



BATA - Local Advisory Council Minutes

Monday, June 1, 2026, 12:01 – 1:15pm

Hall St Transfer Station

In attendance:

- **Linda Joppich:** LAC Chair / Community Representative
- **Matt Morritz:** Community Representative
- **Caleb Lindgren:** Goodwill Northern Michigan
- **Lana Payne:** Grand Traverse Commission on Aging
- **Mandy Joppich:** Community Representative
- **Lena Vander Meulen:** Leelanau County Senior Services
- **Dee Newman Wilkinson:** Area Agency on Aging
- **Susan Odgers:** Community Representative
- **Lacey Edgecomb:** Senior Center Network
- **Mitch Treadwell:** Traverse City Commissioner
- Keir Rasmussen/BATA Technology
- Eric Lingaur/BATA Communications
- Bill Clark/BATA Outreach
- Chris Davis/BATA Human Resources & interim Director

1. Welcome to the 2026 Local Advisory Council Spring Meeting!

- Introductions & News from your world?
 - Lacey with the GT Senior Center is helping seniors learn how to use BATA and riding at least once a week. Dee with the Area Agency on Aging emphasized how riding buses in a college town gave her great experiences on transit. Lena with Leelanau Senior Services mentioned the upcoming Leelanau Senior Expo on the 16th, and outlined her hope for a future partnership with BATA for senior grocery trips. Chris with BATA discussed BATA's staffing needs, shortages, and recent hiring successes. Eric with BATA welcomed everyone on a nice first day of Smart Commute Week while Traverse City Commissioner Mitch concurred that this is a great week that people look forward to all year. Linda is a "Friend of Transit," has served on BATA's board of directors, and helped BATA create the Route 12 where she is currently very impressed with its operation in this heavy construction period. Mandy concurred that the drivers on this route and others know a great deal and are trustworthy to always be there for you. Matt has been riding BATA for 26 years and relies on BATA. He strongly recommends an organization named "Better Together" that united individuals with various disabilities. Online participants included Lana with GTCOA, who is bummed to be missing our lunch but happy to be a part of the group today remotely. Susan is a part of the Community Foundation and writes a column in the Record Eagle and recommends working with the Safe Streets Coalition and forwarding concerns to the City and MDOT for pedestrian issues that Dee brought up earlier. Caleb with Goodwill Inn thanked the group for including Goodwill on these discussions. Bill with BATA thanked everyone for being here on our first day

of Smart Commute Week where residents collectively walk, bike, bus, carpool, or even paddle instead of drive whenever they can for a change of pace.

2. BATA prepares for summer of 2026

- Discussion of tweaks for Summer 2026
 - Summer Bike-n-Ride is on, there is a new end point at East Bay Park-n-Ride at TBACU, Route 14 will run on Saturdays while Route 5 will not, and there are a few new bus stops added to our network. Most of our big summer construction projects are nearing completion.
 - Mandy and Linda asked if the deviation allowances on Route 12 will return to normal after the construction? Yes, deviations will be incorporated again once the time challenges of the construction are over.
 - Kudos were expressed to drivers and staff with all the weather and construction – “They must navigate all of that and they are amazing!”
 - BATA outreach is always happy to enlist BATA Buddies to continue to encourage and expand that program to help people get more comfortable using public transit.
 - Susan suggested the Widows and Widowers group and others

3. August 2026 Fare System Changes

- How will it work?
 - New fare cards that are good on ALL of BATA buses will be used beginning on August 17. Riders will no longer be sold the current style beginning that day and will no longer be able to use them on buses after December 31.
 - Old fare values can be moved to new fare cards beginning in August.
 - Programs with the COA, TCAPS, workforce employers, library, etc. will be transitioned to the new system.
 - Some of these groups will have the ability to sign their members up for BATA accounts and even to add funds to their accounts.
 - The new system will give more options to check balances on cards, cancel lost cards, find out how much funds are out on cards, handle balances remotely, etc.
 - BATA wishes to do as many public education sessions as possible anywhere that we can be.
 - It is stressed that although this new fare system is DIFFERENT, it may serve our riders BETTER once they use it. Getting past the difference is the hardest part of the transition.
 - Riders can also use credit cards, smart phones, and possibly other chip-read cards and devices. Some of these features will begin later in the fall.
 - Reduced fare cards can be incorporated directly into their fare cards for faster and more discreet boarding.
 - Riders can use cash as well but will have the option to exchange cash for fare cards at vending machines, at Hall Street’s window, or at select merchants around the region. Currently, there are no set plans to discontinue the acceptance of cash on buses.
- How to best communicate this to YOUR people?
 - Outreach events, BATA Buddies, training staff, website instructions, etc.

4. Summer website updates – we discussed the upcoming changes at our last LAC meeting and have used the ideas and suggestions that members provided to us to create a website that is useful and easy to navigate that will be launched later this summer.
5. Update on BATA’s Search for an Executive Director
 - Chris stated that 40 to 50 applications were received nationwide and last Friday they interviewed two finalists. One of them has risen to the top and details of the contract and starting date will be coming soon.
 - Joe Underwood's term expired in December and a new seventh board member was appointed, Janice Wyatt.
 - We have five drivers starting Monday, plus advertising and job fairs to boost recruiting. We've kept the standards up and we have our turnover rate low. We don't normally have a class in July just because of all the demands but with more recruits, we're having a class this July!
6. Introduction to the fall 2026 BATA millage on the November 3rd ballot
 - The question was asked, “What is the same and what is different about the millage?”
 - a 7-year millage renewal which will run 2028 to 2034
 - not to exceed .4589 millage
 - Millage Ideas from Susan: Go to Central Neighborhood and talk to riders there with outreach and education sessions. Perhaps Q&A interviews with riders.
7. Discussion, adjourn, and thanks!
 - Mitch suggested making sure we have competitive job benefits and continue to negotiate.
 - Matt would like to thank Wayne for seeing Better Together ads.
 - Susan says that drivers are great educators and understandable the riders, she encourage people to come to Hall Street for more information about BATA.
 - The meeting was adjourned at 1:12PM.

2026 Local Advisory Council Membership

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- **Matt Morritz:** Community Representative
- **Dan Buron/Cobe Farris/Caleb Lindgren:** Goodwill Northern Michigan
- **Lana Payne:** Grand Traverse Commission on Aging
- **Mandy Joppich:** Community Representative
- **Lena Vander Meulen:** Leelanau County Senior Services
- **Melissa Shea/Dee Newman Wilkinson:** Area Agency on Aging
- **Demarie Jones:** Disability Network Northern Michigan
- **Susan Odgers:** Community Representative
- **Lacey Edgecomb:** Senior Center Network
- **Mitch Treadwell:** Traverse City Commissioner