



Public Participation Plan 2025



Bay City Area Transportation Study (BCATS)

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Overview

The Bay City Area Transportation Study (BCATS) provides transportation planning services as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for Bay County's urban core area, comprised of the cities of Bay City and Essexville and the townships of Bangor, Monitor, Hampton, Portsmouth, Kawkawlin, and Frankenlust. The MPO is established by census and population density. Federal law requires all urbanized areas of the nation to provide coordinated transportation planning using the "3C" process, (Continuing, Cooperative and Comprehensive). This process is required for the area to continue to receive U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) funding. Extensive USDOT funds are spent annually in the Bay City area for highways, bridges, transit, transportation enhancement and safety projects and improvements.

BCATS is the principal public agency, as per Section 134 (a) of title 23, United States Code, conducting regional transportation studies for the Bay City Urbanized Area. BCATS, through an agreement with the Bay County Board of Commissioners. BCATS provides management and policy functions for the transportation planning programs as required by the **Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (Map-21) of 2012, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2022.**

The FAST Act continues the **Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users of 2005 (SAFETEA-LU)** trends of federal legislation which move the decision-making authority away from the federal government and closer to the citizens, and transportation decisions to be more responsive to state and local needs. The SAFETEA-LU updates require MPOs to develop, advertise, and adopt participation plans for greater public comment and engagement. In response, BCATS has developed this Public Participation Plan that includes provisions to ensure early and continuing involvement of the public in (a) the transportation planning process, (b) the development of transportation plans, and (c) the development of priority projects for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Therefore, the Public Participation Plan shall reflect consultation with interested parties. The BCATS Organization shall publish the Public Participation Plan to be used and allow 45 days for written public comment before the revised plan is adopted.

Citizens, public officials, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, users of public transit, freight shippers, private providers of transportation and other interested parties shall have full access to plans and programs, their supporting materials, and an opportunity to participate in all stages of the planning process. The Public Participation Plan shall dictate the methods to be used to notify, inform, and engage the public through various



public involvement tools to be utilized, as well as the major transportation documents that describe planned activities, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to make them readily available for public review and comment. The Public Participation Plan will comply with the Open Meetings Act of 1976 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The public participation process described herein is used to satisfy the public participation process for the Program of Projects (POP), as prescribed in accordance with Chapter 53 of Title 49, United States Code (FTA requirements), and the metropolitan and statewide planning regulations under the FAST Act, for the following grantees: Bay Metropolitan Transportation Authority (BMTA).and other BCATS agencies.

Organizational Structure of the Bay City Transportation Study (BCATS)

The BCATS program is administered through the Bay County Department of Environmental Affairs and Community Development. BCATS staffing primarily consists of one (0.7) staff member as the BCATS Director, one (0.7 FTE) staff member as a Transportation Planner, with both staff supporting the County GIS program (0.3 each), and one (.03 FTE) administrative staff. The BCATS program will continue to utilize the assistance and efforts of local agency staff, including the City of Bay City, the Bay County Road Commission, BCATS Committee members, and the BMTA (Bay Metro), to effectively and efficiently address the federal planning requirements as well as local issues and programs.

BCATS is comprised of two committees: The Policy Committee and the Technical Committee. The Technical Committee is made up of transportation planning and engineering professionals from the community. The Policy Committee is made up of mostly elected officials from townships and cities in the urbanized area and county government.

Both committees also have representatives from the Michigan and U.S. Departments of Transportation. The Technical. Committee provides valuable expert advice and recommendations to the Policy Committee on various matters which it must address. The Policy Committee must give final local approval to all plans and projects in the Bay City urbanized area which use federal funding.

The Technical Committee usually meets on the second Tuesday of every other month at the Bay County Building, 515 Center Avenue, Bay City, Michigan. The Policy Committee typically meets at the same location, usually on the third Wednesday in the same month. The schedule for the meetings, as well as meeting call-in information will be posted on the Bay County website.





