

DRAFT  
READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY  
MINUTES OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN-PERSON AND  
VIRTUALLY  
JANUARY 18, 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, 1<sup>st</sup> Class Townships (Cumru Township)  
Keith Boatman, South Central Transit Authority, Alternate (V)  
Dante Santoni, Jr., Reading Regional Airport Authority  
Brian Hoffa, Boroughs (Sinking Spring) (V)  
Donna Reed, City of Reading (V)

\*Tie-breaking vote only  
(V) Attended Virtually

COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

Commissioner Michael Rivera, County of Berks  
Mike Kocher, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Townships (Spring Township)

OTHERS

Vanessa Shamberg, Federal Highway Administration (V)  
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, Commuter Services of PA (V)  
Lauri Ahlskog, South Central Transit Authority (V)  
Greg Downing, South Central Transit Authority (V) (Joined at 2:05PM)  
Joe Romano, Larson Design Group (V)  
David Alas, PennDOT Central (V)  
Nyomi Evans, PennDOT Central (V)  
Wilfredo Parcon (V)  
Lynne Burns, Commissioner Santoni's Executive Assistant  
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission  
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission  
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission  
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission  
David Hunter, Berks County Planning Commission  
Matthew McGough, Berks County Planning Commission (V)  
Heather Berger, Berks County Information Systems (V)  
Carl Long, Berks County Information Systems  
IS Production, Berks County Information Systems (V)

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBER – LISHA ROWE, CUMRU TOWNSHIP COMMISSIONER AND DANTE SANTONI, JR., READING REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY

Chairman Kufro welcomed and introduced Ms. Lisha Rowe from Cumru Township as the newly appointed representative for 1<sup>st</sup> Class Townships and Mr. Dante Santoni, Jr. as the newly appointed representatives for the Reading Regional Airport Authority.

3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Piper stated that at the November 2023 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting, nominations were made for the Coordinating Committee. Those nominations were for the PennDOT District Executive, Mr. Chris Kufro, as Chairman and the Berks County Planning Commission representative, Mr. Tom McKeon, as Vice Chairman.

MOTION: Ms. Reed made a motion to elect the nominees. Mr. Tobin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

There was no other business from the floor. Ms. Timochenko stated that there was no public comment.

5. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 9, 2023 JOINT TECHNICAL/COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

Chairman Kufro asked if there were any questions or comments on the November 9, 2023 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: Mr. McKeon made a motion to approve the November 9, 2023 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

6. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 21, 2023 JOINT TECHNICAL/COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

Chairman Kufro asked if there were any questions or comments on the December 21, 2023 Special Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: Mr. Santoni made a motion to approve the December 21, 2023 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Tobin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

7. 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 November 7, 2023 to December 28, 2023.

- There are four (4) Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with phase cost increases and decreases to cover low-cost bid amounts, releasing funds from phases that were previously fully funded off the last TIP, aligning phase costs with anticipated let schedules, increases for supplements for various phases, deobligations that have been returned for reassignment, and using toll credit funds to free up state 185 funds.
- There is one (1) Statewide Administrative Action – the adjustment deals with realigning funds to make use of the statewide HSIP funds.
- There are no Amendments.

8. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF FY 24-25 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) serves as the basis for a contract between PennDOT and Berks County staff on behalf of the Reading MPO for the transportation planning work that will be conducted in FFY 2024-2025.

This UPWP is a one-year program instead of the typical 2-year program so that UPWP updates can be completed in off years from conducting updates to the TIP.

There were some minor updates to the text to include new legislation that has taken effect since the last update and updated ADA notifications and information and non-discrimination clauses per federal regulations.

Within Work Program 1 which is General Administration and Coordination, the Public Participation Plan and Limited English Proficiency Plan Review has been included for updating every two years off-cycle from the TIP. In addition, once this UPWP is adopted, we will begin starting to update the UPWP for the next two FFYs. The quadrennial Certification Review is scheduled to occur during the FFY 2024-2025 and that is reflected in this work program. Additionally, information has been included to reflect the reorganization of staff assignments, office organization and file cleanup due to the impending office relocation anticipated to be in the first quarter of 2025.

