

**Reading MPO
Public Comment Period for the
FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program,
Air Quality Conformity Analysis Report and FFY 2025-2028 Environmental Justice Summary**

The Public Comment Period began March 24, 2024 and ended April 23, 2024

Comments and Response to Comments:

Complete copies of all written comments follow this summary.

Laurinda Alcorn – Citizen

E-Mail dated 4/2/24

Comment: Concerned that neither the Spring Street “Subway” nor the Heisters Lane underpass were included in the TIP based on their condition and impacts to traffic and their importance in facilitating movements under the Norfolk Southern lines that divide the City of Reading.

Response: We acknowledge that there are issues relating to traffic movements and vehicle height restrictions at the Heisters Lane underpass and vehicle height restrictions and frequent flooding issues at the Spring Street “Subway”. The Heisters Lane bridge is identified as an unfunded project in the Reading MPO’s FFY 2023-2045 Long Range Transportation Plan. The bridges in question are owned and maintained by Norfolk Southern Railroad. Their tracks pass over Spring Street (SR 2014) and Heisters Lane (SR 2011), both State owned and maintained streets. We have not received any request for funding from either Norfolk Southern to address the bridge conditions or from PennDOT to address traffic and flooding issues at either of these bridges. Additionally, we did not receive any request from the City of Reading during this TIP cycle to consider improvements at either of these crossings. Should a formal request be made by any of these parties going forward, we will consider adding improvements to the TIP subject to financial constraints.

Ashley Showers, Assistant Director, Berks County Planning Commission

Verbal Comments During April 8, 2024 Public Meeting

Comment: Will trail connections and bicycle/pedestrian access be considered and/or maintained for the bridge rehabilitation projects on PA 183 near Blue Marsh Lake?

Response: All highway and bridge projects take bicycle and pedestrian access into consideration through the use of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Checklist as a part of the design process. Additionally, consideration of local and regional trails are part of a project’s pre-design scoping process. The two bridges on PA 183 are undergoing surface overlay treatments only.

They already have full-width shoulders that are capable of accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians and would not be changed in any way other than the surface overlay.

Adrian Jadic – Citizen

Verbal Comments During April 8, 2024 Public Meeting, April 11, 2024 Public Meeting and Letter dated 4/23/2024

Comment: Expressed a desire to ensure that the Lancaster Avenue interchange included for reconstruction as an element of the US 422 West Shore Bypass – Phase 1 reconstruction project (MPMS# 114439) make better connections to the planned passenger rail station in downtown Reading.

Response: Through the planned reconstruction of both the Penn St./Penn Ave. interchange and the Lancaster Ave. interchange, including the reconstruction of the Bingaman Street Bridge, connections to downtown Reading would be significantly improved easing the connection to a downtown station.

Comment: Mr. Jadic expressed support for the proposed State Hill Road project (MPMS# 105954) and the roundabouts that are presently planned.

Response: Mr. Piper thanked him for his support.

Kim Schultz – Citizen

Verbal Comments provided by Telephone 4/11/24

Comment- Concerns regarding the TIP proposing additional locations for roundabouts throughout Berks County and their use by trucks.

Response – Roundabouts are a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Proven Safety Countermeasure.

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures/roundabouts>

They can substantially reduce crashes that result in serious injury or death. Roundabouts can: Improve Safety; Promote Lower Speeds and Traffic Calming; Reduce Conflict Points; and Lead to Improved Operational Performance. They can be used to meet a wide range of traffic conditions because they are versatile in size, shape and design. Penn DOT believes these benefits will help to address the safety and congestion concerns currently experienced.

Dan Tobias – Bern Township Supervisor / Citizen

Verbal Comments During April 11, 2024 Public Meeting and E-Mail dated 4/23/24

Comment: Question regarding the nature of the US 222 Auxiliary Lane-Wyomissing “Hard Shoulder” project (MPMS3 110008) and its impact on westbound PA 12 traffic destined for the Paper Mill Road exit.

