



NEPA MPO STRATEGIC PLAN

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Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Background/Overview	2
Introduction	2
Methodology.....	3
Review of Priority Program Areas	4
Transportation Funding	4
Linking Land Use Planning and Transportation Planning.....	5
Local Bridges	6
Interstate Condition	8
Project Prioritization	10
Further Recommendations for MPO Staff	11
Appendix A: Select Transportation Planning Acronyms	14
Appendix B: SWOT Analysis Results.....	16

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Executive Summary

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) operates against many and profound changes. It is an important agent for improving transportation within its constituent counties and helps underpin the region's economic competitiveness. As an MPO, the decision-making body stands a better chance of tackling today's challenges, from declining revenues, increases in travel demand, and competing transportation interests, if it can successfully combine members' ideas and efforts under a unified, strategic direction.

The development of a Strategic Plan for the MPO is timely, as it will immediately precede the development of two critical planning products, those being the update of the regional Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), as well as the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The strategic planning process provides MPO members with an opportunity to assess the direction of the current program and identify issues demanding attention, as well as corresponding short-term priorities and recommended actions. The MPO identified its primary program areas of focus as: 1) Transportation Funding, 2) Linking Land Use Planning and Transportation Planning, 3) Local Bridges, 4) Interstate Conditions, and 5) Project Prioritization.

Strategy is all about marshalling resources and developing capacities to carry out priority goals. Establishing this agenda required a concerted effort aimed at understanding the region's needs (including the MPO's partners and stakeholders) and instituting a fresh vision for how the MPO can best act as an agent of change in implementing a transportation strategy for its four member counties.

The Strategic Plan process followed the following major steps:

Task	Description	Deliverable	Completion Date
1	SWOT Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarized Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to understand internal and external factors 	February 19, 2019
2	Stakeholder Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic survey, analysis, and implications of input Identified priority program areas 	March 8, 2019
3	MPO Retreat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft action plan for each identified priority program area 	March 19, 2019
4	Review Draft Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Draft Strategic Plan and achieve consensus on the implementation framework 	April 16, 2019
5	Recommend Final Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend approval of Final Strategic Plan 	May 22, 2019
6	Approve Final Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MPO Policy Board approves Strategic Plan via e-mail ballot 	June 17, 2019

The Strategic Plan that follows reflects the consensus of the MPO's Technical Committee and Policy Board on the MPO's strategic direction over the next four years and how it will be implemented.

Background/Overview

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) is one of 19 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) in Pennsylvania, and one of 23 such Planning Partners, statewide.

The organization's relationship with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has been long-standing, dating back to its years as an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)-designated Local Development District (LDD), to its years as a Rural Planning Organization (RPO). With the Federal designation of the East Stroudsburg, PA-NJ urbanized area, the five-county (Carbon-Monroe-Pike-Schuylkill-Wayne) RPO transitioned to become a four-county (Carbon-Monroe-Pike-Schuylkill) MPO in March 2013.

Pennsylvania's network of MPOs and RPOs performs transportation planning under the aegis of PennDOT through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU outlines NEPA's responsibilities as a planning agency to the region, as well as in its reporting to PennDOT. As a Planning Partner of PennDOT, NEPA is responsible for implementing the policies and objectives of the transportation planning process in order to accomplish and maintain the region's eligibility for Federal transportation funds. A few of these primary responsibilities include the maintenance of a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and a transportation improvement program (TIP). NEPA's actions taken with respect to these planning products must be done in a coordinated and cooperative manner. Pennsylvania's MPOs and RPOs enjoy an uncommonly high level of collaboration with the state DOT.

As one of Pennsylvania's newest MPOs, NEPA's transportation planning program continues to evolve and mature. In 2018, the NEPA MPO sought to develop a Strategic Plan that would guide its planning efforts through its primary planning tools, specifically, the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The MPO updates and adopts its UPWP on a biennial basis, and adopted its first-ever LRTP in March 2016. The region is in a "maintenance" status for air quality, meaning its LRTP must be adopted on a four-year cycle.¹

Introduction

Through the strategic planning process, the NEPA MPO sought to properly evaluate the effectiveness of its transportation planning program, moving forward. The development of a strategic plan is intended to help shape future work programs and the region's overall transportation planning direction.

