READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MAY 16, 2019 IN THE BERKS COUNTY COMMISSIONER’S BOARD ROOM ON THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR OF THE BERKS COUNTY SERVICES CENTER

ATTENDANCE

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

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

*Tie-breaking Vote only

OTHERS
Amanda Leindecker, PennDOT 5-0
Gene Porochniak, PennDOT Central
Earl Armitage, PennDOT Consultant Project Manager
Alan D. Piper, 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 Miralles, BCPC Intern
Craig Lutz, Senator Argall
Jessica Blauser, County of Berks
Matt Boyer, Commuter Services
Tim Benner, McTish, Kunkel & Associates
Paul Archibald, McCormick Taylor, Inc.
Chris Spohn, Hamburg Area School District
Carol Riley, AIM
Angel Torres, AIM
Rev. Evelyn Morrison, City of Reading Citizen
Patrick Manwiller, WFMZ-TV
1. **CALL TO ORDER**

   Chairman Rebert called the meeting to order at 1:09 p.m.

2. **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF COORDINATING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MARCH 21, 2019**

   Chairman Rebert asked if there were any questions or comments about the March 21, 2019 Coordinating Committee Meeting minutes.

   **MOTION:** Commissioner Barnhardt made a motion to approve the March 21, 2019 Coordinating Committee Meeting minutes. Mr. Rudderow seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. **PENNDOT UPDATE ON MAJOR PROJECTS**

   Chairman Rebert gave an update on the major projects.

   Mr. Swan questioned the delay for the estimated completion of the SR 222 and SR 73 Intersection project. Chairman Rebert said it is more likely to start in Fall 2019 and going through Spring, 2022.

   Mr. Rudderow asked about the 25% cost increase for the SR 222 and Long Lane project. Chairman Rebert said it is primarily related to ROW and stormwater issues.

   Mr. Piper said that the second to the last phase of the Penn Street Bridge should start in June 2019. Mr. Piper said that for that phase, it will still be one lane into the city and two lanes out of the city.

   Mr. Swan asked why, if we haven’t identified the source of money to pay for the construction phase of the West Shore Bypass project, have we started Preliminary Engineering. At the same time, we cannot start Preliminary Engineering on the SR 222 Widening project, from Kutztown to Lehigh, because we do not have any money until 2021. Chairman Rebert said that is the way it is set up on the TIP. We’ve had this discussion a handful of times regarding priorities and which projects need to move forward. We cannot wait for one project to end for another one to start. Projects need to be phased the best we can. The widening of SR 222 from Maiden Creek Township to the Kutztown Bypass will take time. As that is finished, we want to be through the design phase of the next piece going to Lehigh County.

   Mr. Swan asked if there is any idea when that project will be let. Chairman Rebert said no. There are a number of alternative alignments that need to be evaluated. Mr. Piper stated that SR 222 is fully programmed through the process and we have started the initial phases to get to US 422 going. Eventually, we will be done with constructing SR 222 and be ready to start with US 422, which is now estimated to go to construction in 2024. There are more than enough projects to keep using every dollar that is available.
Mr. Swan would like to see the Department do whatever can be done to keep the US 222 projects moving. Chairman Rebert said there is more information to come from Financial Guidance.

4. **BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

   There was no Business from the Floor.

5. **PENNDOT REQUESTED AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS TO FFY 2019 TIP**

   Mr. Piper gave an update on Amendments/Modifications to FFY 2019-2022 Highway TIP from February 28, 2019 through April 24, 2019.

   **Statewide Administrative Actions** – There is one (1) Statewide Administrative Action that adds funding to the I-78 paving project.

   **Amendments** – There are two (2) Amendments.

   **Administrative Actions** – There are six (6) Administrative Actions. Each of these shift funding within existing projects based on needs.

   Amendment #1 is assigning an additional $7.5 million for construction funding for the SR 222/73/Genesis Drive project to match the current estimates to go to a let for July 11, 2019.

   Out of the additional funding, the three biggest drivers are almost $2 million for sewer and water line work and $2.5 million for construction engineering. Additional funding is also added for staging and traffic control because of all the movements to keep traffic moving through that area while under construction. Additional funding is also added for work related to pavement design, building demolition, incorporation of a new ITS sign on the southern end of that project.

