ATTENDANCE

COORDINATING COMMITTEE
Michael Rebert, PennDOT 5-0 Chair *
Larry Shifflet, PennDOT Central
Kevin S. Barnhardt, County of Berks
Donna Reed, City of Reading
Tom McKeon, Berks County Planning Commission
Jeff Glisson for Dave Kilmer, SCTA/BARTA
Joseph E. Rudderow, III, 2nd Class Townships (Maidencreek Township)
Kevin Lerch, 1st Class Townships (Muhlenberg Township)
Craig Lutz for Randall Swan, Reading Regional Airport Authority
*Tie-breaking Vote only

COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING
Stephen H. Price, Boroughs (Wernersville)

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
Christopher Kufro, PennDOT 5-0 Vice-Chair*
Gene Porochniak, PennDOT Central
Alan D. Piper, Berks County Planning Commission
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission
Ralph E. Johnson, City of Reading
Jeff Glisson for Dave Kilmer, SCTA/BARTA
*Tie-breaking Vote only

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING
Terry Sroka, Reading Regional Airport
Tim Krall, City of Reading

OTHERS
Amanda Leindecker, PennDOT 5-0
Shannon Rossman, Berks County Planning Commission
Regina Zdradzinski, Berks County Planning Commission
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission
Laura Mursch, Berks County Planning Commission
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission
Pedro Miraflores, Berks County Planning Commission Intern
Nick Ronco, Berks County Planning Commission Intern
Christian Leinbach, Berks County Commissioner
1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Rebert called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MAY 2, 2019

Chairman Rebert asked if there were any questions or comments about the May 2, 2019 Technical Committee Meeting minutes.

MOTION: Mr. Golembiewski made a motion to approve the May 2, 2019 Technical Committee Meeting minutes. Mr. Porochniak seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF COORDINATING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MAY 16, 2019

Chairman Rebert asked if there were any questions or comments about the May 16, 2019 Coordinating Committee Meeting minutes.

MOTION: Mr. Rudderow made a motion to approve the May 16, 2019 Coordinating Committee Meeting minutes. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Commissioner Scott requested that Business from the Floor be advanced on the Agenda. Chairman Rebert allowed this.

5. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

- Commissioner Scott stated that this issue pertains to a PennDOT Federal funding grant in excess of $1 million pertaining to improvements along Rt. 422 Business in Exeter Township. Everyone is probably familiar with the ongoing highway improvements and disruptions to the businesses present along that corridor. He said these additional improvements he is addressing pertain to streetscape improvements, which were not fully made known to the business owners along the street and are now realizing these improvements will raise hardships ranging from accessing parking to ongoing maintenance. One business owner contacted him regarding the hardships that the business will endure because of these streetscape improvements. The funding was a result of a request by Exeter Township. We want to make sure these grants are
administered, and expenditures are made properly, and that any improvements put in place will not damage the businesses that front along Perkiomen Avenue (SR 422 Business).

Ms. Kircher, a former supervisor in Exeter Township for twelve years and a resident for numerous years, handed out information regarding this issue. She stated that the Commissioner’s office was contacted by numerous businesses affected by the constructions. Effie’s Charcoal Chef and Dr. Borgia’s Spine and Wellness Center are two of them. They are crammed for space and have had land taken away. Because of this construction, parking spaces are now close to the highway.

There have been a few meetings between Exeter Township and PennDOT to try to resolve these issues. The township insisted that the streetscape is all the way to the end of Perkiomen Avenue. The Spine and Wellness Center will lose so many parking spaces that it may be impossible to continue with their business.

Recently, Dr. Borgia had numerous meetings with PennDOT, John Granger, Exeter Township manager, and Attorney Cortez. Initially, the business owners were told sidewalks would be put in at no additional cost. At the last meeting, it was made known to the business owners that they will have to maintain these, including snow removal. More costs are being forced on these business owners. Ms. Kircher said there is a lot of salt put on 422 Business in the winter, which will wear down the concrete.

Ms. Kircher said that the supervisors suggested putting tables on the sidewalk in front of Charcoal Chef to have an outdoor café, which would be noisy, unsafe and unclean. The Spine and Wellness Center has tight parking now. With streetscape added, there will be less parking and nowhere to pile up the snow.

