READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE JOINT TECHNICAL/COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON SEPTEMBER 19, 2019 AT THE READING REGIONAL AIRPORT

ATTENDANCE

COORDINATING COMMITTEE
Christopher Kufro, PennDOT 5-0 Acting Chair *
Raymond Green, PennDOT Central
Kevin S. Barnhardt, County of Berks
Donna Reed, City of Reading
Tom McKeon, Berks County Planning Commission
Dave Kilmer, SCTA/BARTA
Joseph E. Rudderow, III, 2nd Class Townships (Maidencreek Township)
Kevin Lerch, 1st Class Townships (Muhlenberg Township)
Craig Lutz for Randall Swan, Reading Regional Airport Authority
Stephen H. Price, Boroughs (Wernersville)
*Tie-breaking Vote only

COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
Christopher Kufro, PennDOT 5-0 Chair*
Gene Porochniak, PennDOT Central
Alan D. Piper, Berks County Planning Commission
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission
Dave Kilmer, SCTA/BARTA
Tim Krall, City of Reading
Terry Sroka, Reading Regional Airport

*Tie-breaking Vote only

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING
Ralph E. Johnson, City of Reading

OTHERS
Amanda Leindecker, PennDOT 5-0
Jen Ruth, PennDOT 5-0
Jeff Rai, PennDOT 5-0
Shannon Rossman, Berks County Planning Commission
Regina Zdradzinski, Berks County Planning Commission
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission
Laura Mursch, Berks County Planning Commission
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission
Joe Romano, Larson Design Group
CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chairman Kufro called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

He followed up on the issue with Exeter Township from the last meeting. PennDOT did reach out to the Exeter Township Engineer regarding an issue with a property owner losing parking in front of their building because of a PennDOT project. The reason for that is that some of the parking is located in a PennDOT right-of-way.

PennDOT met with the property owners last summer and the township has a Streetscape project in the works right now. It is not in construction but is in design. Exeter township presented this project and master plan for adding a sidewalk connecting it to PennDOT’s project. The Exeter Township’s engineer is working with the restaurant to maintain and coordinate parking in front of the building. The streetscape project is estimated to be let in the summer of 2020.

Another issue regarding the same PennDOT project is at the Wellness Center. Exeter Township is working with them to gain additional access to a parking lot behind their building.
2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JOINT TECHNICAL/COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 18, 2019

Acting Chairman Kufro asked if there were any questions or comments about the July 18, 2019 Joint Technical/Coordinating Committee Meeting minutes.

MOTION (Technical): Mr. Golembiewski made a motion to approve the July 18, 2019 Joint Technical/Coordinating Committee Meeting minutes. Mr. Krall seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

MOTION (Coordinating): Mr. Rudderow made a motion to approve the July 18, 2019 Joint Technical/Coordinating Committee Meeting minutes. Ms. Reed 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. Germann stated that during the last joint meeting he discussed the methodology used for projecting the volume of traffic for proposed development - specifically for warehouses. The methodology used by PennDOT is from the Institute of Traffic Engineering handbook. Mr. Germann proposed using an alternate methodology. At that meeting, Chairman Rebert offered to put him in contact with the appropriate contacts at PennDOT’s Central Office. PennDOT did respond to him and he, in turn, responded back to PennDOT. Mr. Germann is now waiting for another response from PennDOT.

Acting Chairman Kufro said there are discussions going back and forth and are working with Central Office. He said that anything that needs to be changed needs to be changed statewide.

- Mr. Piper thanked Mr. Sroka for letting us have the meeting at the airport. Mr. Sroka then gave an update on the airport projects that are underway. A complete HVAC renovation project is being done in the terminal. This is a state project through the Bureau of Aviation. They have also received a grant for $2.5 million for a runway apron restoration.

5. SCTA FFY 2020 TRANSIT PERFORMANCE GOALS

Mr. Kilmer said that each year the Federal Transit Administration requires transit providers to adopt Performance Goals relating to the Transit Asset Management Plan. The initial plan was presented to the MPO last year at this same time. Each year assets need to be reviewed and new goals need to be set for the new year.
A list of goals is in the packets and they are almost the same as last year. Each asset is listed in three classifications: Facilities, Vehicles, and Equipment on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). For FY 2020, the SCTA Performance Goals are: Facilities (4-good), Vehicles (4-good) and Equipment (3-adequate).

