

# Consultation Plan

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**KATS**

KALAMAZOO AREA  
TRANSPORTATION STUDY



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# Introduction

The Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Kalamazoo County and eastern Van Buren County. As the MPO, KATS is responsible for carrying out all federally coordinated transportation-related planning activities for the area, including the preparation of two planning documents:

- The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a short-range planning document that describes transportation projects over a four-year cycle
- The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), a visionary, long-range planning document that discusses transportation projects, priorities, and investment strategies for the next 20+ years

When developing current and future transportation plans for the area, KATS is required to adhere to the regulations set forth in the current federal transportation bill, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

## Transportation Planning Consultation Procedures

According to 23 CFR 450.316 in the FAST ACT, when developing both the TIP and the MTP, “The MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the metropolitan planning area that are affected by transportation.” It is suggested that representatives from state, local, tribal governments, and private agencies responsible for the following areas be contacted:

- Economic growth and development
- Environmental protection
- Airport operators
- Freight movement
- Land use management
- Natural resources
- Conservation
- Historical preservation
- Human service transportation providers

KATS recognizes its responsibility to include representatives from these organizations throughout the planning process. KATS refers to these agencies as “consultation organizations.”

The FAST Act also states that MPOs should coordinate their planning process with the planning activities of these organizations to the maximum extent practicable by considering related planning activities within the MPO area. The overarching goal of the consultation process is to eliminate or minimize conflicts with other agencies’ plans, programs, or policies as they relate to the TIP or the

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MTP. For example, by consulting with tribal governments or land use management agencies during the development of these documents, these organizations, in collaboration with KATS, can compare the proposed project lists and maps with other natural or historic resource inventories or with other current or future plans to ensure there are no conflicts.

## Consultation List

KATS's consultation list is continuously updated to assure that the most relevant organizations are contacted as part of the KATS consultation process and currently includes 112 individuals representing 35 unique agencies. The complete list of organizations on KATS's consultation list is included in Appendix B on page 12. If you wish to be added to our consultation list, please contact Megan Mickelson by email [mmickelson@katsmpo.org](mailto:mmickelson@katsmpo.org) or call (269) 343-0766.

## Outreach Tools

KATS currently uses the following methods to engage our consultation organizations:

- (1) Email. KATS staff converted the long-standing direct mail list into an email format which is maintained locally. Sending correspondence over email allows us to more easily start and maintain a two-way dialogue with consultation organizations and make relevant resources, such as maps, more easily accessible through links to our website.
- (2) Website. KATS posts information emailed to our consultation organizations on our website, along with supporting links and additional information.
- (3) Social Media. KATS posts notices emailed to our consultation organizations on social media, including posts on Facebook and tweets on Twitter. These posts and tweets include links back to the website.
- (4) *Optional*: Open Houses/Meetings. Historically, we have invited our consultation organizations to meet with KATS staff one-on-one or with several staff to compare their plans with the draft project list for our TIP and MTP in an open house format. We also offer opportunities for the consultation organizations to meet with staff at a time of their choosing.

## Maintaining and Evaluating the Effectiveness of our Outreach Tools

Below are the procedures for maintaining and evaluating the effectiveness of our outreach tools.

Consultation List: KATS staff continually reviews and updates the KATS consultation list to ensure that contacts are up-to-date, and all necessary organizations are represented. KATS can manage this list efficiently through Google services. When emails are sent out, staff receives responses, such as out of office replies, which often indicate when individuals are no longer employed at specific organizations.

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Staff also receives notifications when emails can't be delivered and can follow up with impacted organizations to ensure that a new contact is added to the list.

Website: KATS frequently updates our website so that it includes the latest information—especially during the development of the TIP and MTP. We can evaluate the effectiveness of our website by viewing analytics through Squarespace, which shows page views, visits, and unique visitors, as well as the device used to visit our website.

Social Media: KATS maintains a social media presence on Facebook and Twitter with continual posts, shares, and updates. Facebook allows KATS to view the number of post engagements, such as likes and shares, as well as people reached. Staff can also view impressions and total engagements from Tweets on Twitter to gauge effectiveness and the total number of people reached.

Open Houses/Meetings: Despite our best efforts, open houses/meetings have not generated the responses from the consultation organizations that we had hoped for. Therefore, open houses/meetings are considered an optional outreach strategy for consultation and may be eliminated in the future if they are determined to be ineffective.

