

DRAFT
READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY
SEPTEMBER 16, 2021

ATTENDANCE

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Chris Kufro, PennDOT 5-0 Acting Chair *
Kristin Mulkerin, PennDOT Program Center
Commissioner Michael Rivera, County of Berks
Donna Reed, City of Reading
Tom McKeon, Berks County Planning Commission
Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt for Dave Kilmer, SCTA/BARTA
Joseph Rudderow, Reading Regional Airport Authority
Stephen Price, Boroughs (Wernersville)

*Tie-breaking Vote only

COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

James Oswald, 2nd Class Townships (Lower Alsace Township)
Leonard “Chip” Bilger, II, 1st Class Townships (Cumru Township)

OTHERS

Amanda Leindecker, PennDOT 5-0
Scott Vottero, PennDOT 5-0
David Alas, PennDOT Central
Michael Donchez, PennDOT 5-0
Alan D. Piper, Berks County Planning Commission, MPO Secretary
David Hunter, Berks County Planning Commission
Ashley Showers, Berks County Planning Commission
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission
Regina Zdradzinski, Berks County Planning Commission
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission
Laura Mursch, Berks County Planning Commission
Barbara Lopez, County of Berks
Matt Boyer, Commuter Services of PA
Tim Smith, Berks County IS
Heather Berger, Berks County IS
Malcolm Townes, Berks County IS
Steve Henshaw, Reading Eagle

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Piper took a verbal roll call of the Committee members. Acting Chairman Kufro then called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

2. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

There was no business from the floor.

Ms. Berger said there are five people on YouTube.

3. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING OF JULY 15, 2021

Acting Chairman Kufro asked if there were any questions or comments on the July 15, 2021 Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: Mr. Rudderow made a motion to approve the July 15, 2021 Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PENNDOT REQUESTED AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS TO FFY 2021-2024 TIP

Mr. Donchez gave an update on PennDOT's requested Amendments/Modifications to FFY 2021-2024 TIP from July 3, 2021 to August 28, 2021.

- There were no Amendments.
- There were a total of twelve (12) Administrative Actions of which three (3) were Statewide Administrative Actions— each of these adjustments were to address current estimate/supplements for design and utilities, to match cash flow funds to current let dates, cover low bid analysis, and assign unobligated balances before the fiscal year-end close out.

5. MAJOR PROJECT STATUS

Mr. Piper gave an update on the Major Project Status Report.

Mr. Rudderow asked a question regarding the SR 222 (24S) Hard Shoulder project. He asked if the SR 222 lane will be its own lane or will it still be a merge lane. Mr. Piper stated that there will be two lanes that carry vehicles beginning where Berkshire Boulevard passes over SR 222; one of those lanes will continue straight through as SR 222 and the other lane will exit at Paper Mill Road. The goal is to eliminate the pinch point located on SR 222 after Berkshire Boulevard passes over the highway.

Mr. Rudderow stated there is work being done across the Berks County border in Lehigh County on SR 222. Is this in coordination to what PennDOT is planning for SR 222 on the Berks County side of things? Mr. Piper stated they are doing the same cross

section with 2-thru lanes in each direction on SR 222 and through the roundabout that is getting constructed at Route 863. Mr. Rudderow remarked that the Berks County side of things will be lagging compared to what is being done on the Lehigh County side. Mr. Piper noted that the SR 222 construction on the Lehigh County side is the equivalent of the initial phase of construction that occurred at the Route 662 roundabout that is linked by two lanes on either side of the roundabout. Future construction phases will expand upon the lanes created at the roundabouts back into Berks County and to Trexlertown on the Lehigh County side.

Mr. Rudderow asked if there is an update on the Lenhartsville Bridge Replacement Project and whether it is still a candidate for bridge tolling. Mr. Piper said that it remains a candidate bridge for tolling and construction would be carried out through a public-private partnership with PennDOT. Acting Chairman Kufro confirmed the Lenhartsville bridge remains a candidate bridge for tolling at this time.

6. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF SCTA TRANSIT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PERFORMANCE MEASURE TARGETS

Mr. Kilmer stated that under federal rules from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), South Central Transit Authority (SCTA) is required to update their Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan and set new performance targets for the condition of assets every four years. Through the update and review, the Performance Targets revealed that all measures were just about at a state of good repair.

Mr. Kilmer stated that in the last four years 30 buses were replaced which is 60% of their active fleet and cost \$20 million. 44% of the shared ride fleet was replaced. They spent \$8 million on the expansion of their Operations Facility to protect those assets. \$3 million was spent to improve the Transit Center and the Park-n-Transit garage all in the last four years. Mr. Kilmer said the focus was on keeping the assets in good condition.

