



MEMORANDUM

(610) 478-6300
FAX: (610) 478-6316

Berks County Planning Commission
Berks County Services Center
633 Court Street, 14th Floor
Reading, PA 19601-4309

TO: Berks County Planning Commission
FROM: Amanda Timochenko, Transportation Planner II
RE: Reading Area Transportation Study LRTP Steering Committee Nomination
DATE: July 10, 2024

The Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Berks County. RATS facilitates the regionally, performance-based planning process that serves as the basis for spending state and federal transportation funds for improvements to streets, highways, bridges, public transit, bicycle and pedestrian networks allocated to Berks County. Federal and state regulations guide the transportation planning process which ensures a series of interrelated plans and programs are developed that align with federal and state objectives. As part of the transportation planning process, MPOs are required to establish Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTP) that guide transportation and land use decisions over a minimum 20-year horizon.

The Reading MPO FFY 2027-2050 Long Range Transportation Plan update began in October 2023. To initiate the update process, state regulations required that a 30-month kickoff meeting be held with PennDOT Central, PennDOT District 5-0, FHWA, FTA, and other transit agencies as necessary to review the methodology, work tasks, and schedule for the LRTP update process. This meeting was held on October 12, 2023, with MPO staff, District 5-0 staff, PennDOT Central staff, FHWA, and SCTA in attendance.

Federal regulations require that MPOs work cooperatively, continuously, and comprehensively with state and public transportation operators in the development of LRTPs. State regulations further the federal regulations by requiring that MPOs establish a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee should be comprised of representatives from the RATS Coordinating Committee Board, Berks County Planning Commission Board, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), PennDOT Program Center, PennDOT District, South Central Transit Authority, and other stakeholders with interests in the transportation planning process such as passenger rail authorities, airport authorities, freight/logistics representatives, active transportation representatives, and public service agencies.

The Steering Committee will provide regular input and feedback on the LRTP development process and will review/comment on draft work tasks. In addition, the Steering Committee will provide input and feedback on goals, objectives, and policies for the next 20 years covered by the plan.

The next step in the Reading MPO FFY 2027-2050 LRTP development process is to establish the LRTP Steering Committee. The first LRTP Steering Committee meeting is anticipated to be held in August 2024. Invitations to participate on the Steering Committee will be sent out July 22, 2024, with a Doodle Poll link included to establish the best meeting date and time for the majority of participants. The meetings will be held virtually using Microsoft Teams during office hours between 8AM and 5PM. The commitment to this task would be limited to seven or eight meetings scheduled over approximately an 18-month period that would conclude upon LRTP adoption by the RATS

Coordinating Committee in May 2026.

Action

The Berks County Planning Commission transportation planning staff serves as staff to the Reading MPO. As such, MPO staff is requesting that the Berks County Planning Commission members nominate a Board member to participate on the RATS LRTP Steering Committee.

www.countyofberks.com/planning

Reading Area Transportation Study

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c/o Berks County Planning Commission
Berks County Services Center
633 Court Street, 14th Floor
Reading, PA 19601-4309

To: Reading Area Transportation Study Coordinating Committee
From: Amanda Timochenko, Transportation Planner II
Re: **FFY 2027-2050 Long Range Transportation Plan Steering Committee Nomination**
Date: July 18, 2024

The Reading MPO FFY 2027-2050 Long Range Transportation Plan update began in October 2023. To initiate the update process, state regulations required that a 30-month kickoff meeting be held with PennDOT Central, PennDOT District 5-0, FHWA, FTA, and other transit agencies as necessary to review the methodology, work tasks, and schedule for the LRTP update process. This meeting was held on October 12, 2023, with MPO staff, District 5-0 staff, PennDOT Central staff, FHWA, and SCTA in attendance.

Federal regulations require that MPOs work cooperatively, continuously, and comprehensively with state and public transportation operators in the development of LRTPs. State regulations further the federal regulations by requiring that MPOs establish a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee should be comprised of representatives from the RATS Coordinating Committee Board, Berks County Planning Commission Board, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), PennDOT Program Center, PennDOT District, South Central Transit Authority, and other stakeholders with interests in the transportation planning process such as passenger rail authorities, airport authorities, freight/logistics representatives, active transportation representatives, and public service agencies.

The Steering Committee will provide regular input and feedback on the LRTP development process and will review/comment on draft work tasks. In addition, the Steering Committee will provide input and feedback on goals, objectives, and policies for the next 20 years covered by the plan.

The next step in the Reading MPO FFY 2027-2050 LRTP development process is to establish the LRTP Steering Committee. The first LRTP Steering Committee meeting is anticipated to be held in August 2024. Invitations to participate on the Steering Committee will be sent out July 22, 2024, with a Doodle Poll link included to establish the best meeting date and time for the majority of participants. The meetings will be held virtually using Microsoft Teams during office hours between 8AM and 5PM. The commitment to this task would be limited to seven or eight meetings scheduled over approximately an 18-month period that would conclude upon LRTP adoption in May 2026.

Action

The Reading MPO staff requests that the Coordinating Committee nominate a Board member to participate on the LRTP Steering Committee.

Reading MPO FFY 2027-2050 Long Range Transportation Plan Steering Committee Invitation

Your organization has been identified as a candidate to serve on the Reading MPO LRTP Steering Committee.

The Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS), the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Berks County, has initiated an update to its current FFY 2023-2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The LRTP identifies socioeconomic and environmental trends affecting travel, the current state of the County transportation network, and provides recommendations to address current and future needs of the transportation system in Berks County. The primary focus of the plan is to maintain and improve the current transportation system by making better use of existing highway, bridge, and transit facilities while seeking to improve safety, reduce traffic congestion, reduce energy consumption, and reduce motor vehicle emissions. The LRTP helps direct transportation and land use decisions over a minimum 20-year horizon.

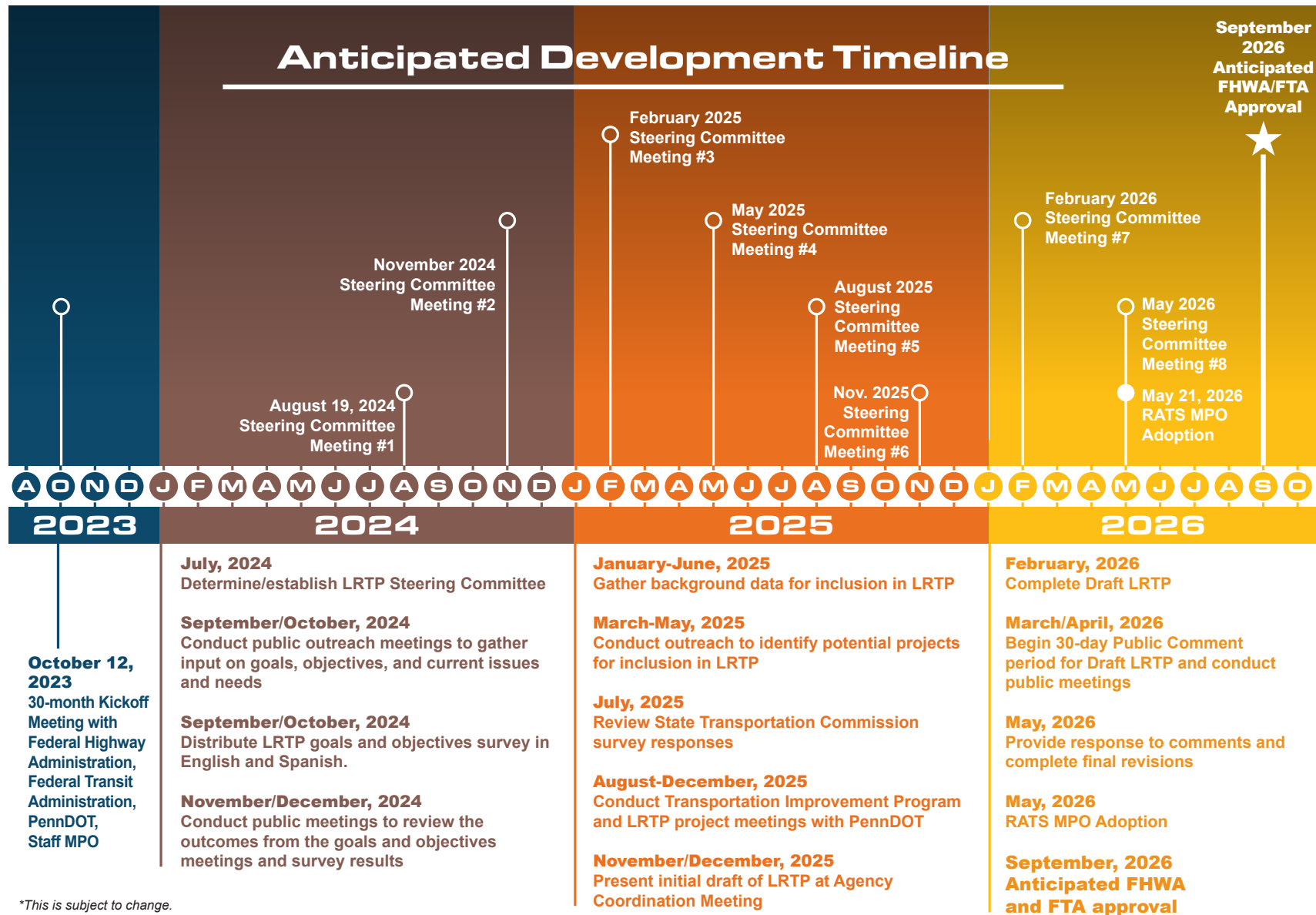
Federal and state regulations require that a Steering Committee be established to provide regular input and feedback on the LRTP development process and review/comment on draft work tasks. The Steering Committee is recommended to consist of representatives from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), 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. The Steering Committee will provide input and feedback on goals, objectives, and policies for the next 20 years covered by the plan. If you or another representative of your organization elect to participate in this process, we estimate that the commitment to this task would be limited to seven or eight daytime (between 8AM and 5PM) virtual meetings using Microsoft Teams scheduled over approximately an 18-month period that would conclude upon LRTP adoption in May 2026.