## Special Requests

Several organizations on our consultation list have made special requests to receive various project lists or documents during the planning process for the TIP or the MTP. For instance, one consultation organization has asked that staff flag safety projects on the draft project list. KATS accommodates such special requests on an as-needed basis and works directly with the organization making the request to ensure they receive the information they need in a timely manner. Consultation agencies that wish to make a special request should contact Megan Mickelson by email at [mmickelson@KATS.org](mailto:mmickelson@KATS.org) or call 269-343-0766.

## Partnerships

In order to bolster our public involvement efforts, KATS has entered into partnerships with two of our consultation organizations: Metro, our area transit authority and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). We often hold public involvement meetings at Metro and are frequently in contact with these organizations. Working through Metro has allowed KATS to increase our reach to additional population groups as well as additional organizations. We work with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to ensure the contacts on our list are up-to-date. KATS has partnered with MDOT in some of our public involvement efforts as well to expand our outreach. KATS recognizes the benefits that partnerships with such organizations can bring to both the public involvement and consultation efforts of our organization and plans to work toward expanding our list of partner organizations in the future.

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## Responses to Comments Received

KATS staff reviews all feedback received during the consultation process for the TIP and the MTP and responds to comments based on the method in which they were submitted. For instance, comments emailed to staff will receive a reply by email. Detailed responses may not always be possible, and in these cases, acknowledgement that staff received the comment(s) may suffice, and input may be forwarded to jurisdictions responsible for the projects for a more thorough response. Please note that not all comments, such as short posts on social media, warrant responses. Staff will reply to all comments requiring a response in a timely manner. Comments that are relevant to specific jurisdictions will be shared with them.

## Incorporation of Feedback

Comments and responses from consultation organizations will be kept on file, be available for public review, and be made part of the document as adopted. Summaries of comments and responses will also be given to the Technical and Policy Committees as well as the jurisdiction(s) directly responsible for the project. Comments will be responded to before decisions are made or plans or programs are adopted. Responses will be made in a timely manner so that they can be considered during the next phase of the plan or program development. Please see the consultation feedback diagram below for a visual representation of the process for submitting, reviewing, and incorporating comments received during the consultation process.

**Figure 1 Consultation Feedback Loop**



Staff also ensures that consultation starts before the public involvement process on project lists so that issues identified during the consultation process have an opportunity to be addressed before the public is invited to comment. When this happens, changes to the project lists are immediately reflected on the website. To allow for additional time for review, it is possible for the consultation and public involvement comment periods to overlap.



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# Consultation and Major Documents

KATS currently consults with agencies when developing our short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and our long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The procedures for contacting consultation agencies, the milestones when they are contacted, as well as the notification date and length of the consultation period, are outlined below.

It is important to note that, while the consultation process is separate and distinct from the public involvement process, the consultation list is included as a smaller sub-list of KATS's larger Public Participation email list, so KATS's consultation organizations receive every notification that is sent to the public. Milestones of when the public is contacted during the development of the TIP and MTP are in KATS's Public Participation Plan.

## Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the list of road, transit and non-motorized projects that communities and agencies plan to implement over a four-year period within KATS's MPO area. (Please see Appendix A on page 11 for a map of KATS's MPO area.) The table below describes the consultation procedure for the development of the TIP document.

Milestone	Consultation Procedure	Public Notification Date	Length of Consultation Period (minimum)
<p><b>1. Draft project lists developed</b></p>	<p>Once the draft TIP project list has been developed and approved by the Technical and Policy Committees, KATS will notify the consultation agencies in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Notices/relevant information posted on website</li> <li>• Social media</li> </ul> <p>The following tools may be used on an optional basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open House/Meetings</li> </ul> <p>*Note: Organizations that have asked to receive certain subsets of the project list will have their requests accommodated over email.</p>	<p>The first day of the consultation period</p>	<p>21 days minimum; 28 days preferred</p>
<p><b>2. Draft document complete</b></p>	<p>Once the draft TIP document is complete, KATS will notify consultation organizations who have specifically requested to be contacted at this point, or requested to review specific chapters, in the following way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email</li> </ul> <p>*Note: This will take place concurrently with public involvement efforts that occur at this milestone.</p>	<p>The first day of the consultation period</p>	<p>14 days</p>

# Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The purpose of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is to ensure that transportation investments in KATS’s MPO area enhance the movement of people and freight efficiently, effectively, and safely over the next 20+ years. (Please see Appendix A on page 11 for a map of KATS’s MPO area.) The table below describes the consultation procedure for the development of the MTP document.

