

READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY  
MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY  
JULY 8, 2021

ATTENDANCE

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Dave Alas, PennDOT Central, Acting Chair\*  
Amanda Leindecker, PennDOT 5-0  
Alan Piper, Berks County Planning Commission, MPO Secretary  
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission  
Dave Kilmer, SCTA  
Tim Krall, City of Reading

NOT PARTICIPATING

Terry Sroka - Reading Regional Airport Authority  
Stan Rugis - City of Reading

OTHERS

Jen Crobak, FHWA  
Jim Mosca, PennDOT Central Office  
Jeff Rai, PennDOT 5-0  
Mike Donchez, PennDOT 5-0  
Vanessa Koenigkramer, PennDOT 5-0  
David Hunter, Berks County Planning Commission  
Ashley Showers, Berks County Planning Commission  
Regina Zdradzinski, Berks County Planning Commission  
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission  
Laura Mursch, Berks County Planning Commission  
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission  
Matt Boyer, Commuter Services of PA  
Shawn Gamble, Congressman Meuser's Office  
Heather Berger, Berks County Information Systems  
Lori Schneider, Berks County Information Systems  
Malcolm Townes, Berks County Information Systems

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Piper took a verbal roll call of the committee members. Acting Chairman Alas then called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

2. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

There was no business from the floor.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that there are 4 people on YouTube and there are no emails.

3. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION ON MINUTES FROM TECHNICAL COMMITTEE OF MAY 6, 2021

Acting Chairman Alas asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the Technical Committee meeting of May 6, 2021.

MOTION: Mr. Kilmer made a motion to approve the minutes from the Technical Committee meeting of May 6, 2021. Mr. Golembiewski 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 April 24, 2021- to July 2, 2021.

- There were 5 Administrative Actions– each of these involve shifting funding among existing projects to reflect current needs. Administrative Action #3 (Stony Run Valley Road over Maiden Creek) has a scope change from a superstructure replacement to a complete bridge replacement.
- There were no Amendments.

Mr. Krall said that he sees quite a bit of funds in Administrative Action #2 being transferred from the SR 2006 Chestnut Street project out of the construction phase and into the preliminary engineering phase on the SR 3024 project. Mr. Donchez said those funds were converted off the 2019 TIP prior to the expiration of it. The Chestnut Street project is not defunded.

5. SCTA REQUESTED MODIFICATIONS TO FFY 2021-2024 TIP

Mr. Kilmer stated that the Administrative Actions reflect what projects will be done this year. The TIP is often developed before the total funding amount is known. When the budget is completed and we know our total funding amount, we must reflect, after the fact, what funding we are actually getting and show how each project will be funded. These are all Administrative Actions and require no action.

6. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION ON FTA COMPLIANT DRAFT TITLE VI PROGRAM

Mr. Golembiewski stated that, at the May 6, 2021 meeting, an action was taken by the committee to forward the Draft Title VI Program to the Coordinating Committee with a recommendation to adopt, subject to no adverse comments from FTA or PennDOT's Bureau of Equal Opportunity (BEO). Both entities got back to the MPO the day before the Coordinating Committee meeting. FTA had no adverse comments and were satisfied that it met all their requirements. They considered the Corrective Action from the Planning Certification Review as closed.

PennDOT's BEO staff mostly had minor comments throughout the document. However, one comment was considered significant. Our current Title VI Notice to the Public contains references to several protected classes. Title VI only addresses race and national origin. FHWA and FTA have both changed their stances since the previous Notice to the Public was developed. The recommendation was made from PennDOT that we have a separate Title VI notice to address race and national origin and another overall notice to address all nondiscrimination.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that, included in the Draft Title VI program is a formal Title VI Notice to the Public that only addresses the Title VI protected classes which are race, color, and national origin. This notice will be posted in our office, links to the policy will be available on our website, and the notice will be included in any documents going forward that the MPO adopts. With this in place, a recommendation is needed from this board to forward this Draft Title VI Program to the Coordinating Committee with a recommendation to adopt.

Mr. Piper stated that, in terms of the changes and what we looked at the last time, the only real difference is that we have broken out the nondiscrimination notice. Mr. Golembiewski confirmed that everything else remains the same.

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to recommend forwarding the Draft Title VI Program to the Coordinating Committee for adoption. Mr. Kilmer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

7. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION ON DRAFT READING MPO NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Mr. Golembiewski stated that all those protected classes covered under the various Federal statutes and laws that we need to address have been included into this policy. The classes include race, color, national origin, income, gender, gender identity, age, religious preference, creed, and disability.