We would like to hold the first LRTP Steering Committee meeting in August 2024. Please let us know if you are willing to participate on the LRTP Steering Committee by completing a Doodle Poll (<https://doodle.com/meeting/participate/id/dwRO0G8b>) by no later than July 31, 2024. Upon receipt by participants, a virtual meeting invitation will be sent out via email no later than August 2, 2024. During our initial meeting, we will determine a meeting schedule for the rest of the project duration, review the roles and responsibilities of the LRTP Steering Committee, and identify next steps in the LRTP development process.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at atimochenko@berkspa.gov.

We look forward to meeting with you and working with you throughout the development of the Reading MPO FFY 2027-2050 LRTP.

RATS FFY 2027-2050 Long Range Transportation Plan



**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #1
AUGUST 19, 2024, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Attendance:

Amanda Timochenko (BCPC staff)	Michael Donchez (PennDOT District 5-0)
Michael Golembiewski (BCPC staff)	Ed Burns (Burns Logistics Specialists)
Alan Piper (BCPC staff)	Lisha Rowe (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member)
Lauri Ahlskog (South Central Transit Auth.)	Nick Raio (PennDOT Central Office)
Scott Vottero (PennDOT District 5-0)	David Mattes (BCPC Board Member)
Stephanie Quigley (Abilities in Motion)	Donna Reed (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member)
Chris Kufro (PennDOT District 5-0)	Elaine Schaefer (Schuylkill River Greenways NHA)
Ron Young (PennDOT District 5-0)	Zachary Tempesco (Reading Reg. Airport)
Ashley Showers (BCPC staff)	Matthew McGough (BCPC staff)
David Hunter (Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority)	

Meeting Notes:

Ms. Timochenko started the meeting at 1:02 PM. She welcomed everyone and screen shared a list of attendees. All attendees introduced themselves, their affiliation, and what they hoped to gain from serving on the Steering Committee.

Ms. Timochenko next screen shared a PowerPoint presentation (see attachment at the end of these notes).

She described the organizations participating in the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee participants represent a diverse group of organizations with interests in the future of the transportation system. She mentioned that staff has reached out to our local Spanish speaking organization for representation but have not yet received a response. Efforts will continue to seek representation from the local Spanish speaking community on the Steering Committee. In addition, Ms. Timochenko will continue to seek participation from organizations representing low-income persons.

Ms. Timochenko described the Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) and the Committee structure.

Ms. Timochenko explained what the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is along with some of the necessary items to be included under federal requirements; planning horizon and update

process; performance measures; and serving as the foundation for the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The next few slides detailed the LRTP Plan Components, by Chapter.

Chapter 1 is the Introduction. This provides the context for why the plan is done and its relationship with other federal, state, and local plans. The **Vision Statement** is included in this chapter: *The Reading Area Transportation Study will provide and maintain a balanced, multimodal transportation system that will safely and efficiently move goods and people.*

Chapter 2 contains the background Information, including demographics, economics, environmental integration, and resiliency.

Chapter 3 is the State of the System. Individual sections examine Roads and Bridges, the Congestion Management Process, Safety and Security, Transit, Freight, Non-motorized Transportation, Aviation, and Issues & Needs.

Chapter 4 is the recommendations of the plan. These include Goals/Objectives/Strategic Performance Measures, Project Prioritization, Project & Financial Planning, Travel Demand Modeling, and Air Quality Conformity.

Contained in the Appendix is documentation of the Public Participation Process, Amendment Procedures, and detailed tables/descriptions of the Highway and Transit Program Funding assumptions and calculations.

There are ten (10) Federal Planning Factors that must be incorporated into the LRTP:

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvement and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.
- Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation.
- Enhance travel and tourism.

The LRTP must be consistent with state and local transportation plans and programs.

- Statewide plans applicable to long-range transportation planning include (but are not limited to): Statewide LRTP, Comprehensive Freight Movement Plan, State Rail Plan, Active Transportation Plan, Transportation Asset Management Plan, Regional Operations Plans, Extreme Weather Vulnerability Study, and the Strategic Highway Safety Plan.
- RATS developed plans and programs that must be incorporated into the LRTP include (but are not limited to): Berks County Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, the Congestion Management Process, System Condition Reports (annual Pavement & Bridge and Safety), Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, SCTA's Transit Development Plan, the FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program and included Environmental Justice Summary and Air Quality Conformity Analysis, Public Participation Plan and Limited English Proficiency Plan, and the Title VI Program Plan.
- Berks County developed plans and programs applicable to long-range transportation planning include (but are not limited to): the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Update, the Greenway, Park & Recreation Plan, Imagine Berks Economic Development Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan, Solid Waste Management Plan, and the Reading Airport Authority Strategic Master Plan.

Ms. Timochenko reviewed the anticipated LRTP development timeline:

- October 2023 – 30-month Kickoff Meeting
- July/August 2024 – Establish Steering Committee
- September/October 2024 – Public Outreach Meetings
- November 2024 – June 2025 – Gather background information
- March-May 2025 – Gather public input on issues and needs (in coordination with State Transportation Commission [STC] public outreach on the State's Twelve—Year Program Update)
- July 2025 – Review STC survey responses
- August-December 2025 – TIP and LRTP project meetings with PennDOT
- November/December 2025 – Present at Agency Coordination Meeting (ACM) meeting
- February 2026 – Complete Draft LRTP
- March/April 2026 – Begin 30-day public comment period and conduct public meetings
- May 2026 – Response to comments
- May 2026 – Anticipated RATS Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Adoption
- September 2026 – Anticipated Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approval

Ms. Timochenko reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee. These include:

- Advise on federal and state regulations to ensure compliance.
- Provide system analysis / data.
- Assist in project selection and prioritization.

- Assist in providing cost estimates for new needs.
- Provide technical assistance on public transportation service operations and needs.
- Review components of the plan throughout plan development and provide input and recommendations.
- Assist in public outreach efforts.

The next step in the LRTP development process will be initial public outreach. Staff will conduct in-person meetings in each of the Berks County Planning Commission's (BCPC) five (5) Planning Regions in the County. An additional meeting will be held virtually. This initial outreach would be used to gather input on the Goals and Objectives in the current LRTP (FFY 2023-2045), along with gaining knowledge on current transportation issues experienced by residents and businesses.

A survey will be available in English and Spanish as part of the initial public outreach. Ms. Timochenko screen shared a draft of the survey (survey attached). She reviewed the proposed questions for inclusion in the survey and asked for any questions/comments.

- Mr. Donchez recommended including a question regarding teleworking as it has changed commuting patterns and has implications on transportation funding for roads and bridges as taxes on fuel are a funding mechanism for transportation infrastructure. All agreed to include the question in the survey.
- Mr. Golembiewski asked if the survey was going to be translated into Spanish and available to Spanish-speaking constituents. Ms. Timochenko answered that it would be translated, and we would work with the local Hispanic Center to reach out to the Spanish-speaking community.
- Mr. Burns asked in the MS Teams group chat: "Who gets the Survey / How is it Delivered?" Multiple BCPC staff answered that we currently use multiple methods including direct emails with links, the BCPC website, Facebook (it was noted that Facebook is the only social media platform presently available to County staff), and printed copies available in our office. Additionally, local news media would be sent a press release.
- Ms. Showers asked if the LRTP addresses the issue of agricultural equipment on roadways and bridges. Ms. Timochenko responded that in the survey an objective for Goal #3 (*Economic Development: Invest in projects that strengthen the ability of Berks County commerce to access national and international trade markets and support regional economic development and tourism opportunities.*) can be added regarding the movement of agricultural equipment on the transportation system. Mr. Mattes commented that in Berks County farming is an economy in and of itself.
- Ms. Showers inquired if an interactive mapping feature would be included as part of the public outreach survey. Ms. Timochenko responded this survey is to set the framework for the Goals and Objectives in the LRTP which will guide the development of the LRTP going forward. We will look to incorporate an online mapping feature that can be used to identify transportation issues later in the development process as we get more 'project specific' in plan development.

- Mr. Burns asked about a launch date for the survey, and how we distribute the survey to the public. Ms. Timochenko responded that it would be released sometime in September. We need to first identify public meeting dates and locations, advertise the public meetings, and also get the survey translated into Spanish.
- Mr. Burns inquired about survey participation from the public outside of Berks County. Since the draft survey has a question regarding zip code, there was concern about someone from outside the County completing the survey. Staff acknowledged that there was no way to completely guarantee that only Berks County residents completed the survey, but filtering by zip code should still yield acceptable results. We are aware that there are always margins of error in surveys.
- Mr. Mattes volunteered to use his network of contacts to help forward the survey. Ms. Timochenko thanked Mr. Mattes and requested that all Steering Committee members would be willing to do the same.
- Ms. Timochenko read an email from Ms. Kenana Zejcirovic (Federal Highway Administration representative, unavailable to attend the meeting). Ms. Zejcirovic made two recommendations. One was to specify which questions were ‘required’ to be answered. All agreed. Her second recommendation was to add a general question that she’s seen in other LRTP surveys: If you could instantaneously make one change (big or small) to the transportation system without concern for cost or other potential obstacles, what would it be? All agreed that such a question could yield interesting answers and should be included.
- Ms. Timochenko asked if there were any additional questions/comments regarding the survey. None were received.

The Steering Committee’s anticipated meeting schedule was the final topic of discussion. It was proposed to meet quarterly, starting with today’s meeting, through Plan adoption in May 2026. Ms. Timochenko asked the group if they would prefer to either schedule each meeting individually or use a consistent schedule. After brief discussion it was concluded that the Steering Committee would meet quarterly on the 3rd Monday from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM. All meetings would be held virtually using Microsoft Teams.

A final call for general questions/comments was placed; none were received. Ms. Timochenko thanked all for their time today and their willingness to participate over the next several months. She finished by announcing the next meeting date: Monday, November 18, 2024, beginning at 1:00 PM, via MS Teams. The meeting concluded at 2:18 PM.

*Prepared by,
Michael D. Golembiewski
Transportation Modeler*

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Reading Area Transportation Study

Long Range Transportation Plan Goals and Objectives Survey

The Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS), the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Berks County, is updating its current Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The LRTP helps direct transportation and land use decisions over a 20-year horizon. As part of the initial process, we are asking for your input on the goals and objectives identified in the current plan ([County of Berks - 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan \(berkspa.gov\)](https://berkspa.gov/berks-2045-long-range-transportation-plan)). The goals and objectives provide the framework for the plan and provide insight on future issues and needs of the Berks County transportation network. Your responses will help us adapt our goals and objectives to the needs of Berks County residents and travelers.