The SCTA board passed the goals last night and they must now be approved by the MPO’s in Berks and Lancaster Counties.

MOTION: Commissioner Barnhardt made a motion to approve the SCTA FY 2020 Asset Management Plan Performance Goals. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

6. UPDATE ON BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the Bicycle/Pedestrian Steering Committee had its quarterly meeting last Wednesday at Berks Nature. All the input from the public surveys, municipal surveys and non-profit surveys have been gathered and compiled a listing of potential projects. The committee has begun deliberations on recommended priorities for those projects.

The committee will need to meet monthly instead of quarterly, since we are near the end of the process. He said the plan should be ready to go out for public comment by the next Coordinating Committee, which will be held in November. During staff discussions, it was decided that trying to get public comment over the holidays is not preferred.

The committee decided to hold off on the public comment period process for an additional two months. Hopefully the plan will be ready for adoption at the March Coordinating Committee meeting.

7. PENNDOT REQUESTED AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS TO FFY 2019 TIP


Amendments: There were no Amendments.

Administrative Actions: There were four (4) Administrative Actions. These all reallocated funds within existing projects based on needs.

Statewide Administrative Actions: There were two (2) Statewide Administrative Actions. One of these added HSIP funds for a Right-of-Way phase to the SR 2014 (Spring St.) Corridor in Reading, the other reallocated TAP funds for the Schuylkill River Trail N-Gap project in Reading to align with the anticipated schedule.
Chairman Kufro asked Mr. Piper to provide a review of the funding issues for the audience and stated that we would then have an open discussion on the topic.

Mr. Piper began by stating that this is a routine update to the 4-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and PennDOT 12-Year Program. Each are updated every two years. This update was developed using the same process used in creating prior programs.

He noted that there are three principal issues that have affected this program:
- Less overall available funding
- A shift in investment strategies
- A policy decision to increase investment in the Interstate Highway System

With regard to funding, he pointed to Act 89 of 2013 which increased state funding for highways and bridges through a tax on fuels. That increase was phased in and reached its peak in 2018. The revenues received from this have begun to decline due to increased use of alternative-fueled and high-efficiency vehicles. The state estimates that the revenues received under this program will be nearly $300 million less that the 2019 program. This funding source has been assumed to remain flat over the course of this program at the reduced level. On the federal side, there has been no increase in the federal fuels tax since 1993. The current federal funding program expires in 2020 and is also assumed to be flat across the program. PennDOT estimates that they are losing $100 million per year in purchasing power at modest (2.5%) inflation rate.

Relating to the investment strategies, Mr. Piper noted that the state is adjusting to meet a federally mandated Performance-Based Planning and Programming Process. This process shifts from a “worst-first” philosophy to a “lowest-life cycle cost” approach. There is also a shift in the recommended allocations from 65% bridges/35% highways to 60% highways/40% bridges.

The greatest impact to the program results from the decision to significantly increase the state’s investment in its Interstate Highway System.

In Pennsylvania, there is a group of highways classified as the National Highway System (NHS). These are the most significant highways in the state. This group is broken down into two sub categories. The Interstate System and the Non-Interstate Highways. The Non-Interstate System includes 7,149 segment miles, and 4,934 bridges. It makes up 16% of the total state-owned miles and carries 37% of the vehicle miles traveled. 24% of the non-Interstate miles are expressways. The Interstate portion of the NHS include 21 Interstate routes, 2,743 segment miles and 2,112 state-owned bridges and carries 27% of the vehicle miles traveled.

Last year, PennDOT conducted a thorough analysis of the Interstate System and determined that there was a $1.2 billion statewide annual need just for basic maintenance
and safety and a need for $1.5-$3 billion to address reconstruction and modernization needs. The state is currently investing $460 million per year into Interstates. They have requested that a transition toward the $1.2 billion annual need to be achieved by shifting $150 million of NHPP funds to the Interstate System in FFY 2021 and then adding an additional $50 million per year through FFY 2027 until it reaches an annual level of $1 billion.

