

READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY
JULY 11, 2024

ATTENDANCE

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Scott Vottero, PennDOT 5-0, Chair*
Nyomi Evans, PennDOT Central, Vice Chair
Alan Piper, Berks County Planning Commission, MPO Secretary
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission
Kyle Zeiber, City of Reading
Keith Boatman, South Central Transit Authority

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

Tim Krall, City of Reading
Zachary Tempesco, Reading Regional Airport Authority

*Tie-breaking vote only

OTHERS

Kerri Cutright, PennDOT 5-0
Michael Donchez, PennDOT 5-0
Gregory Downing, South Central Transit Authority
Lauri Ahlskog, South Central Transit Authority
Matthew Boyer, Commuter Services of PA
Elvin Herrera, City of Reading
Christopher Trachte
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission
Matthew McGough, Berks County Planning Commission
Melissa Lewis, Berks County Information Systems
Carl Long, Berks County Information Systems
IS Production, Berks County Information Systems

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Vottero called the meeting to order at 1:34 PM.

2. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

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

3. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MAY 2, 2024, TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Chairman Vottero asked if there were any questions or comments on the May 2, 2024, Technical Committee meeting minutes. There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: Mr. Golembiewski made a motion to approve the May 2, 2024, Technical Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Zeiber seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. RECOMMENDATION ON MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) – MPO BOUNDARIES AND COORDINATION OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING BETWEEN THE READING MPO AND LANCASTER MPO AND LEBANON MPO

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is part of a process that began in May of last year with the Urban Area boundary smoothing process as a result of newly released boundaries from the Census Bureau after the 2020 Census. The Urban Area Smoothing was approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in May 2024.

The next step in the process is to establish cooperative agreements (MOUs) between any Urban Areas that extend across the Reading MPO's area of responsibility (Berks County boundary line). The MOUs establish such things as who will be responsible for transportation planning within those Urban Areas and identify whether or not funding exchanges need to occur between the MPOs. The last time these MOUs were completed was in 2013.

We worked to update the MOUs between the Reading MPO and the Lancaster and Lebanon MPOs. Small portions of their Urban Areas extend into the Reading MPO and small portions of our Urban Area extend into their MPOs. Each MPO will retain responsibility for transportation planning within their respective MPO boundary. There is no exchange of funds due to the small and relatively equal size of the Urban Area that extends across the boundary.

A substantial portion of the Philadelphia Urban Area extends into eastern Berks County. We will be developing a new MOU with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. Once again, each MPO will retain responsibility for transportation planning within their respective MPO boundary. The Reading MPO will be getting some Surface Transportation Urban (STU) funds from Delaware Valley MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Since STU funding is based on Urban Area population, the Reading MPO will receive a percentage of the DVRPC STU allocation representing the ratio of the Philadelphia Urban Area population extending into Berks County divided by the entire (PA portion) of the Philadelphia Urban Area population. Over the four years of the FFY 2025-2028 TIP, we will

be receiving approximately \$1.34 million from DVRPC. They adopted the MOU in June 2024. However, their Chairman was not at the meeting and they are working on getting his signature. Once we receive the MOU from DVRPC, we will bring that MOU back to our Board in September 2024.

The Reading MPO is also updating an MOU with the Lehigh Valley MPO. That MOU is not available yet as their Board will not be acting on it until their August 2024 meeting. Once they act on the updated MOU, we will bring that MOU back to our Board in September 2024 as well.

Mr. Piper stated that over the past 10 years, we had an MOU with NEPA MPO for the portion of the Reading Urban Area that extended into Schuylkill County. As part of that MOU, we did have a small exchange of funds that we provided to them. Now, as a result of the re-evaluation of the Urban Areas by the Census Bureau, the Reading Urban Area no longer extends into Schuylkill County. Therefore, the MOU between us and NEPA will lapse as we are no longer required to have an MOU or transfer funds to NEPA.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that we are asking for a recommendation to the Coordinating Committee that they execute the Lebanon MPO and Lancaster MPO MOUs.

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to recommend to the Coordinating Committee the adoption of the MOUs between Reading MPO and Lancaster MPO and Reading MPO and Lebanon MPO. Mr. Boatman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

5. FFY 2023-2026 TIP E-BALLOT CONFIRMATION – WEST SHORE BYPASS PH1 FINAL DESIGN

Mr. Piper stated that at the beginning of June 2024, PennDOT requested that the Reading MPO conduct an e-ballot regarding an amendment to the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The request was to add \$19.1 million for the final design phase of the West Shore Bypass Reconstruction project to the current FFY 2023-2026 TIP. The goal was to take advantage of funding that is available now rather than wait until the new FFY 2025-2028 TIP becomes effective. The funds to be added were available from various sources.