1. What is your zip code?
2. Do you telework (work from home)?
 - a. All of the time
 - b. Some of the time
 - c. Never, I travel to my place of work
3. What transportation issues does your neighborhood currently experience? (Select all that apply)
 - a. Congested roads
 - b. Lack of connectivity (limited number of ways to get to where I want to go)
 - c. Lack of sidewalks or poorly maintained sidewalks
 - d. No bicycle lanes or paths
 - e. Lack of public transportation options
 - f. Other
4. What roadways or bridges in your area do you currently consider problematic and tell us why?
5. What is your primary way to travel?
 - a. Drive alone
 - b. Walking
 - c. Biking
 - d. Public transit
 - e. Carpooling
 - f. Aviation
 - g. Other
6. Your decision on your primary way to travel is determined by: (Select all that apply)
 - a. Reliability
 - b. Accessibility
 - c. Location

- d. Cost
 - e. Availability
 - f. Other
7. **Vision Statement: The Reading Area Transportation Study will provide and maintain a balanced, multimodal transportation system that will safely and efficiently move goods and people.** Do you agree that the Vision Statement accurately identifies what we should be trying to achieve for our transportation system over the course of this plan?
- a. Agree
 - b. Neutral
 - c. Disagree
 - i. Why do you disagree with the Vision Statement?
8. **Goal 1: Keep travelers safe and secure, no matter the mode of transportation.** Do you agree that goal 1 is a good goal for our transportation system?
- a. Agree
 - b. Neutral
 - c. Disagree
 - i. Why do you disagree with goal 1?
9. What should we do to achieve goal 1? (Select all that apply)
- a. Reduce the number, frequency, and severity of crashes on our highway system through proper analysis of the transportation system and implement projects to address safety issues for all users (PM1).
 - b. Work closely with municipalities, PennDOT and SCTA/BARTA to ensure the safe interaction of vehicles, transit, and bicyclists/pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.
 - c. Increase public awareness of construction zone safety hazards for workers and users.
 - d. Evaluate proposed development plans for transportation safety issues during both the county review and PennDOT's Highway Occupancy Permit processes.
 - e. Educate the public on future transportation projects and changes that may impact safety.
 - f. Other
10. **Goal 2: Maintain and improve the transportation system and services we enjoy today where financially feasible.** Do you agree that goal 2 is a good goal for our transportation system?
- a. Agree
 - b. Neutral
 - c. Disagree
 - i. Why do you disagree with goal 2?
11. What should we do to achieve goal 2? (Select all that apply)
- a. Minimize maintenance costs of roadways and bridges through proper routine maintenance planning utilizing PennDOT's Transportation Asset Management Plan (PM2).

- b. Improve the effectiveness of the existing transportation system and services.
- c. Implement a variety of methods to improve the flow of traffic during peak travel times.
- d. Use available transportation funding to maintain a state of good repair for all systems.
- e. Major roadway widening or relocation should only be considered if efforts to improve capacity and safety of existing roadways can not meet desired service levels.
- f. Reduce congestion, improve air quality, and increase the reliability of the transportation system (PM3).
- g. Develop a full range of public transportation options using available funding.
- h. Other

12. **Goal 3: Invest in projects that strengthen the ability of Berks County commerce to access national and international trade markets and support regional economic development and tourism opportunities.** Do you agree that goal 3 is a good goal for our transportation system?

- a. Agree
- b. Neutral
- c. Disagree
 - i. Why do you disagree with goal 3?

13. What should we do to achieve goal 3? (Select all that apply)

- a. Provide multiple modes of convenient transportation to tourist destinations.
- b. Provide regional bicycle, pedestrian, bus, and rail routes (when feasible/available).
- c. Study implementable solutions that will speed the movement of materials, goods, and people.
- d. Ensure that major activity centers are designed to accommodate a range of transportation modes.
- e. Increase the region's global and national competitiveness by improving and enhancing regional freight infrastructure.
- f. Support the Reading Regional Airport Authority in strengthening the use of the airport for both business and commercial aviation activities.
- g. Support the efforts of the newly created Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority to reestablish passenger rail service between Reading and Philadelphia.
- h. Coordinate with agricultural community to identify and address obstructions to the movement of equipment and products.
- i. Other

14. **Goal 4: Give travelers a variety of well-designed transportation choices that are in good condition.** Do you agree that goal 4 is a good goal for our transportation system?

- a. Agree
- b. Neutral
- c. Disagree
 - i. Why do you disagree with goal 4?

15. What should we do to achieve goal 4? (Select all that apply)

- a. Support projects that expand the county trail and sidewalk network.
- b. Support projects that expand the public transportation network.

- c. When designing roadways, include bicycle and pedestrian paths and transit stops where applicable and feasible.
- d. Support Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs such as ridesharing, using public transportation, walking, biking, or working from home.
- e. Other

16. **Goal 5: Enhance the performance of the county transportation system in environmentally sustainable ways that increase resiliency to both climate change and vulnerability.** Do you agree that goal 5 is a good goal for our transportation system?

- a. Agree
- b. Neutral
- c. Disagree
 - i. Why do you disagree with goal 5?

17. What should we do to achieve goal 5? (Select all that apply)

- a. Maintain the county's air quality attainment status for both ozone and fine particulates.
- b. Work closely with federal, state, municipal and private entities to implement alternative fuels use (i.e. electric, natural gas) throughout our region.
- c. Continue coordination with appropriate agencies to protect and provide resiliency for critical transportation infrastructure against disaster by identifying vulnerable assets and prevention strategies through an updated, current hazard mitigation plan.
- d. Work with all local, regional, state, and federal organizations and agencies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential negative impacts from planned projects.
- e. Assist in identification of potential environmental mitigation issues by acquiring, creating, and updating, as needed, geographic information system data layers for use by the implementing agencies and sharing them in a readily accessible format to municipalities.
- f. Work with PennDOT to implement best management practices and mitigation strategies on transportation projects.
- g. Other

18. Are there other goals in addition to the first five goals that you would like to see considered for inclusion in the LRTP?

19. If you could instantaneously make one change (big or small) to the transportation system without concern for cost or other potential obstacles, what would it be?

20. Any additional comments?

Questions 21-24 will help us to understand more about our residents' opinions based on differing demographic data. These questions are optional.

21. What is your age?

- a. Under 25
- b. 25-34

- c. 35-44
- d. 45-54
- e. 55-64
- f. 65-74
- g. 75+
- h. Prefer not to answer

22. What is your gender?

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Prefer not to answer

23. What is your race/ethnicity?

- a. White
- b. Black or African American
- c. Hispanic/Latino
- d. Asian
- e. American Indian and Alaskan Native
- f. Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- g. Two or more races
- h. Prefer not to answer

24. What is your annual household income?

- a. Less than \$30,000
- b. Between \$30,000 and \$50,000
- c. Between \$50,000 and \$100,000
- d. Between \$100,000 and \$250,000
- e. Above \$250,000
- f. Prefer not to answer

Thank you for your time and participation!

**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #2
NOVEMBER 18, 2024, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Attendance:

Amanda Timochenko (BCPC staff)	Michael Donchez (PennDOT District 5-0)
Michael Golembiewski (BCPC staff)	Ed Burns (Burns Logistics Specialists)
Alan Piper (BCPC staff)	Lisha Rowe (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member)
Lauri Ahlskog (South Central Transit Auth.)	Nick Raio (PennDOT Central Office)
Scott Vottero (PennDOT District 5-0)	David Mattes (BCPC Board Member)
Alex Roche (Greater Reading Chamber Alliance)	Donna Reed (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member)
Keith Boatman (South Central Transit Auth.)	Elaine Schaefer (Schuylkill River Greenways NHA)
Ron Young (PennDOT District 5-0)	Kenana Zejcirovic (FHWA)
Ashley Showers (BCPC staff)	Matthew McGough (BCPC staff)
David Hunter (Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority)	Devon Hain (BCPC staff)
Nyomi Evans (PennDOT Central Office)	

Meeting Notes:

Ms. Timochenko started the meeting at 1:01 PM. She welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

Ms. Timochenko began by reviewing six LRTP Public Outreach meetings. Four were held throughout the County between October 1 and October 10; one for eastern Berks on October 16th was cancelled due to lack of registration; and a virtual meeting was held on October 15th. In total there were 45 registrants (not including staff) and 25 actual participants. She reviewed the content of the public meetings and summarized the comments received. **(Editors Note: Comments received at the Public Meetings can be viewed in the meeting notes from each meeting.)**

Ms. Timochenko then reviewed the results of the Public Survey. Overall statistics regarding the returned surveys include:

- Roughly 1/3 telework to some extent, while those that did not primarily drove alone
 - Access and location were primary reasons to drive alone
- Congested roadways and lack of bicycle accommodations were primary concerns;
- Major roadways with specific concerns noted included PA 12 and PA 183, US 422 and US 222

It was noted that, at the meetings, most responses pertained to text changes for enhanced readability. Some of those changes included using common synonyms for more ‘advanced’ language i.e., Resiliency.

There were Survey responses regarding the Vision Statement. One notable response suggested switching the text position of ‘goods’ and ‘people’.

Goal #1: Include an objective that references the need for Emergency Responder access? Define the ‘modes’ we consider within the Goal. Ms. Timochenko stated that future iterations of the Goals and Objectives will include efforts to make the transportation planning process more understandable to people that do not encounter it every day.

Goal #2: Ms. Timochenko led a discussion on funding and how it is allocated, including discretionary grants. Survey respondents noted that some goals and objectives seem contradictory. She explained how we work to achieve balance in funding and project selection.

Goal #3: Many respondents noted that this Goal is very wordy and suggested splitting into two separate goals; one focused on local/regional issues and one focused on more widespread issues. In the Chat, our FHWA representative agreed.

Goal #4: This was the least-commented on goal. A discussion regarding sidewalks in general, unconnected developments and unmaintained sidewalks occurred. While the LRTP clearly supports sidewalks, their placement is largely a function of mandates contained in municipal Land Development and Zoning ordinances.

Goal #5: Most of the comments on this Goal – and the attached Objectives – focused on condensing to make more concise. There was discussion over the political ‘push’ toward electrification of the vehicle fleet and the need for electric charging infrastructure to be able to handle it. The Commonwealth’s NEVI Plan was discussed.

