

READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY
MARCH 7, 2024

ATTENDANCE

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

David Alas, PennDOT Central, Vice Chairman* (Acting Chairman)
Alan Piper, Berks County Planning Commission, MPO Secretary
Keith Boatman, South Central Transit Authority
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission
Kyle Zeiber, City of Reading
Tim Krall, City of Reading
Michael Donchez, Alternate for PennDOT 5-0

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

Scott Vottero, PennDOT 5-0, Chair*
Zachary Tempesco, Reading Regional Airport Authority

*Tie-breaking vote only

OTHERS

Jennifer Ruth, PennDOT 5-0
Lawrence Peterson, PennDOT 5-0
Greg Downing, South Central Transit Authority
Matthew Boyer, Commuter Services of PA
Nyomi Evans, PennDOT Central
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission
David Hunter, Berks County Planning Commission
Matthew McGough, Berks County Planning Commission
Melissa Lewis, Berks County Information Systems
Carl Long, Berks County Information Systems
IS Production, Berks County Information Systems

1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chairman Alas called the meeting to order at 1:33 PM.

2. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

There was no business from the floor. Mr. Golembiewski stated that there was no public comment.

3. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 4, 2024 TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Acting Chairman Alas asked if there were any questions or comments on the January 4, 2024 Technical Committee meeting minutes. There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: Mr. Donchez made a motion to approve the January 4, 2024 Technical Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Boatman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. UPDATE ON FY 2024-2025 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Mr. Piper stated that the RATS MPO approved submittal of the FY 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) at its January 2024 meeting. Upon approval, the UPWP was forwarded to PennDOT. PennDOT forwarded the UPWP to US DOT on February 29, 2024.

The next step, following federal approvals, will be for the PennDOT Program Center to begin processing the new agreement for execution later this year.

5. PENNDOT REQUESTED AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS TO FFY 2023-2026 TIP

Mr. Donchez gave an update on PennDOT's requested Amendments/Modifications to the FFY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) from December 29, 2023 to February 28, 2024.

- There are eleven (11) Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with aligning phase costs with anticipated let dates, increases for phase supplements and right-of-way needs, increases to address utility relocation costs, increases to cover recent estimates to address work orders and to address adjustments that resulted from low bid savings on projects.
- There is one (1) Statewide Administrative Action – the adjustment deals with adding funds for emergency repairs to the Carsonia Avenue bridge over Antietam Creek project as a result of the flood that occurred on July 9, 2023.
- There are four (4) Interstate Management Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with aligning phase cost increases and adding 2021 Accelerated Innovation Deployment Demonstration grant funding to the I-78 Shartlesville to Hamburg Resurfacing project. The I-176 Cold in Place project is a recycling project for approximately \$5.6 million to improve the roughness index of the roadway and ramps.
- There are no Amendments.

Mr. Piper stated that Administration Action #11 deals with adding state funds to create a study phase for Route 183 in the Bernville area. The study will extend from Solly Road just north of Bernville Borough through the Shartlesville Road intersection and Bernville to Beyerle Hill Road. The study will identify safety and traffic concerns and make

recommendations for addressing them. PennDOT has already solicited proposals from consultants and are currently in the process of reviewing them.

6. SCTA REQUESTED MODIFICATIONS TO THE FFY 2023-2026 TIP

Mr. Boatman gave an update on South Central Transit Authority's (SCTA) requested transit Amendments/Modifications to the FFY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) from July 5, 2023 to February 14, 2024.

- There are eight (8) Administrative Actions – the adjustments deal with realigning funds from 2023 to 2024 to align with anticipated grant funding for the projects identified.
- There are no Amendments.

Mr. Boatman noted that MPMS #114372, the Purchase 3 Paratransit Vans, has been placed on hold for now due to Federal Transit Administration (FTA) raising a question regarding 5307 funds that are set aside for this project but not currently identified on the TIP for use towards this project. There will be a correction made to this project and brought to the Committee at a later date.

7. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATIONS ON DRAFT FFY 2025-2028 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ELEMENTS FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

Mr. Piper stated that MPO staff has been working with PennDOT to develop the Draft FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). At the end of last year, the Committee approved the Draft TIP Project List for the Reading MPO. In January, staff reviewed the Draft TIP Project List with PennDOT. After that, staff has been working on gathering all of the data and information to put together a draft document that can be reviewed and commented on by the public during the required public comment period.

Mr. Piper commended both Department staff and MPO staff for their efforts in gathering and providing information to develop this Draft TIP document. In previous TIP development years, the document was approved and adopted in July allowing for more time to gather information and develop a document. However, this generally meant that the Reading MPO was one of the last MPO's to adopt a TIP that was then sent for statewide approval and inclusion in the state's Twelve-Year Program (TYP). We made an effort during this TIP cycle to adjust our schedule to develop a Draft TIP document that could be approved and adopted by the MPO before the state's deadline for inclusion in the TYP. As a result of this change, we are now one of the first MPOs to develop a Draft TIP document for public comment and approval instead of one of the last MPOs. We greatly appreciate District and Department staff for their efforts in development of the public narratives and providing that information to us quickly.

Using the information provided by PennDOT, Michael Golembiewski was able to run the Travel Demand Model and provide the information to the consultant, Michael Baker

International Inc., to run the Air Quality (AQ) Analysis. The AQ Report is anticipated to be provided to us within the next few days and we anticipate no issues with the analysis.

As another element of the Draft TIP process, Devon Hain prepared the Environmental Justice (EJ) Summary document which shows that the disbursement of TIP projects has no adverse impacts to low-income or minority populations.

The Draft TIP document is a testament to Amanda Timochenko who spent the vast majority of the last 3 to 4 weeks updating the information in the document and gathering information to put everything together. We have never been this far along in the document development process this early in the update cycle.

The action today is to review all of the information in the Draft TIP and related documents to ensure all of the elements required for public comment are included and then to make a recommendation to the Coordinating Committee to approve release of the documents to begin the public comment period.

There is a checklist in the General and Procedural Guidance that identifies the information that is required to be included for public review and comment. Mr. Piper reviewed the checklist items and their locations within in the draft document which include:

- TIP Development/Project Selection Process Documentation can be found on page 13.
- TIP Development Timeline can be found on page 168. The TIP Development Timeline documents everything that has been done so far as part of the TIP development process and projects the remaining TIP development actions that will be completed as part of the process.
- Transportation Performance Management (TPM) (PM1, PM2, PM3) Narrative Documentation can be found beginning on page 16. This information discusses the various Performance Measures relating to safety, bridge and pavement conditions, and system performance. It includes information on the measures and targets and identifies specific projects that address those Performance Measures.
- Transit Performance Measures Narrative Documentation can be found in both Section 2 beginning on page 28 and Section 3 beginning on page 101.
- Highway and Bridge TIP Listing with Public Narrative can be found beginning on page 35. It lists all of the narratives for highway and bridge projects. At the end of Section 2, we include the maps that identify where all the TIP projects are located throughout Berks County. We start with the Countywide map and then include 5 additional regional maps for better viewing. We do not map the projects that are line items or projects that have multiple locations as part of one MPMS number such as bridge preventative maintenance projects. However, in Section 2 on page 31 we do include a web address link to the Draft TIP project listing map on PennDOT's OneMap which does identify those projects that have multiple locations associated them.
- Public Transportation TIP Listing with Public Narrative can be found beginning on page 105.