The targets are listed on page 85 of the report. SCTA will have by the end of this fiscal year 0% of fixed route buses and 0% of shared ride vehicles that are directly operated past the Useful Life Benchmark (ULB). The ULB used by SCTA is 12 years or 500,000 miles for fixed route buses and 5 years or 150,000 miles for shared ride vehicles. Since the last TAM Plan, the shared ride vehicles for purchase dropped from 17% to 8% past the ULB of 5 years. The scale for all SCTA facilities improved. Previously, some facilities were assessed at a 3 on the 5-point TERM scale. The TERM scale is the 5-category rating system used in FTA's Transit Economic Requirements Model (TERM) to describe the condition of an asset. Now all the facilities are rated at 4 because of upgrades and improvements made since the initial TAM Plan. About 10% of equipment owned by SCTA is past its ULB. Most of the facilities are kept for 50 years and funds are programmed every 10 years for upgrades and maintenance. Shared ride vans are replaced every 5 years.

Mr. Piper said the motion would be to approve the Transit Asset Management Plan and the Performance Measure Targets.

MOTION: Mr. Rudderow made a motion to approve the Transit Asset Management Plan and the Performance Measure Targets. Ms. Mulkerin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

7. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF SCTA SAFETY PLAN AND PERFORMANCE MEASURE TARGETS

Mr. Kilmer stated that SCTA is annually required by FTA to update their Safety Plan and create Performance Measure Targets like the MPO does for highway performance. The Performance Measure Targets have not been changed since last year because the pandemic remains. While ridership is beginning to recover, ridership is not anywhere near where it was prior to COVID. Ridership is down 30%, which means the exposure for passenger related injury has dropped because the buses are carrying less people. The Performance Measure Targets have remained the same as they were in 2020, but other areas have been updated to reflect more emphasis on encouraging a safer environment for the employees and the traveling public.

Mr. Piper said the motion would be to approve the Safety Plan and the Performance Measure Targets.

MOTION: Mr. Rudderow made a motion to approve the Safety Plan and Performance Measure Targets. Commissioner Barnhardt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

8. UPDATE ON FY 2022-2024 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the last Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) was adopted two years ago. It is a two-year document and is used as the basis for the contract the MPO has with PennDOT for the work that is done as staff on behalf of the MPO.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) added a few requirements they want included in the UPWP which consists of more documentation, and milestones with dates and products that will be produced.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the UPWP process has two development phases. They are: 1) looking at the products and programs that BCPC staff performs as staff to the MPO; 2) reviewing and updating the document itself, which is 67 pages of text and a few charts. Staff decided to condense this document. In its current form, it is inefficient to update, for billing purposes, and invoicing. The program is set up in 9 major work areas. There are 20 individual tasks that staff bills to. Staff wants to take the 9 major work areas (20 tasks) and condense them into five major work areas while retaining the 20 tasks. Efficiencies that would be gained include: 1) as far as staff billing, it would avoid confusion as to which code should be used based on the type of work performed for a given task; 2) invoicing would be simplified.

This document would be broken up into much smaller, more condensed sections for each one-year period. At the top of each major work area, the budget for both years would be identified instead of having a big chart for each year. As well, instead of showing a general table, there would be information shown specifically for each work area.

At the Technical Committee meeting, Mr. Mosca from Central Office, raised some concerns regarding eliminating some of the documentation in the UPWP and noted there could be potential issues with submitting the billing information as presented to PennDOT. Concerns were acknowledged and a meeting will be set up with him to address potential conflicts between the documentation in the UPWP and the requirements for billing to PennDOT.

No action is required from the board at this time. A final draft for review and authorization by the MPO will be provided at the November Coordinating Committee meeting. At that point, it would go to FHWA, which requires a 30-45-day review period before the MPO adopts. Any comments received from FHWA and PennDOT would be addressed, and then a revised document would be provided to the MPO for adoption in January 2022. It must be adopted no later than January 2022.

9. UPDATE ON RATS PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL FREIGHT PLAN

Mr. Piper stated that a proposal for five MPOs to collaborate and develop a regional freight plan was submitted. In June, PennDOT informed the MPOs that the proposal was approved at the fully requested funding amount of \$350,000. Out of that total amount, \$280,000 would come from PennDOT and the remaining \$70,000 would come from the five participating MPOs. Berks County's share of the \$70,000 is just over \$13,000. There were at least two discussions with the Board of Commissioners regarding the coordination of our local match.

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission is acting as the contracting agency with PennDOT for the five MPOs. They are currently working on putting together a draft scope of work and continue to coordinate with the other MPOs to refine the scope of work. They are also developing the reimbursement agreement that would be necessary to share those costs associated with the development of a regional freight plan. Information will be shared at future meetings as it becomes available.

10. UPDATE ON FFY 2023 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Piper stated that the FFY 2023 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) development process has begun. Solicitation began with the State Transportation Commission public comment period on the 2021 Twelve-Year Program update. There is a separate solicitation that was sent to all the municipalities seeking project recommendations for the TIP and Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Project recommendations are due by the end of October 2021. Meetings with the District are scheduled to start moving

through project definition, refining the projects currently on the TIP, reviewing schedules and trying to begin to match projects with the dollars that are available.

Staff is following through on PennDOT's process for early consideration of Environmental Justice factors in terms of where project needs are located and programmed. That information will be incorporated throughout the development process and will provide guidance for project programming. Environmental Justice relates to low income and minority populations and the distribution of projects and improvements.