Question regarding making one change regardless of cost: This survey question highlighted more current issues and needs vs. “grandiose” changes:

- Necessary studies and resultant changes along the PA 183 corridor between US 222 and I-78
- Finishing US 222 North
- Locating a possible interchange on US 222 near Stoudt’s Ferry Bridge Road
- Removing/regulating truck traffic on local roads
- Better/more availability of public transportation, particularly in the rural areas
- Better/more connections between modes of transportation including more Park and Ride lots
- Intersection improvements at PA 724 and Gibraltar Road
- Improvements to Shartlesville Road
- Overall improvements to sections of US 422 throughout the County, including the planned US 422 West Shore Bypass reconstruction
- Improvements to PA 12 (Pricetown Road)
- Necessary improvements to the US 422/PA 10/Lancaster Ave. intersection

Ms. Timochenko that the next Steering Committee meeting will have rewritten Goals and Objectives for review. A final call for general questions/comments was placed; the following were received:

- (Chat) Mr. Burns stated that this was a good recap of the survey responses
- Ms. Ahlskog mentioned that SCTA/BARTA does have Park and Ride lots but she is unfamiliar with where they all are and will research further
- (Chat) Mr. Burns questioned how Lottery proceeds 'cover' elderly public transportation. Mr. Boatman explained which services are and are not covered by PA Lottery funds.
- (Chat) Mr. Young placed a web link to PennDOT-maintained Park and Ride lots in the Chat.

Ms. Timochenko outlined the next steps that staff will be undertaking. As data in the current LRTP are updated, they will cover the 2019-2024 time frame. Background data updates will be occurring and will take time. There will be another round of Public Meetings in February/March 2025, possibly in conjunction with the STC's Twelve Year Program update.

Ms. Zejcirovic asked if FHWA/FTA will have an opportunity to review the draft LRTP prior to final Public Input in early 2026? Ms. Timochenko said yes.

Ms. Timochenko thanked all for their time today and announced the next meeting date which is presently scheduled for Monday February 17, 2025. That date coincides with the Presidents Day Holiday and some people including County staff are not working that day. She asked for consensus to move the meeting to Monday, February 24, 2025, beginning at 1:00 PM, via MS Teams. Most attendees concurred. The meeting concluded at 1:46 PM.

*Prepared by,
Michael D. Golembiewski
Transportation Modeler*

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #3
FEBRUARY 24, 2025, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Attendance:

Amanda Timochenko (BCPC staff)	Michael Donchez (PennDOT District 5-0)
Michael Golembiewski (BCPC staff)	Ed Burns (Burns Logistics Specialists)
Lawrence Peterson (PennDOT District 5-0)	Lisha Rowe (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member)
Lauri Ahlskog (South Central Transit Auth.)	Nick Raio (PennDOT Central Office)
Scott Vottero (PennDOT District 5-0)	David Mattes (BCPC Board Member)
Alex Roche (Greater Reading Chamber Alliance)	Donna Reed (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member)
Keith Boatman (South Central Transit Auth.)	Elaine Schaefer (Schuylkill River Greenways NHA)
Ron Young (PennDOT District 5-0)	Ronnique Bishop (FHWA)
Ashley Showers (BCPC staff)	Matthew McGough (BCPC staff)
David Hunter (Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority)	Devon Hain (BCPC staff)
Nyomi Nonnemaker (PennDOT Central Office)	Chris Kufro (PennDOT District 5-0)
Stephanie Quigley (Abilities in Motion)	

Meeting Notes:

Ms. Timochenko started the meeting at 1:01 PM. She welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

(Slide 2) **Summary of Public Meetings & Outreach** Ms. Timochenko began by giving a brief overview of the series of LRTP Public Outreach meetings held throughout the county between October 1 and October 15th. In total there were 45 registrants (not including staff) and 26 actual participants, along with 15 Survey Responses received. Today's discussion is the result of the comments received at those meetings. **(Editor's Note: Slides reviewed by Ms. Timochenko can be accessed here)**. Ms. Timochenko then reviewed the following slides which detailed the results of the comments received and staff's responses.

(Slide 3) **Vision Statement** Showed the proposed rewording of the Vision Statement. All agreed with the proposal.

(Slide 4) **Goal 1** No proposed changes; all agreed initially. Mr. Hunter proposed changing "no matter" with "regardless of". Agreement was made on "...secure for all modes of...".

(Slide 5) **Goal 1 – Objective** Showed the proposed rewording of the Objective which condenses the original statement and addresses Performance Measures but does not affect what it says. All agreed with the proposal.

(Slide 6) **Goal 1 – Objective** Reduces the word count of the statement without materially changing the meaning, and also leaves it more encompassing. All agreed with the proposal.

(Slide 7) **Goal 1 – Objective** Removes the word “hazards” as it is implied in the statement. All agreed with the proposal.

(Slide 8) **Goal 1 – Objective** The proposed rewording consolidated the objective; however, the group wanted a slight modification to change “...plans and identify...” to “...plans to identify...”. All agreed with the reworded Objective and the modification.

(Slide 9) **Goal 1 – Objective** Initially there were no changes proposed. Mr. Burns commented that the objective as written could inadvertently be pointing out ‘lower safety’.

Recommendation was made to change the wording to “...that increase safety awareness”. All agreed with the proposed amendment.

(Slide 10) **Goal 1 – NEW OBJECTIVE** Ms. Timochenko read the proposed new Objective to be added. A recommendation was made to consolidate the wording to “...efficient emergency vehicle access where...”. All agreed with the proposed change and the overall addition of the new Objective.

(Slide 11) **Goal 2 – Objective** Slight rewording was proposed. Mr. Burns recommended changing “fiscal constraints” to “budget”. The group decided to keep “fiscal constraints” as it is the terminology used across transportation agencies and in guidance documents. All agreed.

(Slide 12) **Goal 2 – Objective** Slight rewording was proposed. Question regarding the meaning of “effectiveness” within the context of this statement was asked. After some discussion, “effectiveness” was changed to “efficiency”. No other comments were received, and all agreed with the proposed rewording.

(Slide 13) **Goal 2 – Objectives** No changes were proposed. All agreed.

(Slide 14) **Goal 2 – Objective** Slight rewording was proposed. Suggestion was made to replace “utilizing” with “using”. All agreed.

(Slide 15) **Goal 2 – Objective** This was proposed for removal as it duplicates many other goals/objectives. All agreed to remove it.

(Slide 16) **Goal 3 – Objective** The overall goal was determined to be excessively wordy and proposed to be condensed. All agreed with the proposed rewording.

(Slide 17) **Goal 3 – Objective** Slight rewording was proposed. “People” placed before “Freight”, and “freight” to replace “materials, goods”. Ms. Showers recommended a further rewording, “Implement best practices that will enable the efficient movement of people and freight”. All agreed with Ms. Showers’ recommendation.

(Slide 18) **Goal 3 – Objectives** There were originally no proposed changes. It was recommended to remove the words “newly created” from the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority goal, since the Authority has been in existence for three years. All agreed.

(Slide 19) **Goal 3 – Objective** Minor rewording proposed, substituting “Promote” for “Provide”. No comments were received.

(Slide 20) **Goal 3 – Objective** The proposal had two parts: Rewording the original statement, and also moving this Objective from Goal 3 to Goal 4. After some discussion, all agreed with both changes.

(Slide 21) **Goal 3 – NEW OBJECTIVE** Adds a new Objective related to the implementation of the newly-adopted Eastern PA Freight Alliance’s Regional Freight Plan. All agreed with adding.

(Slide 22) **Goal 4 – Objective** No changes were proposed. All agreed.

(Slide 23) **Goal 4 – Objectives** No changes were originally proposed. Mr. Golembiewski recommended substituting “accommodations” for “paths” in the third goal to avoid the restrictive nature of the current wording. The Objective from Goal 3 (slide 20) was proposed to replace the first and second Objectives due to duplication/repetition. All agreed with the proposed changes.

(Slide 24) **Goal 5 –** This goal needed significant rewording due to overall difficulty in how it read. The proposed rewording was deemed to be just as difficult to read. Several suggested modifications were discussed at length. The final suggestion was to break the overall Goal into one that was smaller, with some of the content turned into individual Objectives that support the revised Goal. It was finally decided that staff would revise this Goal as suggested to state “Enhance the County transportation system to address environmental impacts.” The remaining wording from the proposed Goal will become a new Objective that states “Identify transportation system assets that are vulnerable to natural hazards and continue coordination with appropriate agencies to develop protection and recovery strategies through hazard mitigation planning.”

(Slide 25) **Goal 5 – Objectives** There were originally no proposed changes. Mr. Golembiewski suggested amending the Air Quality Objective to be more consistent with the current status: Maintain the County’s Air Quality attainment status for fine particulates and improve the marginal nonattainment status for Ozone. All agreed with the proposed changes.

(Slide 26) **Goal 5 – Objective** The Objective was proposed for rewording to consolidate it. All agreed with the proposal. This Objective will be combined with the new Objective created from the remaining portion of Goal 5 that became a new Objective.

(Slide 27) **Goal 5 – Objective** The Objective was proposed for minor revision for clarification. Ms. Showers suggested a full rewrite: “Collaborate with local, regional, state and federal organizations and agencies to prevent, minimize, or mitigate potential negative environmental and social impacts from planned projects”. All agreed with this rewrite.

(Slide 28) **Goal 5 – Objective** This Objective was condensed for readability purposes. There was discussion regarding the purpose being to provide information prior to reaching any type of mitigation stage of development. Minor rewording was proposed to remove “mitigation” from the Objective. All agreed with the proposal.

(Slide 29) **Goal 5 – Objective** This Objective was slightly revised to incorporate the term “stormwater”. All agreed. Mr. Roche made a general comment that putting the Objectives in “plain language” would help in clarifying what they are trying to accomplish. There was general agreement with this.

(Slides 30 and 31) Ms. Timochenko discussed the next round of Public Outreach meetings and proposed schedule. We are considering six (6) public meetings (one each in most of the Planning Regions with two in the Metro Region), and two virtual meetings (morning and evening). We would discuss the revised Goals and Objectives and start to get public input on current and perceived future transportation needs. We are finalizing meeting dates and locations, but are targeting late March and into April. The next Steering Committee meeting would review the outcomes of the second round of Public Meetings and would also have some draft Plan sections for review.