The information was circulated to the Committees on June 13, 2024. We asked for a yes vote to approve the action. For the Technical Committee, there was a 6-0 vote in favor of the amendment. One member on the Technical Committee did not vote. What we need today is confirmation of the Technical Committee e-ballot vote.

MOTION: Mr. Golembiewski made a motion to confirm the Technical Committee e-ballot votes. Mr. Piper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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 April 23, 2024, to July 2, 2024.

- There are ten (10) Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with shifting funds for phase increase supplements, increases for recent price proposals, increase to add a study phase onto the TIP, and increases for supplements to help manage and deliver projects.
- There is one (1) Interstate Management Administrative Action – the adjustment deals with swapping funds from state funds to federal funds for the I-78 12M Emergency Detour Signal.
- There is one (1) Amendment – the adjustment deals with adding \$19.1 million for the final design phase of the West Shore Reconstruction project to the current FFY 2023-2026 TIP.

All of the modifications presented in the chart do not adversely affect the project delivery schedules or air quality conformity.

Mr. Piper stated that the study phase that funding is being added to is to investigate and recommend potential improvements along Route 183 from Solly Lane to Beyerle Hill Road which includes the intersection of Route 183 and Shartlesville Road, the intersections in Bernville Borough, and the intersection with North Heidelberg Road.

NOTE: The motion for the Amendment was carried out in agenda item #6 above.

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

Ms. Ahlskog gave an update on South Central Transit Authority’s (SCTA) requested transit Amendments/Modifications to the FFY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) from February 14, 2024, to July 1, 2024.

- There are six (6) Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with matching SCTA’s capital budget with their program of projects for the FFY 2024 funding year.
- There are no Amendments.

8. RECOMMENDATION ON SCTA FY 2025 TRANSIT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Mr. Boatman stated that the Transit Asset Management Plan (TAMP) has been updated in accordance with the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (Map-21) and

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines. The goal of the TAMP is for SCTA to reach and maintain a state of good repair for all of its capital assets through a Performance Based Planning and Programming process.

The asset classes that SCTA measures for performance measure targets are Rolling Stock, Facilities, and Equipment. Rolling Stock consists of Fixed Route Buses/Directly Operated, Shared Ride Vehicles/Directly Operated, and Shared Ride Vehicles/Purchased Transportation. Facilities consists of the buildings that SCTA manages and operates. SCTA manages 7 facilities within Lancaster and Berks County. Of those 7 facilities, SCTA manages 4 facilities within Berks County which are the Operations Center located at 11th Street in Reading, the Berks Transfer Center in Reading, Franklin Street Station in Reading, and the P&T Parking Garage in Reading. Currently, none of the 7 facilities managed by SCTA rank below a 3 on the TERM scale. The TERM scale is the five-category rating system used in FTA’s Transit Economic Requirements Model to describe the condition of an asset with 5.0 being Excellent and 1.0 being Poor. In 2024 and 2025, SCTA will be renovating the Berks Transfer Center.

Equipment consists of currently 20 pieces of equipment where each piece of equipment has a value of \$50,000 or more. All of the equipment SCTA reports on is currently in good standing.

Mr. Boatman reviewed the Performance Measure Targets

ASSET CLASS	FY 2024 PERFORMANCE MEASURE TARGETS	FY 2024 ACTUAL MEASUREMENT	PROPOSED FY 2025 PERFORMANCE MEASURE TARGETS
Fixed Route Buses/Directly Operated	0% past Useful Life Benchmark of 12 years	0% past Useful Life Benchmark of 12 years	0% past Useful Life Benchmark of 12 years
Shared Ride Vehicles/Directly Operated	0% past Useful Life Benchmark of 5 years	0% past Useful Life Benchmark of 5 years	0% past Useful Life Benchmark of 5 years
Shared Ride Vehicles/Purchased Transportation	0% past Useful Life Benchmark of 5 years	0% past Useful Life Benchmark of 5 years	0% past Useful Life Benchmark of 5 years
Facilities	0% below 3 on the TERM Scale	0% below 3 on the TERM Scale	0% below 3 on the TERM Scale
Equipment	18% past Useful Life Benchmark	14% past Useful Life Benchmark	14% past Useful Life Benchmark

Mr. Boatman stated that the action requested today by SCTA is for the Technical Committee to recommend to the Coordinating Committee adoption of the SCTA Transit Asset Management Plan FY 2025 Performance Measure Targets.

