

**Minutes of Meeting
SATS POLICY COMMITTEE
August 10, 2017**

ATTENDANCE**Policy Committee Voting Members**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brian McFadden, Chair	Sangamon County
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dave Kimsey, Vice Chair	Village of Chatham
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bonnie Gray	City of Springfield
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Val Yazell*	Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jeff South**	Illinois Dept. of Transportation (IDOT): Region 4, District 6
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Frank Squires*** *	Springfield Mass Transit District

* Represented by Norm Sims

** Represented by Sal Madonia

*** Represented by Steve Schoeffel

Policy Committee Non-Voting Members

<input type="checkbox"/>	Holly Ostdick	IDOT: Urban Program Planning
<input type="checkbox"/>	JD Stevenson	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): Illinois Div. Office
<input type="checkbox"/>		Federal Transit Administration

Others

Chris Isbell – IDOT District 6 LR&S
 Ronald Walker – Resident, City of Springfield
 Steven Simpson-Black – Friends of Transit
 Mary Jane Niemann – Regional Planning Commission
 Shannan Karrick – Regional Planning Commission
 Neha Soni – Regional Planning Commission
 Jason Sass – Regional Planning Commission
 Brian Sheehan – Regional Planning Commission

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Brian McFadden called the meeting of the SATS Policy Committee to order at 12:00 PM.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. McFadden asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the July 13, 2017, SATS Policy Committee meeting. Sal Madonia made a motion to approve the minutes. Norm Sims seconded the motion. The vote to approve was unanimous.

III. TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REPORT

No report was given.

IV. 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan

No updates to the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan.

V. 2017-2020 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

No updates to the 2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program.

VI. TECHNICAL ADVISOR UPDATES

A. Illinois Dept. of Transportation: Office of Planning and Programming

No report was given.

B. Federal Highway Administration: Illinois Division Office

No report was given.

VII. AGENCY UPDATES

A. Sangamon Mass Transit District (SMTD)

No report was given.

B. City of Springfield

No report was given.

C. Sangamon County

Mr. McFadden reported that the Sangamon County Board approved an operating budget for the Sangamon-Menard Area Regional Transit (SMART). He anticipated that service would begin April 2, 2018.

D. Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission

Mr. Sims told the Policy Committee that the new State Transportation Improvement Program and draft State Long Range Transportation plan were released and that SSCRPC staff were reviewing the documents to determine what projects were prioritized within the SATS planning area. He said that projects and analysis would be sent out to constituent members when completed.

Mr. Sims said that SSCRPC received notice that Motor Fuel Taxes would be placed under the Grants Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) regime. Mr. Isbell told the Committee that local agencies would be required to be registered under GATA to receive their monthly MFT outlays. No GATA agreement would be necessary for local agencies to spend MFT outlays. Mr. McFadden asked if each department within a local government unit would need to register under GATA. Mr. Isbell said that it was not necessary, but each local government unit would have to register itself in order to receive MFT funds. Mr. Isbell said that the required date for local government units to register under GATA was still undetermined and that he would work to clarify the required date. Mr. Sims expressed concern that some smaller government units would not have the technological capability or expertise necessary to register under GATA. Mr. Sims further noted that he was unsure what training and support local governments would receive from the State in order to meet GATA compliance requirements.

Mr. Sims reminded the Committee that SATS sent a letter to Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Randy Blankenhorn, asking for a delay in requiring MPOs to have an indirect cost rate for pass-through funds under GATA. The pause would be used to create a working group to find a solution that would make GATA compliance easier for MPOs. Mr. Sims told the Committee that the problems SATS had with GATA were not the fault of SATS' Federal partners, nor by IDOT. The problems lay within the system used to implement and enforce GATA that the Executive branch of the State put in place.