   Mr. Rudderow asked if the intersection at SR 222/73 will be improved before the roundabouts would be built. Chairman Rebert said the entire corridor would be under construction beginning on one side and then shifting to the other side. Mr. Piper said the widening and the bridge over Willow Creek will also need to be tied into the project. Mr. Rudderow asked if putting in the roundabout would take place towards the end of the project. Mr. Piper said the final sequence will not be determined until a contractor is on board. Mr. Rudderow also asked if the separate bridge repair and maintenance on Rt. 73 will be wrapped up before the start of the widening. Chairman Rebert said yes.

   Mr. Piper handed out the second Amendment regarding the Hamburg Traffic Study. The Scope of Work was advanced and reviewed by the Borough and everything was put in place, except for the funding. This action would add federal funding to pay for that traffic study in the amount of $211,000, which comes from de-obligated funds.
MOTION: Commissioner Barnhardt made a motion to approve the two amendments (SR 222/73 and Hamburg Traffic Study). Ms. Reed seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

6. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION ON PENNSYLVANIA PERFORMANCE-BASED PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING WRITTEN PROVISIONS

Mr. Piper said that this document had been sent out to all the MPO’s across the state. Federal regulations require that PennDOT, the MPO and public transportation operations jointly agree to written provisions for developing, measuring and reporting transportation performance measures for the following areas:

- PM1 Measures - Safety
- PM 2 Measures - NHS/Interstate Pavement and Bridge Conditions
- PM 3 - NHS Performance, Interstate Freight movement and CMAQ

A separate document has already been prepared and approved regarding the Federal Transit Asset Management Final Rule.

MOTION: Mr. Green made a motion for the Reading MPO to endorse these written procedures and authorize Mr. Piper to notify the Department of this decision. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

7. REVIEW OF ANNUAL LIST OF OBLIGATED PROJECTS-FFY 2018

Mr. Piper said it has always been a federal requirement that we publish an annual list of obligated projects. In prior years, we simply posted a spread sheet provided by PennDOT along with basic instructions for reading it. When the last STIP and TIP were submitted, FHWA stated that we were meeting the letter of the law but not the intent of the law. They directed MPO’s to work with PennDOT and transit agencies to put together a new report that people can read and understand. Staff member Amanda Timochenko worked with PennDOT to develop a new format for the report. It identifies funding sources, where those funds have gone, how the dollars have been allocated over the years within different phases of projects, and charts of information that pertain to the current year.

The report was submitted to PennDOT. They said it was a good report and would like to use it as an example to other areas across the state. Mr. Green said the report looked mainly at the highways and bridge projects. He knows that FHWA is still calling for the transit part. Mr. Glisson (BARTA) has been working on this portion. At some point, that information should be incorporated into the report. It was also pointed out that, because we are only doing the report for our MPO, the Interstate projects are not listed. The Interstate Program is its own MPO. It will be noted in future versions of the report that, while the Interstate projects continue to be implemented, they are not included in this report.
8. PENNDOT UPDATE ON US 422 WEST SHORE BYPASS RECONSTRUCTION

Mr. Tim Benner, the project manager for West Shore Bypass reconstruction project, gave an update.

This is a 5.3-mile-long widening project of the West Shore Bypass to 6 lanes from Rt. 12 down past I-176. Interchanges with North Wyomissing Boulevard, Penn Street/Penn Avenue, Lancaster Avenue and I-176 will be upgraded.

The project involves construction/reconstruction of 21 bridges, including four over the Schuylkill River, 19 retaining walls, and 5 potential sound barriers. The project will impact 16 different utility owners with over 140 conflicts identified. The project must be phased to allow the continuing use by two lanes of traffic in each direction during peak hours throughout the reconstruction.

Mr. Benner stated that the project is still in the Preliminary Engineering phase. They are working towards getting Environmental Clearance by next Fall (2020). With that, the project would then move into Final Design. The earliest construction could begin has been moved back to 2024. The current cost estimate is $600 million.