Work Area 2 which is Plans and Programs has been updated to reflect the work on the update to the current TIP and the update to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The Congestion Management Plan was just adopted but is included in this UPWP update to reflect that a review and update of that plan will occur every two years off cycle from the TIP

with the process anticipated to begin in the spring of 2025. Additionally, information has been added to reflect the transportation staff assistance to the Berks County Planning Commission for the update to the Berks County Comprehensive Plan since the LRTP serves as the transportation element to that plan.

Work Area 3 which is Data, Mapping, and Technology has been updated to include Travel Model Demand Validation (TMD). Federal Highway Administration guidance recommends running the TMD validation every ten years to ensure accurate results and the last time we did it was in 2015. A consultant will be hired to complete the TMD validation which is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2024. In addition, information has been included to reflect the work that will be done for the Functional Classification update once the Urban Area Smoothing (UA) is approved by FHWA.

Work Area 4 which is Transit Planning has been updated to reflect the coordination with South Central Transit Authority on the implementation of their Transit Development Plan which is anticipated to be adopted by their Board in February, 2024. In addition, the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan has been included here to be reviewed off cycle from the TIP and complete any necessary updates.

Work Area 5 which is Special Funded Projects has been updated to include both the Local Transportation Assistance Program (LTAP) task and a new task relating to the Increasing Safe and Accessible Transportation Options (ISATO) program. Implementation will include working with the BCPC's Joint Municipal Comprehensive Planning Program to include items such as Complete Streets policies, designation of Active Transportation facilities and networks within their municipal boundaries along with a prioritization plan. In addition, as part of the ISATO program, transportation staff will work with the City of Reading to address the recommendations of the Transit Oriented Development study being developed in conjunction with the proposed restoration of passenger rail service. We will also be working with SCTA to ensure accessibility to new transit stops as they implement their Transit Development Plan (TDP).

The coordination efforts have been documented and included in this UPWP update. The initial stakeholders meeting was held in October, 2023. There were not many comments received at that meeting and those comments were addressed immediately. The FFY 2024-2025 UPWP was sent to FHWA, Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and PennDOT for their 45-day review period prior to MPO review and approval. Several comments were received from FHWA and we worked with them to develop the ISATO implementation information in this UPWP that meets the criteria and legislation requirements.

Mr. McKeon asked how the UPWP gets evaluated for accountability throughout the year to verify that the tasks are completed. Mr. Piper stated that we submit quarterly progress reports to PennDOT that informs them of progress made and tasks completed.

**MOTION:** Mr. Tobin made a motion to approve the FFY 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

9. REVIEW/ADOPTION OF SCTA FY 2024 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AGENCY SAFETY PLAN

Mr. Boatman stated that a few updates were made to the SCTA FY 2024 Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan. Tables and data within the plan were updated to reflect FYs rather than calendar years, wording regarding COVID was removed, Safety Performance Targets were updated to reflect FY 2024, included Infectious Disease Exposure verbiage as required by FTA, and updated other language to reflect the change in position titles within the SCTA. In addition, the Appendix was updated to include the Service Improvement Suggestions Form, Near Miss Form, and SAFTI Standards.

MOTION: Mr. Santoni made a motion to adopt the SCTA FY 2024 Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan. Ms. Rowe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

10. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF RATS ANNUAL PAVEMENT AND BRIDGE CONDITION REPORT 2018-2022

Mr. Piper stated that the RATS Annual Pavement and Bridge Condition Report 2018-2022 and the RATS Annual Traffic Safety Report 2018-2022 are reports that we began producing last year. They are essentially inventory documents that provide us with information on pavement and bridge conditions and safety. These documents will be updated annually and will serve as resources for our staff and PennDOT staff as we go through and develop plans, programs and projects to understand what the current conditions are of highway pavement, highway bridges, and safety within the County.

