

DRAFT
READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN-PERSON AND
VIRTUALLY
MAY 16, 2024

ATTENDANCE

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Chris Kufro, PennDOT District Executive, Chair*
Mark Tobin, PennDOT Program Center (V)
Tom McKeon, Berks County Planning Commission (V)
Lisha Rowe, 1st Class Townships (Cumru Township)
Arthur Lambert, 2nd Class Townships (Upper Bern Township)
Keith Boatman, South Central Transit Authority, Alternate (V)
Donna Reed, City of Reading

*Tie-breaking vote only
(V) Attended Virtually

COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

Dante Santoni, Jr., Reading Regional Airport Authority
Commissioner Michael Rivera, County of Berks
Brian Hoffa, Boroughs (Sinking Spring)

OTHERS

Gene Porochniak, Federal Highway Administration
Michael Donchez, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Jennifer Ruth, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Alan Piper, Berks County Planning Commission, MPO Secretary
Jeff Rai, PennDOT Central (V)
Matthew Boyer, CommutePA
David Alas, PennDOT Central
Nyomi Evans, PennDOT Central
Adrian Jadic (V)
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission
David Hunter, Berks County Planning Commission
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission
Melissa Lewis, Berks County Information Systems (V)
Carl Long, Berks County Information Systems

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kufro called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM.

2. INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMEBER

Chairman Kufro welcomed and introduced Mr. Arthur (Ray) Lambert from Upper Bern Township as the newly appointed 2nd Class Township representative on the RATS Coordinating Committee.

3. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

There was no business from the floor. Ms. Timochenko stated that there was no public comment at this time.

4. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MARCH 21, 2024, COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

Chairman Kufro asked if there were any questions or comments on the March 21, 2024, Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: Ms. Reed made a motion to approve the March 21, 2024, Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Ms. Rowe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

5. UPDATE ON FY 24-25 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Mr. Piper stated that earlier this year the Committee approved the FY 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). It was submitted to PennDOT for their review and approval. PennDOT approved the RATS UPWP and forwarded it to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Last week, we received approval from FHWA on our UPWP. PennDOT is now processing the UPWP for our agreement as Work Order #2. The UPWP is the list of the projects that we as staff and the MPO will be doing over the next year. Normally, the UPWP is a two-year program document. This time it is a one-year document which was done so that the creation of the UPWP can be completed off cycle from the TIP. The UPWP is the basis for developing the contract that reimburses the County for staff services. This represents approximately \$650,000 that can be reimbursed to the County for transportation planning services that is covered under the agreement between the County and PennDOT for the period July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. Once Work Order #2 is completed, the UPWP will become effective on July 1, 2024.

6. PENNDOT REQUESTED AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS TO FFY 2023-2026 TIP

Mr. Donchez gave an update on PennDOT's requested Amendments/Modifications to the FFY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) from February 29, 2024, to April 22, 2024.

- There are six (6) Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with increases needed for phase supplements, right of way, low bid amounts, modifications

involving cash flowing and advancing funds to align with when they are anticipated to be needed and increases to address accrued unbilled costs.

- There is one (1) Statewide Administrative Action – the adjustment deals with cash flowing HSIP Spike funds for the State Hill Road project that extends from Colony Drive to the SR 222 southbound ramps.
- There is one (1) Amendment – the adjustment deals with adding the SR 222 Truck Weigh Station construction phase to the current FFY 2023-2026 RATS TIP. The project is located in Brecknock Township near the Berks County boundary with Lancaster County. The intent is to realign the existing entranceway to the truck weigh station which currently is a right-angle turn. Right now, trucks have to reduce speed on northbound SR 222 to approximately 10 miles per hour to enter the truck weigh station. The speed limit on SR 222 is 55 miles per hour. The truck weigh station is frequently used by the Pennsylvania State Police. The State Police’s Safety Division requested more of a tapered entrance rather than a right-angle entrance into the inspection area. Safety at the truck weigh station would greatly improve by implementing a tapered entrance to the inspection area. This project would be added as a companion project to an existing project on the current TIP as part of a SR 222 resurfacing project in District 8 in Lancaster County which is approximately 1-2 miles south of the truck weigh station location in Berks County. The SR 222 resurfacing project is scheduled to go to construction later this fall. The estimated cost for this project is \$190,000 which would be funded using NHPP funds. As this a new project being added to the current TIP and uses federal funds for construction, the Amendment requires a vote from the Committee.