Because there is no new source of funding and funding levels are assumed to be flat, these funds are being taken away from those currently applied to the Non-Interstate NHPP System. A similar analysis of the needs to the Non-Interstate NHPP System was conducted and indicates that that system requires $2.2 billion per year for basic safety and maintenance needs. The proposed shift will reduce the current statewide investment in this portion of the system from $742 million per year to approximately $110 million per year. These are primary funds that we use for improvements to highways like US 222, 422 and PA 61.

Mr. Piper then reviewed the fiscal impacts of these actions. He distributed a table and corresponding map illustrating the funding changes to each MPO and RPO across Pennsylvania when comparing the overlapping 10 years of the FFY 2019 and FFY 2021 programs. These changes varied across the state based on various factors within each area. Impacts ranged from very small gains (2-3%) in the Williamsport and Altoona MPO’s to a loss of 43% of funding in the Northwest RPO. Berks County (Reading MPO) experienced a loss of over $239 million (-35%) over this period. Other areas with major losses included the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) MPO (-37%), Lehigh Valley MPO (-33%), Scranton/Wilkes Barre (-31%), Southwest Pennsylvania Commission (Pittsburgh Area) (-30%) and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (Philadelphia Area) (-25%).

In Berks County, we lose just over $68 million in the first four years (FFY 21-24) alone. Over the full 10-year overlap period reviewed, Berks County will lose approximately $159 million or 65% of its NHPP funds. Funds from this program are used for our major corridors. Another major impact is in the state bridge funding category where we are losing almost $46 million or 36% over the 10-year period.

Acting Chairman Kufro said this greatly impact federal funding for Non-Interstate projects on US 222, US 422 and Rt. 61. The draft TIP needs to be developed by the end of 2019 and to be submitted to Central Office for review.

Mr. Rudderow said he sees the challenges before us and they will only get more difficult with less money. The last few years, we were short funded. He noted that there has been a lot of work planned for the Interstate highways in Berks County. Now there are needs in other parts of the state and they will be taking money to make their improvements.

Acting Chairman Kufro stated that we did receive a good amount of interstate funding ($170 million) for construction for the (12M) Lenhartsville to the county line. That money does not come out of our regional TIP. There is another big project in the Hamburg area on I-78 which is a rehabilitation widening, a whole interchange
reconstruction (over $100 million) and that does not come out of the regional TIP. That project will be let this fall.

Mr. Rudderow said he wants to understand the process that got us to this point. At the last meeting it was laid out that, from May to July, there was a lot of discussion occurring on this issue and the MPO might not have been aware of the impacts of these discussions. He understood that the MPO sent representatives to a greater meeting in order to come up with a solution for the next twelve years. He asked who represented this MPO regarding how the formula was going to be formulated. There were meetings held between May and July that determined what we were told in July. How did this happen and who was involved?

Acting Chairman Kufro explained how this started. He said that Ms. Batula was here last year talking about the interstate funding gap. During the winter, the Secretary of Transportation put together a Financial Guidance/Work Group. PennDOT Central office and the MPO’s were invited to be part of that in order to keep it an open and fair process. It is up to PennDOT’s discretion to make the choices on this issue.

Mr. Piper said he represented Berks County at the workshop meetings providing input. There were a number of things that went into this process consists of the philosophy of how things were going to change. What does the overall financial envelope look like now? The state, based on the Interstate report, made a policy decision that it wanted to make more significant input into the Interstate System. That was a given to the members of the Financial Guidance workgroup. There will be more money going to the Interstate System. The other revisions were driven by the Performance-Based Planning requirements. The state still makes the final call on how funds are allocating.

Ms. Reed said we are dealing with the “after the fact” impact of decisions by others rather than on our priorities. All the MPO’s are dealing with the “after the fact’. Ms. Reed presented a resolution approved by the Council of the City of Reading on August 26, 2019 requesting that PennDOT and those officials setting fiscal priorities revisit and reconsider their funding decisions and restore funding and it has been previously proposed. It also asked state and federal legislators take a similar stand.

