

READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY
SEPTEMBER 1, 2022

ATTENDANCE

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Scott Vottero, PennDOT 5-0 Acting Chair*
David Alas, PennDOT Central
Alan Piper, Berks County Planning Commission, MPO Secretary
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission
Jeff Glisson, South Central Transit Authority
Tim Krall, City of Reading
Kyle Zeiber, City of Reading

NOT PARTICIPATING

Zachary Tempesco, Reading Regional Airport Authority

OTHERS

Crystal Heshmat, PennDOT Central
Michael Donchez, PennDOT 5-0
Vanessa Koenigkramer, PennDOT 5-0
Kerry Cox, PennDOT Central
Matthew Boyer, Commuter Services of PA
Joe Romano, Larson Design Group
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission
Ashley Showers, Berks County Planning Commission
David Hunter, Berks County Planning Commission
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission
Mohamed Sillah, Berks County Information Systems
IS Production, Berks County Information Systems

1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chairman Vottero called the meeting to order at 1:31 PM.

2. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

There was no business from the floor. Mr. Golembiewski stated that there was no public comment.

3. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION OF MINUTES FROM JOINT TECHNICAL/COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF JULY 14, 2022

Acting Chairman Vottero asked if there were any questions or comments on the July 14, 2022 Joint Technical/Coordinating Committee minutes.

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to recommend approval of the July 14, 2022 Joint Technical/Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Alas seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION ON MINUTES FROM SPECIAL JOINT TECHNICAL/COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF AUGUST 23, 2022

Acting Chairman Vottero asked if there were any questions or comments on the August 23, 2022 Special Joint Technical/Coordinating Committee minutes.

MOTION: Mr. Golembiewski made a motion to recommend approval of the August 23, 2022 Special Joint Technical/Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Krall seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

5. PENNDOT REQUESTED AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS TO FFY 2021-2024 TIP

Mr. Donchez gave an update on PennDOT's requested Amendments/Modifications to the FFY 2021-2024 TIP from July 8, 2022 to August 26, 2022.

- There are nine (9) Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with increases for revised estimates, increases to meet low-bid and estimated costs for projects, various right of way claims, and aligning funds to meet projected let dates.
- There is one (1) Interstate Management TIP Administrative Action – this adjustment deals with the I-78 (12M) project to address remediation of slope failure adjacent to the roadway.
- There are no Amendments.

6. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION ON PM3 ALLENTOWN-BETHLEHEM-EASTON (A-B-E), PA-NJ URBANIZED AREA TARGETS FOR CMAQ CONGESTION MEASURES

Mr. Golembiewski stated that at the July 14, 2022 Joint Technical/Coordinating Committee meeting two actions were taken relating to this set of performance measures (PM3) for Urbanized Area Targets for CMAQ Congestion Measures. One action taken was to complete an addendum that would permit cooperation with Lehigh Valley Planning Commission in their CMAQ target setting for the portion of the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton (A-B-E) urbanized area that extends into Berks County. The second action taken was approval of the Reading MPO CMAQ targets for Peak-Hour Excessive Delay (PHED) and Non-Single Occupancy Vehicle (Non-SOV) Travel percentage.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the next step is to recommend to the Coordinating Committee adoption of Lehigh Valley Transportation Study's (LVTS) PHED and Non-SOV Two- and Four-Year Performance Targets for their urbanized area.

The Non-SOV percentage used the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Census data for people that use a mode of travel to work other than driving by themselves. Their Non-SOV percent is based on 5-year averages to develop a proposed 2-Year Target (2022) and 4-Year Target (2024) of 18.6%. The PHED targets are based on portions of the National Highway System that are located within the urbanized area. Their proposed 2-Year Target (2022) and 4-Year Target (2025) is 8.4.

The sections of that urbanized area that are in Berks County are located in Topton Borough, to the east and north of Topton Borough in Longswamp Township, the easternmost portion of Longswamp Township, and in Hereford Township along the northern portion of Route 100. The northern portion of Route 100 in Hereford Township is on the National Highway System within the Lehigh Valley urbanized area. The urbanized area boundaries are based on the 2010 Census. The expectation is that new urbanized area boundaries based on the 2020 Census will be released sometime in the fall of 2022 at which point these targets will be amended when we do future calculations of these performance measures.