The development of a Strategic Plan in guiding the MPO's planning program is timely, as it immediately precedes or guides the development of several critical planning products for the MPO, including the update of the LRTP, the UPWP, and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The strategic planning process provided MPO members with an opportunity to assess the direction of its current program and identify specific areas for improvement, as well as corresponding short-term priorities and recommended actions.

A final Strategic Plan will provide the MPO with a meaningful starting point for developing its future work programs. It is a critical document for the MPO, as it will help shape the contours of its primary

¹ Carbon County is presently in "non-attainment" status for ozone under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

planning documents (the UPWP and LRTP). These two planning products respectively serve as the gatekeeper for the MPO's planning program, and portfolio of capital projects. The Strategic Plan will also directly affect the composition of other plans the MPO develops, including its Public Participation Plan, Coordinated Public Transit - Human Service Transportation Plan, and others.

The Strategic Plan is central to NEPA's work in transportation planning and economic development.

Methodology

The development of the Strategic Plan was organized around four key tasks:

- **Kick-off Meeting** – NEPA MPO staff introduced the Strategic Plan process to its members of the MPO Technical Committee during a regularly scheduled meeting on February 19, 2019. The plan scope and schedule was reviewed, and members participated in a SWOT analysis which identified the MPO's strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats. NEPA MPO staff also introduced the Strategic Plan process to the MPO Policy Board during its regularly scheduled March 6 meeting.
- **Survey of MPO Membership** – The NEPA consulting team coordinated with the MPO staff in developing and conducting an online survey of the NEPA MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board membership. The survey included six questions, and asked Technical Committee/Policy Board members to rank various program areas in order of priority. Technical Committee/Policy Board members were also provided an opportunity to suggest recommended actions in support of each of the program areas of focus. NEPA's consulting team distributed the survey to the MPO membership on March 1, with a one-week deadline. The survey was completed by 27 of 29 potential participants for a return rate of 93 percent. Respondents were asked to evaluate comments, and answer questions related to the following six statements:
 - I understand my role as a voting member of the NEPA MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board and can communicate it to others.
 - MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board meetings could be improved by (respondents could check one of several answers).
 - Technical Committee/Policy Board members are generally supportive of receiving different perspectives of other members.
 - What should the NEPA MPO's top priorities be over the next five years?
 - What are the top five transportation topics facing the MPO at the current time?
 - How can MPO staff members improve their level of service to the MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board?

NEPA's consulting team used the survey results to formulate an agenda for a joint Technical Committee/Policy Board member retreat.

- **MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board Member Retreat** – MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board members participated in a four-hour retreat at the NEPA boardroom on March 19. The MPO's consulting team facilitated the retreat, the output of which was used in developing the Strategic Plan. Background data was also presented, reviewed, and discussed in support of the

various program areas. The MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board prioritized the following program areas for further evaluation:

- Transportation Funding
- Linking Land Use Planning and Transportation Planning
- Local Bridges
- Interstate Conditions
- Project Prioritization
- **Review and adoption** – The MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board members reviewed a draft Strategic Plan as part of a regularly scheduled Technical Committee meeting, on April 16, 2019. Subsequent adoption is expected shortly after the review of comments received.

