Bay Area Transportation Authority
Local Advisory Council (LAC)
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 28, 2026
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.
Hall Street Transfer Station - Conference Room
115 Hall Street, Traverse City, MI 49684

Advisory Council Members in Attendance:

- **Linda Joppich:** LAC Chair / Community Representative
- **Mandy Joppich:** Community Representative
- **Matt Morritz:** Community Representative
- **Lana Payne:** Grand Traverse Commission on Aging
- **Lacey Edgecomb:** Senior Center Network
- **Lena Vander Meulen:** Leelanau County Senior Services
- **Tom Mair:** Susan Odgers' spouse (representing Susan in person)
- **Dee Newman Wilkinson:** Area Agency on Aging
- **Susan Odgers:** Community Representative (attended virtually)
- **Caleb Lindgren & Dan Hoffman:** Goodwill Northern Michigan (attended virtually)
- **Demarie Jones:** Disability Network Northern Michigan (attended virtually)

Guests & Staff in Attendance:

- Kyle Ross: Benzie Bus Mobility Coordinator
- Patrick Preusser: BATA Executive Director
- Eric Lingaur: BATA Communications & Development Director
- Bill Clark: BATA Mobility and Outreach Coordinator
- Keir Rasmussen: BATA IT Coordinator
- Kelly Walter: BATA Administrative Assistant

1. Welcome to the 2026 Local Advisory Council Fall Meeting!
    - Bill Clark introduced BATA's new Executive Director, Patrick Preusser (pronounced Proy-ser). Patrick thanked members for their commitment to serving the Council. Patrick provided a summary of BATA's work since the last LAC meeting.
    - Council members introduced themselves and shared background information.
        - Mandy Joppich – noted that she has been riding BATA for nearly 30 years.
        - Linda Joppich – Mandy's mother noted how wonderful the BATA drivers are and shared her background with BATA and the Friends of Transit who have helped with the millages.
        - Matt Morritz – thanked BATA for their service to people like him who need public

transportation.

- Lacey Edgecomb – shared that she continues to focus on ways to partner with BATA on encouraging seniors to utilize BATA's services.
- Lena Vander Meulen – shared that she is trying to encourage ridership in Leelanau County. They are expanding transportation in 2027 with a couple of different partners and hopes BATA will be one of them. One area that they are looking to solve in 2027 is public transportation to dialysis as well as funding sources for that transportation.
- Tom Mair – shared positive feedback on a recent use of Indian Trails to Mackinaw City.
- Kyle Ross – started at Benzie Bus three weeks ago; looking to start a similar group to the BATA LAC in Benzie. Benzie Bus is a great partner with BATA. He noted they have a new Executive Director, Chad Hollenbeck, who served in a different role at the organization for many years prior.
- Dee Wilkinson – commented that BATA does a good job of listening.
- Susan Odgers – shared positive feedback on her recent use of Indian Trails, noting that a lot of riders were senior citizens, students, and military. She encouraged LAC members to look at the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation website to apply for transportation grants.
- Caleb Lindgren and Dan Hoffman – They are looking at Code Blue season and coordination with BATA on services. Noted BATA removed the shelter near the Inn that was not being used appropriately, and it seems to be working out well.

2. BATA 4th Quarter 2026 and FY2026 Ridership Data
    - Bill Clark shared ridership data. Total ridership increased 2.8% in Fiscal Year 2026.

3. BATA Highlights since June 2026 Meeting:
    - Bayshore Marathon – 1,664 riders rode BATA up from 2025's 1,331 riders, and 2024's 1,100 riders.
    - Cherry Festival – 26,876 riders, with a single-day record on the 4th of July! The free Bayline was very popular at 23,639 riders. Open Ramp was 2,197, another record. Received a lot of positive feedback from riders overall and noticed a lot of local riders this year. Park-n-Rides were popular, both at Meijer (Bayline) and LaFranier (Route 2 had 586 additional Cherry Fest rides in 2026). BATA is considering providing free rides on Route 2 later in the evening from the concerts and fireworks in 2027.
    - Leelanau Uncaged – increased ridership each year, 143 rides in 2026 when BATA provided a direct route from Traverse City for the first time and was well received.
    - Cedar Polka Fest – rained that day, so ridership was down; although there was a ridership technical glitch we estimated 100+ riders during the weekend.
    - Bike-n-Ride recap May-October 2026 – 792 bikes and 3,355 riders; BATA is looking closely at Route 10 for improvements that better suit riders.
    - Education and outreach – this summer, BATA was out at least once a day, if not more, tag-teaming at events, schools, businesses, etc. to familiarize people with BATA.
    - Summer bus stop improvements – Stop improvements for 2026 include: 18 new seating placements, three new shelters installed, four shelters with new light and heat, seven locations paved for Americans with Disability Act (ADA) access (most on the east side), and six new bus stops.
    - Route and schedule modifications – due to staff shortages, Bayline is temporarily at a