Mr. Krall noted that the northernmost area of Route 100 in Hereford Township is not urban but rather is impacted by the urbanized area across the Berks County border in Lehigh County. Mr. Golembiewski confirmed that the way the Census Bureau defines the urbanized area is by population density within a census block. Mr. Krall asked what the measures would be to conform to Federal guidelines. Mr. Golembiewski noted that RATS adopted performance measures for the Reading MPO for those segments of the National Highway System in the Reading urbanized area. Lehigh Valley is following the same coordination process for the A-B-E urbanized area which in their case covers 2 states and 5 counties. RATS would be cooperating with Lehigh Valley and the Department in how they propose to meet those measures. This is the first time we are dealing with these measures, so the initial process involves establishing the targets for the measures. In two years, the targets will be reviewed and assessed. Afterwards, new targets will be developed. This process of reviewing and resetting targets is required every two years. If areas do not meet the targets, Federal requirements to include more air quality significant projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) may be imposed.

Mr. Piper noted that the A-B-E urbanized areas in Hereford Township and in Berks County are not considered congested and it is not anticipated that congestion levels there will change anytime soon.

MOTION: Mr. Krall made a motion to recommend approval of the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study's PHED and Non-SOV targets for the portion of the A-B-E urbanized area that extends into Berks County. Mr. Piper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

7. DISCUSSION ON PENNSYLVANIA GRADE CRUDE DEVELOPMENT ACT (ACT 52 OF 2016), SIP AND POSSIBLE TRANSPORTATION SANCTIONS

Mr. Piper noted that this agenda item is an issue in a non-transportation area that may affect our ability to implement our plans and programs.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that under the Federal Clean Air Act, Berks County is a non-attainment area for ground level ozone. As a result, transportation modeling must be conducted when we develop our Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

Under the Clean Air Act, Pennsylvania DEP had to approve a final form of rulemaking controlling volatile organic compounds (VOC) from natural gas and oil wells for both conventional and unconventional oil and gas resources. Unconventional resources includes fracking. VOCs are one of two sources that contribute to ground level ozone. Unfortunately, Pennsylvania legislature did not approve the regulations that the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) put forth as one set of regulations covering both types of resources. The Pennsylvania legislature did not approve them because they felt the regulations should be two separate actions.

Under Act 52 of 2016, there was a conformity deadline date of December 16, 2022 to have those regulations in place. Unfortunately, it seems that the deadline will not be met. That means that EPA can sanction the 5 MPOs covering 17 counties that have some level of nonconformity for ground level ozone. Across the 5 MPOs, approximately \$400 million could potentially be withheld impacting air quality significant projects. The possibility of EPA imposing sanctions is not definitive at this time. Projects identified as possibly affected by EPA sanctions are also not definitive and are subject to change. The Department is working with the Federal Highway Administration to review the lists of air quality significant projects included in the FFY 2023-2026 TIP (effective October 1, 2022) in all the affected MPOs to further refine and identify projects that could potentially be affected. More information will become available towards the end of September 2022.

Mr. Piper stated that it is not guaranteed that the funding will be lost if the sanctions are imposed. The funding could be held or deferred until new legislation is put in place. It's incumbent upon us to inform our elected officials and let our legislators know that this is a potential impact of the state not moving forward with approving the air quality legislation. The legislation has nothing to do with transportation, but the sanctions could impact transportation funding.

Mr. Krall asked how VOC and fracking contribute to the potential sanction. Mr. Golembiewski replied that Pennsylvania is a state that produces petroleum products. VOCs are released by evaporation. So, any wells that are not capped properly or have uncontrolled releases contribute to the release of VOCs into the atmosphere. Ozone is a photochemical process. When VOCs are released into the atmosphere, they react in the presence of sunlight and stagnant air to the products of combustion present in the atmosphere produced from things such as vehicles to create ground level ozone. Ozone in the upper atmosphere helps

block radiation from the sun. Ground level ozone causes respiratory issues for populations such as the elderly, people with compromised respiratory systems, and very young people.

8. UPDATE/DISCUSSION ON READING DOWNTOWN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the City of Reading is working on an Active Transportation Plan that focuses on the downtown area in combination with some of the other plans the City is trying to implement. The City recognizes that active transportation includes pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit using the streets to commute and that the streets are not meant for just cars.