Mr. Rudderow thought the purpose of the MPO was to be stakeholders in the local decisions. With the way this came about, he did not feel like a participant, only given the bad news. Prior to the May meeting, there was no discussion that this was going to happen or that going to this meeting could create a formula funding change that could result in our MPO losing money. The Financial Guidance Work Group only began meeting at the end of January and issues that were being discussed were presented at our meeting in March by Deputy Secretary Ritzman. Mr. Piper stated that the numbers that were presented at our July meeting were only given to the MPO’s and PennDOT two days before at the Planning Partners meeting where we were asked to give consensus to the proposal. Mr. Rudderow said his questions are not to criticize the people involved; it is to understand how we got to where we are. We would have never guessed the changes would be to this extent. Infrastructure is a huge problem in the county, and we are trying to process and work through this. It is frustrating because it seems like we were heading in the right direction,
and now the decision has been made. Mr. Piper said that following our last update to this plan in 2019, he felt the best about the Long-Range Transportation Plan that he has ever felt in all the years he has worked here. As a result of these actions, nothing could be changed farther.

Commissioner Barnhardt stated that, even if this MPO would have had the ability to send Mr. Piper as a representative to Harrisburg to fight for our roads and bridges to be repaired, what would be the difference? It was PennDOT’s determination of where the federal and state allocation of money was going. We can sit here and debate all day as to what could have happened. The federal and state government did not step up and do the right thing for infrastructure. We can point fingers and say we need millions of dollars for infrastructure, but no one wants to do anything to fix it. Mr. Lutz said this is subject for the federal government to address. Commissioner Barnhardt added the state, as well.

Mr. Lutz asked about the impacts of revising the formulas. Mr. Piper said every area across the state now receives the same pro-rated share based on their number of bridges, roadway miles and volumes on that system. Berks County does have a lot of miles, roads and bad bridges. So, when that funding formula flipped, Berks County lost a lot. Conversely, if you take the same formula and have a county like Lancaster or York, where their bridges were in good shape. They were subsidizing all the other areas that had bad bridges. So, when the formula is evened out and based on your pro-rated share, the counties that had good bridges received more bridge money.

Mr. McKeon said the core issue here is the Federal Highway Trust Fund has not been replenished for 26 years. No new revenue stream has been given to the Highway Trust Fund since 1993. There was no increase in the gasoline tax, user fees were looked at and no one wants their mileage tracked. It is up to the federal government, the Administration and legislators to raise the gas tax. Was it fair or was it unfair? We have been put into a life raft with one canteen full of water and now must divide it up. Mr. Rudderow agrees with Mr. McKeon. He asked if MPO’s across the state should send letters to federal and state legislators in order to lobby. If more money were to come federally and from the state, would PennDOT revisit this issue or will they give more money to the Interstate System? Mr. Piper said that additional federal funds are made available. Generally, those funds would go back into the overall pot to be reallocated. We then would come back to revisit the TIP and start putting projects back in place.

Acting Chairman Kufro said this is based off the current FAST-Act now. Ms. Reed asked if this is written in stone. Acting Chairman Kufro said every two years this Financial Guidance will be revisited, and the funds will get dumped into the formula. Ms. Reed asked if we will have the ability to lobby our views. Acting Chairman Kufro said nothing will change until after the first two years. The funding cuts will start happening after that point.

Mr. Rudderow said there are a lot of representatives of elected officials here today. He hopes the message back to the elected officials is that transportation needs to be the #1 priority both federal and state wide. Hopefully, the presentation and comments will make
their way back to the elected officials who are able to reopen the discussion to see if there is more that can be done at the state and federal level regarding transportation.

Mr. Kilmer stated that the State House of Representatives did appoint a special task force chaired by Rep. Martina White from Philadelphia. The members do not include anyone from Berks County. They are addressing the whole issue of funding shortfalls due to ACT 89 and the diversion of money from ACT 89 to non-transportation items. He was at a meeting in Harrisburg this morning with Rep. White. It was urged to be comprehensive and multi-modal if it is addressed because of the need for local roads, state highways, interstates and transit. Transit is looking at a $400 million shortfall. There is a cliff waiting for transit July 2022 when the money from the Turnpike is halted. There is already a move to shift that funding earlier to start staging that out of the general fund which will be a disaster. At the federal level, Environmental and Public Works (EPW), the Senate committee that deals with the transportation bill is proposing a 17% increase. The legislature will need pressure from us to make something happen.

