1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Rebert called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.
2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JOINT TECHNICAL/COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 19, 2019

Chairman Rebert asked if there were any questions or comments about the September 19, 2019 Joint Technical/Coordinating Committee Meeting minutes.

MOTION: Commissioner Barnhardt made a motion to approve the September 19, 2019 Joint Technical/Coordinating Committee Meeting minutes. Mr. Price seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. PENNDOT UPDATE ON MAJOR PROJECTS - DEFERRED

The major projects update was deferred due to the current uncertainty regarding project schedules resulting in the funding reductions to be discussed in Agenda item 8.

4. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Mr. Piper said that he, along with Chairman Rebert and other representatives from PennDOT, Northeastern Pennsylvania (NEPA) MPO and the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce participated in the Senate Majority Policy Committee hearing that Senator Argall held in Maidencreek Township earlier today to discuss the funding issue. Senator Schwank also participated in the session and many State Representatives had staff present since the House of Representatives was in session. PennDOT discussed their side of the issue addressing the need to move funding to the Interstate System. The Berks and NEPA MPO’s talked about the negative impact of that move to our local plans and projects. These include deferring some projects, cancelling others and placing a greater emphasis on routine maintenance over rehabilitation and/or replacement. There was general discussion on potential things that the state may or may not do moving forward to streamline the process, lower the costs or see if there are other options to get additional funds moving. Nothing specific has come out of this meeting at this time. It was an opportunity to have the Department and local planning partners to put their case before legislators. This meeting was live-streamed and recorded on the Senate Majority Policy Committee’s web page.

Mr. Rudderow said this meeting was set up by Senators Argall and Schwank. As the township supervisor, he was not informed about the meeting until this morning. He wanted to get clarity that is was the Senator who called the meeting and not RATS or PennDOT. Mr. Piper said Senator Argall called the meeting. There was an opportunity to put these funding issues on the table. Mr. Price asked if this was for us to get money or for them to pull more money from the projects. Mr. Piper said no. It was more for the Department to explain the process of why the funding was moved to the Interstate System and to hear the impacts. He does not know if this will result in any changes in either direction, but it sets up a continued discussion on those issues as we move forward. Mr. Lerch said there was a willing ear to listen to our concerns, regardless where it goes. He asked if the Senators seemed receptive to the concerns. Mr. Piper said yes. They were interested especially regarding the projects that fall within their district. Mr. Rudderow asked if it was only Senate members involved. Mr. Piper said that House of Representative members were
invited to attend. Apparently, their schedules changed, and they were in session. A number of Representatives had staff in attendance at the meeting. Mr. Rudderow asked if there was any direct relationship to our joint meeting. He noticed a lot of representatives were invited to attend that joint meeting and they sent staff. Do you think those comments and the discussion is what prompted that? Mr. Piper said yes. In general, the overall issue is one they felt was happening outside of their area of influence and wanted to learn more about it.

Chairman Rebert stated that, since Mr. Shifflet is now Deputy Secretary for Planning, he will no be attending our meetings. We have two people from our PennDOT’s Program Center attending our meeting today. Kristen Mulkerin will be taking Mr. Shifflet’s on the RATS Coordinating Committee. Brian Hare will be filling Mr. Shifflet’s role as Director of the Program Center.

Commissioner Barnhardt said that PennDOT decided to reallocate money to the Interstate System. We were told in the summer. Eventually, the legislators found out. Shouldn’t they have found out this information from PennDOT at the same time that the MPO did? Mr. Piper said they found out through the information we distributed. Ms. Mulkerin said typically it is not something that rises to that level. This year, because of the changes in staff who work with Senate and House of Representatives, she is not sure how it filtered out to those members. Maybe they did not know what occurred at each regional level.

Mr. Piper said that the nature of the Financial Guidance Workgroup process is that you spend most of that time talking in macro levels in terms of we need to invest more money in the Interstate System and we need to change the base formulas. General ideas were discussed leading up to this past summer. It was not until you get to the very end of the overall process that data comes through in terms of specific impacts to a region. We had the basic allocation for the first 4 years and no more than that until sometime in mid-June. We never received information regarding the full allocation for what was coming to our area, and neither did anyone else, until a week before we presented it to MPO in July. The information was given to us following a Thursday conference call in July. We had two working days and a weekend to review it before going to the Planning Partners meeting the following Tuesday. At that meeting, representatives from across the state were asked - Do they agree to this or not? Mr. Piper observed that there was silence at the meeting because no one had a real chance to go through all of the details. Two days later, we presented the information to the Coordinating Committee.