Mr. Piper said that the goal is to complete a draft project listing that can be formally submitted to PennDOT in early 2022.

Mr. Rudderow asked if there has been a lot of municipal requests submitted for this draft TIP. He also asked if any of the projects previously submitted, that were not able to be funded, would be looked at again. Mr. Piper said yes. Anything previously submitted is still on our list. As of right now, the municipal project solicitation has been out for a few weeks, and nothing has been received. Mr. Rudderow asked what is the last day to submit projects. Mr. Piper said the end of October 2021 is the deadline to submit projects. He also stated that, if it is a new project that we have not seen, it will probably not be included on this draft TIP based on existing funding limitations. Regardless of inclusion status on the draft TIP, projects submitted remain on a list identifying needs that could be used in support of requesting more revenue.

11. COMMUTER SERVICES UPDATE

Mr. Boyer provided information from the Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership (SRTP) and Commuter Services. He stated that the month of September is "Car Free Month". It is a promotion going out to all the employers and participating commuters.

The Employer Transportation Coordinator (ETC) challenge was conducted over the last six weeks. The ETC's are our points of contact between our employer partners that work with each team to coordinate events and educational opportunities throughout the year. The top two winners of this challenge were from Berks County. The winner was the ETC from Albright College and the 2nd place winner was the ETC from Sweet Street Desserts.

Mr. Mark Easteadt, an outreach team member for more than ten years, will be leaving Commuter Services. Ms. Michelle Schribbick, from the NEPA area, will be transitioning back on staff as a main point of contact for the Berks County region.

There are 90 new members and 6,200 tracked trips which saved \$103,000 in the month of August.

Mr. Golembiewski, Chairman of the SRTP, stated that we are in the process of negotiating a new contract with AECOM, Mr. Boyer's employer. SRTP anticipates signing another contract with AECOM next week to continue to retain Mr. Boyer and his staff.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr. Rudderow asked that, given the fact that there has been a lot of inflationary pressures being seen because of the economy and where we are with things, have the dollars committed to road projects suffered from this inflation. Acting Chairman Kufro said that the bids received over the last year are very competitive. As for the prices, there is some protection in the project contracts. The inflation will be seen in some of the newer projects that will be let. There are price increases in asphalt and other materials that are harder to get. PennDOT has a database of all the contract bids and prices in the Electronic Management System. This helps with adjusting estimates in the future. If inflation continues, it will be a problem that will have to be accounted for in the projects.
- Ms. Mulkerin gave an update on various funding issues. They are:

PennDOT Pathways Program – Lenhartsville Bridge is one of the candidate bridges for tolling with construction anticipated to be funded through the P3 initiative as part of the Pathways Program that is advancing. Diversion workshops were held for each candidate project to gather local input. The National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) process continues for each of those candidate bridges. Public meetings will be held for each of the candidate bridges soon.

Planning and Environmental Linkages Study (PEL) – Several equity workshops were held in March 2021. The public comment period was held April 29, 2021 through June 1, 2021. They are currently working through comments and anticipating the PEL to be finalized and accepted by the end of September 2021.

Transportation Revenues Option Commission (TROC) – This Commission was created in March 2021 by an executive order to develop comprehensive funding recommendations for PA’s aging infrastructure. A proposal was developed to address transportation needs including options for replacing the gas tax. This TROC held nine meetings, and the meetings were recorded and are available online. The report was due to the Governor by August 1, 2021. The report is on the website and provides an overview of the gaps in funding and several potential revenue options. An analysis of each of the revenue options is included in that report, including concerns and the suggested next steps. The Commission will continue to work with the legislature and administration to evaluate and consider implementation of those potential funding options. All reports, recordings and other materials are available on [PennDOT.gov/funding](https://www.penn.gov/dot/funding).

Federal Legislation – the infrastructure bill currently in the House of Representatives is a 5-year reauthorization bill that would provide increased spending for roads and bridges along with transit and passenger rail. The legislation relies on general fund transfers to ensure the solvency of the highway trust fund. The Senate passed the bill in August and the House of Representatives is scheduled to consider the legislation before the end of September 2021.

Mr. Piper stated that yesterday was the first day of the statewide Planning Partners Conference. Mr. Shifflet gave a presentation on this matter. One of his concerns was that, if this bill does pass and generates new federal revenues for Pennsylvania, we need to ensure that there are state revenues available to match those dollars in order to use them. Ms. Mulkerin stated that there is hope that some of the options from the TROC report would be reviewed and considered so every federal dollar could be spent and would also advance some of the projects.

- Commissioner Barnhardt stated that the US 222 Bypass, adjacent to the Berkshire Mall, needs to be cleaned. He asked if PennDOT would be able to clean that part of the highway. Trash has been there along that part of the highway for months. Acting Chairman Kufro stated the concern would be communicated to PennDOT's maintenance division.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that there are 7 public viewers on YouTube and no public comment.

13. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Rudderow made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Price seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 1:57 p.m.

Date: _____

Alan D. Piper