Reverend Morrison offered her opinions on this issue. We need to be more creative on a local level. How do we educate the public to conserve our roads, mileage and transportation needs? We should give incentives and encourage people to become less dependent on their own cars. If legislators are not at the table, they are not aware of ways in which we the consumers can curtail some of this use. She thinks the MPO has been shaken by the transportation threat from resources being reduced. They find themselves without resources because of an emergency they have not planned on. It is time to tighten the belt and look at ways to be more conservative when it comes to expenses and resources that we do not have control over. What if there is no more funding to get? How can we continue to be responsible to the public as their representatives?

We should be considerate of where we go from here less those resources. How creative can we be in order to meet those goals of the next two years? We can resolve it by lobbying to the legislators year to year. What happens in the years to come? We need to be conscience of our philosophy of usage for the end user of the consumer as related to decisions. Resources are wending up and we need to be conscience of our funds and resources and increased costs in materials.

Ms. Landis stated that everything being talked about is very critical. We need to work together to make things happen. On August 15, 2019, the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance, Berks County Commissioners, and the RATS Study Group did send a letter to our elected officials at both the state and federal levels. She is pleased that, in addition to Mr. Piper’s invitation today, she encouraged legislators to attend this meeting. There are eight of the thirteen-member delegation present to hear the funding issues directly from this group, so they understand how important and how critical it is. We also have the Public-Private Partnership, who has been working on the priority projects under Commissioner Barnhardt. We will continue to work with different stakeholders to identify this. Anything we can be doing to make sure the congestion and safety of our roads is maintained is important. RATS is a great group to help move us forward with that. Whatever we can do for Transit, we are here to work and initially engage in grass roots initiative to make that happen.
Rev. Morrison spoke about the inclusion of people with disabilities and minority contracting, female-owned and operated businesses incorporated with PennDOT and all the other MPO’s. Acting Chairman Kufro said, for PennDOT projects using federal money for state projects, there is at state DBE goal of 15%. He also said that, if there is less money for projects, there will be less projects proceeding.

Mr. McKeon asked if anyone of the legislator representatives would like to comment on this issue. Ms. Landis said that they were encouraged to come today is to receive a good briefing and understand our concerns on these issues so they can take them back for discussion. One thing is we want to speak with one voice as a community and Greater Reading so PennDOT or the federal government are not sent a situation where the different parts of Berks County ask for different project. Mr. Lutz said Ms. Landis’s letter nailed it.

Mr. McKeon said the issue is not just being able to speak with one voice; it is that the federal and state governments did not do their jobs. He asked if there were any responses to the letter. Ms. Landis said she has a response from Sen. Mensch. Mr. Gombar said that there was also a letter from Senator Schwank. She expressed concern regarding the impacts and changes and asked the Secretary to reconsider that. The other part of the plan is to add funding. He had asked what some of the federal representatives would be discussing and in Harrisburg as well.

Mr. Germann said that there are bridges in Delaware that are maintained by tolls. Acting Chairman Kufro said that tolling has been looked at in the past but was rejected. Mr. Piper said that legislation at the state level would be needed to be able to impose tolls on any existing state bridge or highway.

Mr. Rudderow thanked Ms. Landis and the Greater Reading Chamber for their efforts on this issue.

9. DISTRIBUTION OF PENNDOT PROJECT STATUS REPORTS-TASA

Acting Chairman Kufro said there is an attachment included in the packet. There are four TAS-A projects on the handout to review.

10. COMMUTER SERVICE UPDATE

Mr. Golembiewski stated that Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership is the non-profit organization that oversees the Commuter Services Program. They decided to have AECOM continue with another year of their contract, which was a 2-year deal with three one-year extensions. The second of the three one-year extensions was approved yesterday.

The program that is being promoted in September is called Walk Like a Boss. It is supposed to get you out of your car. All next week, if you track your walking trips on an app on your phone, or register the trips online, you will be entered to win a Kindle Fire or Longwood Garden tickets.
11. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Piper said that, during the last few years, the Reading MPO has had a lot of support from the Greater Reading Chamber. Ms. Landis has recently announced her retirement from the Greater Reading Chamber. She will stay engaged in private-public partnerships and the South Central Transit Authority board and some others. She said it was a pleasure to work everyone. It takes a community to engage and move our economy forward. Mr. Piper and members of the committees expressed their gratitude for the work that Ms. Landis has done over the years.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Commissioner Barnhardt made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Rudderow seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 2:29 PM.

Date: 11/21/19

[Signature]

Alan D. Piper