PennDOT needs to take into consideration the needs of the people in that area. Ms. Kircher said there was a recent meeting where the township manager walked out because the owner of Charcoal Chef said she is losing money and cannot afford to keep taking loans out to stay in business. PennDOT and Attorney Cortez were present at the meeting as well.

Ms. Kircher said thirty years ago she tried to get barriers put onto SR 422 at the lower end to prevent more fatal accidents. PennDOT did install the barriers and deaths decreased. Now PennDOT is considering taking those barriers away, which would not be a good idea.

Chairman Rebert said he would investigate the matter, since there is a streetscape project in progress. Vice-Chairman Kufro asked if the concern is access to the businesses after construction or just during construction. Ms. Kircher said it would be after construction, as well, because of the pull-in area. Parking spaces will be taken away because of the removal of the open access. This area is not heavily used by pedestrians. Exeter Township cannot afford to lose the tax base and the people do not
want the businesses to shut down. Chairman Rebert will check into this matter and give updates.
Mr. Rudderow said he is not familiar with streetscapes. He does not understand how this issue ties into the highway project. Piper said that, in addition to the PennDOT highway improvement, there are two different kinds of programs. There is funding that comes through the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA). In 2018, Exeter Township developed a plan for a $3.5 million streetscape improvement along Perkiomen Avenue to compliment the PennDOT project. They applied for and received $1 million in state-wide TASA funding that covered a portion of that corridor extending from 37th Street to W. Neversink Road. Exeter Township also applied for and received additional $2.9 million in funding under the PennDOT Multi-Modal Transportation Funding Program. That is where the additional money came from and allowed them to extend their project from 37th Street to Rt. 562.

Mr. Rudderow asked if the purpose of the streetscape project is just to enhance that corridor. Mr. Piper said yes. He noted that portions of what is being done to impact the access to the parcels is being done under regular Highway Occupancy Permits related to PennDOT’s project. When the entire frontage of a property has open access in most cases, it was restricted to designated driveways. Mr. Piper said most of the PennDOT work was done within the existing state highway ROW on the north side of Perkiomen Avenue. Exeter Township sent information that, most, if not all the area they were going to use to build the sidewalks and streetscape work was within the township ROW, which is located outside the PennDOT ROW. Commissioner Scott said that the handout states that all improvements will be within the PennDOT ROW including new sidewalk and walking path on the southside of Perkiomen Avenue between W. 33rd and W. 37th Street.

Mr. Lerch asked if there is an egress into and out of the Wellness Center parking lot. Ms. Kircher said there is one at the bottom of the parking lot and one at the top. Mr. Rudderow asked, when a community looks at this area, do they think one size fits all or know there is a potential issue here. Are they able to make the appropriate adjustments in the field that is going to cut into someone’s property too far or is this what is approved? He wondered if the business owners were able to be a part of that. Vice-Chairman Kufro said this is a township-sponsored project. This project is within the township ROW.

Mr. Lutz asked if the property owners are responsible for maintenance after the project is done. Vice Chairman Kufro said yes because of the sidewalks. Chairman Rebert said it goes by the township’s ordinance. Commissioner Barnhardt said the same applied to the streetscape project in West Reading.

Mr. Lerch said that they (Muhlenberg Township) have a lot of questions regarding the 5th Street Highway Corridor. They are trying to put sidewalks in and follow the Walkability Act. They are looking at the project for the community as a whole. There was a public presentation and they contacted businesses along that highway. He questioned earlier about an egress because they were going to block a secondary
entrance coming from the highway for one of the businesses. It would not have cost them parking spaces. He does understand the concern for this issue.

Mr. Piper said that, many times, when places develop over time along PennDOT’s ROW with egresses that are undefined and possibly with the township ROW behind that, businesses tended to use that undefined ROW as part of their parking areas just as long as the townships were not using it. Sometimes the property owners need to be re-acquainted with the ROW line when betterments projects are done.

