

## Reading Area Transportation Study

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c/o Berks County Planning Commission  
Berks County Services Center  
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To: Reading Area Transportation Study Technical Committee

From: Michael D. Golembiewski, Transportation Modeler

Re: 2020 Census-Defined Urban Areas and Boundary Smoothing

Date: March 30, 2023

After each Decennial Census, the U.S. Census Bureau defines and designates 'Urban Areas' based on a specified set of criteria. From the Bureau's website,

*"The Census Bureau's urban areas represent densely developed territory, and encompass residential, commercial, and other non-residential urban land uses. For the 2020 Census, an urban area will comprise a densely settled core of census blocks that meet minimum housing unit density and/or population density requirements. This includes adjacent territory containing non-residential urban land uses. To qualify as an urban area, the territory identified according to criteria must encompass at least 2,000 housing units or have a population of at least 5,000."*

The newest Urban Areas information was released in January 2023. Based on criteria changes from 2010 as well as population growth and shifts, the boundaries of the Reading Urban Area have changed. Additionally, the former Pottstown Urban Area, portions of which extend into eastern Berks County, has been completely absorbed into the Philadelphia, PA-NJ-DE-MD Urbanized Area.

While the designation of Urban Areas has several implications, those specific to transportation planning include the functional classification of roadways and funding opportunities. Additionally, since many urban areas cross MPO planning boundaries, agreements related to planning and programming projects need to be established between adjacent planning partners. At the April 6<sup>th</sup> Technical Committee meeting, staff will give a presentation on the 2020 Census-Defined Reading, PA Urban Area, changes from 2010, and adjacent areas. Additionally, the process of "smoothing", where seemingly disconnected areas are joined, will be discussed. Finally, the need for updated Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) between RATS and surrounding MPO's will be addressed. This discussion will be for informational purposes only. There will be no action requested at this meeting.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

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