Mr. Price said that most of the people he speaks to are local residents and they are thrilled with the way their tax money is spent on projects. After telling them that there will be cuts in projects, they asked why not raise the gas tax so projects will not get cut. Mr. McKeon said the federal gas tax has not been raised since 1993. Mr. Price said that people do not mind paying taxes if they see projects being done. Is there a way to convince the State Legislature to address this? Mr. Piper said that we should convince the Federal legislators because the federal government provides a larger part of the money. Pennsylvania raised its gas tax in 2013. We are seven years past that now and still haven’t received any change in the federal funding formula.
Mr. Rudderow suggested not raising taxes at all and just prioritize our transportation infrastructure with money we already collect. There will be a program somewhere else that will suffer without roads and infrastructure for transportation. What should be the push on our federal and state legislators is that they need to make transportation the No. 1 priority. This is the challenge at hand. One or two people or this group alone mentioning it will not have the impact. If the constituents around the county and elsewhere say that we want our transportation system addressed, then maybe money would be reallocated in the state budget and the federal budget. We pay enough taxes, so let’s get the money to complete the projects. Mr. Price said that obviously we don’t have enough money. Mr. Rudderow said that is because it not prioritized. Ms. Reed said that it is getting prioritized without our input. Mr. Piper said there are two levels of prioritization being talked about. He said that Ms. Reed is talking about the money that we have, and Mr. Rudderow is talking about transportation funding within the overall budget. Mr. Rudderow agreed.

Mr. McKeon said that the federal Highway Trust Fund needs to be replenished. Where would you take that money from in the federal budget to put it into the Highway Trust Fund? The pot needs to be three times bigger than it is. It is the federal government that needs to put money in and make up the difference. This all points to the federal gas tax, which needs to be raised.

Mr. Swan said those are excellent points. We can all implore our federal representatives to do something with infrastructure. He asked who the single person in the hierarchy above us in PennDOT is or in the state that cut our allowance by 35%. Chairman Rebert said he doesn’t think it was one single person. Ms. Mulkerin said it was the Financial Guidance Work Group as a collective whole. Mr. Piper said that the output from the work group is only a recommendation. They have no approval power. The only people that actually approve it is the Secretary of Transportation and the Governor.

Mr. McKeon asked if that is an irreversible policy. Now that we know the details and have seen the effects with the other MPO’s across the state, could the state now rethink putting all their chips on the Interstate System? Maybe they can reduce what was planned to spend on the Interstate System. Some of it could be given to the MPO’s. Can this policy be changed at this point? Chairman Rebert doubts it.

Ms. Reed asked who comprises the Financial Guidance Workgroup. Mr. Piper said he was one of the representatives. He said that it is made up of MPO’s, RPO’s, District and Central Office personnel. 59 counties out of the 67 counties in the state were represented either by a PennDOT District or an MPO representative. Chairman Rebert said the group looks at the formulas and also takes into consideration the federal requirements that are about to take effect. There were various presentations regarding all the metrics that need to be hit. Knowing the metrics and how much money needs to be shipped to the Interstate to meet those metrics, influences the change in funding formulas. Chairman Rebert said that we don’t hit certain metrics. Mr. Piper pointed out that there are metrics for both Interstate and non-Interstate systems, and we can meet one or the other. We cannot meet both because the dollars we have are not enough. Metrics can be set by the federal government, but if they don’t provide adequate resources to meet those metrics, no one will meet them no matter the source of money. Mr. Price asked, with this reallocation, will we eventually
meet the goals on the Interstate. Chairman Rebert said yes in many years. Right now, $450 million per year goes into the Interstate. That will grow over eight years up to $1 billion per year. If we look today, what we need every year just to maintain what we have on the Interstate, we will need $1.1 billion per year. Chairman Rebert said that it is not likely we will solve our Interstate problems and then come back to deal with regional problems. This shift only gets us to where we need to be to maintain what we have on the Interstate.

Mr. Piper said that the same pot of funding that funds the Interstates also funds the US 422, US 222 and Rt. 61 projects. While the state was only putting $460 million into the Interstate System, they were putting over $700 million into the NHS. In order to make the move, only the NHS and NHPP dollars can be used for the Interstate system. The dollars from the other system were shifted to go up. While the Interstate system moved to a point to where it was funded at an 83% of need, the funding for the non-interstate NHS dropped from $700 million out of $2.2 billion need to $108 million per year or 4.9% of the documented need. That result was not readily apparent when the MPO’s and RPO’s were asked to concur with the recommendation.

Mr. Hare, from the Program Center, said he sat in on the Financial Guidance Work Group and had exposure on what went on. He also wanted to clarify if this is set in stone. This is the parameter in which we are working on right now. It is painful for every region across the state. This will be reconsidered. There is a TIP update every two years and part of that process is to look at projections and working the Financial Work Group. Re-evaluation would be done at that point to see what changes need to be made.