Vice-Chairman Kufro said that, when controlled access points are re-established, an important question to ask the township on the applications is what type of project they are submitting, and will others be affected by it. Mr. Rudderow asked if the Department is taking the position that the township should be doing these very steps. Vice-Chairman Kufro said that when the application comes in, it is submitted by the Township. Mr. Rudderow asked, once a project is approved, can modifications be made to it. It doesn’t sound like there is an objection to the total project. There are a few areas that don’t make sense.

Vice-Chairman Kufro said PennDOT will find out who attended these meetings and gather more information on what the exact issues are. Mr. Rudderow asked if there is the ability to change certain areas of the project, or does it stay the same as to what was submitted. Chairman Rebert said there is the ability to make modifications. The question becomes if it will cost more money and who will pay for it. Change orders cost more money. Mr. Lutz said the property maintenance costs would concern him. Mr. Piper said that when you put a sidewalk in front of anyone’s house, the property owner is currently responsible for the maintenance. In this case, there are other issues where the township is telling the business owners the responsibility falls on them.

- Mr. Fred Germann asked to discuss a proposed warehouse north of the I-78 Interstate. The traffic engineer for the developer did a traffic analysis for the SR 737/Old 22 Intersection. Mr. Germann asked him what he was using for his traffic count. He said he was using ITE International handbook to come up with trips generated by this warehouse. Average values are being used. Mr. Germann said when you use average values, there is a 50% chance of it being exceeded. This seems to be a systemic approach to analyzing data using these average values.

Mr. Germann suggests that PennDOT specify that more stringent standards be applied to the estimated traffic count that provide a more accurate projection.

Chairman Rebert said this is more than a statewide issue. It is national issue. District 5 found that the Lehigh Valley and the Berks County areas are booming in warehouses. PennDOT thinks that what they are using is very conservative. He is not aware of any adverse studies that have come back as underestimating the traffic.

Chairman Rebert suggested that, if Mr. Germann wished to pursue this proposal, it should be addressed to a higher level in PennDOT. Chairman Rebert can get Mr. Germann the information if he gives him contact information.
Mr. Germann said that, when he lived in Exeter Township, he was told building subdivisions would have no traffic impact.

There is an error coming from traffic studies with estimated traffic volumes. He questions traffic studies being justified given the capacity and traffic volumes particularly on I-78.

4. PENNDOT UPDATE ON MAJOR PROJECTS

Chairman Rebert gave an update on the major projects.

Mr. Rudderow asked are there unforeseen issues with the right-of-way at the intersection of SR 222 and Long Lane. Chairman Rebert said there may have been strip takes here and there but not full takes. There are pending issues as well that are conflicting developments (Rutters’s and WAWA) on the north side that were not anticipated in the design phase.

Mr. Rudderow said that, in the SR 222 and SR 73 Intersection Improvements project, there was an increase in the estimated construction cost. He questioned the cause of the increase. Chairman Rebert said it comes down to a last minute look at the unit costs associated with other projects before going out for bids. PennDOT tries to account for inflation as they go, but things change quicker, and costs rise. Mr. Lutz asked if there would be a lot of change orders. Chairman Rebert said change orders can be done but are minimized. The major work will probably start in spring of 2020.

Mr. Lerch observed that nothing is happening on the SR 222 Kutztown to Lehigh Co Line project. Chairman Rebert said that the money to begin Preliminary Engineering is not available until FFY 2021.

Mr. Rudderow asked what caused the cost increase for the SR 222 Widening project. Chairman Rebert said PennDOT is fine tuning its design at this point. We are working through the concept delivered in the Preliminary Engineering phase. PennDOT now knows the obstacles that they must work around, the lane widths, and where roundabouts may be. Mr. Rudderow asked if that would mean building additional roundabouts as part of the project. Chairman Rebert said yes.

