

READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY
MAY 6, 2021

ATTENDANCE

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Scott Vottero, PennDOT 5-0 Acting Chair*
Ethan Baldwin, PennDOT Central
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

Laura Keely, FHWA
Chris Kufro, PennDOT 5-0
Amanda Leindecker, PennDOT 5-0
Jeff Rai, PennDOT 5-0
Mike Donchez, PennDOT 5-0
Gary Caloda, 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
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission
Laura Mursch, Berks County Planning Commission
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission
Mark Eastedt, Commuter Services of PA
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 Vottero then called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

2. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

There was no business from the floor.

3. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION ON MINUTES FROM TECHNICAL COMMITTEE OF MARCH 4, 2021

Acting Chairman Vottero asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the Technical Committee meeting of March 4, 2021.

MOTION: Mr. Kilmer made a motion to approve the minutes from the Technical Committee meeting of March 4, 2021. Mr. Krall 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 February 26, 2021- to April 23, 2021.

- There are 11 Administrative Actions including 1 Statewide Administrative Action – each of these involve shifting funding among existing projects to reflect current needs.
- There were no Amendments.

Mr. Piper noted the Administrative Actions are adjustments made to existing projects to keep them moving along. He did not see anything that would affect the timing of other projects.

5. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION ON CMAQ FUNDED PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the draft CMAQ project selection process was reviewed in March. There were concerns at that time that the selection process was not vetted through District officials, since they would part of the process. Staff met with District officials on April 8, 2021. District officials noted some concerns which were then taken to FHWA officials. The three main concerns were: 1) When will this process begin to take effect? The answer is that it would start with the upcoming TIP process; 2) Would this be required for local input into the 12-Year Statewide Program or the LRTP? The answer is no, the selection process is for MPO functions; and, 3) How far into the process does a proposed project need to be before it goes through this selection process? To be considered for CMAQ funding, we need enough information to be able to run an Emissions Analysis on a project to ensure we are getting emissions benefits. If the project is not far enough along in the process, then it would not be considered through this selection process.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that we need to have a process according to FHWA rules that is transparent, in writing and is publicly available. Once this process is adopted by the Coordinating Committee, it will be posted on our website and the documentation will be included in the TIP when it is updated and adopted next year.

There are three major areas where we currently direct CMAQ funding.

- VMT reduction – There is a certain amount of money given to the Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership (SRTP) for our part of the Commuter Services Program.
- Funding is provided to the South-Central Transit Authority (SCTA) to replace buses in the BARTA fleet with newer, cleaner technology.
- We look at off-road, non-construction projects to help address congestion or air quality. Examples include expansion of the Freeway Service Patrol, operators for the PennDOT District 5-0 Traffic Management Center, and replacing travel traffic information technology on the roadways.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that any additional funds remaining would require that potential projects for CMAQ funding go through this formalized selection process. At the very beginning of the TIP update cycle we would meet with District officials to review draft project ideas, discuss what should be included to go through this process and identify candidate projects that could potentially be funded elsewhere. Once the TIP update cycle has begun and we know how much money we will receive, the projects would be vetted through an initial screening. The three major requirements according to Federal regulations for CMAQ funding are: 1) Do we get emissions reductions? Specifically, as an area with ground-level ozone, do we get Nox and/or VOC emissions reductions; 2) Does it reduce congestion? and, 3) Does it increase capacity? If it does, CMAQ funding cannot be used for the project. If a project gets through these initial steps, then the project continues through to the next phase of the selection process.

Projects are screened using various criteria through the spreadsheet developed by FHWA and PennDOT. The spreadsheet documents the projects and the emissions benefits. If there are more projects than there is funding available, the spreadsheet would be used to identify the projects with the most benefit versus cost. A second meeting between the District and MPO staff would be held where selected candidate projects would be agreed upon and those projects would then be forwarded to PennDOT Central Office for approval. After approval, the projects are then placed onto the draft TIP.

Mr. Golembiewski said that if additional CMAQ funding is received outside of a TIP update cycle, the MPO would go through a similar process to identify projects. This process was vetted through the District and they concurred with it. There were minor changes that were requested by FHWA officials. The MPO met with them on April 22, 2021 and FHWA gave their concurrence on this process.