Ms. Hain stated that the Annual Pavement and Bridge Condition Report uses data from PennDOT's Pavement and Bridge Condition Reports for the National Highway System Performance Measures. We add roadway management system data and bridge management system data for the state and local conditions in our report. The data for this report covers the years from 2018-2022. The data identifies the trends for the pavement and bridge conditions across all the Business Plan Networks over these 5 years. We also include the trends for the FHWA Performance Measures and created scorecards for both pavement and bridge condition trends. We want to be able to utilize this report as an aid in making decisions for potential transportation improvements and included data and information on Local Federal Aid road conditions and local bridge conditions. New this year to the report is the addition of a listing of both poor pavement condition segments and poor bridge condition locations in the Appendix. Also, information on current projects and planned future projects that are on the TIP that address the poor pavement or bridge locations are included in the tables in the Appendix.

Mr. Piper noted that in the Appendix, almost all of the state-owned bridges that are rated Poor have a project planned and programmed that will address the bridge condition. However, the vast majority of municipally-owned bridges that are rated Poor do not have a project planned or programmed that will address the bridge condition. One of our reactions to this was to include a municipal bridge line item on the upcoming FFY 2025-2028 TIP that

can be utilized to address some of the local municipally owned bridges. Over time, it is anticipated that additional funds will be allocated to the municipal bridge line item that will allow us to work with municipalities to address more of these poor locally owned bridges.

MOTION: Ms. Reed made a motion to approve the RATS Annual Pavement and Bridge Condition Report 2018-2022. Mr. Santoni seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

## 11. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF RATS ANNUAL SAFETY REPORT 2018-2022

Ms. Timochenko stated that the RATS Annual Traffic Safety Report 2018-2022 identifies trends and potential mitigation strategies that can be used to reduce overall traffic related crashes and fatalities and serious injuries.

The report includes information on the National Strategy on Highway Safety Towards Zero Deaths and recognizes the global effort to reduce fatalities and injuries. We included information on the Pennsylvania Strategic Highway Safety Plan and the themes it includes for progressing towards zero deaths across the state as well as the focus areas identified in the plan.

All the datasets included in the plan cover the 5-year period from 2018-2022. Similar to the scorecard in the Annual Pavement and Bridge Condition Report, there is a trend summary report that is developed. It includes a brief description or summary of the trend for the indicator identified and has trend ratings that are a visual representation of areas that are seeing improvement, remaining steady, or have declined from 2018-2022.

The plan includes potential mitigation strategies that can be used to help reduce crashes, fatalities and serious injuries which include the FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures and education and enforcement countermeasures which are generally carried out through cooperation between PennDOT and state and local law enforcement officials.

New to the Traffic Safety Report this year is the addition of a table that identifies the predominant collision type for roadway segments where more than 20 reportable crashes occurred. An additional table was added that identifies projects that are programmed on the current TIP that include elements of safety as part of the overall goal that the project aims to address.

Mr. Piper stated that we do not really have additional funds available to add projects to the TIP this year. However, we do anticipate receiving some earmark funding that will be utilized for projects that address Vulnerable Road User crashes and provide additional Intelligent Transportation System projects that aim to improve safety on Berks County roadways. We will continue to work closely with the Department in identifying projects that can utilize the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding for implementation.

MOTION: Mr. McKeon made a motion to approve the RATS Annual Traffic Safety Report 2018-2022. Mr. Hoffa seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

## 12. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF READING MPO 2024 SAFETY TARGET SETTING LETTER

Mr. Piper stated we are required to adopt Safety Performance Measures and targets. We can either agree to go along with the state's performance targets or we can develop our own. If we would choose to develop our own performance targets we would also have to develop the methodology for those Performance Measure targets.