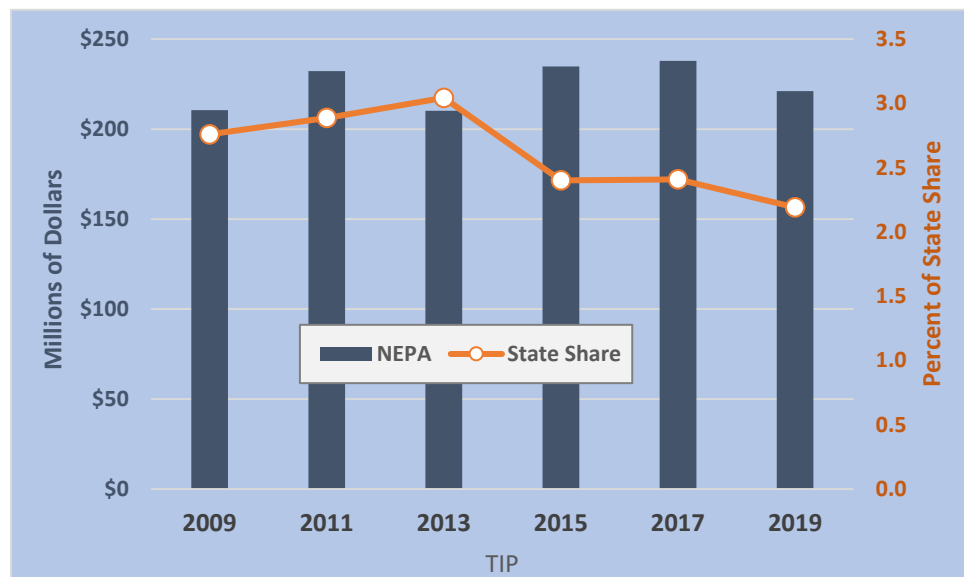
Review of Priority Program Areas

The following section summarizes each of these program areas and identifies how each could be advanced, either through the UPWP, LRTP, or both. Of the two planning products, the UPWP is the more tactical of the two. Adopted biennially (and revised as needed), the UPWP summarizes the MPO staff's planning activities, as well as those of its partners and other transportation agencies in the region. It authorizes and funds studies across a wide range of needs. The LRTP, as its name implies, takes a longer-term view of the MPO's planning program, and is updated every four years. The LRTP forecasts future conditions and establishes a vision for the development of the regional transportation system over the next 20 years. A review of the MPO's priority program areas follows.

Transportation Funding

For the 2019 TIP, the four-county NEPA MPO region received an allocation of \$221 million, a 2.2 percent share of the state total, and a decline from a 3 percent share the region received during the 2013-16 TIP cycle (Figure 1). Some of this loss is directly attributable to the loss of Wayne County as an MPO member during 2013. Funding

Figure 1: NEPA MPO Historic TIP Allocation



changes introduced by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Federal transportation reauthorization bill (MAP-21) in July 2012 also left the region with very little roadway mileage eligible for the National Highway Performance Program (NHPP), the Act's largest funding category. The region has also not fared well in recent years in regard to receipt of local project "Spike" funding, or discretionary

funding available to the Pennsylvania Secretary of Transportation for special projects. The following table summarizes the issues and potential strategies for advancing this program area.

Issues Demanding Attention	Strategies or Ideas for Moving Forward	UPWP	L RTP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The region's transportation needs have not been fully quantified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The region's LRTP update should include an assessment of the region's multimodal transportation needs. 	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The region has a lack of routes eligible for NHPP funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue updating the region's functional classification scheme with a focus on potential new Principal Arterials. 	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions on TAP funding have been centralized through changes in Federal law. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider sub-allocating funding for TAP-related projects within the region. 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More information needs to be made available for matching funds to move projects forward. The region has not been successful in obtaining Spike funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPO staff should identify and communicate the availability of various funding sources (outside of the TIP) to stakeholders. This includes discretionary funding. 	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The region's share of state transportation funding has been declining. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine root causes of funding declines and advocate for funding increases. 	X	

Linking Land Use Planning and Transportation Planning

The linkage between land use planning and transportation planning has been a long-standing concern. Within Pennsylvania, transportation decisions are largely state- and regional-based, while land use decisions are made at the local level. This has contributed to a disconnect in planning between the two. Regional agencies such as the NEPA MPO are best positioned to address the disconnect through policies such as PennDOT Connects and the county comprehensive planning process.

