

TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
 TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND POLICY COMMITTEE
 Monday, March 17, 2025

Committee Members in Attendance

Representative	TwinCATS Member Organization	TAC	Pol
Richard Royal (<i>Virtual</i>)	Benton Charter Township	X	X
Paul Gillespie (<i>Virtual</i>)	Berrien County Community Development Department	X	
John Humphry	Berrien County Planning Commission		X
Mark Heyliger	Berrien County Road Department		X
Tim Drews	City of Benton Harbor	X	X
Tim Zebell (<i>Virtual</i>)	City of St. Joseph		X
Alex Austin	City of St. Joseph	X	
Cindy Gray	Disability Network of SW Mich.	X	
Terrie Smith (<i>Virtual</i>)	Lincoln Charter Township	X	
Jim Sturdevant (<i>Virtual</i>)	MDOT Bureau of Transportation Planning	X	X
Adrian Stroupe	MDOT Southwest Region	X	X
Jonathon Smith (<i>Virtual</i>)	MDOT Coloma Transportation Service Center	X	X
Denise Cook	St. Joseph Charter Township		X
Roger Seeley	St. Joseph Charter Township	X	
Mike Allard (<i>Virtual</i>)	Village of Shoreham	X	X
Kacey Dominguez (<i>Virtual</i>)	Village of Stevensville	X	X
Fred Featherly (<i>Virtual</i>)	MDOT – Office of Passenger Transportation	X	
Kim Gallagher	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission		X

Others in Attendance

Name	Representing
Jonathon Fisk	St. Joseph Charter Township
Ralph Benson	Lincoln Charter Township
Brandon Kovnat	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Committee Members Absent

Representative	TwinCATS Member Organization	TAC	Pol
Ray Bell	Berrien County Board of Commissioners		X
Kevin Stack	Berrien County Road Department	X	
Juan Ganum	City of Bridgman		X
Darwin Watson	City of New Buffalo	X	X
Dick Stauffer	Lincoln Charter Township		X
Steve Tilly	Royalton Township	X	X
David Chandler	Sodus Township	X	X
Shannon Christy	Southwest Mich. Regional Airport	X	X
Todd Schurn (<i>Virtual</i>)	Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority		
(Vacant)	Village of Grand Beach	X	X
Christian Nicholaides	Federal Highway Administration		
Evan Gross	Federal Transit Administration		
Katie Beck	MDOT Statewide and Urban Travel Analysis		
Fred Featherly (<i>Virtual</i>)	MDOT – Office of Passenger Transportation	X	
Scott Webber	Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission		

TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND POLICY COMMITTEE
Monday, March 17, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Call to Order and Roll Call

Policy Committee Vice Chair, Denise Cook, called the meeting to order at 9:30 am, and Kim Gallagher conducted roll call.

Changes to the Agenda

Gallagher said that the West Michigan Regional Trail Plan Presentation would not be occurring and should be removed from the agenda.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Past Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes from the January 27, 2025 TwinCATS combined Policy and Technical Advisory Committee meeting. Made by Roger Seeley and seconded by Tim Drews. **Motion approved.**

SWMPC Staff Report

Gallagher reported on the following items.

Unified Work Program (UWP): SWMPC, MDOT and FHWA held a pre-UWP meeting to discuss the FY 2026 work plan. The draft plan will be released for public comment in early May, with TwinCATS approval at the May meeting.

Asset Management: Applications for PASER data collection funding on local (non-federal aid) roads were sent to agencies in December 2024, and awards were given to Bridgman, Buchanan, and the Van Buren County Road Commission. There is still funding available, and agencies should contact Gallagher for an application.

2026-2029 TIP Update: Local road projects were approved by TwinCATS in January and programmed into MDOT's JobNet database. The full TIP document, including all projects, will be posted for public comment in early May and voted on by TwinCATS at the May meeting. Projects are posted on the SWMPC website in an interactive map where public comments can be submitted.

Local Road Agency Updates

Tim Zebell provided updates on the City of St. Joseph's 2025 projects.

Botham Ave Project: Bid letting is complete, with the accepted bid 8.7% over the engineer's estimate. Work is expected to begin late July to early August. The total estimate was lower than programmed due to non-participating work (watermain, sanitary sewer, and pocket parking) coming in under budget, while the participating estimate was higher.

Cleveland Ave Project: Obligated with a May letting date.

Local Agency TIP Amendment to add the Sawyer Road Path

The proposed sidewalk in Chikaming Township along Swayer road connecting Red Arrow Hwy to Downtown Sawyer was presented. Gallagher explained that Chikaming Township is applying for a federal earmark grant through Senator Peters office, which required the project be in the TIP for eligibility. The Township also plans to apply for statewide competitive TAP funding.

