

Northeastern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization

Transportation Programming for the Counties of: Carbon ✧ Monroe ✧ Pike ✧ Schuylkill

April 20, 2021 Technical Planning Committee

Meeting Summary and Minutes

9:30 a.m.

Meeting Location:

Microsoft Teams Videoconference

Attendees:

David Alas*
Kamlesh Ashar
Ethan Baldwin
Tina Bauman
Dave Bekisz*
Marie Bishop*
David Bodnar*
Jim Brady
Chris Chapman
John Christy*
Brendan Cotter*
Steve Fisher
Marta Gabriel
Peggy Howarth*
Vanessa Koenigkramer*
Amanda Leindecker
Jim Mosca

Organization:

PennDOT Central
PennDOT District 5-0
PennDOT Central
Lacka. Co. Planning
STS
PennDOT District 4-0
Carbon Co. Planning
STV
Luzerne Co. Planning
Mo. Co. Commissioner
CCCT/LANTA
PennDOT District 4-0
Sen. Toomey's Office
MCTA
PennDOT District 5-0
PennDOT District 5-0
PennDOT Central

Attendees:

Christine Meinhart-Fritz*
Mike Mrozinski*
Kristin Mulkerin
John Petrini
Emma Pugh
Jeff Rai
Rich Roman
Jay Schectman
Susan Smith*
Brian Snyder*
Scott Vottero

Alan Baranski
Kate McMahon
Daniel Yelito

Organization:

Monroe Co. Planning
Pike Co. Planning
PennDOT Central
PennDOT District 4-0
PennDOT District 4-0
PennDOT District 5-0
PennDOT District 4-0
Luzerne Co. Planning
Schuylkill Co. Planning
Pike Co. Planning
PennDOT District 5-0

NEPA Alliance
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*Technical Committee members who voted at this meeting

Summary of Actions Taken by the NEPA MPO Technical Planning Committee:

During this meeting, the MPO Technical Committee voted on the following actions:

Action 1: Mr. Bodnar requested a motion from the Technical Committee to approve the minutes from the March 16, 2021 meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Smith, seconded by Mr. Mrozinski. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bodnar called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

1) Business Items

a) Approval of minutes from the March 16, 2021 Business Meeting

Mr. Bodnar requested a motion from the Technical Committee to approve the minutes from the March 16, 2021 meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Smith, seconded by Mr. Mrozinski to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

2) TIP Amendments and Administrative Actions

a) District 4-0 and 5-0 2021-2024 TIP Amendments and Administrative Actions

Information was included in the meeting packet which highlighted administrative actions on the 2021 TIP for District 4-0 and 5-0. Mr. Fisher highlighted actions for District 4-0, Ms. Koenigkramer highlighted actions for District 5-0.

Statewide Informational Item 1- Mott Street Bridge- increase construction phase. The source is the TAP Reserve Line Item. Interstate Informational Item 1- I-80/I-380 Tannersville Resurface- increase construction phase to match current estimate. The source is the Interstate Contingency Line Item. Action 1- SR 61 Restoration from PSU to St- increase for low bid adjustment. The source is the 924 over 4030, RR & Mahanoy Creek. Statewide Informational Item 2- Smithfield Gateway- add selected Multimodal project to the TIP. The source is the Multimodal Reserve Line Item. Action 2- SR 590 Safety Improvement- shift partial construction phase for balancing. The source is the NEPA 4-0 Highway Line Item. Action 3 – SR 590 High Friction Surface – Increase PE Phase for additional design items. The source is the NEPA 4-0 Highway Line Item. Action 4- Pike State Game Land Bank- add PE per wetland agreement. The source is the NEPA 4-0 Highway Line Item. Interstate Informational Item 3- I-80 White Haven DS Bridges- add phase to advance ROW acquisitions for main project MPMS 99552. The source is the Interstate Contingency Line Item. Action 5- Department Force Preservation projects in Carbon – SR 209, Monroe Glenbrook Road and SR 3027 and Schuylkill – SR443 - add 100% state funding to department force projects. Glenbrook Road Slope Remediation- include 20% state match on remainder of design completed after 180 days. The source is the NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Action 6- Hamilton West Resurfacing Sciota- toll credit phase to release 581 funds for the region. The source is the I-80 Ramp to ST 8024. Action 7- Asset Management Phase 1- advance construction phase to bid project early to pave 3.5 miles of SR 590. The source is the SR 2002 Slide and the NEPA 4-0 Highway Line Item.

b) Transit Amendments and Administrative Actions

None.

3) Transportation Planning & Programs

a) Current Project Status

Ms. Bishop provided an update on highway projects in District 4-0. Mr. Vottero provided an update on highway projects in District 5-0.

b) U.S. Census Bureau Proposed Redefinition of Urban Areas

Mr. Baranski stated that similar to the proposal from OMB regarding Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), the U.S. Census Bureau has issued proposed changes to the criteria for establishing urbanized areas. The Census Bureau is looking to redefine urban areas using housing density, rather than population. The ramifications of this change are unknown. The Census Bureau is only looking at the proposal from a statistical analysis standpoint and not based on the impact of the changes. This change also has potential impacts on the designation of our MPO. Urbanized areas are also referenced in other federal funding statutes. Comments are due by May 20th so we will have proposed comments for the committee to review in the coming weeks.