Milestone	Consultation Procedure	Public Notification Date	Length of Consultation Period (minimum)
<p><b>1. Draft project lists developed</b></p>	<p>Once the draft MTP project list has been developed and approved by the Technical and Policy Committees, KATS will notify the consultation agencies in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Notices/relevant information posted on website</li> <li>• Social media</li> </ul> <p>The following tools may be used on an optional basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open House/Meetings</li> </ul> <p>*Note: Organizations that have asked to receive subsets of the project list (such as safety projects) will have their requests accommodated over email.</p>	<p>The first day of the consultation period</p>	<p>21 days minimum; 28 days preferred</p>
<p><b>2. Draft document complete</b></p>	<p>Once the draft MTP document is complete, KATS will notify consultation organizations who have specifically requested to be contacted at this point, or requested to review specific chapters or projects, in the following way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email</li> </ul> <p>*Note: This will take place concurrently with public involvement efforts that occur at this milestone.</p>	<p>The first day of the consultation period</p>	<p>14 days</p>

# Updating the Consultation Plan

It is necessary to update the Consultation Plan periodically to ensure that it remains relevant and that the outreach tools and methodology remain effective. KATS will review the Consultation Plan prior to the beginning of the MTP development cycle and update the plan if necessary. The table below describes the consultation procedure for updating the Consultation Plan.

Milestone	Consultation Procedure	Public Notification Date	Length of Consultation Period (minimum)
<b>1. Draft consultation plan available for comment</b>	Once the draft consultation plan has been reviewed and updated, KATS will notify consultation agencies in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Notices/relevant information posted on website</li> <li>• Social media</li> </ul>	The first day of the consultation period	21 days minimum; 28 days preferred

Once the draft Consultation Plan has gone through the consultation period, KATS will bring the document to the Technical and Policy Committees for approval. Meeting agendas for Technical and Policy Committee meetings are posted at [KATSmipo.org](http://KATSmipo.org), and both meetings are open to the public. An appendix that details the consultation outreach efforts during the update process, including comments received, will be included in an appendix of the document.



*Kayakers on the Kalamazoo River. Rivers are one of the important environmental resources in West Michigan.*

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## Other Resources

For more information, please consult the resources below. All documents are available on KATS's website. Hard copies are available at KATS's office or upon request.

KATS's Public Participation Plan—outlines how and when KATS solicits feedback from the public during the development of our four major documents: the TIP, the MTP, the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and the Public Participation Plan (PPP). The document also describes how the public can submit comments and the process that KATS staff uses to respond to them. A copy of the document can be found here: [www.KATS.org/public-involvement](http://www.KATS.org/public-involvement).

KATS's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)—discusses transportation projects, priorities, vision, and investment strategies for the transportation system for the next 20+ years. A copy of the document, which includes detailed information about the consultation process, as well as project lists and relevant appendices, can be found here: [www.KATS.org/mtp](http://www.KATS.org/mtp).