Mr. Hare said PennDOT will not be able to solve this problem on its own. It will take a whole lot of partners working together at all levels of government. He was encouraged to participate in the meeting today. The issue of funding was identified and is not just the gasoline tax issue. We need to think more inventively with funding and projects and how we prioritize those projects. How we work smarter or create solutions to projects that might be more cost effective. Funding is a part of that equation but there were a lot of other issues that were identified at the workshop this morning. Hopefully that was the first step in moving forward. He encourages this group to stay involved with this and looks forward to opportunities to help improve problems region by region.

Commissioner Barnhardt asked if the State Senators figured out how to pay the State Police. Mr. Piper said the issue was discussed and some alternatives are under consideration. He is curious how other states fund their State Police. Mr. Piper said Pennsylvania took funding from Act 89. It maxed at $800 million per year. They have now agreed to ratcheting it back down by 2% per year to $500 million. There are some proposals under consideration that would do this faster.

Mr. Swan said we live in a land of “no”. We cannot support our community. We cannot do the things we need to do. Now, our allowance is being cut by 35% and no one is standing up and saying they made this decision. A group of people is not a decision maker. That is passing the buck in his mind. This committee is outraged. Ms. Reed said this was not a democratic process and never was.
Mr. Lerch said the original presentation regarding the necessity on focusing on the Interstate took place at the joint meeting one year ago. At that point, someone at PennDOT was already conversing about this. Mr. Piper said, looking back at prior minutes, this group agreed that we need to spend more money on the Interstate system. Mr. Lerch said that agreement was based on the presentation. The people having those discussions and looking at those dollars should have passed that information to the MPO’s so conversations could have started earlier. They would have had a better handle on the financial impact. There would have been a different set of voices agreeing that the Interstate need work, but we need money for other projects too. That is where the prioritization could have started to come into play. Maybe there would have been a better understanding with a push from the federal government on what that impact would be on PennDOT and their thinking. Someone had to sit down and know there needs to be a focus on this issue. A conversation with the specifics on the financials should have been sent to the MPO’s in advance.

5. **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF 2020 MEETING SCHEDULE**

Mr. Piper said that the meeting schedule for 2020 needs to be adopted. The Technical Committee meets on the first Thursday of the month. There are three changes: 1) The committee will meet on January 9th as opposed to January 2nd; 2) July 9th rather than July 2nd; and, 3) September will be another joint Coordinating and Technical meeting.

The Coordinating Committee meetings are held the third Thursday every other month beginning in January. There are no exceptions to this schedule this year. The meetings will continue to be held in the Commissioner’s Board Room at 1:00 pm with the exception of the September Joint meeting which will once again be held at the Reading Regional Airport.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Barnhardt made a motion to approve the 2020 meeting schedule. Mr. Rudderow seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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

Ms. Leindecker gave an update on Amendments/Modifications to FFY 2019-2022 Highway TIP from September 12, 2019 through November 1, 2019.

**Amendments:** There was one (1) Amendment. This would add federal funds for the ROW Acquisition phase of the SR 2023 Carsonia Avenue Bridge over the Antietam Creek in Lower Alsace Township.

**Administrative Actions:** There were fourteen (14) Administrative Actions. Each of these reallocated funds within existing projects based on needs and schedules.

**Statewide Administrative Actions:** There were four (4) Statewide Administrative Actions. One of these realigned funds for the I-78 project to meet current needs. A second added State ARLE funding for
projects in Amity, Exeter, and Muhlenberg Townships. The third added State Multi-modal funds for a project on Shiloh Road and Rt. 10 in Caernarvon Township. The fourth added State Green Light Go funding for intersection projects in Wyomissing.

MOTION: Mr. Kilmer made a motion to approve Amendment #1, which would federalize the 2023 Carsonia Bridge over Antietam Creek project. Mr. Green seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Rudderow asked what Delivery Consultant Assistant means in Administration Action 6. Ms. Leindecker said it is an increase for the consultant to help deliver and complete the PennDOT Connects initiative. Chairman Rebert said that consultants are used to manage projects. That pot of money only pays the consultant. Mr. Rudderow asked what RATS Traffic Review Assistance means. Ms. Leindecker said that is a similar initiative taken on by the PennDOT traffic unit to help review submissions when needed involving traffic information on major projects. Mr. Rudderow also asked what Construction Assistance means. Chairman Rebert said that is funding for consultants to help PennDOT with construction inspection. Mr. Rudderow also asked what Urban Reserve Line Item means. Mr. Piper said that within any of the funding categories, the funds that are not specifically obligated to a project go into a Line Item. It is a holding fund that allows flexibility to move it around with the other projects.

Ms. Reed asked what project is SR 2012-DRL for Amendment #1. Mr. Piper said that project was the street lighting on Penn Street. There were funds originally obligated to the project that were left over after the project was completed. When a project is completed, those funds are available for re-obligation to other projects.

7. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF SUBMISSION OF DRAFT FY 20-21 AND FY 21-22 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP)

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is an operational document that is used in-house. It serves as the agreement between the county and the Department for all the work that staff performs on behalf of the MPO. It covers all the plans, coordination with different groups, and all work that is done in-house. Since the document covers two fiscal years, it is updated every two years.

Since the last update, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued guidance that placed more requirements for items they want included within the UPWP. They want more detail within the individual tasks. For example, not just working on the Long-Range Transportation Plan, but specifically what points will be included in there. They want to know when the next update is due, when do we believe it to be completed. They want to see deliverables, dates and spelled out within each of the two years. If a task is not worked on within a particular year, they don’t want to see anything regarding that within that particular year. They want to see the tasks in chart form containing the deliverables and when they are due.
The FHWA issued Planning Findings at the state level when the state submitted the last STIP. These findings needed to be incorporated into our planning program. A notable finding is increased freight planning which is something the federal government wants to see more of.

Mr. Golembiewski said there are ten (10) planning factors that were issued as part of the FAST-Act. FHWA wants to see specific reference to those ten planning factors and which tasks within the UPWP relate to those planning factors. All those factors need to be addressed as best we can. Additionally, more coordination is needed in preparing this document. Between the MPO, FHWA and Central Office, and BARTA, more coordination is needed including documentation that supports it.

Part of the coordination the FHWA wants is a formal 45-day comment period so they have the opportunity to review the UPWP and to make sure it is complete and consistent with their guidance. After the October Technical Committee, staff met and reviewed the draft of some items that needed to be changed, including some BARTA issues. FHWA offered comments, which were incorporated. Mr. Golembiewski stated that he and Mr. Porochniak spoke regarding Central Office comments and they both agreed that those comments not incorporated in this draft would be incorporated after the FHWA review period. At the November meeting, the Technical Committee did forward this to you, with the recommendation that it be forwarded to the FHWA so they can start their 45-day review period. At the same time, Mr. Porochniak will coordinate with the Bureau of Public Transit and the Federal Transit Administration to allow them the opportunity for review.

Mr. Golembiewski said we are looking for a recommendation to forward to FHWA for their review. Mr. Piper said that the goal is that it is reviewed by all parties mentioned above. Any necessary amendments made will be brought back to the Coordinating Committee in January for formal approval.

MOTION: Mr. Price made a motion to forward the draft UPWP to FHWA for review. Mr. Lerch seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

8. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF SUBMISSION OF DRAFT FFY 2021 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROJECT LISTING

Mr. Piper said that he has been working on the draft TIP update for a long time and this has been the absolute worst and most difficult one. Normally there are only minor adjustments.

We are required to put together the draft TIP to be submitted to the Department by the end of the year. The dollars allocated to our area must be accounted for within the projects. Projects cannot be included unless they match dollar for dollar the amount of funding within the appropriate categories and by year. The prior TIP was reviewed, projects that needed to move forward were identified. We then went through the process of laying out the 4-year period accounting for the $68 million reduction. We also reviewed the remaining 8-year period of the State’s 12-Year Program looking at the second 4 years
in detail and a catchall at the end for the third 4-year period accounting for the balance of the $239 million loss through 2030.

Initially, we were significantly out of balance with aligning the projects with the funding. This process was accomplished through looking at priorities, looking at projects that were already on the program, advancing the projects that needed to be advanced, figuring out if and when projects not on the current TIP can be placed and trying to make them work, and identify project phases that didn’t make it onto the program during this update.

Mr. Piper distributed a chart listing affected projects. The chart handed out does not show every project. Projects that were not impacted by more than a year of movement in their schedule were not addressed. Some of the changes in the program were positive; some were negative.

Mr. Piper explained that some projects that would have been bridge replacement projects will now become bridge preservation projects. Projects included for construction in one year may have had to move out three, four or more years to be able to fit into the program. Funding within projects was shifted between allowable funding categories to maximize utility. The last item that needs to be accounted for is the state releasing Spike funding recommendations. That material only became available last Thursday and the MPO received it on Friday and it is still not incorporated into the overall TIP/12-Year Program. It will provide us with an additional $312 million to be used specifically for the US 422 Corridor. Spike funding is time based and that money does not begin to become available until FFY 2027. Most of it will become available in FFY 2028-2029 and beyond.