Mr. Krall asked Mr. Golembiewski how these policies are applied. Mr. Golembiewski stated that we, as a recipient of federal funding, by law cannot discriminate in any way. These policies apply to the RATS MPO. This means that: 1) we cannot discriminate; 2) if someone has a complaint about a discrimination, this lays out the framework for properly filing and reporting it; 3) the time frame involved; 4) the correct forms to use; and, 5) what the follow-up actions are. Mr. Piper said the difference is that the Title VI policy and procedure is adopted and only applies to the two categories required under Title VI. The Nondiscrimination policy is an umbrella that covers everyone else.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the Title VI Program is a requirement of FTA. The overall Nondiscrimination Policy is a requirement under FHWA and the USDOT.

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to forward this Nondiscrimination Policy to the Coordinating Committee for adoption. Mr. Kilmer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

8. UPDATE ON RATS PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL FREIGHT PLAN

Mr. Piper stated that the RATS MPO has joined with the Lebanon, Lehigh Valley, Lackawanna/Luzerne and NEPA MPOs to put together a proposal to PennDOT for supplemental funding to hire a consultant to prepare a regional freight plan. This regional freight plan would build on the findings of the state's plan and their LRTP, and then further address specifics within the region in finer detail. The proposal was put together and was submitted to PennDOT last week. PennDOT has agreed to fund the work item. The work item itself will be on the Lehigh Valley MPO's work program as an administrative location. There is a meeting scheduled next week to begin working on the detailed scope of work to hire a consultant to move forward with the project.

The total amount of the project is \$280,000 from PennDOT to be matched with \$70,000 from the MPOs for a total project cost of \$350,000. The project is expected to take 18-24 months to be completed.

The goal is to put together the scope of work, advertise to hire a consultant, and move forward. Mr. Piper said the \$70,000 match is shared between the five MPOs. Berks County's share is just over \$13,000. The Board of Commissioners has already endorsed it and has agreed to provide that funding as a county match should PennDOT give us the full amount.

Mr. Piper stated that the group will need to finalize formal agreements with the county and all the other MPOs involved.

9. UPDATE ON FFY 2023 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Mr. Piper said there are several different items related to the process that have begun. They are:

- STC Survey Results - It was mentioned in March 2021 that the State Transportation Commission kicked off the Twelve -Year Program Update by conducting a survey and holding an on-line public meeting. As part of that survey, participants had the opportunity to make specific recommendations for projects anywhere in the state. The STC compiled the results into two types of brochures: one provided results at the statewide level and the other provided results for individual MPOs. There were 153 recommendations listed in Berks County. Out of the 153 recommendations, the mapping process identified 62 of them that were considered already addressed based on projects we have incorporated into the TIP. Most of the projects recommended related to roadway issues, 6 were related to bridge, 6 related to bike and walking, 3 to transit and 4 to what recommenders identify as freight.

There were 313 surveys from Berks County and respondents were roughly 50% male, 45% female and 2% preferred not to answer. The average age was approximately in the 55-64 category. The main modes of transportation in order were as follows: 1) driving alone; 2) walking; and 3) aviation. Priorities were ranked as follows: 1) roadway pavement; 2) traffic flow; 3) bridges; 4) interstate highways; 5) passenger rail; 6) freight; 7) walking; 8) transit; 9) bicycling; and 10) aviation.

All of these comments are used in our development of the LRTP and the TIP. The responses were reviewed, and the results were broken out project-specific by municipalities.

- General and Procedural Guidance – The Draft Pennsylvania’s 2023 Transportation Program General and Procedural Guidance document is now available. It identifies how an entire TIP should be put together and identifies what must be included in a TIP.
- Financial Guidance – In 2023, the update fully implements the phase-ins to apply performance-based planning and programming and life cycle costs across all 4 years of the program. In the FFY 2021 TIP, the first two years, FY 2021 - 2022, were based on the old scenario. Performance-based planning and programming and life cycle costs are now based on this new guidance.

Additionally, the enhanced Interstate Program is still being carried forward. The decision was to move \$50 million a year out of the National Highway Fund and into the Interstate Program until the point it reached \$1 billion. So, an additional \$50 million a year will get shifted over to the Interstate Program through FFY 2028. That had an impact on several programs.

Because there is no new federal legislation, all federal funds are assumed to be flat across all years of the program. State revenues are projected to drop by \$152 million. While there is discussion at the state and federal levels on new legislation, none of that is approved at this time, so the Financial Guidance that is being developed does not reflect any estimates for what may come out of that. With the funds being flat, we are in the range of \$1.7 billion in federal funds and another \$760 million in state funds for a total of \$2.5 billion to be allocated across all the programs per year.

The different programs are formula driven. All of the information that gets fed into those formulas are updated for this Financial Guidance update which include: 2019 Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), 2019 lane miles, Truck VMT, Bridge and Pavement Asset Management Factor (which helps gauge level of need for basic maintenance), bridge deck area and crash data which focuses mainly on fatalities and serious injuries.