Issues Demanding Attention	Strategies or Ideas for Moving Forward	UPWP	L RTP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operationalize PennDOT Connects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forthcoming LRTP update should address this in the scope of work as candidate projects are identified. 		X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify strongly-defined purpose and need for a proposed project to ensure better articulated projects. 		X

Issues Demanding Attention	Strategies or Ideas for Moving Forward	UPWP	L RTP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEPA and PennDOT should ensure that utility companies are part of the PennDOT Connects process. 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transit-oriented development needs to be considered more in project development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the PennDOT Connects process to help inform the design of local developments. 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal planners and decision-makers need technical assistance and training on comprehensive planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify model ordinances or best practices in the region. MPO will arrange for interactive land use training through LTAP on PennDOT Program Center PennDOT Connects-related training. Promote the availability of PennDOT land use planning Publications that have been prepared in recent years (e.g., Official Map, Access Management, etc.). 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No catalog exists of available land use data and tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEPA staff develop a depository of land use-related data in GIS for local use and reference. 	X	X

Local Bridges

The subject of local bridges emerged as one of the top planning issues for the NEPA MPO to address. There are currently 283 locally-owned bridges within the region that are greater than 20 feet in length. Of these, 87 are posted and 10 are closed. Over 43 percent of locally-owned bridges in the NEPA region are considered “poor” (by number), while roughly the same share are considered “poor” by deck area. These rates far exceed overall state rates for bridges on the locally-owned system. While local bridges between 8 and 20 feet in length have been inventoried, no condition information is known about them. Through the 2019 TIP, the NEPA region is slated to receive just over \$17 million to address its network of off-system bridges, representing nearly 8 percent of the MPO’s base funding allocation. Act 89 of 2013 dramatically increased municipal Liquid Fuels funding for municipalities, from \$321 million in 2013, to \$489 million last year. The following table summarizes the issues and potential strategies for advancing this program area.

Issues Demanding Attention	Strategies or Ideas for Moving Forward	UPWP	L RTP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand use of the County Vehicle Registration Fee made allowable by Act 89 of 2013. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Carbon and Monroe Counties to adopt the \$5 fee for local bridge projects.² Investigate whether registration inputs related to the \$5 fee can be amended to include information on county vs. zip code. 	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The region has a large network of locally-owned bridges with limited funding available to address them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider performing a bridge redundancy study to identify unnecessary bridges on the local system for potential removal. 	X	X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with PennDOT in investigating the development of a program to recommend bridge projects as part of a bridge bundling program for future planning and programming. 	X	X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider possible sub-allocation of TIP funding for eligible local bridges. 		X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage use of agility agreements to facilitate joint planning and materials development, as well as shared use of materials, equipment, and exchange of services. 		X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Public-Private Partnerships to finance, operate, and maintain locally-owned structures and accelerate project delivery. 		X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market the availability of the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Bank (PIB) to the region's municipalities for low interest loans. 		X

² Act 89 of 2013 allows counties to impose a \$5 fee for local use on non-exempt vehicles registered to an address in the county. These funds can be used for construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and repair of public highways and bridges. The law allowed approval of the fee beginning in 2015, when \$1 million was raised for local use. By 2018, that number had grown to nearly \$29 million. There are 22 counties statewide that have adopted the fee, including Pike and Schuylkill.

Issues Demanding Attention	Strategies or Ideas for Moving Forward	UPWP	L RTP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the status of Governor Wolf's "Restore Pennsylvania" initiative. 		X