MOTION: Mr. Kilmer made a motion to make a recommendation to the Coordinating Committee that this process be adopted and included as part of the TIP update cycle. Mr. Vottero seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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

Mr. Golembiewski stated that, coming out of our certification review at the end of last year, there was one corrective action submitted by FTA officials noting that we did not have an FTA compliant Title VI Program. It requires that any program using Federal funding does not

discriminate based on race. In prior certification reviews, we had all the policies, procedures and items that FHWA officials required. However, we were unaware that, since we received Federal Transit Administration funding through PennDOT, we were also subject to their (FTA) regulations which required that all of those items, which we already had, be combined into one, cohesive program and submitted to PennDOT.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that, at the last Coordinating Committee meeting in March 2021, the response to that corrective action was approved. This Draft Title VI Program is in response to that action. The program itself gives a brief introduction to RATS and the makeup of the committees. The major requirements from FTA for a Title VI Program are identified and addressed. The main objectives of the FTA Title VI program are: 1) Public transportation service is provided in a non-discriminatory manner; 2) promote full and fair participation in everything that is done; 3) provide meaningful access to programs and activities for those with Limited English Proficiency; 4) Assuring that all decisions are made without regard to race, color or national origin.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that because this is an FTA program, a lot of these references are for public transportation and public transit. There are 13 specific requirements that that need to be fulfilled as part of the Title VI Program.

Program requirements are:

- Title VI Notice to the Public
- Title VI Complaint Procedures
- Title VI Complaint Form
- List of transit-related Title VI investigations, complaints, and lawsuits
- Public Participation Plan
- Language Assistance Plan for Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
- Memberships of non-elected committees and councils
- Primary recipients & how agency monitors subrecipients
- Copy of board meeting minutes or resolution adopting Title VI Program
- Demographic Profile of the metropolitan area
- Maps showing distribution of state and federal funding for public transportation projects
- Analysis of our system of investments that identifies and addresses disparate impacts

This information was sent to FTA and PennDOT's Bureau of Equal Opportunity on May 27th, 2021. Ms. Beytas from FTA said she would check with Ms. Keely to ensure she received a copy. Mr. Kilmer noted that BARTA and RATS are now on the same cycle for updating Title VI Program documents. They are hoping to have their Title VI Program adopted by their board this summer. He thinks it is good to be on the same cycle because information can be shared. RATS has always been helpful in obtaining statistics, population data and everything SCTA needs to help BARTA with their program. Mr. Kilmer said if they can help RATS with anything, please let him know.

Mr. Piper recommended that a conditional approval subject to favorable comments received back from FTA and PennDOT's Bureau of Equal Opportunity should be made today.

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to recommend the Draft Title VI Program to the Coordinating Committee for conditional approval subject to receiving favorable comments from FTA and PennDOT's Bureau of Equal Opportunity. Mr. Kilmer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

7. UPDATE ON PENNDOT PATHWAYS: DRAFT PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL LINKAGES (PEL) STUDY AND PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Piper stated that PennDOT is working to put together their Planning and Environmental Linkages Study (PEL) that looks at options for funding transportation infrastructure in the future. The objective of the study is to identify and implement near-term funding solutions that can be used to identify and prepare for long-term funding solutions. The draft study was put together to address the ongoing gap in the funding system and will look at the impacts of how those funding sources may be implemented moving forward.

The study is broken up into eight (8) chapters. They are: 1) Summary including purpose, need, and goals; 2) Background information on PennDOT funding sources and expenditure needs; 3) Compares revenues and expenditures and identifies funding gaps; 4) Looks at previous studies that identified funding options; 5) Greater details on the proposed near and medium term funding options, namely bridge tolling, managed lanes and congestion pricing; 6) Presents near, medium, and long term action plans for addressing the funding gaps; 7) Presents a proposed methodology for analyzing impacts on low-income and minority populations; 8) Presents a framework for considering other potential mitigation strategies should a project proposed under the program be found to have environmental impacts. Mr. Piper said the study itself is fairly large consisting of several hundred pages. Links to both the full study and the extracted executive summary are located on our webpage.

We are now in the middle of a virtual public comment period which is open between April 29, 2021 and June 1, 2021 for this study. There was some media attention, and this was circulated through our mail lists and to municipalities. It is important that both members of the committee and members of the public participate in this process because this document is going to guide PennDOT on making recommendations for future funding sources for transportation systems. There are no specific recommendations currently other than identifying the bridge tolling and potentially managed lanes as near-term options. It also looks at the potential for congestion pricing as a medium-term option. Not every option considered may impact every area of the state equally. Tolling and congestion pricing may only impact certain areas. It depends on what is being proposed and where it is being proposed. It is important to get opinions from people across the state included in the results for this study.

Mr. Piper stated that, based on the feedback from this, PennDOT will release the report and use it to make recommendations moving forward for those funding options.

