

Northeastern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization

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

July 20, 2021 Technical Planning Committee

Meeting Summary and Minutes

9:30 a.m.

Meeting Location:

NEPA Alliance Office and
Microsoft Teams Videoconference

Attendees:

David Alas*
Tina Bauman
Dave Bekisz*
Marie Bishop*
David Bodnar*
Chris Chapman
John Christy*
Brendan Cotter*
Mary Liz Donato
Marta Gabriel
Chuck Gould*
Micah Gursky
Kathy Henderson
Peggy Howarth*
AJ Jordan
Amanda Leindecker*
Chuck Leonard*

Organization:

PennDOT Central
Lacka. Co. Planning
STS
PennDOT District 4-0
Carbon Co. Planning
Luzerne Co. Planning
Mo. Co. Commissioner
CCCT/LANTA
Lacka. Co. Planning
Sen. Toomey's Office
Chestnuthill Twp.
St. Luke's Hospital
CCEDC
MCTA
CCCT/LANTA
PennDOT District 5-0
PMEDC

Attendees:

Jim Mosca
Christine Meinhart-Fritz*
Mike Mrozinski*
Kristin Mulkerin
Krista Riedel-Yohn
Brenda Sacco
Jay Schectman
Jason Skrimcovsky
Susan Smith*
Matt Smoker
Brian Snyder*
Scott Vottero

Alan Baranski
Nettie Ginocchetti
Kate McMahon
Daniel Yelito

Organization:

PennDOT Central
Monroe Co. Planning
Pike Co. Planning
PennDOT Central
STS
Lackawanna Co.
Luzerne Co. Planning
Carbon Co. Planning
Schuylkill Co. Planning
FHWA
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 April 20, 2021 meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Howarth, seconded by Mr. Mrozinski. The motion passed unanimously.

Action 2: Mr. Bodnar requested a motion to confirm the May 20, 2021 Email Ballot on US Census Bureau Proposed Changes to Urban Area Designation. A motion was made by Mr. Cotter, seconded by Mr. Mrozinski. The motion passed unanimously.

Action 3: Mr. Bodnar requested a motion to confirm the July 2, 2021 Email Ballot on the SR 115 Corridor Effort Safety Improvements Amendment. A motion was made by Mr. Bekisz, seconded by Mr. Cotter. The motion passed unanimously.

Action 4: Mr. Bodnar requested a motion to approve the STS New Facility Amendment. A motion was made by Mr. Cotter, seconded by Ms. Smith. 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 April 20, 2021 Business Meeting
Mr. Bodnar requested a motion from the Technical Committee to approve the minutes from the April 20, 2021 meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Howarth, seconded by Mr. Mrozinski to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.
- b) Confirmation of the May 20, 2021 Email Ballot on Comments on US Census Bureau Proposed Changes to Urban Area Designation
Mr. Baranski stated that the comments were circulated for approval by the Technical Committee in May. After the email ballot was approved, the comments were submitted by email to the Census Bureau. Mr. Bodnar requested a motion to confirm the May 20, 2021 Email Ballot on US Census Bureau Proposed Changes to Urban Area Designation. A motion was made by Mr. Cotter, seconded by Mr. Mrozinski. The motion passed unanimously.
- c) Confirmation of the July 2, 2021 Email Ballot on the SR 115 Corridor Effort Safety Improvements Amendment
Mr. Baranski stated that the amendment on the SR 115 Corridor Effort Safety Improvements project along with a detailed explanation from District 5 was approved by email ballot at the beginning of July. Mr. Bodnar requested a motion to confirm the July 2, 2021 Email Ballot on the SR 115 Corridor Effort Safety Improvements Amendment. A motion was made by Mr. Bekisz, seconded by Mr. Cotter. 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. Ms. Bishop highlighted actions for District 4-0, Ms. Leindecker highlighted actions for District 5-0.

Action 1: Manor Dr over McMichael Creek- increase construction phase for remaining work orders and to close out the project. The sources are SR 447 over Brodhead Crk and P/S Box Beam Bridge Bundle. Action 2: SR 447 over Goose Pond Road- reduce due to low bid adjustment and align with anticipated need. Restoration from PSU to St. Luke's- advance to align with anticipated need. The sources are 715 over McMichael's Creek, 924 over 4030, RR & Mahanoy Creek and the NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Statewide Informational Item 1- Co. Br. 114 (Zimmerman Bridge)- add FD phase and decrease CON phase. The source is the STP Reserve Line Item. Action 3- Fairview Outlet Bridge- add UTL phase to the TIP. The source is the NEPA 4-0 Highway Line Item. Statewide Information Item 2- Add Forest Drive Bridge Replacement, Kutz Road Bridge Replacement and Airport Road Restoration MTF projects to the TIP. The source is the Multimodal Reserve Line Item. Action 4- Tunkhannock Bridge- add ROW phase. SR 715 over Pocono Creek- align with anticipated need and increase for YOE. Hollow Road Bridge- increase to revised estimate and align with anticipated need. The source is the NEPA Bridge Preservation and Repair 5 project. Action 5- Isaias Permanent Repair- adjust PE phase for 90/10 pro rata on Interstate 81. The source is the NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Action 6- State Game Land Bank- increase for District 3 compensation for mitigation acres. The source is the NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Action 7- 3-0 SEDA-COG Regional Line Item- increase to regional line