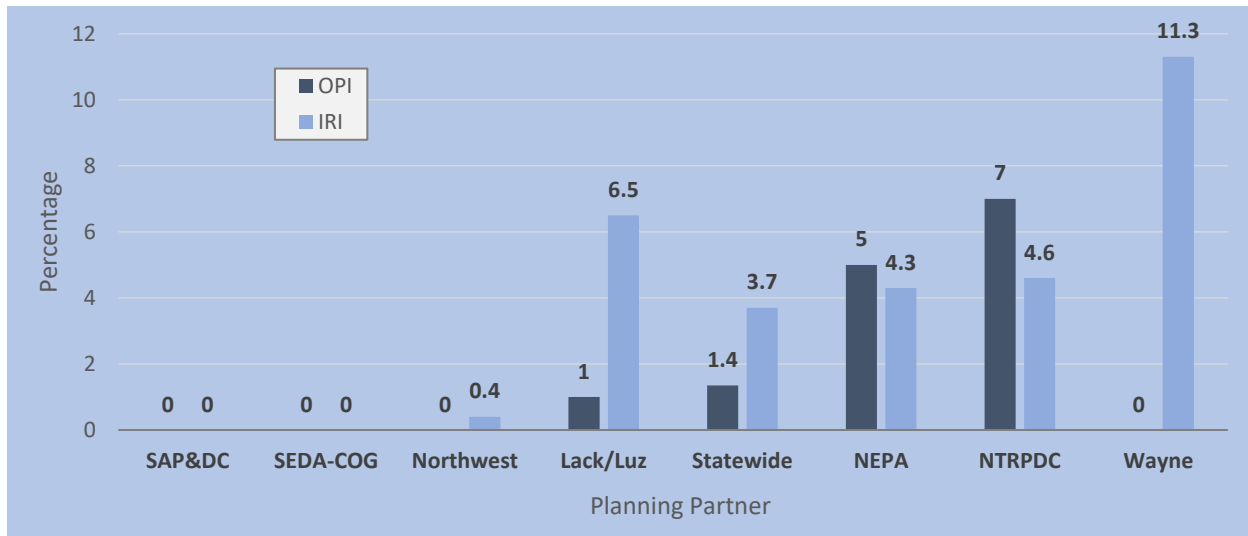
Interstate Condition

The NEPA region is criss-crossed by 157 linear miles of Interstates. Attesting to the network's strategic importance, the region's interstates comprise 5 percent of the region's total roadway mileage, but accommodate over 35 percent of all travel demand. Much of the Interstate system was constructed during the 1960s and is now nearing the end of its useful design life.

Beginning in 2007, PennDOT instituted the Interstate Maintenance Program as a way of centralizing decision-making related to the state's system of interstates in planning for them as one asset. As such, These statewide-funded Interstate projects appear on the TIP as a matter of information. The 2019 Twelve Year Program (TYP) includes \$5.5 billion for Interstates statewide, equating to approximately \$458 million annually. Some Planning Partners, including SEDA-COG and Lackawanna/Luzerne, use a portion of their base allocation to support interstate improvement within their regions.

According to PennDOT data, the Interstate network within the NEPA MPO region has a higher rate of mileage classified as "poor" (Figure 2) when measured by the Overall Pavement Index (OPI) and International Roughness Index (IRI). FHWA requires that no more than 5 percent of a state's National Highway System (NHS) interstate lane-miles be in poor condition. Pavements are considered to be "poor" if two or more of its three distress components (i.e., cracking, rutting, and faulting) are rated as poor. The numbers for the NEPA region indicate a greater need for resurfacing and reconstruction.

Figure 2: Percent of “Poor” Interstate Mileage by OPI and IRI,³ by State and Planning Partner Region (2017)⁴



Source: PennDOT

NEPA has a relationship with neighboring Lackawanna and Luzerne MPO in which it engages with Focus 81, a committee formed 15 years ago to address congestion, safety, and capacity along I-81 within Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, particularly within the urbanized area. It has since been expanded to include all of I-81 within Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties and into Schuylkill County. As such, it involves direct cooperation between the two MPOs. Related to Interstate condition, the issue of freight movement continues to be a growing trend, as new warehouse and distribution centers are generating additional truck trips throughout the region and putting additional demands on the system.

Planning and programming for the region's Interstates is under the purview of PennDOT Central Office. The following table summarizes the issues and potential strategies for advancing this program area.

Issues Demanding Attention	Strategies or Ideas for Moving Forward	UPWP	L RTP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interstate conditions in the NEPA region generally lag behind the rest of Pennsylvania. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider sub-allocating funds in support of the region's interstates. 		X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate potential Interstate preservation projects for discretionary "Spike" funding. 		X

³ IRI refers to the "International Roughness Index," which is used for measuring the roughness of the pavement surface. OPI (Overall Pavement Index) is calculated by using the IRI and pavement distress scores.

⁴ Wayne County has only 6.6 linear miles of Interstate.

