

DRAFT
READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN-PERSON AND
VIRTUALLY
MARCH 21, 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) (V)
Keith Boatman, South Central Transit Authority, Alternate (V)
Dante Santoni, Jr., Reading Regional Airport Authority
Commissioner Michael Rivera, County of Berks
Donna Reed, City of Reading (V)

*Tie-breaking vote only
(V) Attended Virtually

COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

Brian Hoffa, Boroughs (Sinking Spring)
Vacant, 2nd Class Townships

OTHERS

Joseph Rudderow, Berks County Controller
Michael Donchez, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Jennifer Ruth, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Scott Vottero, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Lawrence Peterson, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Alan Piper, Berks County Planning Commission, MPO Secretary
Jeff Rai, PennDOT Central (V)
Matthew Boyer, CommutePA (V)
Lauri Ahlskog, South Central Transit Authority (V)
David Alas, PennDOT Central (V)
Nyomi Evans, PennDOT Central (V)
Lynne Burns, Commissioner Santoni's Executive Assistant (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 (V)
Ashley Showers, Berks County Planning Commission (V)
Matthew McGough, Berks County Planning Commission
Melissa Lewis, Berks County Information Systems (V)
Carl Long, Berks County Information Systems
Malcom Townes, Berks County Information Systems (V)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kufro called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM.

2. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Mr. Piper stated that Mr. Michael Kocher (Spring Township) submitted his resignation as 2nd Class Township representative on the RATS Coordinating Committee Board as of March 20, 2024, due to work conflicts minimizing his ability to participate on the Board and attend RATS meetings. Mr. Piper passed the information along to Chairman Kufro and the Berks County Commissioners. Mr. Piper thanked Mr. Kocher for his time and participation for serving on the Board while he was able.

Mr. Piper stated that he will provide the information needed to the Commissioners to begin the process to solicit a replacement for the 2nd Class Township representative seat on the Coordinating Committee. A letter will be sent to all of the 2nd Class Townships in Berks County. The 2nd Class Townships will submit recommendations to the MPO and those recommendations will be forwarded to the Board of Commissioners who will appoint a representative based on the recommendations provided.

3. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 18, 2024, COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

Chairman Kufro asked if there were any questions or comments on the January 18, 2024, Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: Mr. Rivera made a motion to approve the January 18, 2024, Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Santoni seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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

Mr. Piper stated that at the last meeting, the Coordinating Committee approved submitting the FY 24-25 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to PennDOT. PennDOT has reviewed and approved the UPWP. PennDOT has forwarded the FY 24-25 UPWP to both the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for their review and approval. One approved by both FHWA and FTA, PennDOT will prepare an agreement between the County and PennDOT that will include provisions for funding for the transportation planning staff work for the next year from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

5. 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 December 29, 2023, to February 28, 2024.

- There are eleven (11) Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with aligning phase costs with anticipated let dates, increases for phase supplements and right-of-way needs, increases to address utility relocation costs, increases to cover recent estimates to address work orders and to address adjustments that resulted from low bid savings on projects.
- There is one (1) Statewide Administrative Action – the adjustment deals with adding funds for emergency repairs to the Carsonia Avenue bridge over Antietam Creek project as a result of the flood that occurred on July 9, 2023.
- There are four (4) Interstate Management Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with aligning phase cost increases and adding 2021 Accelerated Innovation Deployment Demonstration grant funding to the I-78 Shartlesville to Hamburg Resurfacing project. The I-176 Cold in Place project is a recycling project for approximately \$5.6 million to improve the roughness index of the roadway and ramps.
- There are no Amendments.

Mr. Piper stated that Administration Action #11 deals with adding state funds to create a study phase for Route 183 in the Bernville area. The study will extend from Solly Road just north of Bernville Borough through the Shartlesville Road intersection and Bernville to Beyerle Hill Road. The study will identify safety and traffic concerns and make recommendations for addressing them. PennDOT has already solicited proposals from consultants and are currently in the process of reviewing them.

Mr. Piper stated that relating to the addition of the Route 183 study phase in the Bernville area, Chairman Kufro asked PennDOT's consultants to look at the overall Route 183 corridor to identify potential low-cost improvements that may be able to be completed in the short-term. A number of safety issues were identified and some of those recommendations will be incorporated into a maintenance paving project that is scheduled for the Route 183 corridor next year. We will continue to look for additional resources and funding to implement recommended safety improvements along the Route 183 corridor.

Mr. Piper stated that the next step is to schedule a meeting with municipalities along the Route 183 corridor to review some of the safety recommendations and update them on the status of the study. Chairman Kufro confirmed that a meeting with municipalities will be scheduled in the near future and an update has been provided to Representative Jozwiak.