30-minute frequency every day, versus a 15-minute frequency due to staffing levels. BATA is working hard on staff recruitment to get it back to a 15-minute frequency.
- The demand for LINK rides is increasing. BATA is working through solutions such as guiding able riders to fixed route services.
- Staffing shortage is real, and BATA is working hard on solutions including hosting numerous hiring outreach events.
- www.bata.net website redesign – Bill shared the draft website redesign that will offer more interactive technology on routes.

4. November 3, 2026, BATA Transit Millage

Bill shared an overview of the millage proposal. The proposal is not an increase in the millage, rather a renewal from the previous millage. Grand Traverse and Leelanau County residents will be asked to levy 0.4589 mills to continue BATA operations for bus service starting January 2028 through December 2034. If the millage is approved, BATA will continue to provide safe, reliable, customer-focused transportation, mobility for people with disabilities, seniors, veterans, and students, access to jobs, healthcare, education, and shopping, and transportation that supports our regional economy. Susan Odgers asked about the City of Traverse City DDA TIFs impact on BATA's millage and services. Staff shared that the two are not linked. BATA's Board has not made any formal action for or against the TIF.

Patrick Preusser noted that BATA's current strategic plan takes BATA through 2027. Regional stakeholders will be asked to collaborate on the 2028 – 2034 (same timespan as the millage renewal). In addition, BATA is also seeing a need to conduct a Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA), with the assistance of Networks Northwest, to help BATA understand the economy, population, business community, network design, service delivery tools, service policies and standards, and making sure BATA's work is aligning to those. A COA will help to see what transit is looking like 5, 10, 15, 20, etc. years from now. This will help ensure BATA's service aligns with the Strategic Plan. BATA will continue to collaborate with the LAC seeking input. This will likely be a 10 to12 month process.

Susan Odgers asked about the impact on ridership related to the increase in gas prices. BATA has not identified any direct trends with the gas prices and ridership. BATA has done a really good job of using technology and propulsion utilizing propane, which has allowed BATA to be consistent with costs using a stable, reliable fuel source.

5. BATA's New Fare System

Bill shared an update about the new fare system slated to be live mid-December 2026. He asked council members to create an account at https://ezfare.justride.tickets/login. Council members can test the system prior to it being released to the public. Sign up for the account, and let Bill Clark know so BATA can add credits to your account for testing. Bill shared the three options to pay using the new fare system; cash will continue to be accepted for the time being. Current passes can be used until March 31. Those passes will stop being sold by BATA the first week of December. Bill explained locations where funds can be added to a card for the new fare system. Riders are capped at $5 per day on fixed routes, minus discounts.

6. Discussion, Adjourn, and Thanks!
    - Bus rides on November 3rd are FREE. Call Dispatch is you don't know the closest stop to your polling location or use Google Maps.
    - Medical Campus Stops – Bayline does stop in front of Cancer Center and Elmwood (current construction makes it challenging); Route 4 West Flex bus leaves Hall Street every hour (on the :30), takes riders to doctor offices on medical campus - Royal Drive, Munson, West Front, Copper Ridge, counts as fixed-route. Current hours are 8am to 2:30pm. Link rides will work for appointments, too, if a ride is available at requested time. BATA wants to try to get riders as close to their destination as possible. Link demand is high. App is pushing riders to fixed route and Bayline. BATA is doing a deeper dive into efficiencies.
    - Link Demand – Demand is very high. BATA is working on solutions to the demand, but in the interim, transportation apps are doing a good job of directing people to a fixed-route as an alternative.
    - Bus stop at New Meijer at Chums – Bill and Eric noted that Meijer is a great partner with BATA. They contacted BATA in advance to talk about where to place the bus stop at the new Meijer.
    - New Fare Action Item (sign up for an account)
    - Eric, Bill, and Patrick thanked everyone for attending.

<u>2026 Local Advisory Council Membership</u>

- **Linda Joppich:** LAC Chair / Community Representative
- **Matt Morritz:** Community Representative
- **Dan Buron, Dan Hoffman, and 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

cc:

- Christina Coger/MDOT
- Kyle Ross/Benzie Bus
- Patrick Preusser/BATA
- Eric Lingaur/BATA
- Bill Clark/BATA
- Keir Rasmussen/BATA