- Interstate TIP Listing with Public Narrative (regional portion) can be found beginning on page 85. There are only 2 Interstate projects that are identified on the Interstate TIP listing at this time.
- TIP Financial Constraint Chart can be found on page 244. It shows the difference between what Financial Guidance allotted for funding versus the funding amounts that are programmed. The Financial Constraint Chart also shows the additional funds that were included in the program related to state highway spike funds which are used in 2026 and 2028 for the US 222 Widening and West Shore Bypass Phase I. There is additional Federal STP spike funding for the same 2 projects. There is HSIP Safety Spike in 2025 for High Friction Surface Treatments. There is a line item for local in 2027 and 2028 that relate to municipal bridges. And we are showing an Other-Federal line item in FFY 2027 and 2028 for the West Shore Bypass which we are anticipating applying for discretionary federal funding to cover that gap when we get there.
- EJ Analysis and Documentation can be found on page 295 which summarizes the information found in the Draft Environmental Justice Summary document. The Draft Environmental Justice Summary uses the standard data sets provided by PennDOT and is applied to the County in terms of impacts on minorities and low-income populations. Based on the data included in the EJ Analysis there is no disproportional impacts on any of the identified EJ communities.
- Air Quality Conformity Determination information can be found of page 247 which summarizes the information found in the Draft Air Quality Conformity Report. MPO staff ran the Travel Demand Model and provided the data to the consultant at Michael Baker. The consultant is running the analysis and we anticipate receipt of the report within the next few days. The report will be ready and available to go out for public review and comment prior to the upcoming Coordinating Committee meeting.
- Public Comment Period Advertisement can be found beginning on page 326. The draft of the advertisement is included in the Draft TIP and is subject to approval by the Coordinating Committee. The timeline for the public review and comment period will begin on March 24, 2024 and end on April 23, 2024. There will be two public meetings. The first meeting will be a hybrid meeting on April 8, 2024 and the second will be an in-person meeting on April 11, 2024. At our May Technical Committee meeting, we will review any comments that were received and make recommendations to the Coordinating Committee on responses to those comments and on the draft documents. We anticipate that the Coordinating Committee will approve the responses to comments and the draft documents at our May 16, 2024 Coordinating Committee meeting. Following the approvals, the documents will be forwarded to the state for review by the State Transportation Commission (STC) for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which will then be submitted to USDOT. We anticipate USDOT review and approval in September 2024 prior to the STIP and regional TIPs becoming effective on October 1, 2024.
- Title VI Policy Statement can be found beginning on page 293 and includes the statement in both English and Spanish.

- Memorandum of Understanding TIP Revision Procedures can be found beginning on page 191. The Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) included in the Draft TIP is an agreement between RATS MPO, PennDOT and SCTA regarding the TIP revision procedures. Acting Chairman Alas stated that the Department is reviewing the draft MOU and there may be a few minor edits. The Department will provide those recommended edits to the MPO within the next few days. Mr. Piper stated once those recommended edits are received, the draft MOU will be updated prior to the upcoming Coordinating Committee meeting.

Mr. Piper stated that we recognize that the draft material included in the document has not been edited for final formatting. The goal was to get as much material gathered as possible and together in a document for the Technical Committee to review. Once we get to the point where we can develop a final document, we will incorporate the other materials that are required for final approval such as the Transit Financial Capacity Analysis. That information is not required for the public review and comment period but is required to be included in the final approved TIP document. Additionally, we will need a signed Air Quality Conformity Resolution included in the final TIP document which will be subject to going through the whole adoption process. For the final TIP, we will also need to include a Self-Certification Review Resolution. The List of Major Project Implemented/Delayed is also required to be included in the final TIP document. That information is currently being prepared and will be included in this Draft TIP for the May Coordinating Committee meeting.

There were two additional things that came up as we were going through the TIP development process. In southern Berks in Robeson Township, there are two projects that were previously listed on the TIP. The first project is MPMS #89634 which is a bridge that is on the former section of Route 82 that had been washed out and closed. This project was originally identified on the TIP as a bridge removal to get the bridge off of PennDOT's bridge inventory. After the Draft TIP project listing was approved and we were developing the scope of work for the project when we were informed that PennDOT has already removed this bridge from their system as ownership of the bridge was transferred from PennDOT to either Robeson Township or the Birdsboro Municipal Authority. At a point after this TIP becomes effective, the funds from this bridge will be reassigned.

