

# Comprehensive Operational Analysis

## PUBLIC OUTREACH PLAN

Capital Area Transportation Authority

December 2025

Prepared for CATA by:



# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this internal document is to provide a framework for planning, facilitating and monitoring public engagement for the Capital Area Transportation Authority’s (CATA) Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA). This Public Outreach Plan (POP) has strategies to help facilitate feedback and build support amongst residents and stakeholders for the project. The project team will work closely with CATA staff to leverage existing connections and touchpoints with communities and stakeholders across the Lansing region.

A variety of communication techniques will provide opportunities for community leaders, agencies, and the public to be engaged. Information and materials can be viewed online, and virtual and live events will occur to allow more in-depth feedback. The POP describes how engagement will be a layered approach throughout this process and outlines the types of groups, meetings, events, and promotion of the project that will be involved. This is meant to be a flexible document and can be updated at key milestones to track engagement activities. This is a collaborative process between CATA and the consultant team. CATA staff will be involved in helping to identify key stakeholders, distribute materials, promote surveys and events, and help keep board members informed.

## 1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA) is developing a COA of its fixed-route and demand-response transit services with the goal of identifying route and service strategies that will improve efficiency and on-time performance, increase ridership, and reduce barriers to mobility across the Lansing region.

The COA will provide recommendations for service modifications and expansions that will guide CATA leadership and staff in making decisions that improve regional mobility, strengthen partnerships, and incorporate innovative service models. These recommendations will be rooted in data analysis, industry best practices, and stakeholder and public engagement.

## 1.2 PHASED ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The project team will conduct three phases of outreach during the planning process. Providing multiple opportunities for public input helps ensure the technical evaluation considers the desires and concerns expressed by the public during the project.

The first phase is aligned with the Data Collection and Analysis Task (Task 3) in the process and will focus on gathering information on what is working and where there are opportunities for

OUTREACH EVENTS	
 <b>Phase 1: Strengths, Weaknesses, &amp; Opportunities   12 Events</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ CATA, Board Meetings</li><li>▶ In Person Stakeholder Meetings</li><li>▶ Virtual Stakeholder Focus Groups</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Transit Center Pop-Up Events</li><li>▶ Public Survey</li><li>▶ Staff Survey</li><li>▶ Operator Meeting</li></ul>
 <b>Phase 2: Vetting Recommendations   5 Events</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ CATA Board Meetings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ In-person Open House Events</li><li>▶ Short Public Preferences Survey</li></ul>
 <b>Phase 3: Final Plan   3 Events</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Virtual Stakeholder Meeting</li><li>▶ Virtual Presentation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Final CATA Board Presentation</li></ul>

improvements. This phase will include outreach to CATA's board, regional transit providers, stakeholder meetings, pop-up events, surveys, and engagement with bus operators. Phase 2 of the project aligns with the Recommendations and Impacts Task (Task 4). Outreach during this phase will seek feedback on recommendation concepts to help adjust or refine them and will include attending board meetings and open house events. Phase 3, the final phase, will include a presentation of the final plan in a virtual public meeting and virtual stakeholder meeting to seek feedback on implementation phases. The project team will also present the final plan to the CATA Board.

## 1.3 GOALS FOR ENGAGEMENT

The following lists out the key communication and engagement goals that are part of this process:

- Be an effective community partner and engage a broad cross-section of stakeholders to provide timely, accurate, and relevant project information.
- Build trust with stakeholders and residents with transparency and respect by understanding key issues and concerns.
- Collaborate with regional planning and transit partners to gain technical feedback and communicate information clearly among stakeholders.
- Revise the engagement strategy as needed to ensure we are engaging target audiences in a meaningful way.
- Effectively communicate findings and recommendations to stakeholders and the public.

# Project Team and Expectations

## 2.1 ENGAGEMENT PROJECT TEAM



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## 2.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The COA is a collaborative process between CATA staff and the consultant team. CATA staff will help identify key stakeholders, distribute materials, and help with the promotion of the project and events, assist with logistics planning and securing meeting spaces, and ensure the participation of appropriate staff in meetings throughout the project process. The consultant team will work with CATA on outreach support and assist with graphics to help communicate information, news releases, presentations, and social media posts. These include the following items:

### PROJECT WEBPAGE

CATA will create a designated project webpage on the CATA website to include updates on project information, events, and online tools to get feedback. The consultant team will provide content for the webpage updates.

### ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

The consultant team will prepare two public surveys during the project process and one operator's survey to gain insight into challenges and needs as part of the COA, as well as feedback on the recommendations.

### INVITATIONS TO EVENTS

The consultant team will prepare flyers that can be used to invite community leaders, stakeholders, and residents to events and meetings. These promotional materials can also be used for stakeholders and partners to forward to their communities. CATA is responsible for posting flyers (and printing if applicable).

### PRESENTATIONS

The consultant team will prepare presentation slide decks and/or boards related to the project that can be used at public meetings and group settings, including for board meetings, stakeholder focus group meetings, and virtual open houses.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

The consultant team will help prepare language for social media posts to provide updates and news about events.

### PROJECT BRANDING

A project brand, including a name, logo, and presentation and report template will be created to catch people's attention. The project brand will be consistent with CATA's colors, fonts, and logos.

### TRANSLATIONS

CATA serves riders with a variety of language preferences. CATA staff will use their existing contacts and services to provide translation for people with limited English proficiency during the project process. More detail on this is included in 3.2 of the POP.

## SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

A final engagement report summarizing findings from meetings, events, and surveys will also document how the input guided the overall outcomes and recommendations in the COA. The final summary of engagement report will be broken up into chapters based on the phases of the engagement process.

# ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

## 3.1 GROUPS TO ENGAGE

### PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM (PMT)

CATA staff will serve on the Project Management Team alongside the project consultants to discuss data, give input on engagement activities, help with meeting logistics and distribution of materials, and provide the first level of review for all work products. The PMT will have bi-weekly meetings and select CATA staff will also meet separately with the consultant team as needed to coordinate specific engagement events.

### CATA BOARD & REGIONAL TRANSIT PARTNER OUTREACH

The consultant team will prepare presentations to report to the CATA board. The consultant team will coordinate with CATA staff to also provide outreach to EATRAN and Clinton Transit boards if desired. CATA staff will coordinate with the staff of those agencies to schedule those meetings or provide briefings. The team will meet with the boards early in the project process (between December 2025 and February 2026) to introduce the project, present best practices, and get initial feedback. One briefing will also be prepared by the consultant team and be presented by CATA staff during a key milestone in the middle of the project to keep board members up to date and hear their insights which can be factored into the overall draft recommendations. Towards the end of the project, the consultant team will present the draft plan in front of the boards to make sure there is alignment with the implementation plans. The final plan will also be presented to the CATA Board at the end of the process.

### KEY STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

As part of this process, the consultant team alongside CATA staff will engage with key stakeholders including agency staff, partner planning agencies, and intergovernmental departments/agencies to gain a better understanding of needs and priorities. The following indicates the stakeholders that will be engaged during this process and includes how team will be engaging with them:

- *Bus operators:* A bus operator survey will be created to understand the “on the ground” transit service perspective, concerns and needs. Operators will also be engaged at an in-person meeting where the team can hear their insights on routes and services.
- *Partner planning agencies, intergovernmental departments/agencies, private sector stakeholders:* The project team will seek to gain a better understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities within CATA’s fixed-route and demand-response network across the region by talking to key stakeholders in the region in the public and private sectors. This will include two in-person meetings and up to four virtual meetings (some groups may be combined into one meeting to streamline engagement) with the following

groups (the consultant team will work with CATA staff to identify specific contacts as well as additional groups that may not be listed):