Ms. Timochenko thanked all for their time today and announced the next meeting date is presently scheduled for Monday, May 19, 2025, beginning at 1:00 PM, via MS Teams. Most attendees concurred. The meeting concluded at 2:30 PM.

*Prepared by,
Michael D. Golembiewski
Transportation Modeler*

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #4
MAY 19, 2025, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Attendance:

Amanda Timochenko (BCPC staff)	Michael Donchez (PennDOT District 5-0)
Michael Golembiewski (BCPC staff)	Ed Burns (Burns Logistics Specialists)
Lawrence Peterson (PennDOT District 5-0)	Lisha Rowe (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, Cumru Twp. Commissioner)
Lauri Ahlskog (South Central Transit Auth.)	Donna Reed (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, City of Reading Council Pres.)
Scott Vottero (PennDOT District 5-0)	David Mattes (BCPC Board Member)
Nyomi Nonnemaker (PennDOT Central Office)	Alan Piper (BCPC staff)
Stephanie Quigley (Abilities in Motion)	Devon Hain (BCPC staff)
Ron Young (PennDOT District 5-0)	Ronnique Bishop (FHWA)
Zackary Tempesco (Reading Regional Airport)	Matthew McGough (BCPC staff)
David Hunter (Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority)	

Meeting Notes:

Ms. Timochenko started the meeting at 1:02 PM. She welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

Ms. Timochenko began by showing four (4) different slides that outlined the results of both Public Outreach efforts (fall, 2024 and spring, 2025).

- Slide 1: Map of Berks County showing planning regions and locations of all meetings held. The meetings held in fall 2024 had better attendance. Meetings held in spring 2025 were not as well attended, but we still obtained valuable feedback from all participants.
- Slide 2: A summary of comments from fall 2024 was discussed. The slide had some notable examples of comments.
- Slide 3: A similar summary of comments from spring 2025 was discussed. Again, notable examples of input received were shown.
- Slide 4: Examples of 'non-mappable' comments (i.e., line painting needs) were discussed along with more regional needs.

Mr. Donchez asked if any analysis was undertaken of all comments and any locations that coincided with an existing Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project? Ms. Timochenko responded that those projects that were identified as TIP projects were still shown on the maps. Additionally, we are awaiting the results from the State Transportation Commission's (STC's)

Twelve Year Program (TYP) survey to combine public input from that effort with what we've received through our outreach. When we get that information a more thorough analysis of requests vs. projects will be undertaken. So far, less than approximately 25% of the publicly requested projects are part of an existing programmed project. Once we receive and analyze the TYP public input, a list will be shared with Mr. Donchez. Mr. Piper made note that some of the public requests were for maintenance-type projects vs. capital projects. Maintenance projects would not necessarily show up on the TIP.

Mr. Tempesco asked if the Reading Regional Airport (RDG) related requests were specific or general requests for restoration of scheduled passenger service? Ms. Timochenko responded that they were general requests for the restoration of scheduled passenger service. Mr. Tempesco offered to host a separate meeting or add time to a Steering Committee agenda to discuss airport-specific issues. He said that RDG is physically ready to receive scheduled passenger service but is not being actively pursued by carriers. RDG needs to 'sell the airport and the community' to attract service. They have been and continue to do so. He further said that offering scheduled service will not initially make any profit for the airport and would have to be subsidized. Would the community be willing to provide those subsidies is a question that would have to be answered. In the regional context that includes Lancaster (LNS), Allentown (ABE), and Harrisburg (HBG), RDG is not yet competitive enough.

After asking for and receiving no additional questions or comments, Ms. Timochenko began to discuss the four (4) draft sections that were sent out. She apologized that the text was not sent out sooner for Committee member review. Upon questioning Committee members, it was confirmed that one (1) week's lead time to review prior to a scheduled meeting is satisfactory to Committee members. Section discussions included:

- A. **Aviation:** Ms. Timochenko gave a brief overview of the section then asked for questions/comments. Mr. Donchez mentioned that there were eight (8) private airports on the included chart, but only seven (7) were mapped. Mr. Piper responded that staff would confirm. Mr. Tempesco mentioned that RDG has the only public paved runway in the County; all others listed are grass. We could add a column to the chart to distinguish this characteristic and reduce the amount of text. Additionally, he added that we should consider addressing 'Advanced Air Mobility' concepts that are becoming more prolific such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV's, or drones), Vertical Take-Off and Landing (VTOL) and Electric VTOL (EVTOL) vehicles, all with both cargo and passenger capabilities.
- B. **Non-Motorized Transportation:** Ms. Timochenko gave a brief overview of the section then asked for questions/comments. Mr. Donchez mentioned that, within the Sidewalks and Pedestrians subsection, PennDOT faces difficulties in convincing municipalities to sign Sidewalk Maintenance Agreements for sidewalks on new/rehabilitated bridges. PennDOT historically does not maintain sidewalks so will not place sidewalks on bridges without maintenance agreements in place. It was suggested that we add generalized language into this section that encourages municipalities to

sign maintenance agreements so sidewalks can be added, and pedestrian networks can be connected. Staff agreed. Next, Mr. Piper mentioned that the paragraph on Micromobility, currently under the Bicycles subsection, should be broken out as its own subsection so more emphasis could be placed on this growing segment of nonmotorized transportation.

- C. **Passenger Rail:** Ms. Timochenko gave a brief overview of the section then asked for questions/comments. Ms. Ahlskog mentioned a new private intercity bus provider, FlixBus, is providing service to Philadelphia and other locations in eastern Pennsylvania. They are using the same bus berth in the BARTA Transportation Center that was formerly used by AMTRAK to provide similar service. Mr. Tempesco added that historically airports have also served as bus hubs. Since the LRTP covers a 20-year plan horizon, adding text regarding the consideration of RDG serving as a bus hub could be a future potential interest, particularly if it offers the potential to coordinate with future air service.
- D. **Rail Freight:** Ms. Timochenko gave a brief overview of the section then asked for questions/comments. Mr. Donchez asked if the list of rail users was general or prioritized in any way? Mr. McGough stated that is not prioritized as this information was taken directly from information obtained from the Federal Railroad Administration.

There being no further discussion on the draft sections, Ms. Timochenko described some of the next immediate steps in the LRTP development process (in no specific order):

- A. Continue developing and revising draft sections.
- B. Review public input results from the STC public survey and combine with those we've received from our outreach efforts.
- C. Create an online mapping portal for the public to report issues.

Mr. Piper stated that as we begin the process of creating the draft FFY 2027-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), certain development steps and document sections will run concurrently with the LRTP development. One result of that is that proposed projects can be placed on either the draft TIP, in the draft LRTP, or on a 'concept list'. He also mentioned the challenges incurred with uncertainties in federal funding as the federal legislation that governs funding levels expires in the first year of the TIP/LRTP, so estimating future funding levels is difficult. Ultimately funding levels determine what projects can be programmed and in what time frames.

Ms. Timochenko asked for any additional comments or questions. Hearing none she thanked everyone for their time today and announced the next meeting date is presently scheduled for Monday, August 18, 2025, beginning at 1:00 PM, via MS Teams. The meeting concluded at 1:56 PM.

*Prepared by,
Michael D. Golembiewski
Transportation Modeler*

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #5
AUGUST 18, 2025, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Attendance:

Amanda Timochenko (BCPC staff)	Michael Donchez (PennDOT District 5-0)
Michael Golembiewski (BCPC staff)	Christopher Kufro (PennDOT District 5-0)
Lawrence Peterson (PennDOT District 5-0)	Lisha Rowe (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, Cumru Twp. Commissioner)
Lauri Ahlskog (South Central Transit Auth.)	Donna Reed (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, City of Reading Council Pres.)
Scott Vottero (PennDOT District 5-0)	David Mattes (BCPC Board Member)
Nick Raio (PennDOT Central Office)	Alan Piper (BCPC staff)
Alex Roche (Greater Reading Chamber Alliance)	Devon Hain (BCPC staff)
Ron Young (PennDOT District 5-0)	Keith Boatman (South Central Transit Auth.)
Zackary Tempesco (Reading Regional Airport)	Matthew McGough (BCPC staff)

Meeting Notes:

Ms. Timochenko started the meeting at 1:01 PM. She welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

Ms. Timochenko mentioned that staff members would review their draft sections with the Steering Committee. She introduced Devon Hain to review the Berks County specific results from the Pennsylvania State Transportation Commission's (STC) public survey that was conducted in spring, 2025. Some items of note included:

- Out of over 3,700 responses statewide that were mapped, there were 165 mapped issues specific to Berks County.
- The Berks responses referenced various concerns by type: 115 roadway, 24 bridge, 13 biking/walking, 6 transit, 7 freight, and 6 concerns that will be addressed by currently programmed projects.
- There were six (6) specific corridors mentioned (I-78, US 222, US 422, SR 100, SR 183, and SR 1010). Additionally, 87 non-corridor specific Highway and Bridge issues were listed in 30 municipalities; 11 Active Transportation issues were identified in five (5) municipalities; and three (3) Public Transportation issues were identified in Reading and Boyertown.
- The top 3 transportation priorities by rank included Road Pavement, Traffic Flow, and Bridges.
- These results, along with those received in a separate municipal survey, and the issues and needs identified during public outreach meetings will be used as part of the overall

process to guide the project selection process for both the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

- Of note, 44 of the 165 responses were specific to Womelsdorf Borough, highlighting truck impacts within the Borough including tight turns, speeding, and issues at intersections.

Mr. Donchez made note that PennDOT District 5-0 staff have had conversations with MPO staff regarding the issues in Womelsdorf Borough, and “a placeholder” has been added to the draft FFY 2027 -2030 TIP for consideration to add study phase funding.

With no other questions, individual document section discussions followed.

- A. **Freight:** Mr. McGough gave a brief overview of the draft Freight section. He discussed the impacts of increasing freight traffic on roadways and in neighborhoods. The role of the Berks County roadway system in freight was discussed. Federal, state and local freight planning efforts were investigated, as were the recently completed Eastern PA Freight Infrastructure Plan and Eastern PA Freight Alliance (EPFA). Non-roadway freight modes were reviewed including rail and air cargo.