The second project is for a bridge rehabilitation on Rock Hollow Road, also in Robeson Township. The Township was not aware that the Rock Hollow Bridge was added to TIP. When PennDOT's project manager contacted the Township regarding scheduling a scoping field view meeting, Robeson Township informed him that they were already in design for a superstructure replacement for this bridge. If the Township elects to proceed with their own work on this bridge, the District offered consideration of a replacement bridge project elsewhere in the Township. Following coordination with PennDOT and the Township, the potential replacement project would be for a bridge on Old River Road in the northern part of Robeson Township which is currently one of the worst bridges in the Township. As above, we will leave the Rock Hollow Bridge on the draft program until it is approved and then formally reassign these funds to the Old River Road bridge project. PennDOT has agreed to begin preliminary work related to this project prior to the formal revision.

Mr. Piper asked if anyone had any questions or comments on the Draft TIP and accompanying documents. We are looking for a recommendation today to the Coordinating Committee to approve release of these documents for public comment and to begin the public comment period after the May Coordinating Committee meeting. Mr. Krall asked if the Centre Avenue bridge over Norfolk Southern and the 5th Street bridge identified on page 23 that are in the City are going to be rehabilitated as he understood that they were to be replaced. Mr. Piper stated that until engineering and design gets to the point where there is a definitive decision in the environmental process, bridges in the narratives are identified as being either rehabilitated or replaced. This provides options and allows for the best use of funds to complete the appropriate type of improvement.

MOTION: Mr. Golembiewski made a motion to recommend approval by the Coordinating Committee for the release of the RATS Draft FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program, Draft Air Quality Conformity Report, and Draft Environmental Justice Summary documents for public review and comment. Mr. Krall seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

8. UPDATE ON 2024 LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM COURSES

Mr. McGough stated that the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) provides free training and technical assistance to municipalities, municipal road crews, and police officers throughout the area on various topics from snow removal to public works worker safety. There are 7 classes scheduled to be held in person in Berks County this year with additional virtual classes available on the LTAP website. The information is available on the Berks County Planning Commission website and please feel free to forward to any potential participants that might be interested in participating in the classes.

9. PENNDOT UPDATES ON TASA/MTF AND BRIDGE PROJECTS

Mr. Donchez gave an update on the status of Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside projects, Multimodal Transportation projects, and bridge projects.

10. COMMUTEPA UPDATE

Mr. Boyer stated that the Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership (SRTP) will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2024.

CommutePA outreach staff continues to meet with local employers and organizations conducting meetings and on-site events. The outreach team has been in contact with Brentwood Industries, DoubleTree by Hilton in Reading, F.M. Browns, Manpower, Unique Snacks, Ashley Furniture, and PA CareerLink.

In April, CommutePA will be participating and promoting at various Earth Day events. In May is the Bike to Work week where CommutePA promotes green trips and the regional bike share program. There will be an announcement going out tomorrow that the Berks

County group will have their annual Bike to Work Week ride on the 3rd Friday of May starting around the Tower Health Hospital Masonic Lodge area. It has been a huge success in previous years and we are gearing up to hopefully provide e-bikes to local law enforcement agencies again as part of that public-private partnership.

CommutePA is moving ahead with a regional Congestion Management Process (CMP). PennDOT has approved a regional CMP platform for the large MPOs that are required to do a CMP. We are also anxiously awaiting decisions on the TASA applications for the possibility of developing some Safe Routes to Schools Programs within the 9 county CommutePA region.

During the month of December, 94 new members joined the program, over 7,300 trips were tracked, and over 145,000 miles not driven were recorded for a savings of approximately \$96,000 as a result of using green modes of transportation.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr. Piper stated that unless there is something that needs to be addressed at the next scheduled Technical Committee meeting on April 4, 2024, that a recommendation for cancellation may be sent out prior to the meeting to allow staff additional time to prepare public meeting materials and gather additional information for the final development of the FFY 2025-2028 Draft Transportation Improvement Program. If the April Technical Committee meeting is cancelled, the next Technical Committee Meeting would be on May 2, 2024 where we would review the TIP public comments.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Golembiewski seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 2:22 PM.

Date: _____

Alan D. Piper, MPO Secretary