The project must be designed and built around the following environmental resources: the Schuylkill River, the Tulpehocken Creek, and the Wyomissing Creek and their associated 100-Year Flood Plains, wetlands, 3 threatened and endangered species with the potential for 2 additional species being added to the list. Sixty-seven phase 1 environmental site assessments have been completed and 23 of these will require additional evaluations. Two areas have been identified where the existing highway was built on large areas of coal ash fill. Preliminary air and noise studies have been completed. They are currently looking at storm water management issues. Drainage from the large area of new highway surface must be accommodated in a very tight corridor.

Thirty-six different above-ground cultural (historical) resources have been evaluated of which 9 are eligible for the National Register of Historical Places. A great deal of archaeology was also completed last year, and the findings are being analyzed and documented. Seven pre-contact sites and three historic sites have been evaluated. Sixteen Section 4(f) resources (parks, trails, historic properties) have been identified and must be accommodated by the project.

Mr. Benner reviewed the public outreach that has been conducted to date and stated that a second public meeting was being planned for this fall. They will also be updating the project web site (www.422westshorebypass.com) to reflect the current designs and recent changes.

Mr. Benner discussed several changes in the design of the corridor. The original plans called for the complete replacement of the bridge carrying 2 tracks of the Norfolk Southern Railroad over the West Shore Bypass between the North Wyomissing Interchange and the Buttonwood Street Bridge. This was recommended due to the limited area where the bypass passes under the bridge between the bridge pier next to the river and a rock cliff.
that supports a second bridge pier. Norfolk Southern has indicated that this bridge cannot be taken out of service at any time during the project. That would require the engineer to design a new bridge adjacent to the existing bridge and then make track adjustments in both West Reading/Wyomissing and Reading that could extend for up to a mile in either direction. Rather than proceeding with that design, the engineers are looking to see if it is possible to remove and strengthen a portion of the rock wall wide enough to accommodate the six-lane cross section of the highway.

The next change that Mr. Benner addressed was at the Buttonwood Street Bridge overpass. This is the lowest point on the West Shore Bypass and is within the 100-Year Flood Plain. There have been recent incidents where this section of the bypass has flooded. Initial plans called for the bypass to be lowered 3-4 feet further to get the required vertical clearance under the Buttonwood Street overpass which is on the National Register. This would make the flooding worse in this area. As a result, the southern three spans of the bridge are now proposed to be reconstructed with shallower beams. The required vertical under clearance will be achieved but the roadway will remain in the flood plain at its current level. It is not possible to raise Buttonwood Street high enough to get the bypass out of the flood plain and still get Buttonwood Street below the railroad underpass in West Reading.

Mr. Benner stated that the bridge on the West Shore Bypass between Penn Street and Lancaster Avenue will be reconstructed as a bridge rather than on fill with retaining walls. This will allow access to the riverfront area, allow the RACC Bridge and Thun Trail to pass beneath it and maintain access to properties. At the Lancaster Avenue interchange, the Thun Trail will now be carried by two separate structures rather than one long structure. The first portion will be built as a part of the bridge carrying US 422 over Lancaster Avenue. The second will carry the trail over the eastbound exit ramp. The final change will involve widening the bridge over the Schuylkill River east of I-176 to the south rather than to the north to avoid a 4(f) resource.

Ms. Reed questioned if any action was being taken regarding the City’s request for inclusion of a North Wyomissing Boulevard Bridge. Mr. Piper said there is information in the packets outlining what is required to add a completely new project to the TIP and Long-Range Plan. Rather than attempting to have this bridge incorporated as part of this project and have the entire project set back, it would be better to pursue the North Wyomissing Boulevard Bridge as an independent project. The bridge project could run parallel with this project and will, hopefully, catch up to it.

Mr. Piper pointed out that this is a highway facility that does not currently exist. Questions need to be answered prior to consideration of this bridge project. Who will be the owner of the bridge? The ownership of the bridge could drive what types of funds can be used for its design and construction. The bypass project is a part of an adopted federal-aid highway system. If the future bridge is going to receive federal funds, it would have to be part of a modified request for a proposed section of the federal aid highway system.

No Purpose and Needs Analysis has been prepared for the bridge project. One of the first things done when a new project is started is to define what is the purpose of that
project and the need for it. There is guidance on conducting a Purpose and Needs Analysis for a project.