item from District 5 for use of existing mitigation bank. The source is the State Game Land Bank Line Item. Action 8- Golf Drive Buck Hill Branch Bridge- toll credit CON phase, no capital budget on project. Gold Star Highway Resurface- increase to cover actual and anticipated work orders. The sources are P/S Box Beam Bridge Bundle and New Philadelphia Rd over Pine Creek. Action 9- SR 209 Betterment Project- toll credit CON phase. 209/115 Int. Imp.- Phase 2- advance funding to align with actual need. The source is the NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Action 10- Scotrun-Swiftwater- increase to cover actual and anticipated orders for milling, roadway repairs, guiderail. SR 901 over Mahanoy Creek- increase to cover AUC and final out project. The source is the NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Action 11- 940 over Beaver Creek- increase to cover AUC and final out project. The source is the NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Action 12- Mill Pond over Pohopoco Creek- reduce funding due to low bid and align with need. Hollow Road Bridge- increase to estimate plus YOW and align with anticipated need. The sources are the NEPA Br. Preservation and Repair 7, Manor Driver over McMichael Creek and New Philadelphia Rd over Pine Creek.

Ms. Smith asked for an explanation of the toll credit reference in action 8. Ms. Leindecker stated that the project does not have capital budget approval, so they are asking the feds to use toll credits for the match, making it 100% federal.

b) Transit Amendments and Administrative Actions

Mr. Bekisz highlighted one amendment for Schuylkill Transit System. Amendment 1- STS New Facility- would add project to 2021 TIP. STS is in the process of constructing a new Admin/Maintenance facility to replace the outdated/undersized current facility. The source is 5311 federal transit funds and 1514 state funds. Mr. Bodnar requested a motion to approve the STS New Facility Amendment. A motion was made by Mr. Cotter, seconded by Ms. Smith. The motion passed unanimously.

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) OMB Potential Revisions to Metropolitan Statistical Areas

Mr. Baranski stated that in February, the OMB released a proposal to increase the population threshold for designating MSAs from 50,000 to 100,000. The proposal had potential impacts on the designation of MPOs, including ours. We submitted comments to the docket back in March in opposition to the proposal. Over 900 comments were submitted, mostly negative. Legislation was introduced in the House and Senate to keep the threshold at 50,000. The NEPA Board of Directors passed a resolution in support of the legislation and asked our federal legislators to support the legislation. Last week, the White House announced that OMB would keep the threshold for designating MSAs at 50,000 and would revisit it in 2030. Congressional staff states that the matter isn't as urgent as it was, but the bills are still active. We shared the resolution with our county commissioners if they would like to show their support for the legislation as well.

c) Transportation Funding Issues

Mr. Baranski stated that things are moving at the federal level. The current federal transportation authorization bill runs out on September 30th. The House has passed the INVEST Act which extends transportation programs for the next five years. The Senate is also taking action, with passage likely before the August recess. The two bills will need to be reconciled. There is also a larger infrastructure bill under consideration. There is an agreement on the framework for the package, but funding

mechanism is still uncertain. We are hopeful that both bills will be passed by this fall and keep funding going.

On the state side, the Transportation Revenue Options Commission (TROC) has been meeting to identify alternates to the gas tax. The TROC is scheduled to release their findings later this summer. The legislature would have to take action on any of their recommendations.

Mr. Baranski stated that we are also beginning work on the 2023 TIP update. Financial Guidance for the 2023 TIP has been shared with the Planning Partners. It is based on flat funding. A distribution table has been provided in the meeting packet. The shifts to the Interstate are fully realized in this TIP. We also had a significant decrease in our CMAQ funding. Previously, our funding was based on Carbon and Monroe Counties' population. Because Monroe County is now in attainment, our CMAQ allocation is based only on Carbon County's population. Mr. Baranski stated that if any additional transportation funding comes through, our allocations will be adjusted. Mr. Mosca stated that there is a lot going on with funding right now. The TROC report is due August 1st. Financial Guidance has been released so the MPOs and RPOs can start drafting their TIPs. Draft TIPs are due to Central Office by December.