MOTION: Ms. Reed made a motion to approve the Amendment to add the SR 222 Truck Weigh Station project to the current FFY 2023-2026 TIP. Ms. Rowe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

7. SCTA REQUESTED MODIFICATIONS TO THE FFY 2023-2026 TIP

Mr. Boatman gave an update on South Central Transit Authority’s (SCTA) requested transit Amendments/Modifications to the FFY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) from July 5, 2023 to February 14, 2024.

- There is one (1) Administrative Action – the adjustment deals with the purchase of paratransit buses and realigning the funds from FFY 2023 to FFY 2024 to align with anticipated grant funding and to include 5307 funds for the project.
- There are no Amendments.

8. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF FFY 2025-2028 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) ELEMENTS

Mr. Piper stated that the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is updated every 2 years. The TIP covers a four year period and is essentially a capital budget for transportation improvement projects that want to receive federal or state funding. The process began approximately one year ago when the State Transportation Commission (STC) kicked off its Twelve-Year Program (TYP) update which we use as the start of our TIP update process. We solicit municipalities and take the recommendations for projects to be incorporated into the TIP into consideration. PennDOT develops procedural guidance that the MPO has to follow when going through the TIP update process. PennDOT also provides financial guidance that the MPO has to follow when programming projects on the TIP. The TIP is required to be fiscally constrained which means that the value of projects on the TIP cannot exceed the anticipated amount of funding that is available. The funding is set based on the Financial Guidance document provided by PennDOT. Funding is currently based on the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and projected state and local allocations.

We met with PennDOT District staff approximately 5 times in October and November of last year to go through the existing programmed projects and evaluate additional funding needs based on current estimated costs as well as project phases and funding categories within individual years. The Board approved the Draft Project Listing in December. In January, we met with PennDOT Central Office and they approved the Draft Project Listing.

Upon approval from PennDOT, a series of actions are required to take place on the TIP document prior to approval. The first requirement is that the TIP needs to go through an Air Quality Conformity Analysis. We have to ensure that the projects on the TIP are consistent with state and federal Air Quality regulations. The first two actions that will need approval as part of the TIP process will be the Air Quality Conformity Analysis Report and the Air Quality Conformity Resolution. The Resolution states that we followed the proper process and that the TIP is consistent with those state and federal Air Quality regulations.

We are also required to conduct an Environmental Justice Summary which ensures that the distribution of the projects and funding are equitable across Berks County. There is a standard format that is used in every MPO across the state to document whether or not there are adverse impacts to low-income or minority populations. Following the process, our Environmental Justice Summary determined there were no adverse impacts to those populations and the distribution of TIP projects across the County is equitable.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) documents the procedures we will follow for completing TIP Amendments or Modifications. Amendments are for projects that will be funded using state or federal funds that are new to the program or for projects that require a reallocation of funds totaling over \$3 million. Modifications are smaller adjustments to the program of projects. The MOU is the agreement on the process that PennDOT, SCTA, and the MPO will follow to make those adjustments.

After the Draft TIP, Air Quality Conformity Analysis, and Environmental Justice Summary documents have been developed, they are required to be released to the public for a 30-day public review and comment period. Our public review and comment period began on March 24, 2024, and ended on April 23, 2024. During the public review and comment period, we held 2 public meetings. The first public meeting was a hybrid meeting on April 8, 2024, and the second was an in person meeting on April 11, 2024. We also conducted two outreach presentations. The first was to the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance's Business and Community Advisory Council and the second was to the Northeast Berks Chamber of Commerce. Federal regulations require that any comments received during the public review and comment period related to the TIP or associated documents need to be reviewed and considered by the Board prior to the TIP being adopted. We have documented any comments received during the meetings or by phone or email and prepared responses to those comments.