Mr. McGough asked for questions. Mr. Donchez commented that he liked the Truck Parking discussion as it will continue to be a growing concern both nationwide and locally. The appropriateness of asking municipalities to address these concerns in their local zoning and land development ordinances was discussed. Mr. Piper added that this specific recommendation was included in the EPFA Freight Plan, so it will be included. Mr. Donchez then commented specifically about the Freight Workplace Access Policy Actions (page 11, second bullet point, *“Partner with transit operators to identify opportunities to expand workforce access options, including: active transportation improvements; public transit service expansion; and private or public-private partnership van services”*). He said that this should be expanded-on based on any prior experiences in the region. Finally, Mr. Tempesco commented that he would attempt to gather data about one particular user at the airport (Quest Diagnostics) as they fly a significant amount of cargo into and out of the airport. He suggested adding a line referencing that “Reading Regional Airport is ready to support increased air cargo operations and intends to market itself as a potential location for air cargo carriers looking to expand their operations in the region.”

- B. **Transit:** Mr. Golembiewski began the Transit section with an overview of the South Central Transit Authority (SCTA) and their role in overseeing the operations of two separate systems [Red Rose in Lancaster County and Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority (BARTA) in Berks County]. Ridership figures for BARTA were reviewed, which show a general increase and recovery in ridership since the COVID pandemic in 2020. The various planning documents that SCTA is required to undertake were reviewed, including the Transit Development Plan (TDP) in 2024 and the Transit Asset Management Plan (TAMP) in 2025. Mr. Golembiewski noted that another required

planning document, the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan should have also been included in this discussion but was inadvertently omitted. Staff will be amending this part to include a discussion on the Safety Plan. Other parts of this section that were discussed included more specific ridership demographics for both BARTA fixed route and Special Services divisions as derived from on-board surveys taken as part of the TDP process. Additionally, other transit-like services such as private intercity transit, ride sharing, taxi services, and the CommutePA program were discussed. Mr. Golembiewski asked for any questions; none were given. Mr. Boatman and Ms. Ahlskog from SCTA both expressed their concurrence with the section as written.

- C. **Safety:** Ms. Timochenko gave a brief overview of the Safety Section. She mentioned that the RATS Annual Traffic Safety Report highlights many of the statistics shown in this section and is used to develop project recommendations. She went on to discuss relevant Performance Measures (PM) and Targets, and some of the countermeasures used in the field to address those PM's. Various statistics were reviewed, such as crashes, persons and vehicles, crash corridors and locations, trends in crashes, and others. She noted that the data was derived from PennDOT's Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool (PCIT) and the data on PCIT is available to the public. She asked for questions/comments.

Mr. Donchez noted that the 20-year trend in fatal crashes graph shows an overall decrease, which is great, despite overall increases in Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and vehicle registrations. He also noted that overall, 2020-2024 data show increases in many categories. He asked if we could include a chart that combines the trends in registrations, VMT, and population growth with crashes and the overall trend line. Ms. Timochenko said that can and will be included.

- D. **Security:** Ms. Hain gave a brief overview of the Security section. She discussed many of the physical tools deployed that add to the security of the roadway system. These measures include Dynamic Message Signs, cameras, Highway Advisory Radio and associated beacons, and the Freeway Service Patrol. Something new is the addition of access gates at newly reconstructed interchanges along eastern Interstate 78. These are used to restrict access to the Interstate during times of a crash incident or weather incidents and can be closed by local law enforcement. Ms. Hain asked for questions/comments; none were received.

There being no further discussion on the draft sections, Ms. Timochenko described some of the next immediate steps in the LRTP development process (in no specific order):

- A. Make changes to the sections as discussed today.
- B. Continue developing and revising additional draft sections.
- C. Once today's sections are revised and the meeting notes from today are generated, the information will be uploaded to the online LRTP Portal.

The sections to be reviewed by the Steering Committee in November include Amendment Procedures, Congestion Management Process, Issues and Needs, and Roads & Bridges. Additionally, the draft Plan will be presented at an Agency Coordination Meeting (ACM) on December 10th. The next meeting of the LRTP Steering Committee will be on November 17 @ 1:00 p.m. via MS Teams. Mr. Tempesco mentioned an Aviation Career Fair happening at the Reading Regional Airport on October 10th and 11th and invited all to stop in.

Ms. Timochenko asked for any additional comments or questions. Hearing none she thanked everyone for their time and input. The meeting concluded at 2:13 PM.

*Prepared by,
Michael D. Golembiewski
Transportation Modeler*

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #6
NOVEMBER 17, 2025, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Attendance:

Amanda Timochenko (BCPC staff)	Michael Donchez (PennDOT District 5-0)
Michael Golembiewski (BCPC staff)	Christopher Kufro (PennDOT District 5-0)
Lawrence Peterson (PennDOT District 5-0)	Lisha Rowe (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, Cumru Twp. Commissioner)
Lauri Ahlskog (South Central Transit Auth.)	Ed Burns (Burns Logistics)
Scott Vottero (PennDOT District 5-0)	David Mattes (BCPC Board Member)
Nick Raio (PennDOT Central Office)	Alan Piper (BCPC staff)
Alex Roche (Greater Reading Chamber Alliance)	Devon Hain (BCPC staff)
Ron Young (PennDOT District 5-0)	Pamela Menet (Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority)
Zackary Tempesco (Reading Regional Airport)	Matthew McGough (BCPC staff)
Ashley Showers (Berks County Planning Commission)	Elaine Schaeffer (Schuylkill River National Heritage Area)
Ronnique Bishop (Federal Highway Admin.)	

Meeting Notes:

Ms. Timochenko started the meeting at 1:02 PM. She welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

Ms. Timochenko mentioned that staff members would review their draft sections with the Steering Committee. She introduced Mr. McGough to review the Congestion Management Process (CMP) for Berks County. Some items of note included:

- The CMP is required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) based on an Urban Area population >200,000 persons
- It evaluates 33 corridors in the County and helps to feed projects into the LRTP and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- He described the factors used to evaluate the corridors
- Included in the LRTP is a table showing the 'Top 10' most congested corridors based on Travel Time Index (TTI)
 - SR 3023 State Hill Rd. had the highest TTI and is, therefore, considered the most 'congested'
- The CMP is reviewed every two (2) years, with one result being a demonstration of how projects – once completed – affect congestion
- The CMP was just updated and approved in November, 2025

Ms. Menet requested clarification on what determines “congestion”; is it volume or Travel Time Index (TTI)? Mr. McGough explained that TTI is a measure of actual travel times vs. expected times based on ‘free flow’ conditions. Actual traffic volumes may be higher on certain roadways, but if the roadway has the capacity (freeway vs. local, for example) then higher volumes may be able to be accommodated. TTI is a more realistic measure of actual conditions vs. just traffic volumes.

Ms. Showers asked if any mapping of the ‘Top 10 Congested Corridors’ was available. Mr. McGough replied that a countywide map of the corridors is included in the LRTP and the individual corridor maps are available in the recently approved Congestion Management Process.

Next, Ms. Hain described the ‘Roads and Bridges’ section. This section describes the physical condition of the roadway and bridge system, with overviews by several descriptors including Functional Class, National Highway System status, Intermodal Connectors, Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled (DVMT), and ownership. Several maps are included which give graphic representation of many of those attributes. Additional attributes of the system discussed include International Roughness Index (IRI), Bridge Deck Condition, and ownership (local vs. state). Charts showing the number of Licensed Drivers in Berks County were also shared. Additional road and bridge information is found in the *RATS Annual Pavement and Bridge Condition Report, 2020-2024* that was adopted by the MPO in November 2025. The annual report helps guide investment decisions through identification and analysis of Berks County roads and bridges and aids in determining potential projects for inclusion in the RATS TIP and LRTP.

Mr. Donchez requested several text clarifications including:

- Explaining that the percentage of roads (by various factors) should be described by roadway mileage, not the number of roads
- Bridge inspections are completed on a two (2)-year cycle at a minimum, with increased frequency as needed
- The Traffic Volume map appears to have several roadways showing low volumes.
(STAFF NOTE: It was later determined that incomplete volumes were shown on many of the divided highways in the County, as only a single direction of volume was captured by GIS. These discrepancies will be fixed by staff).

Ms. Timochenko reviewed the ‘Issues and Needs’ section next. This can be considered a brief synopsis of the many challenges that face the transportation system in Berks County. All the items discussed in this section are further expanded upon throughout the document. The issues and needs discussed were wide-ranging in scope including: current federal funding legislation and the need for reauthorization in the next fiscal year; safety and modernization of the transportation system; crashes and young drivers; the installation of roundabouts which are a federal proven safety countermeasure; truck parking; increases in truck and freight movement

locally and regionally; maintenance of the system, both state and local roads and bridges; strategic capacity improvements; increase in Alternative Fuels vehicles and road user charges; automated vehicles; electric micromobility; passenger rail restoration, aviation and the Reading Regional Airport; and funding for local bridges.

Ms. Showers asked how these issues and needs were identified. Ms. Timochenko explained how they came about through public comments, federal and state mandates, and in completing the background sections of the draft LRTP that analyzes data relating to these issues and needs.

Ms. Schaeffer described how the need for investments in nonmotorized transportation should include investments in the multi-county trail system, specifically the Schuylkill River Trail (SRT). Staff acknowledged the role that the SRT plays in the countywide trail system for both recreation and transportation. Mr. Piper further offered that the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DRVPC) will make funding available for trail needs outside of their planning area, beginning in 2026. Sections of the trail in Berks County would be considered eligible for DVRPC funding.

Mr. Golembiewski discussed the 'Amendment Procedures' section next. Though only a few pages, this section needed to be updated. It describes the processes that must be followed for formal changes to the LRTP. Mr. Piper noted that there has only ever been one LRTP amendment. That was for a Transit project, and that was many years ago. There are two (2) types of formal changes that can occur to the LRTP:

- Administrative Modification happens when a minor change in the project is equal or less than ten (10) percent of the total project/phase cost; adding a new phase or changing the timing of a listed project that would move it from one time band to another, if that movement does not affect air quality conformity determination.
- Plan Amendment is a major revision to the LRTP. Actions that could warrant an Amendment include but are not limited to:
 - Adding a new project where no phases of the project are listed
 - A change in any project that affects its Air Quality significance
 - Deleting projects from the plan
 - Significant changes to project costs (greater than 10% of the project or phase cost), start dates (which may require an updated air quality conformity determination), or design concepts and scopes (eg., changing project termini, changing the number of traffic through lanes) for existing projects.