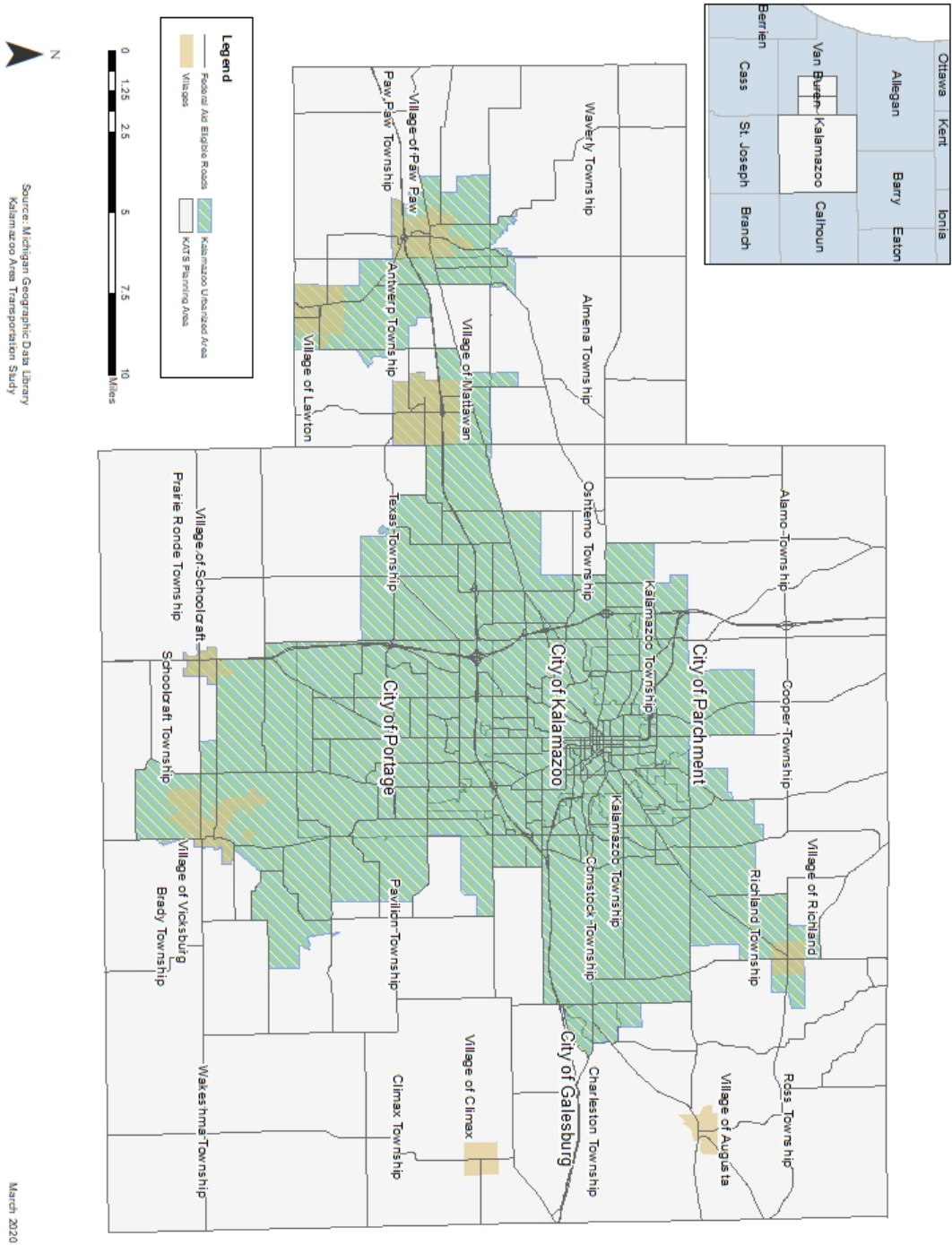
KATS's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)—describes transportation projects for the next four years. A copy of the document, which includes detailed information about the consultation process, as well as project lists and relevant appendices, can be found here: [www.KATS.org/tip](http://www.KATS.org/tip).

KATS's Title VI Plan—explains KATS's non-discrimination policy statement and assurances, as well as the process for how an individual can file a complaint if they believe they have experienced discrimination. A copy of the plan can be found on the home page of [www.KATS.org](http://www.KATS.org).

KATS's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan—reviews how KATS accommodates and includes those with limited English proficiency in the transportation planning process. A copy of the plan can be found on the home page of [www.KATS.org](http://www.KATS.org).

# Appendix A: MPO Map

Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Planning Boundary



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# Appendix B: Consultation Organizations

**KATS's list of consultation organizations is below. If you wish to be added to our consultation list, please contact Megan Mickelson by email at [mmickelson@KATS.org](mailto:mmickelson@KATS.org) or call (269).343.0766.**