- Key agency staff, including the Customer Experience Department
  - CATA Local Advisory Council (*meeting in person. Regular meetings for this group occur every 1st Wednesday of the month (every other month) at 3 PM*)
  - Millage Communities (and corresponding community groups):
    - Lansing
    - East Lansing
    - Meridian Township
    - Delhi Township
    - Lansing Township
    - Mason/Ingham County
  - Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)
  - Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC)
  - Michigan State University, including faculty unions and student groups
  - Lansing Chamber of Commerce
  - Major hospitals
  - Neighborhood groups
  - Disability Network Capital Area and Tri-County Office on Aging
  - Refugee Development Center
  - Capital Region International Airport
  - Capital Area Michigan Works/Peckham
  - Choose Lansing/Lansing Regional Chamber/LEAP/LEDC/MEDC/Downtown Lansing Inc.
  - Lansing Housing Commission/Capital Area Housing Partnership/Ingham County Land Bank
  - Eaton County/EATRAN
  - Delta Township
  - Clinton County/Clinton Transit
  - Bath Township/DeWitt Township/DeWitt
- *All stakeholders:* Towards the end of the planning process, the project team will invite all stakeholders to an in-person or virtual meeting to present the draft recommendations and transit options as well as seek feedback to be incorporated into the final plan.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

The project team will engage a diverse cross section of the Tri-County region and maintain clear communication to make sure the community can easily access engagement tools and provide valuable feedback. Below describes how the public will be engaged during each phase of the project process:

- *Phase 1:* The first round of engagement will focus on gathering information from riders and the public about how CATA's transit services are working well or where there are unmet needs. This phase will include two pop-up events at the Downtown Lansing and MSU transit centers to help educate the community about the project and encourage them to take the survey on their own or while they are at the event. The input received during this phase will be used to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for CATA's existing services and identify improvements to mobility across the region.
- *Phase 2:* The second round of engagement will vet the transit route scenarios and service model options in tandem with Task 4 of the project process. The team will host up to two open-house events (one in Lansing and the other in East Lansing) as well as conduct a brief survey to ask about preferences and provide the community with additional ways to give input.
- *Phase 3:* The last round of engagement will include a virtual meeting where the recommendations of the project will be presented. This presentation is recommended to be posted to the project's webpage on CATA's website to help reach a broader audience.

## PUBLIC SURVEYS

Two public surveys will be created during the project process. The first survey will focus on collecting information on strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in the existing CATA system. The second survey will focus on collecting feedback on recommendations and options. Our team will use regional GIS data to lay out a strategy for getting the most out of survey data. The survey dissemination process will be transit-focused and include a larger sample size of transit riders, providing people who rely on the system with ample opportunity to provide input. The public surveys will be promoted via the methods identified in Section 3.3 of the POP.

## SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT

A summary of engagement will be prepared by the consultant team to outline the findings from the surveys, discussions with the transit boards, meetings with stakeholders, and public feedback from events and open houses. The summary will include insights into the outreach efforts and how the feedback informed the transit recommendations in the plan.

## 3.2 ENGAGEMENT MATERIALS AND ACCOMODATIONS

Engagement materials will be produced by the consultant team throughout the duration of the project. The team will summarize the input to provide a framework that will help create the overall vision, goals, and recommendations.

### EQUITABLE PLANNING PROCESS

This plan aims to ensure that there is an equitable planning process representative of the Lansing region. Equitable access will be addressed by looking at GIS data mapping and implementing a strategy to reach riders, potential riders, and the public. The following communities are critical for CATA to connect with as part of this planning process:

- Title VI and environmental justice populations (i.e., low income, minority)
- Younger residents
- Older residents
- Members of the disability community
- Households without vehicles
- Existing transit riders
- People with low incomes

### ENGAGING WITH PEOPLE WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

CATA serves riders with a variety of language preferences, including Spanish, Mandarin, Korean, Arabic, and Farsi. The consultant team and CATA staff will work together to engage people with limited English proficiency. For in person events or questions about the project, CATA will continue to use the Language Line for live translations. CATA also uses an application for customer-facing interactions that will translate material on an iPad or tablet, including American Sign Language (ASL). This can potentially be used during the pop-up events. Document translations may also be completed by request through CATA's services with LingPerfect.

### 3.3 METHODS FOR OUTREACH



#### **CATA - Capital Area Transportation Authority**

5K followers • 251 following

#### **CATA WEBSITE**

CATA’s website will include a dedicated webpage to host online input opportunities, share information on the project, and promote in-person open house events.

Interactive Activities: These will include surveys and interactive crowd-source mapping. Specifically, the survey and mapping tools will provide feedback regarding transportation safety priorities and concerns. These tools will capture feedback from a broader audience beyond those who attend the open houses.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media is a critical tool in reaching the public and advertising events and engagement opportunities as part of the planning process.