Mr. Golembiewski questioned Ms. Bishop (FHWA) regarding the second bullet point under the Administrative Modification section (*Identification of planned use of federal funds for the existing cost feasible plan projects if federal funds are not initially programed for a project but are added to a project funded with only state or local funds in the adopted LRTP*). Mr. Porochniak (FHWA) had requested clarification on this point. Mr. Golembiewski responded that the bullet point

should probably be removed and requested final guidance from Ms. Bishop. She responded that she would speak with Mr. Porochniak and get back to us.

Mr. Golembiewski explained that Administrative Modifications do not require any type of formal public involvement, but Plan Amendments have public involvement requirements that must follow the MPO's *Public Participation Plan*. If the proposed Amendment could potentially have an adverse air quality conformity impact, there is a separate process that must be undertaken – including the issuance of a Conformity Report. A Conformity Report must be included with the public input documents and approved by the MPO prior to submitting to various federal agencies for their approval. It was noted that Plan Amendments will:

- Require an update to the revenue and cost estimates supporting the plan to use an inflation rate(s) to reflect year of expenditure dollars, based on reasonable financial principles and information. These estimates must demonstrate that the change preserves the financial feasibility of the plan.
- Provide a purpose and need for the change. This should include supporting data and analysis.
- Determine if a proposed project is Air Quality (AQ) significant. The proposed project will be submitted to the PA Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) for that determination and, if so determined to be AQ significant, perform the required travel demand and air quality conformity modeling and prepare the requisite *Air Quality Conformity Report*.
- Follow a public involvement period consistent with the *RATS Public Participation Plan*. This includes review of the full draft proposal and the *Air Quality Conformity Report* (if required), followed by a 30-day public input period. Staff will review and respond to any comments received, and then the amendment will be adopted by a recorded majority vote of the RATS Coordinating Committee at a publicly advertised meeting.

Next, Mr. Piper described the Project Development Process. He reviewed the detailed process of updating and funding the draft FFY 2027-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and draft FFY 2027-2050 LRTP. He reviewed the various projects, costs, funding, and issues facing many of the projects. It was noted that this draft TIP is “maintaining the status-quo”, meaning most projects are carrying-over from the current FFY 2025-2028 TIP, with very few new projects being added but several changes to existing projects were occurring. One item of note is the additional \$335,000/year Urban funding from DRVPC resulting from the Census defined Philadelphia Urban Area extending into Berks County. Mr. Piper then discussed several individual projects.

The LRTP is not about only roadways and bridges. Staff consulted with South Central Transit Authority (SCTA) regarding their 20-year Capital Improvements Program. That Program will be incorporated into the LRTP. Similarly, the Master Plan and Capital Improvement Plan for the Reading Regional Airport will also be incorporated.

Ms. Timochenko mentioned that TIP updates include projects derived from the LRTP. There are three (3) time frames that are used with these related documents:

- TIP = Short Term in the LRTP (first 4 years)
- TYP = Mid Term (next 8 years), part of the state's Twelve-Year Program (TYP)
- Late = The final 8 years and beyond of the LRTP

The final topic of discussion by Ms. Timochenko was related to our Next Steps:

- Presenting the draft LRTP, including the draft project list, at the quarterly Agency Coordination Meeting (ACM) on December 10th. ACM is a group of environmental related organizations, PennDOT representatives, Federal Highway Administration representatives and other MPOs that review items such as specific high impact projects and draft MPO LRTPs to identify potential environmental impacts to natural resources, agricultural lands, and historic resources. ACM reviews the draft LRTP against those resources and looks to see if we missed anything within our analysis that may need to be addressed. The overall goal is to avoid those resources and, if they cannot be avoided, look to mitigate any effects to them.
- Planning our next meeting. Presently the next scheduled meeting would be held on February 16, 2026. That happens to be the President's Day Holiday when MPO staff would not be available. After discussion it was decided to move the next scheduled meeting to Monday February 9, 2026, starting at 1:00 p.m.
- Discussing the possibility of an interim Steering Committee meeting in January. After discussion it was decided that an additional meeting would be held on January 26, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.
- A link to the final formatted draft LRTP would be provided to all Steering Committee members on or before February 26, 2026.

Ms. Timochenko asked for any additional comments or questions. Hearing none she thanked everyone for their time and input. The meeting concluded at 2:32 PM.

*Prepared by,
Michael D. Golembiewski
Transportation Modeler*

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #7
JANUARY 28, 2026, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Attendance:

Amanda Timochenko (BCPC staff)	Michael Donchez (PennDOT District 5-0)
Michael Golembiewski (BCPC staff)	Zackary Tempesco (Reading Regional Airport)
Donna Reed (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, Reading City Council Pres.)	Lisha Rowe (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, Cumru Twp. Commissioner)
Lauri Ahlskog (South Central Transit Auth.)	Ed Burns (Burns Logistics)
Scott Vottero (PennDOT District 5-0)	Matthew McGough (BCPC staff)
Nyomi Nonnemaker (PennDOT Central Office)	Alan Piper (BCPC staff)
Alex Roche (Greater Reading Chamber Alliance)	Devon Hain (BCPC staff)
Ronique Bishop (Federal Highway Administration)	Elaine Schaeffer (Schuylkill River National Heritage Area)
Ron Young (PennDOT District 5-0)	

Meeting Notes:

Ms. Timochenko started the meeting at 1:01 PM. She welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. There will be three (3) sections reviewed today: Introduction, Environmental Integration, and Public Participation.

Ms. Timochenko reviewed the Introduction Section first. Notable discussion items in this section include:

- What must be included in the LRTP
- The Vision Statement as adopted by the MPO
- Who is RATS, the various committees and staff, and the history of the MPO
- A history of the LRTP, local needs, and current focus issues
 - Asset Management and Fiscal Constraint
 - Federal legislation to be addressed and the LRTP's consistency with it
 - How the current federal legislation [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)] ends on September 30, 2026, and the effect of 'flat' federal funding assumptions made for time periods after that date
- State legislative requirements and consistency with them
- Consistency with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan
- The LRTP Steering Committee structure, membership, and function
- The Public Participation Process and Plan Adoption processes

Ms. Rowe commented that the wealth of information in this section "...was amazing...", as it was easy to read and thought it was overall a great introduction into the LRTP document and process.

Mr. Donchez commented that the first page should mention the Federal Gasoline Tax has not been raised since 1993 which has a large effect on federal funding (the primary source of funds), and while the State raised its gas tax in 2023 that was repealed. Also, on Page 3, a definition/explanation of what a

Transportation Management Area (TMA) should be included (Census-defined Urban Area with a population >200,000 persons, but also additional planning requirements).

With no other questions or comments, the Environmental Integration Section was reviewed next. This section discusses environmental impacts that must be considered in the project planning process and possible mitigation strategies for those impacts. Federal and state laws that need to be addressed as part of the process include but are not limited to:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Clean Air Act Amendments of 1991
- Clean water legislation
- Stormwater legislation
- Noise impacts
- Wetlands
- Agricultural and historic preservation

The PennDOT Connects process gives municipal officials the opportunity to highlight local plans and priorities early in the project planning process. Additionally, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) inform the process with mapped features of many types. The overall goal of the environmental review process is to avoid negative impacts as much as possible and mitigate where necessary.

Ms. Timochenko shared a ‘**Potential Project Impacts**’ chart that displayed the number of projects that had various environmental impacts. The “Top 3” impacts were PA Act 167 (Stormwater), Prime Agricultural Soils, and Flood Plains.

The goal of Resiliency in this section is to minimize the impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters to the transportation system. There was coordination with the Berks County Department of Emergency Services (DES) that included a Historical Events review that documents previous natural weather events that impacted Berks County. Additionally, there was coordination with PennDOT’s *Extreme Weather Vulnerability* study.

Ms. Bishop questioned whether this section was to satisfy the appropriate Federal Planning Factors. Ms. Timochenko confirmed that it was. Ms. Bishop then asked what the MPO’s ‘environmental resource inventory’ is? She would like to see that statement expanded upon. Mr. Golembiewski mentioned that BCPC / MPO staff maintains an extensive GIS library of environmentally related layers that make up that inventory. Ms. Bishop was satisfied with that explanation.

The Public Participation section was next to be reviewed. This section reiterates the relevant content of the MPO’s *Public Participation Plan* as it relates to what specifically is required for the LRTP and how those requirements are related to certain Executive Orders. There are specific yet similar processes for the LRTP and TIP, including the requirement to have the *Air Quality Conformity Determination Report* completed for inclusion in the Public Input process. (EDITORS NOTE: The *Air Quality Conformity Determination Report* will be discussed in further detail during the Travel Demand Modeling and Air Quality Conformity sections to be reviewed at the February 9, 2026 meeting).

Mr. Donchez mentioned on Page 1, last paragraph, a grammatical error (too many ‘communities’). Sentence will be corrected. Ms. Bishop requested that the reference to Executive Order 12898 related to Environmental Justice be removed based on current Executive Orders. Additionally, a typographical error needed to be corrected (Title VIA).

Ms. Timochenko made mention of the Agency Coordination Meeting (ACM) presentation that was made on December 10, 2025. The presentation went well with few negative comments; many were very positive. A wide range of natural resources were reviewed. A request was made by the Meeting attendees to include Important Bird Areas and Naturally Reproducing Trout Streams in various analyses. Additionally, a discussion on Wildlife Crossings needs to be included. Since PennDOT's draft guidance is not yet finalized, we should include our own, which at least references PennDOT's *Design Manual #2* (DM2) which does mandate wildlife crossing reviews at the project level and references relevant safety issues.