Issues Demanding Attention	Strategies or Ideas for Moving Forward	UPWP	L RTP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of a Strategic Plan by PennDOT's Interstate Steering Committee (ISC) for Pennsylvania's interstates. 		X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek out innovative technologies and pilot projects for road resurfacing. 		X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan to engage the region's legislators on Interstate roadway conditions and other transportation funding concerns. 	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Truck traffic on interstates limits capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a regional freight plan (or freight element of the L RTP) to help optimize Interstate performance and conditions. 	X	X

Project Prioritization

The primary purpose of transportation planning is to optimize the allocation of finite resources in relation to a large transportation system with needs greater than available funding. In today's limited funding environment, the premium for greater planning – and planning processes – is elevated. In a region as large and diverse as the NEPA region (2,354 square miles), an opportunity exists to identify priorities *spatially* to improve capital resource planning and decision-making. This is important particularly as NEPA's share of the state transportation pie continues to grow smaller and lose buying power due to inflation. As NEPA prepares to update its L RTP in 2019, the directions coming out of the Strategic Plan can help inform a methodology for the L RTP update...not only for the broader plan, but specifically for the composition of the plan's investment portfolio.

Evaluating and prioritizing alternative improvements continues to be a critical need and challenge in this era of limited resources. NEPA will need to develop a process that helps the region target its transportation dollars in the most effective ways possible.

Issues Demanding Attention	Strategies or Ideas for Moving Forward	UPWP	L RTP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources need to be invested in priority areas and across priority networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a regional "core system" for planning and programming purposes similar to work done by PennDOT on its recent Multimodal Economic Competitiveness Network. 	X	X

Issues Demanding Attention	Strategies or Ideas for Moving Forward	UPWP	LRTP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain integrity in the project scoring process - scoring of projects should be performed by those who are most familiar with the proposed project and its technical merits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board identifies evaluation criteria and a recommended weighting that is in alignment with the LRTP's strategic directions. MPO staff will lead the scoring of candidate projects with support coming from the MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board members and local stakeholders. Give priority to projects that have a higher inflation potential over time. 		X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modify the LRTP update process to include opportunities for project sponsors to provide additional level of detail on candidate projects. 		X

Further Recommendations for MPO Staff

The NEPA MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board is supported by various staff members from the NEPA Alliance. There are four primary planners and analysts who support the MPO's administration and planning activities.

MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board members indicated general satisfaction with the level of support it receives from MPO staff, but did discuss several areas that could be improved. Nearly half (42 percent) of MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board members surveyed indicated that they had "limited understanding" as to their role as a voting member of the recommending body,

underscoring an opportunity for staff to provide more assistance, particularly to new members with understanding the role and process of the MPO. The realm of transportation planning is every bit as dynamic as the communities the NEPA region serves. New directives, funding categories, and programs are constantly changing and evolving. Major changes and developments within the world of transportation planning just in the past several years have included the passage of Act 89 of 2013, the reauthorization of Federal surface transportation law (the FAST Act) in December 2015, and the launch of PennDOT's new land use policy (PennDOT Connects) in December 2016 lead the list.

"ONBOARDING NEW MEMBERS CAN TAKE TIME, BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO GET EVERYONE ON THE SAME PAGE TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS FOR THE REGION."

MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board Member

Ongoing training of MPO members - A majority of MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board members are typically laypeople who may not be well versed in the currency of transportation planning. It offers an opportunity for the NEPA staff to assist in providing MPO members with “the big picture” of how new plans, initiatives, and programs can be leveraged to improve the communities of the four-county MPO region. New MPO members would benefit from early orientation to the Technical Committee/Policy Board’s mission, roles, and responsibilities. Moreover, MPO staff can assist membership with the development of Powerpoint presentations for key meeting agenda items in order to provide additional background information, key discussion points, and potential MPO recommendations or actions.

Develop a new member orientation package and process – This could include meetings with MPO staff members and officials and attendance at a State Transportation Commission (STC) meeting as an optional orientation element. The orientation package could be used to communicate what the MPO is and is not. A corollary to this could include the development of an MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board member charter that describes the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of Technical Committee/Policy Board members. The ultimate goal would be to resolve any misunderstandings MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board members may have regarding their involvement as a voting member of the advisory/decision-making body, respectively.