Mr. Piper went through the project list and explained some of the projects. He said that, since we were trying to make up for losses in the NHPP funds, one of the areas that we do have funding is the CMAQ program. To the extent possible by program restrictions, CMAQ funds were shifted to backfill NHPP funds in projects. We recommended cutting our CMAQ contributions to BARTA for transit vehicles in half. We are not abandoning CMAQ money for transit; those dollars were needed elsewhere to cover the program needs. The current 4-Year Program approved for them had $900,000 a year through FFY 2022. That commitment was maintained. We are looking to reduce that down to $450,000 per year from FFY 2023 on out. There is a glitch In the TIP cash flow that does not allow the $450 million to appear in FFY 2023. However, there is $900 million in FFY 2024 and we will be able to flex it back to FFY 2023 once the program is approved.

Additionally, we are looking to make a minor impact to the CMAQ funds used for Commuter Services. The current contracted amount increases at 1% per year. For now, we elected to go with the rate we were paying them in FFY 2021 and hold it at that level across the program.

There are ongoing programs listed that are continuations of existing projects including funding for systematic safety improvements such as All-Weather Pavement Markings throughout the county and High Friction Surface Treatments at selected areas. There are two ongoing operating costs which include money for the Department to run the
Traffic Operations Center at the District Office and for the Freeway Service Patrol. This is the tow truck that travels back and forth on the bypass and provides free service to clear highway obstructions or assist stranded motorists to remove them from the highway. Mr. Price asked if the spike in the first year’s cost for the Service Patrol includes vehicles and ramp up. Mr. Piper said yes and said there are annual costs beyond that. Mr. Price asked who runs the Freeway Service Patrol. Mr. Piper said the Department contracts for these services.

There are three different categories included to address general bridge maintenance. Bridge Preservation uses resources to prevent fair bridges from becoming poor. These are bridges that do not need a full rehabilitation. Bridge Overlay Bundle consists of deck treatments on bridges and the Box Culvert Bundle addresses the replacement of these smaller structures that are in poor condition.

Mr. Piper then reviewed specific projects with changes:

The bridge on Rt. 10 in Caernarvon Township was left on the list. Because it was just a superstructure project, it was a low priority. The bridge moved out about five years in the program. A different type of bridge project was the major bridge rehabilitation project on Rt. 61 over the Schuylkill River in Hamburg. It was estimated that doing a full rehabilitation would cost approximately $17.5 million. It was now programmed as only a larger Preventative Maintenance project costing approximately $6 million.

Improvements to Rt. 61 in Hamburg, Tilden and Windsor Townships regarding safety will still move forward. Rather than a full restoration, it will now only receive black top overlay and the safety improvements including median barriers. Bridges will also be addressed in this area.

The intersection project at Rt. 73 and Maidencreek Road (SR 1005) in Maidencreek Township is still moving forward, but it is moved out eight years. The scope of work for the SR 143 Bridge Replacement in Albany Township has been changed to Preventative Maintenance. The construction for the Rt. 183 Bridges in Upper Tulpehocken Township has been added to the program but will not begin until FFY 2028-2029. The scope of work for the US 222 Hard Shoulder project in Wyomissing Borough has been expanded to include improvements at both the SB and NB ramp connections between US 222 and the Warren Street Bypass (US 422). The SB improvements will extend to the Paper Mill Road exit. The NB improvements will begin at State Hill Road and extend through the US 222 exit.

The Preliminary Engineering for the US 222 Widening project for the corridor from Schaeffer Road to Kutztown Bypass is to continue but the project has been broken into three phases. They are: 1) Phase 1- New roundabout at Richmond Road to SR 662. Final Design will be in FFY 2025. Estimated construction in FFY 2029 (plus 7 years); 2) Phase 2 – SR 662 to Kutztown Bypass with Bridge Rehabilitation/Replacement in Richmond Township. Preliminary Engineering refresh in FFY 2029 and estimated construction in LRTP (plus 10 year minimum). 3) Phase 3 – Schaeffer Road to Richmond Road w/new
roundabout at Pleasant Hills Road in Maiden Creek and Richmond Townships. All in LRTP (plus 12 year minimum).

The intersection at US 222 and Long Lane does not show on this list because it is moving forward. For the segment of US 222 extending from the Kutztown Bypass to the Lehigh County line, Preliminary Engineering was scheduled to start in FFY 2021 but was moved back eight years and construction will start in ten to twelve years. Mr. Rudderow asked if the project stops at the roundabout on the Lehigh County side. Mr. Piper said that this project will be widening US 222 similar to what we did on either side of SR 662. That project will extend all the way to the Berks County line from the intersections at Shantz Road and PA 863. Mr. Piper said that once you pass their roundabout there is nothing planned to be done from there to the Trexlertown bypass.

There is a US 222/422 Pavement Restoration project on the TIP that would have extended from the Penn Avenue interchange through the State Hill Road interchange and up to the bridge over the Tulpehocken Creek. There was not enough funding, so the project was broken into two separate phases. They are: 1) Phase 1 (Pavement Rehabilitation) West Lawn to south of State Hill Road Interchange. Estimated construction is 2021/2022; 2) Phase 2 (Pavement Restoration) State Hill Road Interchange to Tulpehocken Creek. Estimated construction in FFY 2029 (+7 years).