Response: The general scope of the project was discussed. This project is currently in the preliminary design phase of development. It has been expanded to include improvements in both the southbound and northbound directions. PennDOT will present the preliminary designs for this project at a public forum later this year (date tbd).

Comment: Need for better ways to notify public of planned meetings. Newspaper no longer effective. Difficult to find information on internet unless you already know where to look.

Response: The Reading MPO currently uses newspaper advertisements, direct e-mail distributions, the Berks County Planning Commission web site and Facebook posts to advertise meeting information and review opportunities as documented elsewhere in this Appendix. We will continue to investigate additional options to get information out to a broader audience.

Comment: Question regarding the nature of the proposed project for the SR 183 (Bernville Road) Lane Drop Hourglass Fix in Bern Township (MPMS#117721).

Response: It was explained that the proposal is to fix that portion of PA 183 between the US 222 Interchange and West Leesport Road to eliminate the transition from a five-lane cross section to a two-lane cross section and then back to a five-lane cross section. The project is only programmed for a study at this time to investigate the problem area and make recommendations for design and construction phases on future TIPs subject to financial constraints.

Comment: Very disappointed with your obsession with roundabouts. They are awful, and I avoid them like the plague. Please don't put them on State Hill Road.

Response – Roundabouts are a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Proven Safety Countermeasure.

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures/roundabouts>

They can substantially reduce crashes that result in serious injury or death. Roundabouts can: Improve Safety; Promote Lower Speeds and Traffic Calming; Reduce Conflict Points; and Lead to Improved Operational Performance. They can be used to meet a wide range of traffic

conditions because they are versatile in size, shape and design. Penn DOT believes these benefits will help to address the safety and congestion concerns currently experienced.

Mr. Tobias was provided with information on attending the PennDOT Plans Display for the State Hill Road Project (MPMS# 105954) held on April 24, 2024 and speaking directly to project designers.

**Kimberly Fies, Deputy Director, Berks County Dept. of Agriculture
Verbal Comments During April 11, 2024 Public Meeting**

Comment: Commented about the number of workers at East Penn Manufacturing (DEKA Battery) using PA 12 to access the facility, and questioned if they were accounted for in the designs for both projects on PA 12 [SR 12 Elizabeth Ave (MPMS #79467) and SR 12 Alsace Manor (MPMS #110318)].

Response: Throughout the Study and Preliminary Engineering phases of both projects, traffic counts were taken that included time-of-day. East Penn Mfg. is a very large facility that does not run 'standard' shifts and there are times where non-standard traffic volumes peak based on shift changes at the facility. These factors were considered in the project designs.

Comment: Questioned if there was any involvement of agricultural land condemnation in any proposed TIP projects.

Response: There are small sliver takes of agricultural land where improvements are made to existing highways running adjacent to farmland such as US 222 Widening (MPMS#61972) and the SR 662 Oley and Turnpike Road Intersection (MPMS# 105963). Efforts are made to keep these to a minimum. The only project that is currently included on the approved Long Range Transportation Plan that may require significant acquisition of agricultural land is the proposed reconstruction of US 222 between the Kutztown Bypass and the Lehigh County line (MPMS# 97234). No specific alignment has been determined at this time and preliminary designs are not currently scheduled to begin until FFY 2029.

**Heather Goodman – Citizen
E-Mail Dated 4/15/24**

Comment: Concerned that the bridge on Levensgood Road over the Manatawny Creek in Amity Township was not addressed in the TIP.

Response: The Levensgood Road bridge is owned and maintained by Berks County (Weidner's Mill Bridge #34-E). Due to the type of construction used when this bridge was built originally, there are no easy repairs. The County intends to repair this bridge by removing and replacing

the entire deck of the bridge. This project will be completed using local funding and is not required to appear on the Transportation Improvement Program. An advertisement will be issued in the next few weeks requesting proposals to design this repair. We anticipate that it will take two years to complete the design and associated permitting. Reconstruction is currently anticipated to occur in 2026.

There were no comments offered that related to either the Air Quality Conformity Analysis or the Environmental Justice Summary.

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