Mr. Lerch asked what would determine the need for an extra roundabout to be created. Chairman Rebert said the volume of traffic, safety concerns, and the distances between various moves. There will be restrictions on the roads. Mr. Rudderow said Pleasant Hill Road is a challenge and might be a spot where a roundabout could be a better solution. Mr. Rudderow asked if it would be a smaller version of the typical roundabout. Chairman Rebert said he does not think it could go smaller. Mr. Piper said that, in most cases, anything built on SR 222 must be, at least, what is being proposed at SR 222 and Genesis/Tamarack. Mr. Lerch said that if traffic is flowing smoother and more continuous, there will be no opportunity to make a turn off a cross street. There is no break in the flow. Chairman Rebert said it is hard to envision SR 222 and SR 73 with four lanes. With the extra lane, traffic is more spread out.
Mr. Rudderow said that, as this number grows, the amount of money we must work with in Berks County becomes a concern. He hopes this issue remains a top priority for this committee. As the estimates grow, something may need to drop off our list. Mr. Piper requested moving agenda Items 9 and 10 up on the agenda so the remaining time can be spent addressing the funding issue.

9. DISTRIBUTION OF PENNDOT PROJECT STATUS REPORTS-TASA AND HIGHWAYS

Mr. Piper said that TASA and Highway projects listed on the reports are usually discussed at the Technical Committee meetings. Those reports are included in the packets for review. Please contact the Planning Commission office if there are any questions regarding the reports.

10. COMMUTER SERVICES UPDATE

Mr. Boyer handed out the Commuter Services program update for the last six months. He said that all their programs get tied back to specific changes to vehicle miles traveled (vmt) being decreased and/or emissions being improved. The statistics for various promotions are in the report.

“Beat the Heat” promotion was run in June 2019, which is their Try Transit promotion that was moved to June from September. Air-conditioned buses are appreciated more in June than in September.

Mr. Boyer announced that the Double Tree in the City of Reading received the honor of a “Best Work Places for Commuters” award. That presentation will take place on August 23, 2019 at 9:00 AM at the Antique Automobile Club of America in Hershey, PA. Deputy Secretary for Multi-Modal Transportation, Jennie Granger, has agreed to speak. Commuter Services will also present STAR awards to other businesses across the 13 counties that have met stringent guidelines, relating to providing accessibility, showers, bike racks, locker rooms, etc. for their commuters.

6. PENNDOT REQUESTED AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS TO FFY 2019 TIP


Statewide Administrative Actions – There are three (3) Statewide Administrative Actions. One of these adjusted the timing of funds for railroad crossing improvements in Reading and the other two increased funding for Final Design and Construction of the I-78/SR 61 bridge project.

Amendments – There is one (1) Amendment previously approved by the Coordinating Committee (Hamburg Traffic Study) that was provided for information for the Technical Committee members.
Administrative Actions – There are fifteen (15) Administrative Actions. One of these added a Final Design phase to the SR 4028 (Mill Creek) Bridge in Hamburg. Another added funding for the 18th Wonder TASA project construction phase. The remaining actions shift funding within existing projects based on need.

Chairman Rebert congratulated Mr. Shifflet for being promoted to Deputy Secretary for Planning and Programming with to the retirement of James Ritzman. The committees echoed these sentiments.

7. REVIEW OF STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION FFY 2021 12-YEAR PROGRAM SURVEY RESULTS

Mr. Piper stated that the State Transportation Commission started the update to the 12-Year Program and the Transportation Improvement Program process earlier this year. The on-line surveys and on-line public meeting were available in March.

Mr. Piper said the first handout gives information from the results of the statewide transportation survey summary, which shows answers people gave regarding the survey. It shows statewide how people prioritized transportation investments as well as specific improvements and recommendations. The last two pages of the results shows a comparison between the 2019 survey and the prior survey.

Mr. Piper said there were over 6,500 total surveys completed. Of this, there were 2,500 mapped concerns.

The second handout shows responses from the Berks County residents as well as the 213 specific mapped locations. Staff is working on putting together a detailed summary of this information, which will be presented in the future.

Mr. Piper pointed out that the information on the third page for the Top Transportation Modes section for 2017 was Drive Alone, Walking and Carpool/Rideshare. In 2019, Berks County respondents picked Drive Alone, Walking and Aviation. He’s not sure how that happened.