Alamo Township	Gun Lake Tribe
Almena Township	Housing Resources Inc.
American Red Cross	Indian Trails Bus Lines
Amtrak	Interfaith Strategy For Advocacy and Action in the Community (ISAAC)
Antwerp Township	Kalamazoo Advocates for Senior Issues
Area Agency on Aging	Kalamazoo \ Battle Creek International Airport
Area Agency on Aging Kalamazoo	Kalamazoo Bicycle Club
Bike Friendly Kalamazoo	Kalamazoo College
Brady Township	Kalamazoo Community College
Bronson Healthcare Group	Kalamazoo Community Foundation
Bronson Hospital	Kalamazoo Conservation District
Calhoun Conservation District	Kalamazoo County
Charleston Township	Kalamazoo County Drain Commissioner's Office
Citizens for Community Transportation	Kalamazoo County Parks
City of Galesburg	Kalamazoo Downtown Partnership
City of Kalamazoo	Kalamazoo Historic District Commission
City of Parchment	Kalamazoo Metropolitan Branch of the NAACP
City of Portage	Kalamazoo Nature Center
City of Portage Environmental Board	Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing
City of Portage Parks	Kalamazoo Public Schools
Climax Township	Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency
Comstock Township	Kalamazoo River Protection Association
Consumers Energy	Kalamazoo River Watershed Council
Cooper Township	Kalamazoo Runners Club
County Parks Department	Kalamazoo Township
Disability Network SW MI	Kalamazoo Valley Habitat for Humanity
Discover Kalamazoo	Kzoo Swift
Douglass Community Association	Legal Aid of Western Michigan
Eastside Neighborhood Association	MATCH-E-BE-NASH-SHE-WISH Band of Pottawatomi
Edison Neighborhood Association	Metro
Education for the Arts/RESA	MI Commission for the Blind
Environmental Protection Agency - Region 5	MI Department of Environmental Quality - Kalamazoo District
Fish & Wildlife Service	MI Department of Natural Resources - Plainwell Operations
Foundation for the Blind and Visually Impaired	
Gazelle Sports	
Grand Elk Railroad	
Greyhound Bus Lines	



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Northside Association for Community  
Development  
Northside Ministerial Alliance  
Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Pottawatomi  
Oakwood Neighborhood Association  
Open Roads  
Oshtemo Township  
Pavilion Township  
Paw Paw Area Chamber of Commerce  
Paw Paw Township  
Pedal  
Pokagon Band of Pottawatomi  
Potawatomi RC&D Council  
Pottawatomi RC&D Council  
Prairie Ronde Township  
Richland Township  
Road Commission of Kalamazoo County  
Ross Township  
Schoolcraft Community Schools  
Schoolcraft Township  
Senior Services, Inc.  
Sierra Club SW Michigan Group  
Southwest Michigan First Economic  
Development  
Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy  
Texas Township  
US Agricultural Department  
US Department of Agriculture Service Center  
US Federal Aviation Administration  
USDA Farm Service Agency  
Van Buren Conservation District  
Van Buren County Road Commission  
Van Buren Public Transit  
Vicksburg Area Chamber of Commerce  
Village Cyclery Schoolcraft  
Village of Augusta  
Village of Climax  
Village of Lawton  
Village of Mattawan  
Village of Paw Paw  
Village of Schoolcraft  
Village of Vicksburg

Vine Neighborhood Association, Inc.  
Waverly Township  
Western Michigan University  
Zoo City Cycle & Sports



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# Appendix C: Sample Consultation Email

Subject: TIP and LRP Environmental Consultation

We are reaching out with this letter to help all our partners standardize the environmental consultation process. This will help ensure that all agencies have a complete, robust, and meaningful Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and Long Range Plan (LRP). It will also verify that no sensitive environmental, cultural, or economic resources are missed in the development of the TIP and LRP. This communication is being done in the spirit of the cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive planning process.

We are sending you the portions of the TIP and LRP that you requested. We are asking you to please provide your analysis of the information provided, your opinion of how well the information was presented, and the mitigation strategies you would offer to limit the impact of transportation projects on the environment. Links to both the map and master list of projects are available online at <https://katsmpo.org/draft-tip/>

We are asking you to evaluate these sections and send us your input within 30 days. Please send us your responses by {insert date} by emailing Megan Mickelson at [mmickelson@katsmpo.org](mailto:mmickelson@katsmpo.org), giving staff a call at 269-343-0766 or by sending a letter to the KATS office. In the event you do not have any input to provide, please be sure to send us a letter to that effect by the {insert date} response deadline. Without appropriate feedback, it is difficult to foresee potential issues with the project list. No comment will be viewed as having no concerns with the project list.

The Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study greatly appreciates any comment or concern regarding these projects. Thank you in advance for your comments and participation.

Sincerely,

Jon Start

Executive Director, Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study