Content Support: The consultant team will provide graphics and other content for social media posts.

Posting and Updating: CATA will be responsible for directly posting information, monitoring user interactions, and creating event pages for public meetings/events.

Preferred Platforms: Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn

## PROMOTION OF EVENTS AND SURVEYS

The following list notes additional ways beyond social media that CATA can use to promote the project, project events, and surveys. Events should be advertised at least 2-3 weeks prior and continue up to the event (reminders on social media and other methods can be sent 1-2 days before an event).

The consultant team will assist with creating content for these methods of promotion that CATA currently utilizes. The consultant team has budgeted approximately \$300 for printing out 8.5 X 11 color copies – if desired that can be used towards printing flyers or other promotional materials. CATA is responsible for all other printing of promotional materials and installation, as applicable. This may include the items listed below.

Priority and low-cost methods of promotion include:

- Press releases on the landing page and home page of the CATA website
- Rider Alert system through email and text
- Transit app notifications
- E-mail distribution list created for this project
- Flyers/sandwich board signs at boarding stations
- CATAGrams at individual bus stops
- Transit cards on buses
- Annual community report (summer 2026)
- On hold messaging on the general line and call takers (when in queue for making ride reservations)
- Cross promotion at other events (i.e., at MSU [especially in August], neighborhood functions, utility company resource fairs, etc.)
- CATA's monthly listening session on the bus where CATA staff can provide data and let riders know about COA/events
  - Listening Bus Session – Thursday, January 15, 2026, to promote the pop-up events and survey

Other methods of promotion that can be done include:

- Bus shelters, including decals and QR codes
- Bus interior cards

# PROJECT SCHEDULE

## 4.1 ANTICIPATED PROJECT SCHEDULE

The following includes key target dates for each phase of engagement in the COA process. An overall project schedule is also included below:

- **Phase 1:**
  - December 2025:
    - Preparation of board presentations, surveys, promotional materials (potentially including a large retractable banner that can be used at more than one event by CATA), and pop-up event materials
  - January 2026:
    - Early January: Public Survey Launch
    - Mid-January: Operators Focus Group Meeting (ideally same day as CATA board meeting) (TBD)
    - Mid-to-Late-January: Pop-up events in Lansing and East Lansing
    - Mid-to-Late January: In-person focus group meetings (same days as pop-up events)
  - February 2026:
    - Early February: Virtual focus group meetings
    - Mid-February: CATA Board presentation
    - Early to mid-February: Public Survey closes
    - Late February/early March: Summary of Phase 1 Engagement
- **Phase 2:**
  - March 2026:
    - Early March: Prepare board briefings
    - Mid-March: CATA staff provides board briefings
  - April 2026:
    - Preparation of public survey, open house materials, board presentation, stakeholder presentation, and promotional materials
    - Mid-April: Launch of public survey
    - Late April: In person open houses in East Lansing and East Lansing
  - May 2026:
    - Mid-May: Close of public survey
  - June 2026:
    - Early June: All stakeholders meeting/presentation (virtual or in-person)
    - Mid-June: CATA board presentation
    - Late June: Summary of Phase 2 Engagement
- **Phase 3:**
  - September 2026:
    - Early September: Preparation of promotional materials, board presentation, virtual public presentation
    - Mid-to-late September: Virtual public presentation
    - Mid-September: CATA board presentation
  - October 2026: Summary of Phase 3 Engagement

Task	2025			2026									
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
<b>1 Project Management</b>													
1.1													
1.2													
<b>2 Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement</b>													
2.1													
2.2													
2.3													
2.4													
2.5													
2.6													
<b>3 Data Collection and Analysis</b>													
3.1													
3.2													
3.3													
<b>4 Service Evaluation and Recommendations</b>													
4.1													
4.2													
4.3													
4.4													
4.5													
<b>5 Organizational and Financial Analysis</b>													
5.1													
5.2													
5.3													
5.4													
<b>6 Implementation Plans</b>													
6.1													
<b>7 Final Report and Presentation</b>													
7.1													
7.2													