Ms. Meinhart-Fritz asked if there will be outreach to Members of Congress. Mr. Baranski stated that it would be a good idea and we will follow up on that. There may likely be a Dear Colleague letter asking Members to sign on to comments on the proposal as there was for the OMB issue. Ms. Gabriel said that outreach to Senator Toomey can be sent to her.

Mr. Baranski noted that with regards to the OMB proposal on MSAs, there were nearly 900 comments submitted to the docket and the majority of them were negative.

c) PennDOT Transportation Funding Issues

Mr. Baranski stated that the 2023 TIP update has started with the STC comment period which just ended. The Financial Guidance Workgroup has been engaged to start looking at the funding distribution. The workgroup is made up of a representation of MPO/RPO members, PennDOT districts and Central Office staff. The workgroup is meeting every two weeks and reviewing the funding scenario from the 2021 TIP. They are working off the assumption that funding will be flat. The shift of funding from the regional TIPs to the interstate will continue and the impacts will further kick in on the 2023 TIP.

There has been much discussion in Washington about infrastructure funding. President Biden has proposed an infrastructure package that includes transportation funding. The federal transportation reauthorization legislation is also being discussed on a separate track in the House and Senate. We expect versions of a bill for markup in committee in the coming weeks, with passage hoped in the fall. With both efforts, there is a possibility of additional transportation funding and financial guidance will be amended if necessary.

On the state side, the Transportation Revenue Options Commission (TROC) has met to consider options for replacing the state gas tax. Recommendations are expected this summer. We will have to see how the options are embraced by the legislature.

d) Congressional Community Project Funding Proposals

Mr. Baranski said that we have been engaged with our federal House delegation to identify projects for possible funding in legislation. We have been in contact with the county commissioners and the PennDOT districts to identify local priorities within the guidelines that we have been given. The deadline for submission has just passed and we have submitted information to the House members for projects.

Ms. McMahon stated that the projects have been identified for inclusion in the transportation reauthorization legislation. There was also a separate effort to submit projects for inclusion in the appropriations bills. We were given guidelines by Central Office to identify projects that can be let in 18 months and delivered in 4 years. Additional guidance was provided by each Congressional office about their process for submitting projects.

We requested funding for six projects in the NEPA MPO region. One in Carbon County, two in Monroe County, one in Pike County and two in Schuylkill County. A 20% match is required for each project that is funded. The following projects were requested.

County	Project Title	Project Description	Request Amount	Construction Estimate	Congressional Office
Carbon	Jim Thorpe Preventative Maintenance	This is the rehabilitation of a masonry retaining wall supporting US Route 209 (Mauch Chunk Street) in Jim Thorpe Borough and Mahoning Township, Carbon County.	\$ 2,400,000.00	\$ 3,000,000.00	Rep. Meuser

County	Project Title	Project Description	Request Amount	Construction Estimate	Congressional Office
Monroe	SR 115 Corridor Impr - Effort	This project involves safety improvements along State Route 115 in the vicinity of Astolat Road to Sugar Hollow Road including widening shoulders, adding left turn lanes, and improving sight distance in Chestnuthill Township, Monroe County.	\$ 4,000,000.00	\$ 5,448,891.00	Rep. Cartwright
Monroe	SR 209 & 33 NB over Appenzell Creek	This project involves the replacement of the bridge carrying US Route 209 and 33 North Bound over Appenzell Creek in Hamilton Township, Monroe County.	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 7,440,000.00	Rep. Wild
Pike	SR 590 Paving	Resurfacing on State Route 590 from the Wayne County Line to Towpath Road in Lackawaxen Township, Pike County.	\$ 2,400,000.00	\$ 3,000,000.00	Rep. Cartwright
Schuylkill	St. Clair to Frackville Reconstruction	This project involves highway reconstruction of PA 61 starting in St. Clair Borough at the intersection of PA 61 and Terry Rich Boulevard and continuing through New Castle, Blythe, Ryan, and West Mahanoy Townships before ending at the intersection of PA 61 and East Spruce Street in Frackville Borough, Schuylkill County.	\$ 15,200,000.00	\$ 60,000,000.00	Rep. Meuser
Schuylkill	Columbia Street Arch Bridge	This project involves a replacement of the bridge carrying Columbia Street (PA 443) over the Schuylkill River in Schuylkill Haven Borough, Schuylkill County.	\$ 3,200,000.00	\$ 4,000,000.00	Rep. Meuser

4) Other Business

Mr. Bodnar asked about the bike/ped study. Mr. Baranski stated that we had a meeting with DCNR about applying for funding for a regional bicycle/pedestrian study. This item has been identified as a priority in our work program. We were encouraged by DCNR to apply for funding, which required a 50% match. The deadline to apply was very tight. We decided to forgo applying in this round but will revisit it during the next funding round.

5) Adjournment

There being no further business, the NEPA MPO Technical Planning Committee meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.