Major Transportation Documents

- The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a long-range planning document that is used as a basis to guide decision making on where federal dollars should be spent. This document identifies transportation needs at least twenty years out from the publication of the document and highlights projects, both funded and unfunded, as well as possible policies to meet those needs. It takes a comprehensive look at the short-term and long-term strategies and actions to address current and future transportation demands while prioritizing the safety and transit of people and goods during the development of the transportation process. These include, but aren't limited to, operations and management activities that lead to the systematic development of an integrated intermodal transportation system. BCATS also routinely updates each plan for the latest estimates and assumptions for population, land use, travel, employment, congestion, and economic activity.
- The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the list of Federal-Aid road and transit projects that communities and agencies plan to implement over a four-year period. These are planned to be obligated to implement the surface transportation policies contained in the BCATS 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update. That list is required to be fiscally constrained; that is, the cost of projects programmed in the TIP cannot exceed the amount of funding "reasonably expected to be available" during that time. It is important that the scheduled transportation improvements highlighted in the TIP stay consistent with projected and current financial resources.
- The Unified Work Program (UWP) is a yearly document not subject to the Public Participation Plan that integrates work to be performed by the Bay County Transportation Planning Program (BCTPP) which represents the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), administering the Bay Area Transportation Study (BCATS), the Bay Metropolitan Transportation Authority (BMTA), and MDOT into a single document. This document follows the federal fiscal year and runs from October 1st to September 30th of the following year.



Summary of Public Participation Plan Objectives

- Create a plan that will enable BCATS to improve & increase public participation in the transportation planning process.
- Develop measures to prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of transportation benefits by low-income and minority populations.
- Facilitate participation of non-traditional participants in the planning process.
- Be able to usher in new various methods of digital public participation, balanced with traditional methods of public participation.
- To provide and encourage timely and early participation to ensure the opportunity for comment (by stakeholders and the public) on all phases of the transportation decision making process.
- Develop transportation plans and projects that reflect BCATS communities' values.

Public Involvement Process

The components of this Public Participation Plan are included in the development, adoption, and amendment of BCATS Transportation plans and programs. The Public Participation Plan will be monitored and reviewed periodically to evaluate its effectiveness. The strategies identified in this plan are intended to result in well attended public meetings, local news coverage of programs, and more public interest in transportation issues and processes within the region. A public comment period of 45 days will be provided prior to the adoption or amendment of the Participation Plan in accordance with federal guidelines. A graphic that illustrates the review and approval process is shown in Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

Public Involvement Tools

Notice of Meetings

All meetings of BCATS Committees will comply with the Public Open Meetings Act with meeting notices being posted on the website and a physical notice being posted at all public entrance doors at the Bay County Building 515 Center Avenue, Bay City, Michigan 48708 at least 18 hours prior to the meeting. The meeting notice will provide the date and time of the meeting, location of the meeting room, a description of the purpose of the meeting, including Public Hearing if needed and the statement: The public is invited to attend.



Further, the meeting notice shall include:

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals with disabilities may request aids/services within a reasonable time period to participate in the meeting. Contact Amber Davis-Johnson, Corporation Counsel, 515 Center Avenue, Bay City, MI 48708-5125; phone: 989-895-4131 or 989-895-4049 TDD.

Notices of Policy Committee meetings shall follow the same above posting method and contain a description of the same information. In addition, however, notices of Policy Committee meetings must also be published in a local newspaper within the Bay City Urbanized Area, typically the Bay City Times or the Pinconning Journal.

Any Public Hearing for formal consideration of an official action item (TIP amendment, etc.) and/or approval intended at the Policy Committee must also be described in the meeting notice.

All meeting notices will also be posted on the Bay County Transportation Planning Program's website (<https://www.baycountymi.gov/Transportation>). Should the proposed agenda for the meeting include action on the Participation Plan, the Transportation Plan or the TIP, it should be specifically noted.

If a scheduled meeting needs to be rescheduled for reasons such as the inability to reach quorum or inclement weather, it can only be rescheduled if public notification efforts have been made. This will be outlined further in a BCATS By-Laws amendment.

Annual Report

Publishing of the BCATS Annual Report occurs every December. The BCATS Annual Report will be posted on the Transportation Planning website (<https://www.baycountymi.gov/Transportation/BCATSAnnualReports.aspx>). This multi-modal report is a summary of the previous year's work in transportation. It includes updates on planning studies, completed and upcoming roadway construction projects, transit related information and other general data concerning the activities of BCATS. The report also provides names and phone numbers the public can contact regarding transportation issues.



Public Comment Period at all BCATS Policy Committee Meetings

During each BCATS Policy Committee meeting, time shall be allocated for public comment. The public may submit comments to BCATS in person or in any other form of communication (letters, phone, e-mail, fax, etc.). All comments that are received will be read at the meeting during the public comment period. In addition, BCATS encourages citizens to go to the source, that is, the best place to influence a project is at the local level where projects begin. For example, if a citizen has a suggestion for improving a roadway or transit route, find out who has jurisdiction over the road or route (for example, is it the city of Bay City, the city of Essexville, the Bay County Road Commission, the Michigan Department of Transportation or the Bay Metro Transit Authority, etc.). Once you know who's in charge, take advantage of opportunities to voice your support or objection of a proposed project. Projects are approved at the local level (by planning commissions, township boards, city commissions, or road commissions) before they make it on to the BCATS approved project list for federal funding.