Motion for the Technical Advisory Committee to recommend that the Policy Committee approve adding the Sawey Rd Path to the TwinCATS 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program as contained in the meeting packet. Made by Tim Drews and seconded by Roger Seeley. **Motion approved.**

Motion for the Policy Committee to approve the recommendation from the Technical Advisory committee. Made by Mark Heyliger and seconded by John Humphry. **Motion approved.**

Transit Updates (TCATA)

Gallagher reported that TCATA lost its insurance through the MI Transit Pool in November, causing it's premium to jump from \$90K to \$375K annually, with a \$275K per-incident deductible. Several weeks ago, TCATA had a severe crash that resulted in hospitalizations, and will add to further uncertainty about future insurance coverage. TCATA has hired a consultant to explore contracting with a third-party to manage the service.

A meeting was held on March 6th with local communities to discuss transit needs and potential local funding contributions. Many participants were unaware that their communities receive no transit service, highlighting the need for education on the transit service in Berrien County. Currently, only Benton Harbor contributes local funds, and TCATA does not have enough funding to meet the 50% federal match requirement, leaving federal funds unused.

MDOT Project Updates

See Meeting Packet Page 10 for MDOT project updates.

John Smith mentioned that MDOT send emails about major project updates, including road closures and detours, which anyone can sign up to receive. He also recommended checking MI Drive for real-time construction and closure updates. Gallagher added that SWMPC forwards major updates to TwinCATS committee members.

Smith also provided additional details on two major projects.

2026 M-139 Project: The last review meeting was held a few weeks ago, and one more public open house is planned for later this year. The project limits may be adjusted based on available funding.

2027 St. Joseph Main Street Project: The project has gone through multiple stakeholder meetings, and a third public meeting is scheduled for early April. The base plans (30% design completion) are finished.

MDOT Project Amendment

See Meeting Packet Page 12 for amendment details.

No questions or comments were made about the proposed amendments.

Motion for the Technical Advisory Committee to recommend that the Policy Committee approve the MDOT project amendment to the TwinCATS 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program as contained in the meeting packet. Made by Tim Drews and seconded by Roger Seeley. **Motion approved.**

Motion for the Policy Committee to approve the recommendation from the Technical Advisory committee. Made by Adrain Stroupe and seconded by John Humphry. **Motion approved.**

Review and Approval of 2026-2029 Projects

See Meeting Packet Page 13 for the list of proposed 2026-2029 projects.

Kovnat explained that 2026 is an overlap year between the 2023-2026 TIP and the 2026-2029 TIP. Most 2026 projects have already been approved for the current 2023-2026 TIP, and any new 2026 projects (not yet approved) will be noted.

2026-2029 CMAQ and CRP projects: Gallagher mentioned that Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program is allocated countywide, while the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) is allocated only for use within the TwinCATS MPO. However, both funds are intended to reduce emissions, and several projects use both funds which is why they are presented together. There is a possibility that CMAQ and CRP funding could be eliminated in the next federal transportation bill. CMAQ has existed for decades, tied to Ozone reduction under Clean Air Act. The CRP is a new program under the IIJA, targeting carbon emissions.

2026-2029 TCATA FTA funded projects: The proposed FTA 5307 and 5339 funded projects were presented, including the estimated operating allocation. Gallagher noted the 5307 operating funding is apportioned based on urban area population and density, independent of what may happen with TCATA.

2026-2029 MDOT Projects: Kovnat presented the Michigan Transportation Program Portal, which has an interactive map with all proposed 2026-2029 federally funded (FHWA & FTA) transportation projects (MDOT, Local agencies, and Transit). Users can select a project to see details and submit comments. Projects with only state funding are mapped separately. MDOT has only programmed projects for the TwinCATS area to 2027. However, as it gets closer to 2028 and 2029 MDOT will add projects based on maintenance needs and available funding.

Motion for the Technical Advisory Committee to recommend that the Policy Committee approve adding the projects as presented to the TwinCATS 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program. Made by Roger Seeley and seconded by Michelle Height. **Motion approved.**

Motion for the Policy Committee to approve the recommendation from the Technical Advisory committee. Made by Adrain Stroupe and seconded by John Humphry. **Motion approved.**

Privilege of the Floor or Public Comment

Several changes at federal government affecting transportation were discussed.

- FHWA and FTA staff have been dismissed as part of the overall federal employee layoffs.
- The National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program has been suspended.
- In early February, FHWA added a requirement for amendments to be approved in Washington, D.C., which effectively halted all amendments. This policy was recently overturned, resuming the approval process.
- The current transportation act, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) will expire in 2027 causing uncertainty about federal programs beyond 2027.

Sturdevant added that he didn't expect any major changes at MDOT.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 AM. The next TwinCATS meeting is scheduled for Monday April 21, 2025, at 9:30 AM.

Minutes taken by Brandon Kovnat, SWMPC transportation planner