Mr. Rivera asked what the time frame is for the Route 183 study phase. Chairman Kufro responded that the consultant has been selected and that a study phase can take approximately 9 months to one year to complete. Chairman Kufro stated that once the study has been completed, those results can be presented to this Coordinating Committee.

6. 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 are eight (8) Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with realigning funds from 2023 to 2024 to align with anticipated grant funding for the projects identified.
- There are no Amendments.

Mr. Boatman noted that MPMS #114372, the Purchase of 3 Paratransit Vans, has been placed on hold for now due to Federal Transit Administration (FTA) raising a question regarding 5307 funds that are set aside for this project but not currently identified on the TIP for use towards this project. There will be a correction made to this project and brought back to the Committee later.

7. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATIONS ON DRAFT FFY 2025-2028 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) ELEMENTS FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

Mr. Piper stated that MPO staff has been working with PennDOT to develop the Draft FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). At the end of last year, the Committee approved the Draft TIP Project List for the Reading MPO. In January, staff reviewed the Draft TIP Project List with PennDOT. Since then, staff has been working on gathering all of the data and information to put together a draft document that can be reviewed and commented on by the public during the required public comment period.

Mr. Piper commended both Department staff and MPO staff for their efforts in gathering and providing information to develop this Draft TIP document. In previous TIP development years, the document was approved and adopted in July allowing for more time to gather information and develop a document. However, this generally meant that the Reading MPO was one of the last MPOs to adopt a TIP that was then sent for statewide approval and inclusion in the state's Twelve-Year Program (TYP). We made an effort during this TIP cycle to adjust our schedule to develop a Draft TIP document that could be approved and adopted by the MPO before the state's deadline for inclusion in the TYP. As a result of this change, we are now one of the first MPOs to develop a Draft TIP document for public comment and approval during this cycle instead of one of the last MPOs. We greatly appreciate District and Department staff for their efforts in development of the public narratives and providing that information to us quickly.

Using the information provided by PennDOT, Michael Golembiewski was able to run the Travel Demand Model and provide the information to the consultant, Michael Baker International Inc., to run the Air Quality (AQ) Analysis. The Interagency Consultation Group (ICG), including the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), PennDOT, and FHWA review the proposed projects to ensure that

they are consistent with Air Quality regulations. The AQ Report found that the FFY 2025-2028 TIP conforms to applicable air quality plans and conformity requirements.

As another element of the Draft TIP process, Devon Hain prepared the Environmental Justice (EJ) Summary document. The Draft Environmental Justice Summary uses the standard data sets provided by PennDOT and is applied to the County in terms of impacts on minorities and low-income populations. Based on the data included in the EJ Analysis there are no disproportional impacts on any of the identified EJ communities.

The Draft TIP document itself is a testament to Amanda Timochenko who spent the vast majority of the last 3 to 4 weeks updating the information in the document and putting everything together. We have never been this far along in the document development process this early in the update cycle.

There is a checklist in the General and Procedural Guidance that identifies the information that is required to be included for public review and comment. Mr. Piper reviewed the checklist items and their locations within in the draft document which include:

- TIP Development/Project Selection Process Documentation can be found on page 13.
- TIP Development Timeline can be found on page 168. The TIP Development Timeline documents everything that has been done so far as part of the TIP development process and projects the remaining TIP development actions that will be completed as part of the process.
- Transportation Performance Management (TPM) (PM1, PM2, PM3) Narrative Documentation can be found beginning on page 16. This information discusses the various Performance Measures relating to safety, bridge and pavement conditions, and system performance. It includes information on the measures and targets and identifies specific projects that address those Performance Measures.
- Transit Performance Measures Narrative Documentation can be found in both Section 2 beginning on page 28 and Section 3 beginning on page 101.
- Highway and Bridge TIP Listing with Public Narrative can be found beginning on page 35. It lists all of the narratives for highway and bridge projects. At the end of Section 2, we include the maps that identify where all the TIP projects are located throughout Berks County. We start with the Countywide map and then include 5 additional regional maps for better viewing. We do not map the projects that are line items or projects that have multiple locations as part of one MPMS number such as bridge preventative maintenance projects. However, in Section 2 on page 31 we do include a web address link to the Draft TIP project map on PennDOT's OneMap which does identify those projects that have multiple locations associated them.
- Public Transportation TIP Listing with Public Narrative can be found beginning on page 105.
- Interstate TIP Listing with Public Narrative (regional portion) can be found beginning on page 85. There are only 2 Interstate projects in Berks County that are identified on the Interstate TIP listing at this time.

- TIP Financial Constraint Chart can be found on page 244. It shows the difference between what Financial Guidance allotted for funding versus the funding amounts that are programmed. The Financial Constraint Chart also shows the additional funds that were included in the program related to state highway spike funds which are used in 2026 and 2028 for the US 222 Widening and West Shore Bypass Phase I. There is additional Federal STP spike funding for the same 2 projects. There is HSIP Safety Spike in 2025 for High Friction Surface Treatments. There is a line item for local in 2027 and 2028 that relate to municipal bridges. And we are showing an Other-Federal line item in FFY 2027 and 2028 for the West Shore Bypass which we are anticipating applying for discretionary federal funding to cover that gap when we get there.
- EJ Analysis and Documentation can be found on page 295 which summarizes the information found in the Draft Environmental Justice Summary document. The entire EJ Analysis document will also be available for public review and comment.
- Air Quality Conformity Determination information can be found of page 247 which summarizes the information found in the Draft Air Quality Conformity Report. The entire AQ Conformity Analysis Report will also be available for public review and comment.
- Public Comment Period Advertisement can be found beginning on page 326. The draft of the advertisement is included in the Draft TIP and is subject to approval by the Coordinating Committee. Pending the Committee's approval, the public advertisement will be sent out to our contacts and mail lists notifying them of the public review and comment period. The timeline for the public review and comment period will begin on March 24, 2024, and end on April 23, 2024. There will be two public meetings. The first meeting will be a hybrid meeting on April 8, 2024, and the second will be an in-person meeting on April 11, 2024. In addition to these two public meetings, Mr. Piper will present the Draft TIP at both the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) Business and Community Advocacy Council (BCAC) meeting and the Northeast Berks Chamber of Commerce meeting.
- Title VI Policy Statement can be found beginning on page 293 and includes the statement in both English and Spanish.
- Memorandum of Understanding TIP Revision Procedures can be found beginning on page 191. The Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) included in the Draft TIP is an agreement between RATS MPO, PennDOT and SCTA regarding the TIP revision procedures.
- List of Major Projects Implemented or Delayed can be found beginning on page 33 and identifies those projects on the current TIP (FFY 2023-2026) that are either completed or have been delayed. While this information is not required for the public comment period, but is required for the final TIP, we thought there might be value in providing it as part of the public review and comment period.

At the end of the 30-day review and comment period, we will review any comments that were received and make recommendations to the Coordinating Committee on responses to those comments and on the draft documents. We will review those responses to comments

with the Board at the May 16, 2024 Coordinating Committee meeting prior to adopting the draft TIP documents. Following the approvals, the documents will be forwarded to the state for review by the State Transportation Commission (STC) for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which will then be submitted to USDOT. We anticipate USDOT review and approval in September 2024 prior to the STIP and regional TIPs becoming effective on October 1, 2024.

The action that we are asking for today is for the Committee to approve initiation of the public review and comment period. There will be an executive summary which will be the PowerPoint presentation that is used for the public meetings that will be posted to our website that will be available in both English and Spanish.

MOTION: Mr. Rivera made a motion to approve the release of the RATS Draft FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program, Draft Air Quality Conformity Report, and Draft Environmental Justice Summary documents for public review and comment. Mr. Santoni seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

8. UPDATE ON 2024 LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM COURSES

Mr. McGough stated that the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) provides free training and technical assistance to municipalities, municipal road crews, and police officers throughout the area on various topics from snow removal to public works worker safety. There are 7 classes scheduled to be held in person in Berks County this year with additional virtual classes available on the LTAP website. Information regarding these sessions and instructions for registration are available on the Berks County Planning Commission website and please feel free to forward to any potential participants that might be interested in participating in the classes.

9. MAJOR PROJECT STATUS REPORT

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

10. COMMUTEPA UPDATE

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 Brentwood Industries, DoubleTree by Hilton in Reading, F.M. Browns, Manpower, Unique Snacks, Ashley Furniture, and PA CareerLink.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr. McGough stated that the 2024 PennDOT Connects Municipal Outreach Session for District 5-0 will be held in-person and with a virtual attendance option on May 16, 2024 from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM at the PennDOT District Office in Allentown (1002 Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA 18101) or via Go-To-Webinar. The PennDOT Connects program

is a proactive approach to engaging municipalities regarding transportation-related planning and an opportunity to share resources and ideas for transportation projects, planning, and funding.

- Mr. Piper stated that PennDOT and the Turnpike Commission has approved continuation of the Work Zone Speed Safety Camera Program. That will continue now as a regular program versus a pilot program. It has been successful in reducing speeding and crashes within work zones.
- Mr. Piper stated that there are several upcoming virtual plans displays that PennDOT will be hosting. There is a virtual plans display for a bridge replacement project on Donat Road over Stony Run Creek in Albany Township. A second virtual plans display is for the first phase for the programmed improvements to State Hill Road which include the proposed construction of roundabouts where State Hill Road intersects with the driveway to Berkshire Mall and the intersection of Woodland Road and widening State Hill Road to Colony Drive to 5 lanes.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Rivera made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Santoni seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 1:56 PM.

Date: _____

Alan D. Piper, MPO Secretary