Mr. Sims said that Secretary Blankenhorn's response was that IDOT would not take any action specific to indirect cost rates, saying that SATS had received an indirect cost rate earlier. Secretary Blankenhorn specifically mentioned the lower effective rate, stating that it was a more efficient use of public funds. Mr. Sims said that SATS has been very proactive in seeking efficiencies in determining the best uses of public funds. After a period of 265 days, SATS received an indirect cost rate for FY2017, the previous fiscal year at a lower percentage than the year before. Mr. Sims said the issue holding up the indirect cost rate for 265 days was due to paid time off costs for staff being included in the indirect cost rate. He said that previous to GATA requirements, the costs were included in the calculation and that during the first two (of four) submissions, PTO was included as well. Payouts for unused sick days also come from the indirect costs pool. Crowe Horwith, the consulting firm tasked with implementation of GATA did not allow PTO costs to be included in the indirect cost rate, thus lowering the rate that was approved.

Mr. Sims said that SSCRPC modeled costs between the original indirect cost rate and that cost rate that was finally approved. He said there was an approximately 5% difference in the total costs between the two indirect cost rates. He added that the cost savings shown are illusory, because instead of paying for PTO costs from indirect cost pools, they were paid through direct cost pools. The difference was negligible. The costs were paid from a different pool, but were not true savings. He added that any hypothetical savings from the indirect costs rate was erased by the "frictional" costs of implementation on SSCRPC's behalf. He said that over \$10,000 in staff salary was paid during the approval process as a direct result of GATA implementation. He said the real costs were even higher, when one factored in the Director's time, workshop costs, IDOT staff time, and consulting costs. Referring back to the letter, he noted that many local governments will have the same problems implementing GATA as SATS and SSCRPC had.

Mr. Sims said that the County fiscal year does not match the State fiscal year. He said it was a problem when the County has to resubmit a direct cost rate yearly. He further noted that most municipalities do not have a fiscal year that matches the State's fiscal year. He said that IDOT suggested that SSCRPC submit its GATA application with the proposed indirect cost rate, as outlined in the Unified Planning Work Program. The grant agreement was sent back with the older rate, but had to be resubmitted because SSCRPC had received a new indirect cost rate. The new indirect cost rate, however, was for the previous year, and was not applicable for the current year's GATA process. The suggestion from Crowe Horwith was to replace the original indirect cost rate with the approved indirect cost rate from the previous year, both of which are technically incorrect. He said that SSCRPC can't change its rate until the County's audit is done, which presents its own set of problems, since SSCRPC will have to submit another indirect cost rate.

Mr. Sims told the Committee that he received a phone call from IDOT prior to the meeting. IDOT told Mr. Sims that the application for indirect cost rate had to be re-submitted for a couple reasons. One was because of a blank entry on the application stating that there is an approved rate for indirect costs for the current fiscal year. SSCRPC did not have a rate for the current fiscal year and had left the line blank. Mr. Sims said that the choice was to use the previous years approved rate and have it rejected, or to leave it out completely. Another issue was the requirement to list the salaries of the five highest-paid employees. He said that every time that personnel changed, it meant that the GATA paperwork had to be amended. The third reason was that the spreadsheet miscalculated some formulas, creating rounding errors that couldn't be corrected without changing all formulas. He said that SSCRPC staff was currently working on GATA again.

Mr. Sims noted that other MPOs were having similar problems to SATS, with regular delays or issues getting indirect cost rates from GATA staff. He said that Crowe Horwith told him that the next fiscal years' application would have to have two changes. One change would be to change the County's audit from a cash-based audit to an accrual-based audit. The other change would be to create an audit from two different County fiscal years to fit the GATA (State) fiscal year. Mr. Sims said that the suggested solutions would require financial solutions that current staff cannot do. Mr. Sims said he has asked if a working group could be assembled to find solutions to GATA inefficiencies. He said that he had not received any positive response to his proposal.