The National Highway Performance Program is calculated 40% towards bridges and 60% towards highways. The bridge money is calculated by 75% deck area of all bridges in the area and 25% based on the bridge Asset Management Factor. Highway funding is calculated by 25% lane miles, 25% VMT, 25% truck VMT and 25% based on Pavement Asset Management Factor. The Interstate Program grows by \$50 million each year beginning in 2021. This means that in 2021, the shift to the Interstate Program was \$50 million, in 2022 it was \$100 million, and will continue at that additional \$50 million growth rate per year until it reaches \$1 billion.

The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program is based on 40% bridges and 60% highway. The data for the National Highway Performance Program (NHPP) only relates to roadways and bridges on the National Highway System (NHS). The STP bridge funding relates to the

deck area of all bridges, while the highway portion is based on 50% lane miles, 25% VMT and 25% trucks. There is also STP Set-Aside for urban areas and one for off-system bridges based on deck area. There is local and statewide Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding, which are distributed to large areas based on a formula and the remainder is retained for statewide distribution. State highway dollars are allocated based on 25% VMT, 25% truck VMT, 50% lane miles and state bridge funds are related to the proportionate value of deck area for all bridges.

Highway Safety Improvement Program funding is allocated by formula. There is a minimum of \$500,000 that goes to each planning region. \$35 million is retained statewide and the balance of dollars are allocated based on a 39:1 share of fatal and injury crashes vs. property damages only. The more fatal and serious injury crashes in a region, the higher the percentage of safety funding would be received.

As in the past, all National Highway Freight Program funding is being retained for statewide distribution to the Interstate System. All that money is going into the Interstate Program. The Highway Rail Grade Crossing Program is also being administered statewide as opposed to doling out small bits of money to the various regions.

CMAQ funds are based on population and a multiplier used based on air quality conformity classification as non-attainment or maintenance. Only certain areas are eligible to receive CMAQ funding. Berks County is one area that is eligible.

Federal funding is assumed for public transit funds and will be flat again based on the FAST Act. State funding will be based on the annual budgeting process. When the Turnpike contribution is terminated in FFY 2023, it is assumed funding will be picked up by a vehicle sales tax. There will be flat revenues on that side, as well.

Mr. Piper said that by reviewing the preliminary budget numbers that are available in the Financial Guidance Document, it shows all the dollars that are available by going through the formulas. It shows tables breaking out the dollars available and how the dollars break out to each of the MPOs. The areas on a population-based formula at the federal level have remained unchanged. Highway safety and CMAQ money increased slightly. TAP money was flat. Surface Transportation Urban (STU) funding, which is based on population, stayed flat.

Because of the update in the data that goes into the formulas, there are further reductions than what were anticipated in the NHPP funding. The range was from 4.5%-17% of anticipated changes in NHPP funding. There were minor changes in Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding. State dollars flatten out and we are still losing in that phase. State bridges are losing approximately 15% a year. Over the course of the 12 years that would be covered by this program update, \$23 million would be lost based on the prior program. It is 4.7% per year lower in the aggregate over what was looked at.

There will be problems with project costs that will be growing at a rate of 3% or more against a budget that is dropping at nearly 5% per year. All of the MPOs met

on June 29, 2021 to review both the General and Procedural Guidance and the Financial Guidance. There was consensus to approve them and final documentation of both should be issued within the next few weeks.

10. UPDATE ON NEW TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM FUNDING CYCLE

Mr. Piper stated that the new TAP cycle is now open. It opened on June 1, 2021 and goes through mid-October. The procedures for this program have changed significantly for people that are involved in filling in applications. He advised people to go to the PennDOT web page that describes the procedures. Notices were sent out at the beginning of the process. Reminders were also sent out. Applicants need to register in order to submit their program.

As of now, the process will require submission of both a preliminary application and a final application. Preliminary applications are due in mid-August and will be reviewed by the MPOs and the Districts. Applicants will have an opportunity to make any adjustments to make applications better prior to the submission of the final application in October. If the preliminary application is not submitted on time, a final application cannot be submitted.

Mr. Krall asked what action this committee has to take before the final application is submitted. Mr. Piper stated in regard to the preliminary applications, the committee does not have a roll until the final projects are submitted. The preliminary review process would consist of District staff and MPO staff meeting with each applicant to make sure their proposal is consistent with the program. Once the final applications are submitted and reviewed, this committee would rank the projects submitted locally to see how those projects would fit with the dollars available coming from our TIP (\$280,000) and the \$18 million available statewide. and then the committee would rank them.