The state establishes targets for the following Safety Performance Measures:

- Number of fatalities
- Rate of fatalities per 100 million Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT)
- Number of serious injuries
- Rate of serious injuries per 100 million VMT
- Number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries

The statewide targets show nominal increases based on increased traffic volumes but remain fairly consistent with previous targets. Similarly, the Reading MPO Supporting Values and targets show a nominal increase based on traffic volumes and other variables. We use the Annual Traffic Safety Report to plan and program projects that will aid in reaching these performance targets for the MPO.

Our recommendation is that we adopt the statewide targets for the Reading MPO.

MOTION: Ms. Rowe made a motion to adopt the statewide safety performance targets and inform PennDOT that the Reading MPO agrees to use the established PennDOT safety targets. Mr. Santoni seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

## 13. UPDATE ON FFY 2025 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROCESS

Mr. Piper stated that the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a document that we are required by federal regulations to adopt. It covers the next four FFYs from 2025-2028. The TIP update process began back in February of 2023 when the State Transportation Commission (STC) released their statewide performance report. STC had an online public forum to present the report and collect information. Throughout the balance of 2023, the General and Procedural Guidance document was developed to document the process that we are required to follow to develop the TIP. Also, Financial Guidance documentation was developed that we are required to follow. The Financial Guidance documents all the state and federal funding sources and the amounts for those sources that will be distributed to the various regions across the state.

Beginning in the summer, we began outreach to municipalities requesting recommendations for projects. We then worked with PennDOT District Office staff to match

projects with the available funding that we have in a way that supports the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the various performance measures that we are required to meet. That process all occurred over the last couple of months. The Draft TIP project listing was required to be submitted to PennDOT by the end of December, 2023.

All of the draft programs across the state have been submitted to PennDOT Central Office. Over the next several weeks, PennDOT Central Office will be meeting with all the areas to go over projects, make sure the programs are consistent, and that projects are aligned with the different priorities and programs. We will be meeting with them to go over the Reading MPO's draft program next Tuesday morning.

Once the review with the Department is complete, we will begin preparing the document and the various required components. That includes an Environmental Justice Analysis that ensures we identify and address any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its projects or policies on minority and low income populations. We are also required to do an Air Quality Conformity Analysis which means we have to analyze the network and compare that to statewide and local air quality levels that we need to meet. We have set a fairly aggressive schedule this year with the goal of having a full draft document completed by the end of February 2024. Our intent is to come back to the Technical and Coordinating Committee meetings in March with those draft documents with a request to approve circulation of those documents for public review and comment. We are anticipating holding the public comment period from the end of March to the end of April. During that time, the plans have to be made available to the public and we have to hold at least 2 public meetings.

At the conclusion of the public outreach, if there are any comments that we receive, we are required to bring those comments back to the board and have recommendations on responses to those comments. Then, subject to us successfully responding to those comments, we would be looking for recommendations to locally approve the FFY 2025-2028 TIP at our May meeting. We submit the locally approved document to the state, and then they combine the locally approved document with similar documents for each of the other planning regions across the state which is then presented to the STC usually in August. Once they review the documentation, they adopt what is known as the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). That document is then forwarded to USDOT for approval by October 1, 2024 which is the beginning of FFY 2025.

Mr. McKeon commented that in the Draft TIP funding table is a note that the letter 'e' designates economic development projects and asked which projects are considered economic development projects. Mr. Piper stated that this is a reference to projects where the funding source is discretionary that comes from the Secretary of Transportation. This is a statewide set-aside. Mr. Piper will verify what projects this covers. Mr. McKeon noted that in previous TIPs, there was money allocated to the MPO that could be used to support future economic development projects and asked whether that is still an option. Mr. Piper responded that those were Surface Transportation – Urban funds. The current funding levels limit the amount of projects we can program and limits the amount of new projects that we



can add. We can look at that as an option in future updates but it was not a consideration for this TIP.

Note: Mr. Piper followed up and the state economic development discretionary funds are being applied to US 222 North (approximately \$2.9 million) in FFY 2026 and on US 422 West Shore Bypass (approximately \$61.3 million) spread over FFYs 2027, 2028, and 2029.