Mr. McFadden asked if there were any other avenues of recourse, beyond the letter sent to Secretary Blankenhorn. Mr. Sims was unsure what could be done, noting that many other MPOs were in worse shape than SATS and that it could present problems to many other smaller units of local government. He said that SATS had made a number of suggestions to IDOT and GATA to make the process easier and more efficient. None of those suggestions had been implemented.

Mr. Sims concluded that the GATA rules were supposed to sunset and a cost-benefit analysis would be conducted on the regime to determine if there was any benefit to government and taxpayers. He was afraid that any analysis would ignore the negative effects of the costs of implementation on each individual agency, only focusing on the State's role in GATA implementation.

E. Illinois Department of Transportation: Region 4, District 6

Mr. Madonia told the Committee that IDOT would be at the State Fairgrounds during the Illinois State Fair to take input from the public for the Multi-Year Plan. He added that the MacArthur Boulevard feasibility study had concluded and that IDOT was presenting the results to affected constituencies, including the Springfield City Council, MacArthur Boulevard Neighborhood Association, and SSCRPC.

F. Village of Chatham

No report was given.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Ronald Walker, Springfield, addressed the Committee. He said that he wanted to see better coordination between transportation entities, particularly regarding road closures. He wondered why there weren't more media reports for road closures. He also believed that improvements could be made by the City, County, and SMTD for bus stops and signage.

Mr. McFadden said that the County does notify local media when crews close roads for maintenance. He added that the County can't force media outlets to report these closures. Mr. Walker expressed his frustration that solutions to the problems he mentioned seemed to always be in progress and wondered why more wasn't being done at the present time.

Mr. Sims asked Mr. Schoeffel how SMTD announces route detours due to construction. Mr. Schoeffel said that SMTD announces route changes through social media or the SMTD website. Mr. Schoeffel said that SMTD was in the process of implementing Intelligent Transportation Services, which would enable bus users to receive real-time updates to routes and closures. The changes were anticipated by summer, 2018. He added that some bus stops cannot have signs, due to restrictions on signage in some areas. Bus stop benches are owned by a third party, which sells advertising on the benches. SMTD will notify the third party when a bus stop is moved, but cannot compel the company to move the benches. Mr. Walker asked who regulates where benches can be placed. He was told the City regulates where the benches can be placed. Mr. Sims said that some benches are not associated with bus stops. Mr. Walker said that poor bench placement could cause confusion. Mr. Sims said that taking the benches away would create a disservice to some people, especially in the Downtown area. Mr. Sims said that an alternative could be to place bus stop signage on benches where applicable.

Mr. Sims said that SMTD cannot compel the local media to report bus route changes without purchasing air time or column space. The cost-efficient alternative is to announce changes on social media and the SMTD website, which is not accessible to all bus riders. Mr. Walker expressed a desire to contact media outlets himself to raise awareness. Mr. Sims agreed that it would be a good idea.

Mr. Sims told Mr. Walker that SSCRPC was working with SMTD on some ways to communicate better with bus riders and asked that any ideas to improve transit in Springfield would be welcomed. Mr. McFadden suggested that route changes could be posted on the bus itself. Mr. Walker said that he had seen transit agencies give fliers to passengers announcing changes. Mr. Schoeffel said that fliers were not the most effective means of communication because flier would have to be placed in all buses, due to SMTD's bus scheduling program. He said that there were space constraints and the possibility of confusion due to the number of buses.

Steven Simpson-Black, Friends of Transit, said that he would contact the editorial board of the State Journal-Register to encourage the newspaper to publish transit information.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. 2018-2021 Transportation Improvement Program

Neha Soni told the Committee that the draft FY2018-2021 Transportation Improvement Program was available for public review through September 15, 2017.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Next Meeting Date –September 14, 2017

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair McFadden called for a motion to adjourn. Norm Sims made a motion to adjourn. Dave Kimsey seconded the motion. The vote to adjourn was unanimous.

The regular meeting was adjourned at 12:33 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jason Sass
Recording Secretary