New signal coordination and intersection improvements were added for SR 422 Corridor located in Exeter/Amity Townships. Preliminary Engineering is scheduled for FFY 2026 and estimated construction in Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

Mr. Piper said that the major US 422 Reconstruction project (current estimated cost $550 million) is in Preliminary Engineering and was supposed to start Final Design in FFY 2020-2021. Five phases were proposed for this project. Four of them were in the $120 million range. The railroad reconstruction phase was smaller. There is not sufficient funding available for this entire project at this time. We do not want this project to lapse. There is already $6.5 million invested in the design of this project. Enough funding was gathered to replace the bridge on US 422 just west of I-176 interchange and that would also include adjusting the ramp from I-176 northbound towards Reading ($40 million). There is also funding included to do Preventative Maintenance work on the remaining bridges on the bypass. Following the release of the base funding information, PennDOT also informed us that there will be $312 million in STP and State discretionary “Spike” funds allocated to this project from FY 2027 and beyond. Our question now is how do we take the available dollars and incorporate those into the program to get the most out of the funding? Because these are discretionary funds, they are tied to a specific project and cannot be moved to any other projects. Mr. Price asked how many years would the $312 million be spread over. Mr. Piper was not sure. The initial installment of $2.5 million is in FFY 2027 and approximately $27 million in FFY 2028. In FFY 2029-2032, there is another $147.3 million in STP and $145 million in state funds.

Mr. Piper stated that the majority of the remaining projects listed are shuffling funding out three or more years for bridges in the program to fit the available funding. There is one bridge in the City of Reading that was added. The 5th Street Bridge that goes
over the railroad tracks near Centre Avenue. Preliminary Engineering does not start until FFY 2025 and construction in FFY 2027.

A project on State Hill Road through Wyomissing Borough and Spring Township was talked about last year was not included on that TIP, but it was added to the LRTP. In this update, we have added a study (FFY 2021) that will look at the needs in that area. In FFY 2022, Preliminary Engineering and in FFY 2024, construction will begin.

In Hamburg Borough, funding was previously given for a traffic study, which is now under way. Preliminary Engineering was added to this program for FFY 2022 to begin implementation of study recommendations.

Mr. Piper said that two years ago, there was a project proposed that extended along SR 4028 (Old Rt. 22) from Lenhartsville to the Lehigh County line. Funding was only available to cover the piece of highway from Krumsville to Lenhartsville. Mr. Piper said the SR 4028 (Old 22) Resurfacing project was added to cover the last piece of that project (Krumsville to the Lehigh County line).

Mr. Piper said that we are required to submit a draft TIP to the Department by the end of the year. We are still going to have to make a few changes. Spike funds need to be incorporated in the US 422 project. When we developed this initial recommendation, the real core focus was on the first 4 years of the TIP. There are line items remaining in the out years beyond 2025. This money might be able to be incorporated into additional bridge and pavement projects.

After any questions, Mr. Piper is asking for a motion to pass a resolution authorizing us to submit this as our draft TIP project listing. This would then work its way through the review process. The Air Quality Conformity Analysis needs to be done. It would then come back to the MPO and get incorporated into a draft TIP document. In May, it would be put out for public review and comment. The TIP would be fully adopted locally in July 2020. Mr. Rudderow asked if the low priority projects would remain on the list. Mr. Piper said that all candidate project information is kept. The project will either show up in an out year on our LRTP or be identified as a candidate. Line items are held in reserve in the out years of the program. A list is maintained for all candidate projects recommended for both the TIP and LRTP. As any funds become available, the project lists are checked. Approximately every two years, new projects are solicited. No project goes off the radar.

Mr. Lerch said this is good work in a difficult situation. Mr. Piper said meetings started with the District and Central Office 2.5 months ago. Projects were looked at on the existing TIP and prioritized. The second meeting consisted of meeting with the Safety and Congestion Management group regarding areas with congestion and crash issues. Projects were prioritized and cost estimates were applied to those projects. We then looked at all of the bridge projects.

Mr. McKeon said this is good work and it is good to see the detailed impacts to all these cuts. He asked what happens if the committee did not approve the TIP by the end of the year. What are the implications of that and what is the punishment? How can we push
back if we are unhappy with this outcome? Mr. Piper said we tried that once before and it cost us a few million dollars in allocations before we finally approved it. He said, if we do not approve a TIP, we will not receive any funding at the end of the process. Mr. McKeon asked if we can make the TIP approval contingent on meeting with the Secretary of Transportation. Mr. Piper said he can ask. Chairman Rebert said it is unlikely that the Secretary of Transportation will meet with the committee.