Public Hearings

Specifically, before approving any Public Participation Plan, Metropolitan Transportation Plan, TIP or TIP amendment or modification, BCATS shall conduct a public hearing to solicit comments. Such hearings shall take place during the regularly scheduled BCATS meeting unless deemed otherwise by the BCATS Policy Committee. Notice of public hearings will be administered in the same manner as notice of meetings. To supplement the public hearing process, BCATS will also engage in hosting public information/public open house meetings at publicly convenient and accessible locations and times such as, but not limited to, public libraries, schools, shopping malls, or township halls. Every attempt will be made to hold such meetings at locations that are along or within one-half mile of a public transit facility. During public hearings BCATS will utilize various visualization techniques, as described on page 10, to assist in conveying the transportation plans and programs.

Radio, TV, Newspaper, Social Media Internet

To the extent feasible, BCATS staff will utilize the opportunities provided through local radio, TV, Bay 3TV, newspaper, Internet, and social media to inform the public of the development of transportation planning products such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan or the TIP. This would include news releases, bulletin board formats, public service announcements and interview opportunities that may be available. Citizens with internet access can go to the BCATS homepage at www.baycountymi.gov/Transportation.



Outreach

BCATS staff will attempt to identify and contact special interest groups in the community to assure their opportunity to have input. These would include organizations such as citizen district councils, minority populations, low-income populations, private transportation providers, etc. These groups will receive an email or if a mailing address is available, a direct mailing which describes the transportation planning process and their opportunity for input. This includes, but is not limited, to the organizations listed below. This list may be added to at any meeting of the BCATS Policy Committee:

Midland Salzburg Citizen District Council (CDC)
Northwest CDC
Northeast CDC
Columbus Avenue CDC
South-End CDC
NAACP, Bay City Branch
Bay City Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
Essexville DDA
Hampton DDA
Bangor DDA
Monitor DDA
Senior Citizens Advisory Committee
Bay Area Community Foundation Railtrail/Riverwalk Committee
James Clements Airport Advisory Committee
AAA Taxi Company
Bangor Township Public Schools Transportation Program
Bay City Public Schools Transportation Program
Essexville-Hampton Public Schools Transportation Program
Bay City Housing Commission (elderly and low-income housing)
Johnson Street Business District
Midland Street Business District
United Way of Bay County
Bay County Department on Aging
Region VII Area Agency on Aging
Tri-City Cyclist
Great Lakes Bay Region Hispanic Business Association



Visualization Techniques

BCATS will utilize various visualization techniques to inform the public and convey the message of transportation projects, plans, and programs ranging from, but not limited to, static maps, interactive demonstrations, computer model simulations, and photo manipulation to artist renderings. For each individual project, plan, or program, BCATS will use the most efficient visualization technique possible to best inform the public.

Public Participation Plan Process for Major Transportation Documents

BCATS shall consult with governmental units within the MPO, local economic development organizations, freight related businesses, non-motorized transportation groups and clubs, local transportation providers, and other interested parties in the development of the TIP and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. BCATS shall also conduct outreach, public comment periods and public hearings as described in the Public Participation Plan.

Both the initial TIP and Metropolitan Transportation Plan shall be published for a minimum of 30 days to receive written public comment before adoption. When significant written and/or oral comments are received on the draft Metropolitan Transportation Plan and TIP, BCATS will prepare a response summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments as part of the final Metropolitan Transportation Plan and TIP. For any amendments that are deemed necessary for the adopted TIP and/or the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, BCATS shall publish at least one notice in a local news publication of general circulation within the Bay City Urbanized Area prior to the approval of the amendment.



Summary

The BCATS Public Participation Plan described above will ensure maximum access by the public and encourage proactive public participation to all aspects of the transportation planning process. This increased access for local citizens and other groups to transportation planning will help foster the continuous improvement of BCATS plans and programs to serve the Bay City area.

During the planning process, all projects will have an opportunity for public comment and participation. A project open house is held for major projects to discuss the socio-economic impacts of the project on the community which includes any low-income populations or minority populations. Also, during construction, appropriate detour routes are developed to minimize delay and disruption on all population groups.



Appendix 1

Process for Changes to the Participation Plan for Bay City Area Transportation Study