Be available for workshops at the local level to explain local impacts and future projects – The launch of PennDOT Secretary Richards’ new “PennDOT Connects” policy in December 2016 has taken previous initiatives (e.g., Linking Planning and NEPA) to a more advanced stage. Under this new policy, community needs are being considered at earlier stages of the planning process to ensure improved allocation of finite resources. PennDOT’s Planning Partners (including NEPA) must provide training to local planners and municipal officials in support of the regional transportation planning program.

Include status reports as part of the MPO meeting agenda – This could include topics as varied as the Rapid Bridge Replacement (RBR) Program, Federal certification of Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFCs), Local Use Fund (\$5 registration fee), deployment of REAL ID-related systems changes, and transit agency performance reviews, just to cite a few near-term issues that would be of interest to the MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board. Technical Committee/Policy Board members also indicated interest in having a local liaison from the STC provide routine updates to the MPO on activities at the state level as a standing agenda item. This would add to MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board members’ understanding of PennDOT activity and initiatives.

Improve plan implementation assistance – Contracts could be structured in a way to provide for implementation assistance for the various plans that NEPA supports. Many plans generate enthusiasm and momentum, yet the lack of assistance has compromised the effectiveness of implementing these plans.

Rotate the MPO meeting location periodically – The NEPA region is diverse and expansive. Technical Committee/Policy Board members indicated an interest in possibly rotating the meeting locations to various, transportation-oriented destinations within the region (e.g., county planning offices, public transportation agencies, etc.).

Expand meeting agendas – MPO Technical Committee/Policy Board members expressed a desire for meeting agendas with more annotation to provide additional background information on each agenda item. Additionally, it was suggested that a new standing agenda item be considered that involves review

of the regional work program. The UPWP could be evaluated on a regular (e.g., semiannual) basis as a way of determining how well the MPO is progressing in executing its work program and if there are any program areas in need of attention before the biennial update.

Maintain board diversity – The region has a broad and diverse constituency. NEPA is committed to maintaining board representation that is socially and culturally diverse. MPO board appointment letters request qualified minorities for appointments in the interest of providing for fair and equal representation of the region’s constituency.

Appendix A: Select Transportation Planning Acronyms

ARC – Appalachian Regional Commission

CRFC – Critical Rural Freight Corridors, first- and last-mile segments that have been designated by PennDOT and certified by FHWA for placement onto the National Highway Freight Network (NHFN)

FAST Act – Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act, the Federal five-year spending plan signed into law on December 2015.

FHWA – the Federal Highway Administration

IRI – International Roughness Index

ISC – Interstate Steering Committee

LTAP – Local Technical Assistance Program

LRTP – The Long-Range Transportation Plan is the official multimodal transportation plan addressing no less than a 20-year planning horizon that the MPO develops, adopts, and updates through the metropolitan transportation planning process.

MAP-21 – The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21 Century Act was signed into law in July 2012. It provided funding from the Highway Trust Fund for Federal-aid highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs. This legislation still has an impact upon transportation planning, programming, and project delivery.

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organizations are regional planning bodies established under federal law and responsible for developing and approving a TIP. An MPO covers an urbanized area over 50,000 in population with the exception of small pieces of urbanized area that extend into Pennsylvania (e.g., Hagerstown, MD). Pennsylvania has 19 MPOs.

NEPA – Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance

NHPP – National Highway Performance Program, established under MAP-21 and continued under the FAST Act.

OPI – Overall Pavement Index

PennDOT – Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

RPO – Rural Planning Organization

Spike – Discretionary money available to the state Secretary of Transportation

STC – The State Transportation Commission reviews and approves Pennsylvania’s Twelve-Year Program. It was created by Act 120 of 1970...the same act that created the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

TAP – The Transportation Alternatives Program combined and replaced pre-MAP-21 programs, including Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to School, and several other discretionary programs, wrapping them into a single funding source.