As a follow up to the analysis, there are other questions. Have traffic studies been done showing how much traffic will use the bridge and where it will come from. What other areas would be impacted by the shift of traffic to that location? The bridge will change traffic patterns on both the west side of the river and throughout the whole northeastern side of the city. Are the bridge and related roadway changes technically feasible?

Mr. Piper said that once the project has been defined, is the project officially endorsed by the effected municipalities. If there are multiple municipalities, it must be checked to see if there are other impacts that could stem from that development. In this case, it not only could affect the traffic across the river in Wyomissing, but by changing the traffic patterns on Rt. 183, it could impact traffic patterns in Bern Township as well.

Is this project a part of a municipal or a multi-comprehensive plan? By introducing a new transportation element, you are also influencing changes in land use or creating opportunities for new land uses that influence the surrounding transportation system.

Is this project included in an adopted municipal or multi-municipal transportation plan? At this point, only a concept is being discussed. In time, this project might be added to the MPO’s Long Range Transportation Plan. It will be used to get other elements included on the TIP to move towards project construction.

Ms. Reed asked if the City of Reading should take the lead on this bridge project and how do we move forward. What is the next step they can take to get this project moving? Mr. Piper said that concepts regarding the issue of ownership needs to be addressed. A cursory Purpose and Needs Analysis should be done. Ms. Reed asked when this should be completed. Chairman Rebert suggested by mid to late summer and Ms. Reed agreed. Mr. Piper provided Ms. Reed with the list of questions just reviewed as well as guidance for preparing the Purpose and Needs Analysis. Once in hand, PennDOT and staff can then look at the project. Chairman Rebert said this project needs to fit in with Wyomissing’s thoughts and their plan for a roundabout at one of the intersections along North Wyomissing Boulevard. Ms. Reed agreed. She said there are also other aspects to this like alleviating congestion on Rt. 12.

Commissioner Barnhardt asked if St. Joseph’s Hospital did a study when the concept was proposed back in 2000. Mr. Piper said it was not a pure study. When St. Joseph’s Hospital was considering moving out of the city, they considered that site in the city. They commissioned a conceptual design with a cost estimate of $30 million which included all the ancillary construction.

Mr. Rudderow, reverting back to the West Shore Bypass project, said that there are studies that must be done and studies that have been done already. He asked if you need to go back to step one for these studies if you stop the project to add this bridge. Can some of the studies used on the recent project be used to support this new project? Mr. Benner
answered yes that all the studies, even the environmental and bridge studies could be used. Mr. Piper said, when those studies are prepared, however, they have a certain shelf life. It depends on the nature of the study and the dynamics of what is happening around it. Mr. Rudderow asked how much money was spent so far on the preliminary studies presented today for this project. Mr. Benner said $6 million for Preliminary Engineering.

Mr. Piper noted that there are two structurally deficient bridges on the West Shore Bypass. We cannot afford to stop design work on the West Shore Bypass project. We cannot do a project to replace bridges on the bypass until we know the framework of how those bridges must fit with the rest of that improvement. So, until the Preliminary Engineering phase is completed, nothing can be done with those structurally deficient bridges. Mr. Rudderow asked if the Preliminary Engineering helps determine what the final cost for this project will be. Mr. Piper said yes. As we get into more of the details, the price of the project will most likely continue to go up.

Mr. Swan asked if there is any idea how this project will get paid for. A four-year TIP is nearly $300 million, which means this project represents eight years of funding. He said PennDOT is doing a wonderful job of doing the designs and it does need to get done. Someone will need to write the check and right now we don’t have it. Chairman Rebert said that PennDOT will be in a position this summer to meet with their Planning & Programming section in Harrisburg to talk through funding opportunities. These could include a public/private partnership (P3), which covers financing the project and pay it back like a mortgage. Another option is the project can be broken up into pieces. They have an idea of what is going on but until the bridge boring work is completed, there is no way to know how these bridges will need to be built. Mr. Rudderow said that is what the Preliminary Engineering is revealing, and the money is being spent to find out what the ultimate total project is going to cost. Chairman Rebert agreed.

Mr. McKeon asked questions regarding breaking the project into phases. Would stormwater need its own permit? Would the project be broken down into pieces then get phased permits for the different pieces of the project? Mr. Benner said this is being discussed now. Through Preliminary Engineering, this is developed as one big project. The permitting would come into play in the Final Design phase. Once Environmental Clearance is completed, they will figure out how to break this project down. There are concepts on how to build this project, but they are not there yet.