Mr. Piper said the top overall issues for 2017 were Traffic Flow, Road Pavement and Bridges. For 2019, it is Road Pavement, Traffic Flow and Bridges. These are starting points as we begin to develop the TIP and Long-Range Transportation Plan. We get a broad cross section of the county because information is sent to all of the municipalities as well as our mail/e-mail lists and our web/Facebook sites. Additionally, we were with the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance who circulates it to their members as well as Berks County who send it to each County employee via e-mail. There are good responses received from all areas of Berks County.

For access to survey results, go to https://talkpatransportation.com/tell.us/survey-results
Mr. Rudderow stated that five years ago, bridges were a big issue with structurally deficient bridges. He asked where does Berks County stand today. Mr. Piper said Berks County is pretty far through the process in terms of the number of bridges. This is an issue that will have impact on the next discussion. Structurally Deficient bridges are now called Poor bridges. Some of the remaining Poor bridges are among the biggest ones in Berks County, especially those on the West Shore Bypass, and the big bridge on Rt. 61 at Hamburg, which impact the total area of bad bridges.

8. REVIEW OF DISCUSSION OF FINANCIAL GUIDANCE ISSUES RELATED TO FFY 2021 PROGRAM UPDATE

Mr. Piper stated that PennDOT’s Financial Guidance Work Group has been going through a process to see what needs to be done to allocate to the funding in Pennsylvania for the next 4-Year TIP and the subsequent eight years as part of the state’s 12-Year Program.

Mr. Piper said that this presentation is an excerpt from a presentation given this past Tuesday to all the MPO’s and Planning Partners across Pennsylvania. Last September, we had a presentation by PennDOT on the needs of the Interstate System and in March Deputy Secretary Ritzman presented information regarding threats to the funding stream. This presentation will show where, as a group, the state has reached consensus on how funding will be distributed across the state. We will then discuss where the MPO is at this point in time and will identify some of the issues needed to be addressed moving forward. Mr. Piper said there will be impacts to our program, but specific information will not be given today because the numbers are so new that we have not had time yet to determine the impacts at the project level. The next Technical Committee meeting has been postponed from August 1st, until August 15th. Staff will meet with District and Central Office staffs in early August to begin looking at these numbers and compare them to the current program. The Technical Committee will look at the information in August and the Coordinating Committee will then receive a detailed list of the impacts to the program at the September joint meeting.

Mr. Shifflet started the presentation by saying that there are three main factors influencing funding distribution this cycle. The first challenge is that there will be less overall funding on the state side. There will be $289 million less in state funds over a 4-year period to distribute through our formulas. Additionally, every year moving forward, we will lose $100 million in buying power due to inflation.

The second challenge is the shift in investment strategies. MAP-21 and the FAST ACT both require Performance Based Planning with a focus on the National Highway System (NHS).

The third challenge will be the increase in investments in the Interstate System. Every two years as we go through an update, there is a group from PennDOT that rides every mile on the Interstates in Pennsylvania, which is one of the largest Interstate systems in the country. There are incredible needs on this system and how do we address them.
All Planning Partners, municipalities and PennDOT have a huge responsibility in maintaining our transportation system with all the miles of roads (40,000), number of bridges (24,400) and airports, ports, transit systems and all related support services. PennDOT has an overall annual budget of $10.2 billion.

Mr. Shifflet said that Act 89, passed in 2013, was a huge benefit to closing the transportation funding gap. While the state just recorded a surplus over the revenue projections on the General Fund, transportation is only funded out of the Motor License Fund, which is gasoline tax, sales tax on cars, etc. People buying less gasoline due to having more efficient cars plays into this issue. Mr. Lutz asked how much higher the fund would be if the State Police funding was taken out. Mr. Shifflet noted that the fund would be much higher without the diversion of those funds. There is a budget agreement in place that will gradually reduce the amount diverted to the State Police, but it will take a number of years to get down to the agreed upon level. Ms. Leindecker pointed out that Act 89 had virtually no impact on the Interstate System since that is funded with 90% federal funds.

While putting Act 89 together, it was assumed that US Congress was going to help us out as part of the next federal transportation funding reauthorization. They recognized the need for the Interstate System and put forth these measures on the National Highway System (NHS) that requires so much money to be spent to make sure targets are being met but did not allocate any additional funding to address those new standards.