#### 14. UPDATE ON EASTERN PA FREIGHT ALLIANCE REGIONAL FREIGHT STUDY

Mr. Piper stated that we as the Reading MPO are working with a number of other MPOs (Lebanon MPO, Lehigh Valley MPO, Lackawanna-Luzerne MPO, and Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance MPO) which covers everything from Lebanon County through Berks to the Delaware River and up to Scranton and Wilkes Barre in doing a regional freight study. The regional freight study looks at all things related to freight movement. A consultant has been gathering and analyzing data and is preparing a report that identifies freight-related issues, makes recommendations regarding planning and programming projects to address needs that support that freight movement, and recommends policies that we may want to adopt related to freight movement.

Mr. Piper stated that a regional stakeholders meeting for Berks County was held on January 4, 2024. It is one of the last phases of the data collection required for the study. The consultant will go back now and begin writing the recommendation section of the plan. Things are progressing and when more information is available, we will update the Board. Ultimately, the regional freight study will then be incorporated into the next update of our Long Range Transportation Plan.

#### 15. UPDATE ON PASSENGER RAIL

Mr. Piper stated that at the end of December 2023, the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority's (SRPRA) proposal for the corridor from Reading through Chester and Montgomery Counties to Philadelphia was selected by the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) under the Corridor Identification and Development Program. That program will provide up to \$500,000 of additional planning study funding to begin doing detailed analysis of the corridor and working with the host railroad(s) and potential providers to develop a proposal. A scope of work was prepared for that study and a consultant was selected by the Authority for gathering the material and coordinating between SRPRA and FRA. Additional funding will become available for further planning and design as the Authority advances through this process. There is no timetable yet, but there is progress being made on the restoration of passenger rail service.

#### 16. MAJOR PROJECT STATUS REPORT

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

## 17. COMMUTER SERVICES UPDATE

Mr. Boyer stated that the Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership (SRTP) will be celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024.

From the outreach perspective, Commuter Services has brought on board both the Berks Latino Work Force Development Corporation and the PA Career Link in Berks and both signed on as formal community partners.

Commuter Services outreach staff continues to meet with local employers and organizations conducting meetings and on site events. The outreach team has been in contact with Alvernia, Berks Library System, the City of Reading, Reading Health Systems, and Ashley Furniture.

Commuter Services is still waiting for a response regarding SRTPs application for TASA funds to develop a Safe Routes to School Program.

During the month of December, 73 new members joined the program, over 7,500 trips were tracked, and over 127,000 miles not driven were recorded for a savings of approximately \$80,000 as a result of using green modes of transportation.

## 18. OTHER BUSINESS

- Ms. Shamberg stated that there are some currently open discretionary grant programs. RAISE has \$1.5 billion available and funds a wide range of surface transportation projects. Applications are due February 28, 2024. The Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program is a new program that is anticipated to open in 2024. There is \$45 million available for active transportation networks and spines. Finally, the Safe Streets for All Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) will be made available in February 2024. This discretionary grant program is for planning projects and implementation projects that improve safety.
- Ms. Ahlskog stated that the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final public meeting for the South Central Transit Authority's (SCTA) Transit Development Plan (TDP) was held in December 2023. The final draft recommendations for the route alignments and service schedules were presented. There have been some changes from the initial scenario recommendations that were presented at the August meetings. The changes were based on public input, SCTA and BARTA staff input, and on the road field testing. One change that is not in the final recommendations is microtransit implementation at this time. It is still a type of service that is being evaluated and microtransit could potentially be utilized for future service in the Birdsboro area. All of the information on the final routes and maps are available on BARTA's website. The TDP should be wrapped up within the next month and, once approved, SCTA will be implementing the plan and recommendations during this year.

19. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Reed made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Santoni seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 2:23 PM.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Alan D. Piper, MPO Secretary

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