MOTION: Mr. Price made a motion to approve submission of the draft TIP project listing. Mr. Kilmer seconded the motion. Discussion followed.

Ms. Reed said she appreciates all of the hard work that went into this process. This is only going to add to the problems we have. This will only add to congestion as we struggle to add passenger rail. What is the ultimate answer? This will kill us for economic development and residential development. This is not a good situation and she is very uncomfortable giving a positive response to this situation. Mr. Price said the motion is not exclusive for advocating our unhappiness. It needs to be realized that if we are going to get any funding, we need to have this. We would cut off our nose to spite our face if we decide not to play. Ms. Reed said we may play ball but never get to home base. Mr. Price said we need to approve a draft TIP and then have an advocacy group to talk about this.

Mr. Swan voted no and said it is time to make a stand. We are being expected time and time again to go through the motions. There needs to be more local control. He asked how much money was generated from the $5.00 fee collected for vehicle registrations. Commissioner Barnhardt said, over the last 4 years, the amount is $1.9 million. Mr. Swan said that we should be able to direct where those funds go. The elephant in the room is that we live in the land of “no”. We need to be masters of our own destiny and not to be under the federal government or the state. Give us the ability to put a toll on US 422. That road needs to be improved and now it has been pushed out years. US 222 has been pushed out twelve years.

Mr. Price said we need to be practical, adopt the draft TIP, write down the issues, get the backing of the State Representatives and Senators. Mr. Swan said we are no further along with these major projects than we were thirteen years ago. He asked why we cannot put a toll on US 422. Mr. Piper said legislative approval is needed. Mr. Lerch said that the passion to vote no is strong to send a message but what does the “no” really accomplish? It sends a message, but the bottom line is we will walk away with nothing. Mr. Piper said if we do not approve the submission of the draft TIP, then we are not in the game. Commissioner Barnhardt said that those who have the gold make the rules. If this was all county, local or municipal money, we wouldn’t be having this conversation. Mr. Lerch said if you walk away with nothing, then nothing has been accomplished. The reality is frustrating. He does not disagree with sending a “no” vote. But if the ramification is that we walk away with nothing, we haven’t accomplished anything. We need to move forward and still be able to raise some kind of collective voice and stay at it. How can we make our voice heard?

Ms. Reed said it is beyond this; it is everything that we have fallen upon with local and state leadership. It is really hurting the citizens. If this area doesn’t wise up and stand
up for ourselves, transportation will become even worse. This is not helping us. If we stand here and be a rubber stamp, then we are part of the problem. Mr. Swan said we need to send a message. We should table this draft TIP and get real answers. Mr. Price said we are an advisory board to PennDOT about what local projects we think are the best for the local economy and constituents. We only serve here because PennDOT want to get local feedback. If PennDOT wanted to, they would do away with MPO’s. (Note: MPO’s are formed in response to federal law. PennDOT cannot do away with MPO’s.) They would tell us what money is allocated to which projects. We might have better luck with state legislators to raise the gas tax. If we raise more money at the state level, we might have more freedom to do that. Right now, we are at the mercy of the state and federal governments. Commissioner Barnhardt said that back in 2013, the majority of our state delegation voted against Act 89.

2nd MOTION: Mr. Price recalled his motion to approve the draft TIP project listing which was seconded by Mr. Kilmer. Mr. Swan, Mr. Rudderow and Ms. Reed voted no. Mr. McKeon, Mr. Kilmer, Commissioner Barnhardt, Mr. Price and Mr. Lerch voted for the motion. Mr. Green (PennDOT) did not vote. The motion passed by a 5-3 vote with one not voting.

Chairman Rebert said that no one is happy with this. We now have this list and will move on and try to change the funding. The motion did pass. Mr. Rudderow stated that this vote will show somewhere that it was not unanimous and supports the concept of not being agreed upon. Commissioner Barnhardt that this will most likely happen again in the near future. We can prepare ourselves for the next time this happens and be proactive. Mr. Price suggested the committee getting together informally to put together an action plan. He would be all for it.

Mr. Kilmer said that there is a chance there will be another State Transportation bill next year. Public transit will lose $450 million in Turnpike Funding and no method has been approved yet to replace that. He suggests to everyone not happy with this to speak with the State Representatives because virtually all of them voted no to Act 89.

Mr. Piper said that, back in 2010 and prior to Act 89, PennDOT created a State Transportation Funding Advisory Committee. A recommendation heard this morning was that it might be a good idea to re-energize that thought and encourage legislators to participate and advise in that process.

Ms. Reed she is very disappointed with the lack of communication regarding this morning’s meeting. She did not know anything about it until she heard from people who attended. Mr. Rudderow said he is a Maidencreek Township Supervisor and he was not told about it until this morning.