Mr. Shifflet addressed the state funding shortage. He stated that of the $289 million, there is over $300 million less on the highway side, but there is a little additional ($20 million) on the bridge side. This is a result of how the money comes in from the Motor License Fund.

With each program update, asset data is updated. This includes bridges, pavement conditions, as well as the Performance Based Planning & Programming factors. PennDOT is required by FHWA to submit a Transportation Asset Management Plan. That was submitted June 28, 2019. It has a lot of performance requirements and these were incorporated and discussed within the overall decision-making process.

Over the past ten years, PennDOT has been very focused on bridges. Structurally Deficient Bridges have been reduced from over 6,000 in 2007-2008 to 2,839 as of April 1, 2019.

Mr. Shifflet said that there are roughly 250 bridges (1.5%) annually that deteriorated to structurally deficient/poor condition. For many years now, federal funds (NHPP and STP) were allocated 35% to highways and 65% to bridges. This split will be carried forward for the first two years of the TIP but will then change to 60% highway/40% bridges for the second two years. This distribution will also carry forward to the remaining eight years of the 12-Year Program. Mr. Piper said that the shift is to better align the funding to keep road and bridge conditions near their current condition levels.

Mr. Shifflet showed a graphic indicating that Pennsylvania’s Interstate System carries 25% of the vehicle miles travelled (vmt) statewide. The National Highway System,
which includes the Interstates, carries 55% of the statewide vmt. This is why FHWA wants to focus more on these systems.

Mr. Shifflet then addressed the Interstate System. Funding for the Interstate System, currently at $460 million, has averaged at $400 million/year over the past ten years. The Needs Assessment provided last year indicated that PennDOT should be funding the Interstate’s at $1.2 billion/year just to maintain the existing system at a good standard. $1.5 -$3 billion/yr. would be required to fully address safety and reconstruction needs, modernization and system expansion. This does not include the Turnpike.

To address that issue, PennDOT will shift an additional $150 million in federal funding to the Interstates in 2021 and will add an additional $50 million each following year until we reach $1 billion/yr in 2028. Based on estimated future revenues, it is not possible to even get to the desired $1.2 billion and still maintain the rest of the NHS System.

Mr. Shifflet then addressed the formula changes. For FFY 2021-2022, we will continue to use the current formulas statewide with the updated asset data. In FFY 2023-2024, and going forward, we will change to reflect the asset-management based standards. The current formulas distribute funding based primarily on a regions pro-rated share of bad highways and bridges. The Asset Management formulas distribute funds based on your pro-rated share of all highways and bridged.

These formulas impact the distribution of funds for the federal National Highway Performance Program (NHPP), Surface Transportation Program (STP), State Highway, State Bridge, and Federal Off System Bridge (BOF) Programs.

Mr. Rudderow asked, since the formula change was done at the state level, what impact would that have on Liquid Fuels money for the municipalities. Mr. Shifflet said a different formula is used for that and there would be no changes to that program. Liquid Fuels distributions have grown over 53% over the same time period.

Mr. Piper said that prior to 2007, Interstate project funds were allocated to regions and programmed by Metropolitan Planning Organizations. This created significant problems because some areas had more money than others. Work was deferred or not done in an efficient way. Use of the dollars has been much more efficient with the statewide allocation system implemented in 2008.

Mr. Piper noted that the Federal Highway Safety Improvement Program allocation formula will be changed to place a much higher emphasis on a crash severity ratio. Areas with higher rates of fatal and injury crashes will receive a significantly higher amount than those with property damage only. He noted that there will be no changes to the formulas related to these Surface Transportation Program-Urban (STU), Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), National Highway Freight Program, and Rail-Highway Crossing Programs. The last two of these are state-wide rather than regional allocations.
Mr. Piper said that while we say there will be no change made, there could be following 2021. STU, TASA and CMAQ funding all rely, in part, on Census data. There needs to be accurate 2020 Census data because that what drives these numbers. If the census numbers drop, our share of these dollars drop as a relative portion with the rest of the state.