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to recommend adoption by the Coordinating Committee of the SCTA Transit Asset Management Plan Performance Measure Targets for FY 2025. Mr. Golembiewski seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

9. UPDATE ON FFY 2025-2028 TIP SUBMISSION

Mr. Piper stated that since the May 2024 Technical Committee meeting, the Reading MPO adopted the FFY 2025-2028 TIP at the May 16, 2024, Coordinating Committee meeting. The TIP and corresponding documents were finalized by staff and all required information was submitted to PennDOT on May 24, 2024. PennDOT incorporated the Reading MPO TIP into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and was circulated for public review and comment. The public review and comment period was June 18, 2024, through July 3, 2024. We did not receive any comments relating to Berks County from the state regarding the STIP. The STIP will be considered by the State Transportation Commission at their meeting on August 14, 2024. Subject to their approval, it will then be submitted to United State Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration for their endorsement and approval prior to September 30, 2024. October 1, 2024, is the beginning of FFY 2025.

10. UPDATE ON EASTERN PA FREIGHT ALLIANCE FREIGHT STUDY

Mr. Piper stated that over the past few years, we have been working with Lebanon, Lehigh, NEPA, and Lackawanna/Luzerne MPOs as the Eastern PA Freight Alliance on the development of a regional freight plan. A draft document was prepared and submitted to the Steering Committee comprised of the five MPOs. Based on feedback from them, the consultants are currently revising that draft to better align the plan recommendations to the plan goals and objectives. They want to make some of the recommendations more specific and reformat the draft document for better readability. They are also looking at some of the things they need to do to make sure the document is ADA compliant once released. The revisions to the draft document are anticipated to be completed by the end of July 2024. Once completed, the document will be circulated and be available for review by each participating MPO Boards.

As originally presented the report was a single large document. They are looking to break this down into 3 separate documents: the Plan itself, Freight Profiles for individual areas, and Appendices.

There was a certain amount of money that was set aside at the beginning of the process. The consulting firm, which is WSP, did not use all of that funding. There is about \$40,000 that is left for additional work. It was agreed by all the MPOs that some additional tasks would be considered going beyond the report development itself. Most of this related to the idea of keeping the Eastern PA Freight Alliance as a more formal organization for coordination related to freight planning across the five MPOs. Some of the things they are looking at using the remaining funds for is preparation of a website to host the Alliance

materials and plans, more organized coordination through the preparation of a draft MOU for all the MPOs to work under, and having the consultant prepare recommendations on regional Functional Classifications to ensure that the classifications relate to the outcomes of the freight planning effort. Those extra tasks have not been finalized yet. We will be considering those in future months. We will also be considering the draft MOU prior to formal adoption by the members.

With regard to adoption of the freight plan itself, once we have had a chance to review the draft, the consultant is looking to have one online presentation that is available for attendance by members of MPOs and Technical Committees from each of the five MPOs to get one consistent briefing on the report and its recommendations. Then each MPO would go through its own process to formally review and approve the final document. The intent is to have everything done by the end of the 2024 calendar year.

11. UPDATE ON LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Ms. Timochenko stated that the FFY 2027-2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) kickoff began in October of last year. As part of the LRTP update process, regulations require that we develop a Steering Committee. The regulations also identify potential participants to be included on the Steering Committee. One of those participants identified is the County Planning Commission. At yesterday's Berks County Planning Commission (BCPC) meeting, we asked the Board to nominate a Board member to participate on the LRTP Steering Committee for the Reading MPO. They made that nomination. Regulations also identify that we should have a representative from our RATS Coordinating Committee Board participate on the Steering Committee. At next weeks meeting, we will be asking the Coordinating Committee Board to nominate a Board member to participate on our LRTP Steering Committee.

The LRTP Steering Committee will provide regular input and feedback on the LRTP development process and review and comment on draft work tasks. They will also provide input and feedback on goals, objectives, and policies for the next 20 years covered by the plan. We anticipate holding our first Steering Committee meeting in August 2024. We will send out an invitation to participate on or around July 22, 2024, with a Doodle link included to hopefully get the maximum number of participants included in the first meeting. We anticipate the meetings being held virtually using Microsoft Teams and during daytime business hours of 8AM and 5PM.

Mr. Piper asked if there will also be other representatives included on the invitation. Ms. Timochenko replied that regulations recommend including representatives from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), PennDOT Program Center, PennDOT District, RATS Coordinating Committee Board, Berks County Planning Commission Board, local transit agencies, and other stakeholders with interests in the transportation planning process such as passenger rail authorities, airport authorities, freight/logistic representatives, active transportation representatives, and public service agencies.