Recently, staff participated in discussions with PennDOT and their consultant staff regarding potential impacts from the proposed tolling of the Lenhartsville Bridge. The environmental work

for this project is under way now. They are anticipating bringing this back to the public later this spring or summer. This proposal is different because it has the environmental linkage factor included. It will look at two separate things. They are: 1) What are the impacts of traffic being diverted away from the facility and what is the potential for that? And, 2) What are the potential impacts of paying a toll on that highway and what is the impact to minorities or low-income communities?

8. UPDATE ON RATS PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL FREIGHT PLAN

Mr. Piper stated that RATS has joined with Lebanon, Lehigh Valley, Lackawanna/Luzerne and NEPA MPOs to put together a proposal to PennDOT for funding to hire a consultant to prepare a regional freight plan. The proposal was put together and was submitted to PennDOT last week. There was no feedback as to whether or not the Department was going to approve that.

9. COMMUTER SERVICES UPDATE

Mr. Easteadt stated that Berks County was the winner of the Clash of the Counties and the Clash of the Chambers (large size chambers). That week there were 46 green trips with 585 miles reduced, a quarter ton of CO2 reduced, and \$336 of gasoline money saved. A lot of the trips recorded were related to telework as well as walking. Teleworking has been a bigger impact this past year than it has in the past.

In April, Earth-a-Palooza was held and was centered around Earth Day. This one was focused on getting more reach from our social media outlets. People were participating through social media as well as tracking their green trips.

Mr. Easteadt stated that May is Bike to Work Month and they are having a “Motorless May” event. There was a meeting today regarding the Bike Share RFI to discuss the next steps and to answer questions received about that proposal.

Commuter Services recently connected with MPX 1 and will be surveying their employees. Mr. Easteadt will be doing events with Sweet Street Desserts and Albright College connected with the “Motorless May” event. They are temporarily meeting virtually with Career Link clients regarding their Earn Program. Commuter Services recently connected with Family Promise of Berks which helps 200 homeless families a year. This is a big transportation piece to help people with employment.

Commuter Services is doing a new program with staffing agencies, currently with Gage at their West Reading location. Working with Berks Alliance, surveys have been sent out to Berks County Employers regarding transit and other options for green commuting.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that Wyomissing Borough is out today painting sharrows on a number of Borough streets. There are two locations where they will be putting in painted bike boxes at busy intersections for bikes to safely navigate those intersections. Wyomissing Borough is the first municipality where there is a full municipal-wide bike

network produced and laid down on the streets. Ms. Michelle Bare is the contact person for Wyomissing Borough.

10. PENNDOT UPDATE ON HIGHWAY AND BRIDGE PROJECTS

Acting Chairman Vottero gave an update on the Highway and Bridge projects.

Mr. Piper asked if the original design is being changed from the proposal that was initially submitted regarding SR 222-23S - the Long Lane Intersection. Is there an addition of an extra southbound or right turn lane on Long Lane? Acting Chairman Vottero said tweaks were made while working with some of the property owners. He will have to get back to Mr. Piper with an answer to that question.

Mr. Piper stated that the majority of the let dates that are far away in the future for bridges is a byproduct of the funding cut while updating the TIP last year. There were a lot of projects already under contract for Preliminary Engineering. The decision was made that they would continue with the Preliminary Engineering phase in the hope of moving them through the process. Let dates had to be based on when estimated revenues would be available. The intent was to get through the design process and if additional revenues become available from state or federal sources, the designs that are in place can be taken advantage of in order to move forward rather than having the projects start from scratch. Acting Chairman Vottero stated that it is good to have jobs on the table ready to go when funding becomes available.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr. Piper said that PennDOT is doing another survey. They are seeking Pennsylvanians' feedback on the potential introduction of automated vehicles onto Pennsylvania highways. The link to the survey is added into the press release. The purpose of the survey is to try to gauge people's perception on the potential impact of adding automated vehicles as cars, trucks or automated delivery vehicles into the Pennsylvania transportation system.
- Mr. Piper stated that with the proposed federal transportation funding package that is coming out right now, there were requests from our federal congressional representatives for candidate community supported projects, previously known or referred to as earmarked projects. Five projects were recommended in the 9th District, which is Congressman Meuser's district and five projects were recommended in the 6th District, which is Rep. Chrissy Houlihan's District. The 4th Congressional District (Rep. Madelyn Dean) was looked at, but that only represents 6 municipalities along the eastern edge of the county. There are no projects that met the criteria for being ready to go to build within the next 12-18 months after potential passage for the 4th District. Those 10 projects were submitted and now we need to wait to see if any are included in a final funding package. If they are, that could be more funding coming into the TIP through the earmark process.

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12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:44 PM. Mr. Krall seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Date: 7/8/21


Alan D. Piper, Secretary