Public Transit – Mr. Piper said there are multiple sources of income to the transit. In time, the funding from the Turnpike will be significantly reduced and shifted to a motor vehicle sales tax. If this provision doesn’t stay in the legislation, that would be another risk. It is assumed that there will be flat funding for transit.

Mr. Rudderow asked what percentage transportation is of the state budget. Mr. Shifflet did not know. Mr. Rudderow wondered where transportation fits in the priority of the state and federal budgets. It seems to be low in terms of priority. Mr. Shifflet said PennDOT is probably one of the heavier state funded areas.

Mr. Piper explained the comparisons between the current TIP and the proposed TIP with all changes implemented. Over the period extending from FFY 2021-FFY 2030, there will be a shortfall of nearly $240 million or 35%. The majority of the shortfall fall in the NHPP, STP, state projects and BOF categories. The proposed TIP (FFY 2021-2023) will be $68 million or 25% less than what was anticipated.

Mr. Lutz asked if this would affect proposed improvements to SR 222. Mr. Piper said he was not prepared to discuss specific project impacts today because the numbers were only received on Tuesday. More will be discussed at future meetings.

Mr. McKeon asked if borrowing money has been discussed. Mr. Shifflet said that there was a big issue with PennDOT in the early 70’s with borrowing. It is an opportunity to look at for a project like US 422. Mr. Shifflet said bonds were used earlier to enhance bridge work and to help drive the numbers down. Mr. McKeon asked if the legislature would need to approve this. Mr. Shifflet said yes. The key to bond funding though, is that you still need a funding source to repay the bonds, plus you lose buying power to interest payments.

Mr. Shifflet said there were many meetings and tough decisions made by the Financial Guidance Work Group in reaching this point. He stated that 55 of the 67 counties were represented at these meetings either through their MPO, RPO, or PennDOT District. It was discussed for approximately six months.

Ms. Breilje asked if this was a decision made at the meeting held on Tuesday. Mr. Shifflet said that the Financial Guidance Workgroup is made up of MPO’s, RPO’s and staff from the PennDOT Districts throughout the state. They met many times to discuss this and then presented it to both the Administration and to all of the Planning Partners. The decisions were made final at the Tuesday meeting. Mr. Piper said the system is underfunded and it is imperative that additional dollars, particularly federal funds, are found to add to the system.
Mr. Rudderow said he doesn’t think transportation funding is a top priority for either the state or federal government. Until it becomes that, it will be a challenge.

Commissioner Barnhardt stated that the new administration of the House of Representatives and Senate that came in two years ago thought they could get this done. Mr. Piper said they all agreed it needs to be done. The bottom line is there has never been an agreement on how to fund it.

Mr. Rudderow asked if it would be beneficial for the respective MPO’s to send letters to the governor and others in Pennsylvania as well as in Washington that we need more funding. Would this be something statewide to raise the importance of transportation and the need to fund it? If not, the picture is dim. Ms. Reed stated that as the Keystone State, it is important to keep our roads well maintained. This could be devastating to future economic development. Mr. Rudderow asked, if this MPO and all the MPO’s across the state started to lobby their legislatures, would that make any difference and is there any harm in doing it? Mr. Piper agrees that the legislature should be put on notice. We need to have an information session with them explaining what is happening with this and what the direct impact will be in Berks County.

Commissioner Leinbach said the only level that makes sense is to argue for additional funding at the federal level. One of the main items of discussion at the annual County’s Commissioner Conference was infrastructure legislation. He cautioned that the current administration has talked about changing the current funding split, which is now 80%/20% to 20%/80% federal/state. If that happens, forget about lobbying the legislatures. Counties across the country are calling for infrastructure legislation for roads, bridges, intermodal, etc. There is an effort already underway at the federal level. The House of Representatives and Senate are aware of the effort. He does not see anything happening at the state level. The state did pass Act 89 in 2013 and put funding in place. There is a lot of roadwork going on in Berks County right now. He does not deny that more is needed.

To review the 2021 Financial Guidance documents, go to https://talkpatransportation.com/transportation-planning/STIP

11. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Commissioner Barnhardt made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Rudderow seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 3:05 PM.

Date: 9/19/19

Alan D. Piper