12. PENNDOT UPDATES ON TASA/MTF AND HIGHWAY PROJECTS

Chairman Vottero gave an update on the status of TASA/MTF and highway projects.

13. 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 Abilities in Motion, Berks Community Health Center, Reading Housing Authority, Womelsdorf Library, Ashley Furniture, and PA CareerLink. CommutePA established 3 new partnerships in Berks County which include Berks County Veterans Affairs, Unique Snacks, and Penn State University Berks Campus.

Mr. Boyer stated that Reading is active in the regional bike share initiative that continues to be a collaborative effort across a number of bike shares within the 9-county CommutePA area.

The Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership (SRTP) has the contract signed to provide a regional Congestion Management Process (CMP) within the 9-county CommutePA area. This is a regional effort to allow the MPOs the ability to use a platform to build their CMPs to file with Federal Highway Administration. RATS adopted their CMP November 9, 2023. Moving forward we hope this will provide all MPOs with abundant data that can be accessed and used for the completion of their CMPs.

The CommutePA Performance Measures will be completed in a focus group this year and invitations have been sent out. The focus groups will begin meeting next week.

During the month of June, 141 new members joined the program, over 6,900 trips were tracked, and over 127,000 miles not driven were recorded for a savings of approximately \$85,000 as a result of using green modes of transportation.

14. OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr. Golembiewski stated that in March 2023 the MPO adopted and updated the Title VI Program Plan which holds the various Title VI requirements that are required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Administrative updates have been completed to that plan that reflect updated County of Berks website domain names and links and updated email addresses. Additionally, the Berks County Planning Commission no longer accepts or sends faxes so that information was removed from the Plan. Once the updates were completed, the Plan was submitted to PennDOT's Bureau of Equal Opportunity (BEO). They will be reviewing it and once approved, the Plan information will be updated on our website. In October of this year, once the FFY 2025-2028 TIP and Environmental Justice Summary are approved and take effect, some of the appendices in the Title VI Program Plan will be updated to reflect the information found

in those plans. There was no action required by either the Technical Committee or the Coordinating Committee as they are just administrative updates to the Plan.

- Mr. Piper stated that several public comments have been received throughout this meeting via the County's YouTube platform which will be addressed now.
 - Mr. Trachte commented that he was recommended to attend today's meeting by someone on Reading's Planning Commission. Additionally, for the record, people have no idea how much power this organization has over their lives. They complain about being stuck in traffic, but they don't know they can come to these meetings to fix it. Mr. Golembiewski welcomed Mr. Trachte and confirmed that these meetings are open to the public and public participation and input are welcome.
 - Mr. Trachte asked if the e-ballot was open to the general public. Mr. Piper stated that in terms of voting, the e-ballot was not for public involvement. The e-ballot was just for Committee members to make a recommendation on a specific action. That action needed to be confirmed at our meeting today and still needs to be confirmed at the Coordinating Committee meeting. The Coordinating Committee is the official body of the Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS).
 - Mr. Trachte asked why Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority (BARTA) and Red Rose Transit Authority (RRTA) do not connect. Mr. Golembiewski replied that SCTA has studied connections in the past and has found that long-range routes/connections like that would not be feasible at this time. One was attempted approximately 10 years ago between Reading and Lebanon County. It did not work out due to exceptionally low ridership. For more detailed information, please reach out to SCTA. Ms. Ahlskog stated that if Mr. Golembiewski can send the questions and information relating to SCTA to her, she will also respond to Mr. Trachte's questions and comments.
 - Mr. Trachte asked if the State Transportation Commission (STC) meeting is open to the public. Mr. Golembiewski replied that most STC meetings are publicly held and provided the link to STC's website.
 - Mr. Trachte asked if these kinds of partnerships existed for passenger rail as well as freight. (Mr. Golembiewski noted that this comment was received at the start of the Eastern PA Freight Alliance discussion.) The link to the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority (SRPRA) website was provided.
 - Mr. Trachte asked if these plans/projects need to be approved by individual municipalities prior to requesting funding or if the request for funding is before the development of the plans. Mr. Piper responded that

the plans are generated a number of different ways. They are either generated from municipal requests through the RATS organization or generated by RATS and coordinated with the municipalities. All plans, projects, and programs need to be incorporated into both the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and need to be fiscally constrained. The link to the recently approved TIP document and TIP presentation were forwarded to Mr. Trachte. Mr. Piper stated that Mr. Trachte can contact the Berks County Planning Commission directly if he has additional questions.

- Chairman Vottero, Mr. Piper, and Mr. Golembiewski thanked Mr. Trachte for his comments and participation.

15. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Golembiewski seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 2:37 PM.

Date: _____

Alan D. Piper