

READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY
JANUARY 4, 2024

ATTENDANCE

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

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

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

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

*Tie-breaking vote only

OTHERS

Vanessa Shamberg, Federal Highway Administration
Michael Donchez, PennDOT 5-0
Jennifer Ruth, PennDOT 5-0
Greg Downing, South Central Transit Authority
Matthew Boyer, Commuter Services of PA
Nyomi Evans, PennDOT Central
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission
Ashley Showers, Berks County Planning Commission
Matthew McGough, Berks County Planning Commission
Heather Berger, 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. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Piper stated that at the November 2023 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting, nominations were made for the Technical Committee. Those nominations were for the Assistant District Executive for Design as Chairman and the PennDOT Central Office representative as Vice-Chairman.

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to elect the nominees. Mr. Golembiewski seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

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

4. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 9, 2023 JOINT TECHNICAL/COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

Chairman Vottero 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. Golembiewski made a motion to recommend approval by the Coordinating Committee of the November 9, 2023 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Alas seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

5. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION OF MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 21, 2023 JOINT TECHNICAL/COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

Chairman Vottero 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. Golembiewski made a motion to recommend approval by the Coordinating Committee of the December 21, 2023 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Boatman 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 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 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.

7. REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION 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 affect 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.

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to recommend approval by the Coordinating Committee of the FFY 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program. Mr. Golembiewski seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

8. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION 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. Piper made a motion to recommend approval by the Coordinating Committee of the SCTA FY 2024 Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan. Mr. Golembiewski seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

9. REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION ON DRAFT RATS ANNUAL PAVEMENT AND BRIDGE CONDITION REPORT 2018-2022

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 have a project planned and programmed that will address the bridge condition. However, the vast majority of municipally owned bridges 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 some of these poor locally owned bridges.

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to recommend approval by the Coordinating Committee of the RATS Annual Pavement and Bridge Condition Report 2018-2022. Mr. Alas seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

10. REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION ON DRAFT RATS ANNUAL SAFETY REPORT 2018-2022

Ms. Timochenko stated that the draft 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. As well, 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. Piper made a motion to recommend approval by the Coordinating Committee of the RATS Annual Traffic Safety Report 2018-2022. Mr. Golembiewski seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

11. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION ON READING MPO 2024 SAFETY TARGET SETTING LETTER

Mr. Piper stated we are required to adopt safety performance measures. We can 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 have to also develop the methodology for those performance measure targets.

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.

We are required to make a recommendation on these Performance Measure targets back to the Department by the end of January 2024. As in the past, staff recommends the MPO adopt the state's Performance Measure targets.

MOTION: Mr. Golembiewski made a motion to recommend approval by the Coordinating Committee of informing PennDOT that the Reading MPO agrees to use the established PennDOT Safety Targets. Mr. Piper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

12. UPDATE ON SCTA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mr. Boatman stated that there were three public meetings held to present the various scenarios for BARTA service routes and gather public input on the scenarios. SCTA received feedback from those meetings and their consultant is currently evaluating the feedback and developing the final scenarios for BARTA. Once the final scenarios are developed, the information will be available again for public input and comment and will then be presented to the SCTA Board.

Mr. Piper asked if the anticipated SCTA Board approval and adoption of the SCTA Transit Development Plan is in February 2024. Mr. Boatman confirmed that the goal is to have the SCTA Board adopt the plan in February 2024. After SCTA Board adoption, the scenarios will be implemented over time as feasible.

13. UPDATE ON FFY 2025 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Piper stated that at the end of December, 2023, the draft TIP Highway, Bridge, and Transit Project Listing was submitted to PennDOT. We will be meeting with the Department later this month to review the proposals in detail with PennDOT Central Office.

Once the review with the Department is complete, we will begin the Air Quality analysis and start preparing the document. Once the document is prepared, we are anticipating bringing that document to the MPO in March 2024 for approval of the draft and to begin the public comment period. Our goal is have a final FFY 2025-2028 TIP prepared and ready for adoption at the May MPO meetings.

14. UPDATE ON EASTERN PA FREIGHT ALLIANCE REGIONAL FREIGHT STUDY

Mr. Piper stated that a regional stakeholders meeting 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 information for the plan. Things are progressing and when more information is available, we will update the Board.

15. UPDATE ON PASSENGER RAIL

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

16. PENNDOT UPDATES ON TASA/MTF AND HIGHWAY PROJECTS

Chairman Vottero gave an update on the status of Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside projects, Multimodal Transportation projects, and highway projects.

17. COMMUTER SERVICES UPDATE

Mr. Boyer stated that the Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership (SRTP) will be celebrating its 20th 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

- Mr. Piper stated that under federal regulations the Annual List of Federally Obligated Projects was completed and submitted for FFY 2023. This lists those projects that federal dollars were committed to for highway, bridge and transit projects. The information was posted on the Berks County Planning Commission website on December 29, 2023. Copies of the report were submitted to FHWA, FTA, and PennDOT.
- Mr. Piper stated that the Urban Area Smoothing mapping has yet to be approved by FHWA. Ms. Shamberg stated that FHWA is waiting on a revised shapefile from PennDOT. Once those revisions are received, it will go back out for technical review with anticipated approval in January or February of 2024.
- Ms. Shamberg stated that the Bridge Investment Program is currently open for applications with planning applications due February 19, 2024, construction project applications due March 19, 2024. The RAISE grant program is currently open for surface transportation projects with grants available up to \$25 million. The RAISE grant application deadline is February 28, 2024. There is also anticipated to be a new NOFO coming out this year for an Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program for

connecting active transportation networks and spines. That program will have \$45 million available in grant funding opportunities.

19. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Boatman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Piper seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 2:42 PM.

Date: _____

Alan D. Piper, MPO Secretary