Reverend Evelyn Morrison, a resident of the City of Reading, spoke about capacity, compliance and completion. She does not trust the City’s management, technical ability or finances to handle such a project like this. The capacity issue is that there is not a strong relationship between who is qualified to deal with the technical and architectural design versus those who implement the plan. Reverend Morrison felt that contract compliance oversight is missing on the municipal and county levels. She thinks $650 million is not enough to cover the cost of this project. This city was a post-industrial site including the railroad. You will see things here that you will not see anywhere else. When certain structures are removed, there will be levels of contamination and unstable subterranean sites due to the dumping of contaminants years ago.
Regarding contracts, how much of this money is going to be used to guarantee people’s employment, training & development. When they are paid, will it be with union wages? Women contractors, as well, should be involved. Is 30% of this project going to be earmarked to communities and contractors of color? Discrimination is rampant on multiple levels. How can a city that is in debt, a county that continues to discriminate in employment and contracting procurement be given this responsibility? She wants to see the people who live here benefit too. There is a large population of bilingual people. Is anything in Spanish?

Commissioner Barnhardt said that the Reverend is entitled to her opinion. Some things she has stated are totally incorrect, and he thinks this is not the appropriate venue to talk about discrimination. Mr. Piper clarified that neither the county nor the city is implementing this project. This is a state project that falls under the jurisdiction of both the state and the Federal Highway Administration in designing and implementing. Chairman Rebert said that this is a PennDOT project funded with federal and state money.

9. COMMUTER SERVICES UPDATE

Mr. Boyer stated that Commuter Services is in the middle of Bike Month, which has also been renamed Motorless May. Earth Day was held in April.

For those who use the BARTA/SCTA buses, riders can use the Commute PA app to track those trips. The app gives Commuter Services important information to bring back to the MPO documenting vehicle miles being removed from the roads and air quality changes that are occurring. If you are using transit, carpooling or vanpooling and using the app, there are 2,200 rewards available to cash in on the Commute PA site.

Mr. Boyer said that Elite Sportswear, Tower Health, IWC in Hamburg, are companies that they dealt with in the last two weeks. He thanked the Greater Reading Chamber and transit authority for providing the venue for participation in the Berks Alliance Community meeting in late April 2019 as well as the Rt. 422 planning and bus issues in the area and for making sure these issues are taken care of for commuters.

Mr. Boyer said that there are staff positions available for Community Outreach with Commuter Services. Applicants can apply online.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

• Mr. Piper said that Reading Bridges Working group received a Governor’s Award for Excellence in Local Government for their work in innovative community outreach. Related to the Buttonwood Street Bridge, the Penn Street Bridge and the West Shore Bypass.

• There are two significant project lets coming up. In the first week of June, work related to SR 222 southbound lane, which will add an extension of the Broadcasting Road on ramp to the US 222 off ramp, is let. The work for the 222 Slab Stabilization,
including the expansion to include bridge rehabilitation will also be included in this contract. On July 11, 2019, two major projects related to SR 222 are scheduled to be let - the SR 222/73 project and the SR 222/663 Shantz Road intersection in Lehigh Valley.

- There is information in the packets regarding the $5 registration fee and how the county has put that money to use since it was instituted.

- Mr. Piper said that the next meeting will include an extended discussion on funding. It will be a follow-up to prior presentations on the state of the Interstate System, threats to the funding process and reworking formulas. There are no details to share at this time. The Turnpike situation is part of the threat. Mr. Kilmer said it is not a threat; it is a reality. Transit has already lost $450,000,000. Mr. McKeon stated that there are two major studies out of southwestern and southeastern PA regarding what other communities are doing relating to this looming issue for transit.

- Mr. Lutz said he had a complaint from a constituent regarding roadwork on SR 662. He asked Chairman Rebert to look at this area and he agreed. Milling was done. Mr. Piper said construction in that area is still in progress.

- Ms. Riley told Mr. Kilmer about areas with no bus stops. He said they are working on that issue now.

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Commissioner Barnhardt made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 PM.

Date: 7/18/19

Alan D. Piper