TIP – The four-year Transportation Improvement Program addresses the most pressing needs identified in the regional Long Range Transportation Plan. Interstate Highway System projects are managed in a separate Interstate Management TIP, but are included in the TIP for public review and comment. Fund reserves for statewide programs as well as line items for ongoing planning and administration projects are managed in a separate Statewide Items TIP.

TYP – The Twelve-Year Program is a collaborative mid-range planning tool that is reviewed and updated every two years. It is Pennsylvania’s official 12-year listing of transportation projects mandated under state law, the first four years of which is the STIP.

UPWP – The Unified Planning Work Program is a required element of Federal metropolitan transportation planning regulations. It lists work activities to be completed by the MPO.

Appendix B: SWOT Analysis Results

The NEPA MPO Technical Committee met after its regularly scheduled board meeting on February 19, 2019 to kick off the development of a Strategic Plan. The planning process began with a facilitated SWOT analysis to begin defining the MPO's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The outcome of the meeting will be used to frame a discussion for an MPO Board retreat, to be held on Tuesday, March 19. The following is a summary of the SWOT analysis meeting discussions, beginning with an overview of the board's expectations for the Strategic Plan.

Board Expectations and Plan Success Factors

- Include all MPO stakeholders...have a multimodal focus
- Understand roles/responsibilities for all board members – clarification of all disciplines that are represented with voting assignments (e.g., counties, PennDOT districts, FHWA, public transportation agencies, etc.)
- Clear understanding of all planning cycles (e.g., UPWP, TIP, LRTP) and how roles fit into and influence various planning cycles
- A focus on implementation
- Proactive planning vs. maintenance and how that ties into PennDOT Connects
- Address coordination/ communication between PennDOT and municipalities
- Consider how we raise awareness of maintenance plans and avoid being reactionary
- Consider land use planning tools such as Official Maps and the role that NEPA could take in educating municipal planners and officials on their use in transportation planning

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Members are vocal and engaged
- Strong meeting attendance – no issues with having a quorum
- Conference call capabilities
- Flexibility in updating agenda and meeting packet – PennDOT briefings on project updates.
- Coordinating some planning/study efforts and shared resources with other MPOs (e.g., I-81 study, LTAP)
- Multi-county MPO gives the agency more leverage
- County planners all wear multiple hats for their respective planning commissions, sharing information on Hazard Mitigation Plans, GIS, land use, zoning, and multimodal concerns
- The board's transit interests understand the TIP process and the impacts it has on their transit projects. Transit representatives are actively engaged in MPO meetings

Weakness

- MPO counties are all different/have different needs – the region doesn't have an obvious commonality
- Region is split between two PennDOT Districts
- Meetings are often dominated by "report outs" – could be more interactive
- Can be difficult to get information from the committee due to size of board
- Previous LRTP – some confusion over the priority ranking criteria. There was a learning curve for NEPA as a new MPO.
- Funding and projects are finalized prior to input by County/municipal representatives. TIP update discussions need to be liquid for input from counties.
- The weighting of projects on the LRTP negatively impacts smaller projects and lower ADT areas, leaving the majority of projects in the urbanized areas of the MPO.

Opportunity

- Development of subcommittees (currently, only subcommittees for transit and UPWP)
- Engagement of modal stakeholders (rail, aviation) – not necessarily as voting members, but for education/resource sharing
- Additional presentations on regional projects at board meetings
- Additional collaboration with neighboring MPOs
- Opportunities resulting from new legislation and new technologies
- Available data for planning (performance-based, data-driven approach) – will also affect roles, must be transparent about how data is used, with clear documentation
- Raising awareness of the TIP process to municipal planners and officials – how do local transportation priorities make it onto the TIP, etc.?
- Greater clarity/outreach on LRTP project rating criteria early in the planning process

Threats

- Funding restrictions, possible dwindling share of state allocations
- Change in emphasis from STP to NHPP, which is more restrictive
- Fragmentation, both within the MPO and the region. The region is politically fragmented, which could affect the funding of projects
- Transparency resulting from mandated performance measures at state and federal level
- Some counties have over 60 municipalities – it can be difficult to engage them in the LRTP/TIP process through the counties

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