

Kalamazoo Region Bike Route Committee (KRBRC)
January 28, 2025 Meeting Notes
Released February 7, 2025

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Next KRBRC Meeting: April 22, 2025; 11am-noon; location to be announced.

Goal

Begin systematically preparing regional bike routes with the goal of planning connections among Municipalities: immediately adjacent to but outside the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and, within/proximate vicinity of the seven counties that define MDOT's Southwest Region.

Agenda

- Welcome, Goal and Agenda Overview
- Bike Route Map Examples: Quick Review
- Complete Worksheet: Community Bike Route Wayfinding Input
- Community Bike Route Development Process: Handout (KATS 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Appendix F)
- Discuss Next Steps / Comments

Note: This meeting was focused on listing likely “to/from” municipal bike route destinations. Planning routes is a separate step. A process for doing so was distributed.

Bike Route Map Examples: Quick Review

By way of example, 16 bike route maps previously submitted to the Kalamazoo Metropolitan Transportation Study (KATS) that connect municipalities on the periphery of the KATS Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) with adjacent municipalities outside of KATS were circulated (see Appendix H, <https://bikefriendlykalamazoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/SouthwestMIBikewayImplementationPlanv221018-posted-221026.pdf>).

Routes in the examples connect the to/from destinations listed below, starting with Cooper Twp in the north and moving clockwise around the compass in order of the municipalities on the periphery of the KATS MPO. Links to their individual Ride With GPS are also provided.

- Cooper Twp-Plainwell: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37809757>
- Richland-Hastings: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772664>
- Richland-Nashville: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772652>
- Richland-Battle Creek (border): <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772482>
- Augusta-Battle Creek (to border via Dickman): <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37833403>
- Augusta-Battle Creek (border): <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772427>
- Climax-Battle Creek (border): <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772602>

- Fulton-Athens: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37771403>
- Vicksburg-Mendon: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772379>
- Vicksburg-Centreville: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37771361>
- Vicksburg-Three Rivers: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772686>
- Lawton-Decatur: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772294>
- Paw Paw-Lawrence: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37771369>
- Schoolcraft-Three Rivers: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772745>
- Schoolcraft-Marcellus: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772524>
- Alamo-Gobles: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772314>

The entire list, including routes that were earlier variations not provided to KATS, is found at <https://ridewithgps.com/users/4285788/routes>. A variation not presented at the meeting is from Augusta-Battle Creek (downtown): <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37772226>

Complete Worksheet: Results

Participants used the Southwest Region Road and Trail Bicycling Guide published by the Michigan Department of Transportation* guided by structured worksheet** to list municipalities they were most familiar with (“Hubs”), identify to/from “Nodes,” to list familiar place names for those Hubs, and to list Adjacent Municipalities (Destinations) that might most reasonably be connected with the Hubs by bike routes. Results are provided below.

*Link to Southwest Region Road and Trail Bicycling Guide and related information: https://www.swmpc.org/nm_map_plan.asp

A blank worksheet is available here: <https://bikefriendlykalamazoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/KRBRC-Mtg-Worksheet-Southwest-Michigan-Bikeway-250128.pdf>

Hub	Node	Place Name of Hub	Adjacent Municipal Destinations
St. Joseph (City)	Downtown	Downtown St. Joe	Focus: South Haven, Berrien Springs, Bridgeman; Secondary: Benton Harbor, Stevensville, Three Oaks, Niles
Paw Paw (Village)	E. Michigan Av / Route 4j0	Downtown Paw Paw	Lawrence, Lawton, Mattawan, Kalamazoo, Gobles, Decatur, Hartford, Oshtemo
Battle Creek (City)	Michigan Av / Capitol Av	Downtown	Marshall, Homer, Albion, Coldwater, Springfield, Galesburg, Augusta, Richland, Hastings
Mattawan (Village)	CR 652 / town cross St or one further NE; grocery store & School	Village?	Lawton, Paw Paw, Gobles, Kalamazoo, Portage, Schoolcraft

Portage (City)	Centre Av / Westnedge Av; Alternate: Milham / Westnedge; Proposed New Neighborhood Lake Center District	City Center	Portage, City of Kalamazoo, Mattawan, Parchment, Alamo / Cooper, Vicksburg, Western Michigan University, Schoolcraft, Kalamazoo Nature Center; Extended Destinations: Three Rivers, Centerville
Niles (City) - Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail	Main St / Front St.	Riverfront Park; Downtown Niles	Buchanan, Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Dowagiac
Niles (City) - Indiana Michigan River Valley Trail	Main / Front	Riverfront Park Area	Edwardsburg (Village), Buchanan, Cassopolis, Dowagiac

Community Bike Route Development Process: Handout

To facilitate independent community route development, a copy of Bike Friendly Kalamazoo’s Commuter Bike Route Development Process was distributed to the participants. The facilitator explained that the word “Commuter” was used in the version published in the KATS 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Appendix F (pp. 186-190), was used to denote a transportation orientation using fixed permanent destinations. A link to the entire plan may be found here: <https://katsmpo.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/2045-mtp-adopted-4-27-2016.pdf>

The designation “commuter” has been superseded by the word “regional,” as more accurate, since the routes themselves may be used by a variety of recreational, shopping and fitness-oriented bicyclists, among others, and not only commuters.