The Self-Certification Resolution identifies the planning regulations that we are required to follow when developing the TIP and our planning procedures. The MPO is self-certifying that we have followed all those actions in terms of the TIP Development Process.

Once these elements are adopted, we complete the checklist of items that are required to be included as part of the submission to PennDOT. Then, PennDOT forwards our TIP, along with other TIPs from MPOs and RPOs across the state, to the STC. The STC incorporates all the TIPs into a Statewide TIP (STIP) and, once approved, the STIP gets sent to the US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. Both entities review the STIP, and hopefully they approve the STIP by September 30, 2024, because October 1, 2024, is the beginning of FFY 2025 which is the first year covered by the TIP.

The important thing to understand is that the TIP is a capital budget, but it is not a static budget and changes constantly. The dollars are constantly moving, and schedules and costs can always change. Our Financial Guidance is conservative, but it is based on certain assumptions. It is driven by what dollars are anticipated to be available. There are two years left of IJJA. The last two years of the TIP are fixed based on the amounts included in the last year of available funding in that Act. Being included on the TIP itself is not a guarantee that a project will move forward because if there are changing conditions from a financial standpoint, in the design process, or cost factors, projects may ultimately not be implemented.

a. AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY REPORT

Mr. Piper stated that there have been no changes to the Air Quality Conformity Analysis Report after its release for public comment. There were no public comments received related to this report.

MOTION: Ms. Rowe made a motion adopt the RATS Air Quality Conformity Analysis Report. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

b. AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY RESOLUTION

Mr. Piper stated that the Air Quality Conformity Resolution has to be approved by the Coordinating Committee as part of the TIP Development Process. The Resolution gets incorporated into the final submission.

MOTION: Ms. Reed made a motion approve the RATS Air Quality Conformity Resolution. Mr. Tobin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

c. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SUMMARY

Mr. Piper stated that an Executive Summary was added to the beginning of the Environmental Justice Summary which is the only modification to the document after it was available for public review and comment. There were no public comments received related to this document.

MOTION: Ms. Rowe made a motion adopt the RATS Environmental Justice Summary. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

d. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – PROCEDURES FOR FFY 2025-2028 TIP REVISIONS

Mr. Piper stated that the Memorandum of Understanding is the agreement among Reading MPO, PennDOT, and South Central Transit Authority documenting procedures to be followed when performing TIP amendments or modifications. This agreement must be adopted by the Coordinating Committee and incorporated into the final TIP document.

MOTION: Ms. Rowe made a motion approve the RATS Memorandum of Understanding. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

e. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Piper reviewed the comments received during the public review and comment period for the FFY 2025-2028 TIP, Environmental Justice Summary, and Air Quality Conformity Analysis Report. The public review and comment period began on March 24, 2024, and ended on April 23, 2024. There was a total of 12 comments received from 7 individuals. Mr. Piper reviewed the proposed responses to the comments received. The proposed responses must be approved by the Coordinating Committee. Once approved, the responses will be sent out to those individuals that submitted comments. The public comments and responses to those comments are found in Appendix E of the FFY 2025-2028 TIP document on page 379 ([09-AppE.pdf \(berkspa.gov\)](#)).

MOTION: Ms. Reed made a motion approve the public comments and responses for the FFY 2025-2028 TIP. Ms. Rowe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

f. FFY 2025-2028 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Piper stated that the TIP contains 112 projects for approximately \$366 million for phases to be advanced over the next four years. It includes 95 projects valued at \$284.2 million addressing the highway system and bridges and 17 projects valued at \$81.6 million addressing the transit system. There is also a statewide Interstate Management Program that is separate from the regional TIP. There are two Interstate Management Program projects located in Berks County with a value of \$13.9 million.

Among the major projects that are on the TIP, there are a series of projects on the Route 61 corridor in northern Berks County, the Route 12 corridor, and on State Hill Road in Wyomissing Borough. There is widening on US 222 from Maiden Creek Township to Richmond Township, reconstructing the US 422 intersection at Route 724 and Mull Avenue in Sinking Spring Borough, and reconstruction of the West Shore Bypass between Buttonwood Street and I-176. There are many bridge projects scattered throughout the County and safety improvements at various locations. There are also studies included in the program.