11. PENNDOT UPDATE ON TASA/MTF AND HIGHWAY PROJECTS

Mr. Piper said that TASA information was sent out last month and gave an update on those projects. Ms. Leindecker said that if anyone has questions on the TASA projects, please reach out to the District.

Mr. Piper said that there are issues related to the Schuylkill River Trail project but it is still listed with a September let date. Mr. Krall said it was changed recently to February 2022. The ROW was concurred, and the quiet title information was received. It received clearance, is moving into Final Engineering and a let schedule is being prepared.

Mr. Rai stated that the projects would be updated soon and would be reviewed at the quarterly meeting.

Ms. Leindecker gave an update on the Highway projects.

Mr. Piper said there will be a public meeting related to the SR 222-28 M Widening project between Maiden Creek Township and the Kutztown Bypass later this year.

12. COMMUTER SERVICES UPDATE

Mr. Boyer stated that companies are opening back up. Commuter Services outreach staff are traveling around again and engaging with employers with whom previously only virtual things were done with. Over the past few weeks, the Battle of the Staffing Agencies took place.

The monthly employment transportation coordinator messaging sessions with individuals used as contacts for businesses are occurring. Some of the employers in Berks County that staff has met with or dealt with within the past 30 days are: Boscov's, EDSI in Berks, Gage Personnel, Albright College, Sweet Street Deserts, Godiva Chocolate, and Bellco Federal Credit Union.

Mr. Boyer stated that Commuter Services wrapped up a regional Bike Share initiative this past month. This was to try to find a replacement for Zagster. They received a response from Tandem. Wyomissing Borough as well as Tower Health were involved. There was a lot of information sharing between boroughs, townships, municipalities, and counties to make sure there is a bike share available to their residents and employees.

13. DISCUSSION OF DRAFT READING MPO BYLAWS UPDATE

Mr. Piper stated that the last time the bylaws were updated was in 2010. A preliminary update was prepared which primarily consisted of adding language pertaining to online or virtual meetings, addressing issues related to the absences of a chair person, and adding language related to some of the non-discrimination factors.

This information will be shared with the Coordinating Committee and we will ask them for any comments as well. This will be brought back at the September meeting to both committees for final approval.

Mr. Kilmer recommended changing BARTA to SCTA since SCTA is the designated recipient for the RATS area. Mr. Piper agreed. Any recommended changes will be made between now and the next meeting.

14. OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr. Piper stated we are at the mid-point of our 2-year UPWP. Year 2 will be modified to reflect any carryover dollars that were unspent in the first year as well as revising anticipated work that is either to be added to this program or to be carried over. This should be done shortly once the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Invoice is completed. We are looking to bring this back to the September meeting.

Guidance was received on the next UPWP for FFY 2022-2024. This needs to be approved by next spring. Coordination will begin shortly and a preliminary UPWP will be ready for discussion with our federal and state partners by November 1, 2021

- so there is time to comment on it. It is anticipated that the FFY 2022-2024 UPWP will be presented to the board for final approval at the January 2022 meeting.
- Yesterday, Governor Wolf's office announced \$15 million was awarded statewide for Green Light Go grant funding. There were five projects in Berks County that received funding. They are:
    - Kutztown Borough received \$40,000 for replacement of traffic signal controllers, upgrading to LED signals and traffic signal retiming.
    - Shillington Borough received nearly \$321,000 for replacing ten traffic signal controllers, upgrading to video detection and optimizing the timing along the Lancaster Avenue Corridor.
    - Sinking Spring Borough received almost \$277,000 for replacement of traffic signals as part of the Penn Avenue/Cacoosing Intersection improvement project.
    - Spring Township received \$518,000 for replacing six traffic signal controllers, replacing LED indicators and installing pedestrian signals, emergency signal pre-emption, and traffic signal retiming along Penn Avenue corridor through the township.
    - Wyomissing Borough received \$420,000 to upgrade twenty-one different traffic signal controller assemblies throughout the borough.

Mr. Piper said this is the largest amount of grant money Berks County municipalities received from Green Light Go to his recollection and all of these are good projects.

Ms. Leindecker asked if air quality benefits on these areas needs to be reviewed. Mr. Mosca stated that District Office will be working with the MPO to see if any of these projects have impacts on Air Quality Conformity. Anytime there is a coordination activity with signals, Air Quality Conformity will need to be checked. The projects can be added with the understanding any of the air quality significant projects would be modeled as part of the next opportunity for the Air Quality Conformity Analysis. This would go along with the TIP update. Mr. Piper agreed. He said for all these projects, it is for traffic signal retiming which is to encourage optimization. There are generally no negative aspects to any of these proposals.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that there are no public comments at this time.

15. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Leindecker made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:55 PM. Mr. Kilmer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Date: 9/2/21

  
Alan D. Piper, Secretary