Ms. Timochenko asked for questions and comments; none were offered. She next discussed the Next Steps in the LRTP process:

- The final sections will be reviewed at the next Steering Committee meeting on February 9th
- The LRTP is being created in conjunction with the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- The travel demand and air quality modeling processes and conformity determination will be undertaken in the next few weeks
- MPO Board approval for release and to begin Public Input and Comment period is anticipated for March 19, with the Public Comment Period to take place (tentatively) March 22 – April 24
- Four (4) public meetings will be held
 - 4/7, 1:30 p.m., Berks County South Campus (in-person only)
 - 4/14, 6:00 p.m., Berks County Agricultural Center (in-person only)
 - 4/21, 11:00 a.m. AND 6:00 p.m. (virtual only)

The next Steering Committee meeting will take place on February 9, 2026, starting at 1:00 p.m. To be reviewed will be all of Chapter 4 (Recommendations, Performance Measures, Federal Planning Factors, Project listing, other items), and the Demographics and Economics section.

The full, final draft of the LRTP will go to the group when completed for a final review.

Ms. Timochenko asked for any additional comments or questions. Hearing none she thanked everyone for their time and input. The meeting concluded at 1:43 PM.

*Prepared by,
Michael D. Golembiewski
Transportation Modeler*

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #8
FEBRUARY 9, 2026, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Attendance:

Amanda Timochenko (BCPC staff)	Michael Donchez (PennDOT District 5-0)
Michael Golembiewski (BCPC staff)	Zackary Tempesco (Reading Regional Airport)
Donna Reed (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, Reading City Council Pres.)	Lisha Rowe (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, Cumru Twp. Commissioner)
Lauri Ahlskog (South Central Transit Auth.)	Ed Burns (Burns Logistics)
Chris Kufro (PennDOT District 5-0)	Matthew McGough (BCPC staff)
Nyomi Nonnemaker (PennDOT Central Office)	Alan Piper (BCPC staff)
Alex Roche (Greater Reading Chamber Alliance)	Devon Hain (BCPC staff)
Ron Young (PennDOT District 5-0)	Pamela Menet (Berks County Economic Development)
Lawrence Peterson (PennDOT District 5-0)	Elaine Schaeffer (Schuylkill River National Heritage Area)
David Mattes (BCPC Board Member)	Nick Raio (PennDOT Central Office)

Meeting Notes:

Ms. Timochenko started the meeting at 1:01 PM. She welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. There will be three (3) sections reviewed today: Demographics & Economics, Travel Demand Modeling & Air Quality Conformity, and Goals & Strategic Performance Measures, along with several draft Maps.

Mr. McGough reviewed the Demographics & Economics section first. Notable discussion items in this section include:

- Current population trends and population projections
- Urban vs. Rural population (Note: Ms. Menet commented that the US Dept. of Agriculture uses different metrics to determine Urban vs. Rural)
- Other demographic components of the population including
 - Households and composition
 - Income and Poverty
 - Elderly
 - Disabled
 - Limited English Proficient
 - Zero Vehicle Households
- All the above factors have effects on the transportation and transit networks, travel needs, and changes that may affect future travel

Next, Mr. McGough reviewed the Economy section with highlights that included

- How changes in Economy affects regional traffic
- Employment and Unemployment trends, and employment projections
- The County's and regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

- Commuting patterns (distances and locations)
- Mode of travel (Single vehicle, carpool, transit, bike/walk) and travel times
- Major traffic generators

Mr. Donchez made several comments including

- It would be beneficial to sort the various tables in descending order (numeric versus alphabetically) as it would better highlight where Berks County ranks
- *Berks County 2021 Annual Averages* table, please check the math as there appear to be some errors in calculations
- *Top 25 Employers* table, why is Kutztown University not included? Mr. Piper noted that it is included in the #18 entry (PA State System of Higher Education)
- Referencing the bar graph, the second paragraph above it should include a discussion on the emergence of E-Commerce and resulting fewer ‘brick and mortar’ stores and the effects of e-commerce on traffic
- Question regarding the *Persons per Household by Municipality* (Map #3), why is western Berks so high in household size? Is it due to large farmsteads, or the effect that a low number of households has on the calculation. Same could be considered in Hereford Township and New Morgan Borough

Ms. Menet asked why the American Community Survey (ACS) was used so extensively for data when there are other sources available. She specifically highlighted a report recently approved by the Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB) pertaining to future workforce development. Mr. Golembiewski responded that to get data at the municipal level, the ACS 5-year Survey is the most consistently updated and the most comprehensive of the data reported. While certain items like the WDB’s report can be valuable – and we will include a reference in the LRTP – we use ACS primarily for consistency between both municipal and county data.

With no other questions or comments, Mr. Golembiewski reviewed the Travel Demand Modeling & Air Quality Conformity section. He began by giving an overview of the Berks County Travel Demand Forecasting Model (BCTM) including its history, why it’s required, some of its components and how it works. Output from the BCTM is forwarded to a consultant who runs the USEPA’s 5th-generation Motor Vehicle Emissions Simulator (MOVES5), which is required based on the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. The MOVES5 model uses BCTM traffic information to generate estimates of pollutants that contribute to ground level ozone.

RATS is required by the CAAA to prove that future transportation plans and projects do not increase levels of ozone-creating pollutants; using the BCTM and MOVES5 are how we accomplish that. The Air Quality Conformity process (Conformity) involves coding future roadway projects into the BCTM, running the model, then taking the resultant output and using it as input into USEPA’s MOVES5 air quality model. The resulting amount of pollutants created by the roadway network is compared to emissions ‘budgets’ – allowable limits of motor vehicle pollution – to ensure that planned projects don’t add to overall vehicle emissions. Should emissions exceed the budgets, then the overall grouping of plans and projects would need to be adjusted and the models re-run to ensure exceedances do not occur.

Mr. Golembiewski discussed the various National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) that have affected Berks now or in the past:

- 1997 and 2008 8-Hour Ozone
- 2015 8-Hour Ozone

- 1997 Annual PM2.5 and 2006 24-Hour PM 2.5
- 2012 annual PM2.5

At one time we were designated as ‘nonattainment’ and therefore responsible for modeling against the 1997 Annual PM2.5 standard. Subsequently, Berks was designated as ‘in attainment’ as of the updated 2006 24-hour PM2.5 standard and, effective April 2015, is no longer responsible for modeling PM2.5.

At present, we are still considered nonattainment against the 2008 Ozone standard and, therefore, model the ‘criteria pollutants’ [Oxides of Nitrogen (Nox) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)] against the aforementioned Emission Budgets. There is a more stringent 2015 8-hour Ozone NAAQS, but numerous court cases nationwide have delayed the implementation of that standard.

Finally, the actual analysis was discussed. The models must be run (for the current TIP and LRTP) for three (3) analysis years: 2030, 2040, and 2050. Based on FHWA guidance, these years are chosen as (2030) a year within the draft TIP; (2050) the last year of the LRTP; and (2040) an interim year that is no more than 10 years beyond prior analysis years. Regionally significant highway projects are coded into the respective years based on the year they are expected to be substantially complete and open to traffic. The resulting pollutant estimates are reviewed against the budgets and either a ‘Pass’ or ‘Fail’ for each year are issued, thus resulting in a final conformity determination.

Mr. Donchez had the only comment, asking that examples of PM2.5 (i.e., brake dust, tire wear) be added to the text to provide context. Staff agreed.

With no other questions or comments, Ms. Timochenko reviewed the Goals and Strategic Performance Measures section. This section builds on all of the background information, federal requirements, and various processes to ultimately assemble project lists. Items included are:

- Goals and Objectives and how they relate to ten (10) Federal Planning Factors
- Project prioritization strategies and federal Performance Measures (PM’s), along with funding sources pertinent to those PM’s
- FHWA’s Transportation Performance Management (TPM), including nationwide Goals, Performance-Based Planning and Programming and associated PM’s and related target setting
 - PM-1, Safety, and how the LRTP and project selection works toward meeting PM-1 targets
 - PM-2, System Conditions, and how the LRTP and project selection works toward meeting PM-2 targets
 - PM-3, Congestion, and how the LRTP and project selection works toward meeting PM-3 targets
- Transit PM’s and related targets, as set by SCTA

Various initiatives and key projects (Highway/Bridge and Transit) by period were discussed. Related to this, the Financial Plan was reviewed. Numerous issues include

- Issues related to federal transportation reauthorization or extension of the current Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) which ends on September 30, 2026
- Without reauthorization, we cannot assume more federal funding than already authorized
- Longer-range time periods show many line items due to the difficulty of programming projects so far out, due to lack of funding estimates, inflation effects, and other factors
- Financial tables from the Reading Regional Airport’s Capital Improvement Program have been included in the LRTP

- Due to the uncertainty surrounding future funding, a list of ‘unfunded projects’ is included. This can be considered our ‘wish list’ of projects to be considered in future updates of the LRTP and TIP
- The Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority’s (SRPRA) Passenger Rail project is identified in the LRTP but is presently outside of any TIP/LRTP funding streams
- The statewide Interstate Maintenance (IM) TIP items are listed on our TIP only but are not funded out of any RATS allocations
- The SCTA/BARTA Capital Improvement Program is attached

Discussion regarding several of the maps ensued. Mr. Piper mentioned that the IM TIP projects shown are considered Draft, since the final IM TIP has not yet been released by PennDOT. Also, PA Turnpike projects are shown but need to be added to the Bridge and IM project lists as they are funded completely by Turnpike funds and not TIP allocations.

Mr. Raio mentioned the PM discussion, specifically PM-1. The header information in the table had a wrong date; 2024 Safety Measures and Targets should read 2026. Staff will correct the text.

Public Outreach and next steps were the last to be discussed. Staff noted that a full draft of the LRTP document is being prepared and will be sent to the Steering Committee members when completed for their feedback. Additionally:

- The formal Public Input and Comment period is anticipated to take place from March 22 – April 24, with the advertisement running (English and Spanish) in the Sunday (3/22) *Reading Eagle*
- Four (4) public meetings are anticipated to be held
 - 4/7, 1:30 p.m., Berks County South Campus (in-person only)
 - 4/14, 6:00 p.m., Berks County Agricultural Center (in-person only)
 - 4/21, 11:00 a.m. AND 6:00 p.m. (virtual only)

This was the last scheduled Steering Committee meeting. Ms. Timochenko extended to the members her gratitude for their participation and attention to the materials. Their participation made staff’s jobs much easier. A number of members expressed their thanks to Ms. Timochenko for presiding over the Committee. The meeting concluded at approximately 2:30 PM.

*Prepared by,
Michael D. Golembiewski
Transportation Modeler*

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION