

DRAFT
READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY
SEPTEMBER 5, 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
Tim Krall, City of Reading

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

Zachary Tempesco, Reading Regional Airport Authority

*Tie-breaking vote only

OTHERS

Kenana Zejcirovic, Federal Highway Administration
Kerri Cutright, PennDOT 5-0
Michael Donchez, PennDOT 5-0
Lawrence Peterson, PennDOT 5-0
Jeff Rai, PennDOT Central
Lauri Ahlskog, South Central Transit Authority
Matthew Boyer, Commute PA
Elvin Herrera, City of Reading
Amanda Timochenko, 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 1:33 PM.

2. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Mr. Piper stated that there was no business from the floor. Mr. Golembiewski followed by stating that there was no public comment.

3. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JULY 11, 2024, TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Chairman Vottero asked if there were any questions or comments on the July 11, 2024, Technical Committee meeting minutes. There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: Mr. Golembiewski made a motion to approve the July 11, 2024, Technical Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Boatman 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 LEHIGH VALLEY AND DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (PHILADELPHIA MPO)

Mr. Golembiewski stated that at the previous coordinating committee on July 18th a recommendation was made to execute the MOUs between the Reading MPO and Lancaster MPO and the Reading MPO and Lebanon MPO. Since that meeting those MOUs have been executed.

Mr. Golembiewski continued that the MOU between RATS and DVRPC will include an allocation of STU funding from DVRPC's annual TIP equal to 0.3564% or approximately \$1.34 million over the four years of the recently adopted FFY 2025-2028 TIP.

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

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to recommend to the Coordinating Committee the adoption of the MOUs between Reading MPO and Lehigh Valley MPO and Reading MPO and DVRPC MPO. Mr. Zeiber seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

5. RECOMMENDATION ON MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) – METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR BERKS COUNTY, PA BETWEEN THE READING MPO, SCTA AND PENNDOT

Mr. Piper stated that this item was originally added to the agenda with the thought it could be forwarded to the Coordinating Committee for their signing but since then we have received additional comments from FHWA regarding some modifications that should be incorporated into the MOU. Instead of forwarding this along hastily, Mr. Piper recommends tabling this item, make the necessary revisions, and then bring it back before the board at a future meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to table action on the transit coordination MOU at this time. Mr. Golembiewski 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 July 3, 2024, to August 28, 2024.

- There are ten (10) Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with increases to complete constructability reviews, increases needed for right-of-way acquisition, increases needed to adjust recent phase estimates, increases to address low bid and accrued unbilled costs, adjustments to advance funds to align with parent projects, increases to address inspections, and there were some realignments in there where they were realigning funds prior to the 4232 shut down.
- There are two (2) Interstate Management Administrative Actions – on the interstate system.
- There is one (1) Statewide Administrative Action – the Kick Lane extension Multi-Modal project adding the construction phase for it.

None of the modifications presented in the chart adversely affect the project delivery schedules or air quality conformity.

Mr. Piper asked if the projects are fully funded under the newest TIP, which will be adopted by end of month. Mr. Donchez stated that they were. Mr. Piper wanted to remind the committee that the MTF funds did not use to show up on the TIP but we do show them there now as a reference but they come from a completely different funding source.

7. UPDATE ON EASTERN PA FREIGHT ALLIANCE FREIGHT STUDY

Mr. Piper stated that over the past few years, we have been working with our partners in the Eastern PA Freight Alliance (EPFA) and consultants on the development of a regional freight plan. We are very close to having a complete draft available for circulation. There are some final edits under way and Mr. Piper anticipates within the next couple of weeks he will be forwarding a copy of the draft to the committees.

Mr. Piper stated that the intent of the EPFA is that at some point in October there will be a regional presentation by the consultant to all of the MPOs to give an overview of the plan itself. Each MPO will then adopt the plan based on their schedules.

Mr. Piper stated that the tentative date for the multi-MPO presentation is October 9th, 2024. As soon as we get the final edits the draft plan will be circulated. Mr. Piper stated that the goal would be to review and have approval of the entire freight plan by the end of this year or at the very beginning of the next calendar year.

Mr. Piper followed up with how the EPFA is in the process of formalizing the alliance. of the five (5) MPOs. The consultant is currently preparing an MOU for consideration on how we will work together in both administration and collaboration among the MPOs. That MOU will probably not be in front of the board until early 2025.

Mr. Vottero inquired if the multi-MPO presentation is going to be in-person and how that would be done.

Mr. Piper stated that it will be a virtual presentation.

8. UPDATE ON LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Timochenko provided an update on the development of the FFY 2027-2050 LRTP. Ms. Timochenko stated that the LRTP Steering Committee met on August 19th, 2024. At the meeting the structure of RATS was reviewed and staff explained what the LRTP is, and the necessary components required by Federal regulations were reviewed. Also reviewed were the previous LRTP components, the federal planning factors, and some of the state and local transportation plans and programs that the LRTP must be consistent with. The anticipated LRTP timeline was reviewed with the steering committee as well as their roles and responsibilities.

Ms. Timochenko stated that the next step in the development of the updated LRTP will be to conduct initial public outreach to review the goals and objectives of the current LRTP and develop updated goals and objectives based on that feedback to meet the future transportation needs of Berks County. Ms. Timochenko stated that this public input process will help us develop the framework for the FFY 2027-2050 LRTP.

Ms. Timochenko stated that staff has started scheduling the regional public outreach sessions. Ms. Timochenko stated that once the dates, locations and times are set, more information will be forthcoming via email, website, flyers, and social media.

A survey was also developed and reviewed by the steering committee. This will be distributed along with the meeting announcements, at the meetings, and be available on the County website.

Ms. Timochenko stated that PennDOT guidelines recommend establishing a digital hub for information. We will be developing a tab on the planning commission website that will provide the public with information pertaining to the status of the LRTP development. This hub will provide an LRTP development timeline, public meeting results, the survey, and any interim sections of the document as they become available.

Ms. Timochenko stated that the steering committee agreed to meet virtually every quarter to go over any materials or information that has been put together for their review and input. The next meeting of the steering committee will be November 18th from 1-2:30PM. It is

anticipated that they'll go over the input from the public meetings and go over any potential changes to goals and objectives.

9. UPDATE ON TRAVEL DEMAND MODEL VALIDATION

Mr. Golembiewski prepared a presentation regarding the Travel Demand Model for the committee. Mr. Golembiewski stated that this is one of the tools we use for TIP and the LRTP development. Mr. Golembiewski wanted to give an update on it because it is not something we do very often. His presentation included background on what the model is, how it works, and how we use it. Mr. Golembiewski stated that the main reason for using a model is to make sure that transportation projects do not have adverse effects on air quality.

Mr. Golembiewski informed the committee of why we validate and our next steps in doing a new validation. Mr. Golembiewski stated that FHWA guidance calls for a validation every ten years. The last time of our validation was 2015. We are starting a new validation this month and it is anticipated to last about 6 months.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the initial estimate for cost for a validation was between \$75,000 and \$85,000. Mr. Golembiewski stated that this cost will not be incurred by the County but rather PennDOT is paying for it out of their existing air quality contract with their consultant. Mr. Golembiewski thanked PennDOT for their support.

10. PENNDOT UPDATES ON BRIDGE AND TASA / MTF PROJECTS

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

11. COMMUTE PA UPDATE

Mr. Boyer reported that Commute PA outreach staff continues to meet with local employers and organizations conducting meetings and on-site events. These included Berks Technical Institute, Ashley Furniture, Berks CareerLink, PSU Berks, the Reading Housing Authority, Berks County Adult Probation, and Berks Community Health.

Mr. Boyer stated that they just wrapped up the Clash of CareerLinks competition that enables the CareerLink locations staff and clients to use the Commute PA tracking system to monitor and track their green trips in a friendly competition. They also just wrapped up car-free month and soon will be moving into a college month promotion for students and faculty at the colleges within the nine-county region that CommutePA covers.

During the month of August, 142 new members joined the program, over 7,400 trips were tracked, and over 150,000 miles not driven were recorded for a savings of approximately \$100,000 by using green modes of transportation.

Mr. Boyer went on to discuss how they are moving forward with a regional Congestion Management Process and gave a thanks to Mr. Golembiewski regarding his participation in the kick-off meeting workshop on August 23rd. Mr. Boyer explained that this is a regional initiative for the MPOs in the SRTP region. With continued input from the regional MPOs, this process will continue over the next couple of months.

Mr. Boyer discussed some future endeavors. One of them being a program for using Safe Streets for All funding for a Sober Ride Home Program. This program would provide free rides home using Uber for persons over 21 that may have had too much to drink. More information on that will be available at a later time.

Mr. Boyer finally updated the committee about how the SRTP board of directors authorized an opportunity to seek a nationwide accreditation through the Association for Commuter Transportation. The application package for this program is nearing completion and on target to be filed before the end of October 2024.

12. REVIEW / DISCUSSION OF RATS LOGO CONCEPTS

Mr. Piper noted that not long ago the committee was presented with some conceptual ideas for a RATS logo. Since then, some edits/changes have been made and he presented them to the committee to get their feedback. The ultimate goal would be to whittle it down to three recommendations to forward to the coordinating committee for their approval.

Mr. Piper went through all of the conceptual designs and described each one of them. He then asked the committee to provide feedback, if any.

Mr. Krall added that it looks like all but the first few have the actual county as part of the logo. He likes that because it defines the area of our operations/jurisdiction. Mr. Krall said he would lean towards one of the ones that had the county in it.

Mr. Krall asked if there was any benefit to mimicking some other MPO logos? Mr. Piper stated that one thing he wanted to do but has not gotten around to yet is to put together what others are doing to compare to what we are looking at.

13. OTHER BUSINESS / PUBLIC COMMENT

- Mr. Piper stated that he had one item under other business. It being an announcement regarding the PA House Transportation Committee holding an informational meeting on investing in transit. The meeting will be held in Reading City Council Chambers tomorrow morning (September 10) with different legislators and a number of different presentations. Discussion will include items related to passenger rail, local transportation needs, and Berks County priorities. Ultimately, looking at the needs of the region and working on ways to provide funding to meet those needs.

- Mr. Golembiewski addressed a question from one of the YouTube viewers regarding the Model Validation. Mr. Golembiewski stressed that we are watching for questions on topics and are always looking for public input.

14. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Vottero made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Krall seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 2:40PM.

Date: _____

Alan D. Piper

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