MOTION: Ms. Reed made a motion adopt the RATS FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program. Mr. Tobin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

g. RATS SELF-CERTIFICATION RESOLUTION

Mr. Piper stated that the RATS Self-Certification Resolution is a required statement that is done at the end of the process where the MPO certifies that they followed the applicable federal requirements in terms of all the planning regulations that are related to this process.

MOTION: Ms. Reed made a motion approve the RATS Self-Certification Resolution. Ms. Rowe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

9. MAJOR PROJECT STATUS REPORT

Mr. Piper gave an update on the status of major projects.

Mr. Jadic commented via YouTube that one of the compelling advantages of introducing roundabouts is that unlike signalized intersections, roundabouts do not rely on electrical

systems. This inherent reliability ensures that traffic flow is maintained even during power outages or severe weather conditions eliminating the need for emergency interventions.

Mr. Jadic asked via YouTube if there was any news of the status of the State Hill phase one project and if bids were still planned for 2026? Mr. Piper responded that the project should be in final design later this year and bids are still anticipated in 2026.

Mr. Piper stated that there is little change on the major project status report from month to month. He noted that PennDOT and their team suggested that a PennDOT presentation be made on one of the major projects at the Coordinating Committee meetings rather than constantly updating the major project listing. The presentation would be a little more in depth on a specific project rather than a summary of all the projects.

Mr. Piper asked if the Committee would prefer a more in-depth presentation on one major project at the meetings rather than going through the major project status report. Chairman Kufro commented that the PennDOT design team could present and give a 10–15-minute update on a project, the importance of the project, where the project stands, and how the project is progressing through the process. We could rotate around major projects and pick one to present every time we meet. Chairman Kufro stated that we will proceed with presentations and re-evaluate over the year to see if the Committee would prefer to switch back to the high level major project status report update.

Mr. Boyer commented that PennDOT has a good website where if anyone wanted more high level detailed information on a project, they could visit PennDOT's website ([Road & Bridge Construction \(pa.gov\)](https://www.penn.gov/road-bridge-construction)) to get that information.

Chairman Kufro stated that PennDOT will work on scheduling a meeting to update the public and public officials on the status of the US 422 Reconstruction project possibly in September, 2024.

10. COMMUTEPA UPDATE

Mr. Boyer reported that CommutePA outreach staff continues to meet with local employers and organizations conducting meetings and on-site events. The outreach team has been in contact with Ashley Furniture, Bethany Childrens Home, Alvernia College, Tower Health, and Berks CareerLink.

In April, CommutePA participated in and promoted various Earth Day events. May is National Bike Month. In May is the Bike to Work week where CommutePA promotes green trips and the regional bike share program. An announcement was sent out for the Berks County group annual Bike to Work Week ride on May 17, 2024, starting around Tower Health Reading Hospital. It has been a huge success in previous years, and we are gearing up to provide an e-bike to a local law enforcement agency which this year will be the City of Reading as part of that public-private partnership.

CommutePA continues to participate in the regional bike share initiative. Keep an eye out for the new bikes that are available at and around Tower Health, Wyomissing, and other locations.

During the month of April, 272 new members joined the program, over 9,000 trips were tracked, and over 169,000 miles not driven were recorded for a savings of approximately \$113,000 as a result of using green modes of transportation.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr. Boatman stated that SCTA presented its Program of Projects to the SCTA Board for the next fiscal year. The Program of Projects will be posted to their website and it is currently available for a 30 day public review and comment. There will be a public meeting related to the BARTA portion of the program on Tuesday, June 18, 2024, at 5:00 PM at 1700 North 11th Street, Reading, PA. Mr. Piper stated that the MPO will help publicize this information on the Planning Commission’s website and through social media.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Rowe made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 2:16 PM.

Date: _____

Alan D. Piper, MPO Secretary