Mr. Piper said we need to be very engaged with our federal legislators regarding the need to prioritize the development of an infrastructure bill and to see that it is funded at the level it needs to be. Nothing is truly independent. Priorities need to be set and they need to be funded at an appropriate level. Mr. Rudderow said that constituents have that control to let their legislators know this is important.
Mr. Piper said we will also need to make a motion to send a draft Transit TIP project listing. There is none available to consider today. It is still being developed by SCTA/BARTA. Mr. Kilmer said it is basically maintaining what they have. The draft Transit TIP will contain routine replacement of buses, replacement of paratransit vehicles, maintaining facilities, repair and operating costs. He stated that their CMAQ funding will be reduced. In their LRTP, during that time period (2023-2024), there were no buses that needed to be replaced based on their current life cycle. Each bus costs $700,000, which needs to be kept 12 years and 500,000 miles. Mr. Rudderow asked if this could be prepared and voted upon via email. Mr. Piper said yes. We will circulate the draft Transit TIP project listing as soon as we receive it. An e-mail ballot will be taken. That vote will be confirmed at the January meeting.

9. COMMUTER SERVICES UPDATE

Mr. Boyer observed that Mr. Piper did an excellent job with the comments he had prepared for this morning’s Policy Committee meeting. He represented this board very well and gave an insightful overview of what the problems were, and he talked about the gravity of the situation for this area. He also laid out that these are the cards we were dealt, and this is how we have to play the game and what we are left with.

Mr. Boyer said that, on behalf of Commuter Services and the Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership (SRTP), he offered thanks for continuing to keep them on the TIP. Berks County is one of thirteen counties across seven MPO’s encompassing transit agencies and Chambers of Commerce that work with Commuter Services in providing transportation demand management services across these areas.

Commuter Services used to be looked at as just a carpool matching service for commuters. We are now found to be more than that. We are well ingrained with a number of programs across the counties and mentioned and singled-out by PennDOT at events across the region including the I-81 Corridor Study.

Mr. Boyer has given reports over the years regarding miles taken off the road based on Commuter Services’ activities. It might be said that Commuter Services is responsible for taking miles off the road causing less gas tax to be paid. He assured the board that while Commuter Services is taking vehicles off the road, therefore, there is less wear and tear on the roads. Commuter Services is doing a much better job working with PennDOT than working against PennDOT.

Mr. McKeon stated that the Valley Forge Transportation Management Association is very active. He asked if Commuter Services coordinates with what they are doing. They have a new initiative called 422 My Way and are looking at Bus Rapid Transit along US 422. Mr. Boyer said yes. He said that Greater Valley Forge is a Transportation Management Association (TMA) centered in Philadelphia. That particular TMA is doing some similar things but is much bigger. Whereas, Commuter Services is solely funded through the MPO’s CMAQ funds, the Greater Valley Forge TMA also gets other money from DVRPC. They are also a non-profit organization so they can generate revenue
through hosting events, business memberships and sponsorships. Commuter Services cannot do that.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr. Piper stated that the Chamber/Berks Alliance had a program this morning regarding restoration of passenger rail service. Commissioner Barnhardt said they hired a consulting firm to do an analysis over the next three months. Ms. Reed said they went through the history of their company and how they worked with corridors in other areas. They went through an overview of how they will conduct this particular study. Congestion numbers given were astonishing. There should be a report coming soon. It will be conducive and important for the local entities, government, public/private partnerships to be able to fund as much as possible for rail line construction. Funding for this project will be a real concern. It will be interesting to see how this study measures up against past studies. There was also a presentation from the Mayor of Phoenixville and their task force on how they have been working on this project. Obstacles are there.

Mr. Piper said he knew the study was happening. Mr. Dave Myers contacted him a few months ago and asked for background information for putting the RFP together. Ms. Reed said ridership has increased by 128% in the Philadelphia/Harrisburg rail corridor between 2000 and 2013.

- Mr. Rudderow mentioned that this was his last meeting as the representative for the Townships of the 2nd Class. His Supervisor position expires on January 5, 2020 and he did not seek re-election. He wanted to thank the Berks County Commissioners for his appointment to this committee in August 2013. He also thanked his fellow board members, Mr. Piper and the planning staff and PennDOT for their insight and professionalism and for being patient and listening to the frustrations of what this body deals with. If we could get elected state and federal officials to prioritize transportation, it would be a different world. There are unique opportunities if we could prioritize funding as necessary. Mr. Piper said the Board of Commissioners have solicited recommendations for Mr. Rudderow’s replacement. To date, two nominations have been received. The nomination period is open until next Friday. The Commissioners will then make an appointment and the information will be passed onto the committee members.

Committee members thanked Mr. Rudderow for his services to this committee.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Rudderow made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Lerch seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Date: 1/16/2020

Alan D. Piper