A Steering Committee, composed of representatives from SCTA, Berks County, the City of Reading, and several consultants have reviewed crash histories at various intersections, issues that affect mobility in the City, and conducted field views at various locations in the City to identify issues that impede mobility in the downtown area. There are six corridors in the downtown area that are a focus of the active transportation plan: 1) 2nd Street/Canal Street, 2) Court Street, 3) Penn Street, 4) Cherry Street, 5) 7th Street/Railroad Corridor, and 6) Spruce Street/Riverfront Drive. In addition to the 6 priority corridors, the active transportation plan will look at additional potential accessibility along Bingaman Street, crossing over the river to the Schuylkill River Trail, and along Laurel Street down to 9th Street making a connection to Neversink Mountain.

This plan would provide short, mid-range, and long range recommendations for improvements. Some of the improvements could be simple such as paint striping or more substantial such as removing a lane of traffic and striping a bicycle lane. The potential exists for converting a currently one-way street into a two-way street. These improvements are currently being further analyzed. There will be two public meetings on October 25, 2022 at 4:00 PM and 7:00 PM at Reading Central Middle School (215 North 12th Street) to obtain public input for the plan. The ultimate goal is to get approval from City Council by mid-December 2022. The City received \$40,000 from a WalkWorks grant from the State of Pennsylvania and the City provided the matching funds. Mr. Krall noted that the plan is being developed through the consultant Simone Collins. Simone Collins also did the plan to ease congestion and improve pedestrian/bicycle mobility for the 18th WONDER group in the 18th Ward of the City. Mr. Golembiewski noted that the recommendations being developed in the plan are in line with the County's Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan.

Mr. Piper stated that one of the recommendations being considered in the plan involves the Bingaman Street Bridge and coordination with PennDOT's Bingaman Street Bridge Replacement as a part of the West Shore Bypass Reconstruction Project Phase 1. PennDOT's project includes sidewalks on both sides of the bridge. The ask may be to widen the sidewalk on the north side of the bridge to include a shared use trail which might have a small impact on the Lancaster Avenue Interchange. Acting Chairman Vottero noted that sidewalk standard width is 10 feet with some instances providing for 8 feet wide sidewalks. Acting Chairman Vottero recommended following up with the District.

9. PENNDOT UPDATES ON BRIDGE AND TASA/MTF PROJECTS

Acting Chairman Vottero gave an update on the bridge and TASA/MTF projects.

The I-78 Lenhartsville Bridge project is in final design and is now a P3 Pathways project. PennDOT will not be tolling the bridge and therefore diversion route accommodations are not required.

Mr. Piper asked if the bridge will be funded through the Interstate Program as a result of the bridge no longer being considered for tolling. Acting Chairman Vottero replied that this bridge will be funded through the Interstate Program.

Mr. Piper stated that PennDOT had their preconstruction conference call for the SR 12 Warren Street Rehabilitation project. PennDOT's contractor will be given a notice to proceed within the next few weeks. They anticipate work to begin by the end of September 2022. Mr. Krall asked who the contractor for the project is. Mr. Piper responded that the contractor is J.D. Eckman.

10. COMMUTER SERVICES UPDATE

Mr. Boyer stated that Commuter Services has several promotions currently happening including car free month, local clash of the career links, and a college month promotion across Commuter Services' nine county area.

Within the next two months, the outreach team will be engaging with employers during their health and wellness benefits fairs. A growing number of employers are providing employees additional benefits or credits for participating in green travel modes.

A new six month program update (available at https://pacommuterservices.org/wp-content/uploads/CommuterServicesofPA_ProgramUpdate_SpringSummer-2022.pdf) outlines some of the programs that Commuter Services has been conducting over the last six months.

Currently there is a survey circulating through a third-party vendor that seeks feedback on Commuter Services programs and services. The results from the survey will be discussed at Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership's (SRTP) Board of Directors meeting on September 21, 2022. The Board of Directors will be engaging in a strategic planning session next week to help guide the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs and other programs that may be considered such as a regional bike share initiative and some regional congestion management planning ideas.

The outreach team has been at Alvernia University, Ashley Furniture, PA CareerLink in Berks County, L&H Signs, Timet, Berks Connections, Reading Housing Authority, and Wyomissing Rehabilitation within the past 30 days.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Golembiewski stated there was no other business.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Golembiewski made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Piper seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 2:14 PM.

Date: _____

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Alan D. Piper