta not Galesburg to the Kalamazoo/Calhoun County line as stated in the report.

Martin representing Kalamazoo Township, reported the \$600-million-dollar Graphic Packaging International LLC expansion is underway. Plans are being discussed to keep their anticipated increased semi-trucks away from downtown streets.

Olson representing the Village of Vicksburg, reported a major 12-million-dollar project on downtown streets will begin June 13, 2021 immediately following the Car Show on June 11-12, 2021. The project is expected to be completed by October. Thirty lead water lines in the city were replaced. The Village is hosting Flea Markets this summer as well as an Antique Show on Father's Day. A \$50-80 million-dollar project will transform the old papermill into a hotel and brewery.

Britigan reported the Kindleberger Summer Festival will take place in the City of Parchment July 7 – 12, 2021.

Heiny-Cogswell announced copper pipes were stolen in Oshtemo Township and advised attendees to use caution with theirs. A sidewalk project on Stadium Drive in Oshtemo is underway.

Sotherland from the KATS Citizens Advisory Committee, reminded attendees of the summer-long bicycling event in Kalamazoo County called Ride Our Routes 2021. The event will take place from June through September and invites bicyclists of any age and ability to enjoy the Kalamazoo County non-motorized routes that include both designated roads and shared-use paths. Pick up a contest entry form posted on the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club webpage. If you ride all the routes, you can win a t-shirt.

VanderRoest stated a \$400,000 grant will be used to fund an I-94 project through Charleston Township.

Johnson thanked Sotherland for mentioning the opportunity to win a t-shirt. Johnson mentioned Start is missed that the Transportation Asset Management Council meetings. The Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) has over 200 projects scheduled for the season. Drivers should use patience as work has begun and orange barrels are everywhere. A test-run of chip-seal has been performed and will be fine-tuned. Dust control on gravel roads is delayed due to a driver shortage. VanderRoest asked if calcium chloride was being used. Johnson answered it is along with any options RCKC has. Material costs for culvert and guard rails is going up. Non-motorized "Move Over 5" signs are available upon request. RCKC has information sessions coming up. RCKC submitted bridge applications to the state for local bridge funding. For the first time, RCKC bundled the application to include the Augusta bridge project along with RCKC bridges. The application is under review by the state. The RCKC 2020 Annual Report was issued May 25, 2021 and is available on the website. Worden will be delivering copies to agencies. Feedback is appreciated.

## **RECOGNITION OF JONATHAN START'S RETIREMENT**

Stepek explained Jon's retirement celebration was delayed a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Attendees expressed thanks and appreciation for Jon's 19 years of service at KATS, including as the Executive Director, and presented his gift.

Start opened an engraved clock, expressed thanks, appreciation, and enjoyment working with attendees. Start noted how far non-motorized progress has come and is pleased with City of Kalamazoo street projects.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Thompson invited attendees to the Comstock Township ribbon cutting ceremony today at Merrill Park at 4:30 p.m. along with the dedication of the Fire Fighter Memorial.

Chair Thompson adjourned the May 26, 2021 Policy Committee Meeting at 10:15 a.m.

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 - 9:00 a.m.**