It is widely understood that the routes can serve as “trunklines” off of which more local routes can branch, and, that bicyclists may not only be riding from one municipality to another, but also from many intermediate points to other more local points, taking advantage of the safety benefits of a properly signed bikeway.

The routes themselves are now referred to as a “bikeway” forming a network, since bikeways may include on-road and off-road (multi-use path) routing using a variety of wayfinding signage.

The five-page Community Route Development process can also be found as an extract, here: <https://bikefriendlykalamazoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/BFK-Bike-Route-Process-draft-151206.pdf>

- Typical approximate costs for a mile of multi-use path: \$1,500,000 - \$2,000,000
- Typical approximate costs for a mile of signed bikeway: \$800 - \$2,000
- Typical approximate starting cost estimate for a bridge: \$1,000,000

Discuss Next Steps / Comments

- Meeting Notes – to be distributed
- Outreach to additional community representatives
- Possibility of additional meetings like this in the future, held in other parts of the region
- Downloads of existing bike routes are available; many routes are already described on Bike Friendly Kalamazoo's Where To Ride web page, here:
<https://bikefriendlykalamazoo.org/trails-routes/>

[Regarding adjacent destinations]: several different perspectives - commuter, medium recreational, committed cyclist (public roads, the longer Fall Bike Celebration Routes)

Signs should cover all.

Long distance should have multiple destinations and distances (i.e., Fort Custer State Park, Kal Nature Center, Gull Lake)

Thx for facilitating discussion and networking

My first meeting. I think it has given mre great input. The amount of information was good.

Well done - well presented - We are a small township community and see these paths will enable a closer community - With funding the options could be endless - We have many bikers that drive downtown roads!

[Additional committee member recommendation.]

I can't remember road names & SW Region maps don't show/name all roads (like in Village of Mattawan).

Regional planning should also include routes into city hubs (Put pressure on the cities)

I think a greater emphasis should be put onto major "trails" connecting a few communities.

Work closely with the USBR (US Bike Route).

Develop the Niles (Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail) up to St. Joseph, MI (Bridge over St. Joseph River is expensive).

Additional Resources

- Berrien County Trails Master Plan; <https://www.berrientrails.org/bcmasterplan.asp>
- KATS 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan: <https://katsmpo.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/mtp-approved-11-17-2021.pdf>
- Southwest Michigan Bikeway Web Page: <https://bikefriendlykalamazoo.org/sw-mi-bikeway/>
- Southwest Michigan Non-Motorized Transportation Plan: https://bikefriendlykalamazoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2020_southwest_region_nonmotorized_plan_final.pdf
- West Michigan Trails Master Plan: <https://www.wmtrails.org/regional-master-plan>

KRBRC and Local Destination Naming

KRBRC is part of our region's larger place making and community development efforts. Coupled with wayfinding signs that display destination names, directions and distances, a regional bike route network not only supports navigation for the public, it enhances awareness of the area's municipalities.

Background

A community-wide bike route planning effort began in 2012 that culminated in transportation-oriented routes explicitly designed to connect the list of named municipalities and institutions of higher learning* found in Appendix F in the 2045 KATS MTP (see p. 190). These bike route planning efforts to/from named destinations lead to adoption of the routes illustrated in the KATS 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (illustrated in Map 7) and to adoption of the regional-oriented routes illustrated in Maps 13, 13a, 17 and 17a in the KATS 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Following their adoption in the 2045 KATS MTP, the routes in Map 7 were collaboratively named Southwest Michigan Bikeway. KATS refers to these routes as “Regional Routes” in its 2050 MTP.

*Destinations are sometimes referred to as “trip generators” in the literature. The overall design is sometimes referred to as a “hub and spoke” design, between adjacent municipalities. Such a design that limits its scope to connecting adjacent municipalities is more efficient than one attempting directly connect every municipality with every other, whether adjacent or not.

Bike Friendly Kalamazoo maintains resources concerning bike routing on various pages on its web site at <https://bikefriendlykalamazoo.org> and a web page dedicated to resources concerning the Southwest Michigan Bikeway at <https://bikefriendlykalamazoo.org/sw-mi-bikeway/> as a public service.

*Thank you to today’s participants!
Please report corrections to Paul Selden, KRBRC Chair.*