Mr. Baranski stated that several member-designated projects were requested through the House delegation. 4 projects were included in the INVEST Act and one was included in the THUD Appropriations bills. They will need to be reconciled with the Senate version but hopefully they will remain in the bills. Mr. Bodnar asked why the Jim Thorpe Retaining Wall project was not included. Ms. McMahon stated that it was submitted to Congressman Meuser for consideration, but he did not submit it for inclusion in the INVEST Act. He only requested funding for two projects. One is the Rt. 61 project and the other is in the Reading MPO area.

d) 2023 TIP Development

Mr. Baranski said that Financial Guidance and General and Procedural Guidance were released to the Planning Partners late last week. We will share them with everyone. The districts are looking at current project statuses and how much funding is available. We will then schedule meetings with the districts and the county planners to position projects for inclusion on the draft 2023 TIP. We shared the TIP development timeline chart as we see it now.

e) 2022-2024 UPWP Development

Mr. Baranski stated that we are again developing our two-year work program. Last time, the UPWP development process was revamped at the direction of PennDOT and FHWA. We have previously convened a UPWP work group and we plan to do so again this year. We plan to convene the work group starting in August. We will provide information on the status of our current work program tasks as a starting point as well as the updated UPWP Guidance. We anticipate finalizing the UPWP by January.

Mr. Smoker stated that last time there were fundamental changes in the UPWP requirements. NEPA is a good example in convening the work group and getting input into the UPWP process. Matt expressed his support toward engaging the work group again.

f) District 4 Trail Crossing Inventory Pilot Project

Mr. Baranski stated that staff has been engaged with District 4 in establishing an inventory of the trail crossings that cross state routes. The information will be used during project development. Daniel and Nettie traveled to Pike County to do a desk review, demoed the trail inventory application in the field and identified inconsistencies in attribute features for PennDOT resolution. Once the pilot with District 4 is complete, it will be rolled out to the rest of the state.

g) Functional Classification Review

Mr. Baranski stated that we are close to wrapping up the functional classification review. We received some additional feedback from Central Office on the changes that we submitted. Ms. McMahon stated that we had meetings with all of the counties to review the issues that Central Office identified. The major issue is that for the roads we proposed making principal arterials, PennDOT did not agree with adding those roads to the National Highway System. There is also an issue with adding Route 6 in Wayne County as part of our MPO's submittal, so we are working that out with District 4.

h) Eastern PA Regional Freight Study

Mr. Baranski stated that our discussions concerning freight issues with adjoining MPOs has evolved into a regional freight plan with 5 MPOs including Lackawanna-Luzerne, Lehigh Valley, Reading, Lebanon and us. We submitted a request to Central Office for supplemental planning funds. It was approved for \$280,000 with a \$70,000 match. The match will be split between the 5 MPOs. The plan will also address specific regional needs. We are drafting a scope of services and plan to solicit an RFQ/RFP for a consultant. We also need to draft an agreement between the 5 MPOs. Lehigh Valley will be the fiscal agent. The project will be rolling out this fall with anticipated completion by June 2023.

4) Other Business

a) LTAP

Ms. McMahon stated that in-person LTAP classes will resume this August. We are currently rescheduling classes that were cancelled from last spring. LTAP will continue to have virtual offerings for those who are interested.

b) Jim Thorpe Borough

Mr. Baranski stated that the Parking Study was completed last year. A local group coordinated by Borough Council has formed to implement the recommendations. They are now seeking grant funding for some of the plan's proposals. They have engaged a consultant to assist with the funding applications.

c) Milford Borough

Mr. Baranski said that the Milford Borough study is similar to Jim Thorpe. We have secured supplemental planning funds, but the study was postponed due to COVID. We have re-engaged Michael Baker to resume the study. Traffic counters and observers were deployed to Milford last weekend for Music Fest. The project will wrap up by the end of June next year.

d) Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) Applications

Mr. Baranski stated that the TASA application period is open. Pre-applications are due by August 16th, with the full application due by October 15th. Any applications in our region will be reviewed by the committee and we will have presentations from the project sponsors later in the process. We will then rank the projects and submit the rankings to the state. In past rounds, PennDOT has taken our rankings into consideration when awarding funding.

e) HPMS Fieldwork

Mr. Baranski said that our staff will again review Highway Performance Monitoring System data at over 90 locations in the region, mostly in Monroe County. This is our third year doing HPMS. We will also have a Q/A field review with Central Office this year.

5) Adjournment

There being no further business, the NEPA MPO Technical Planning Committee meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.