

Reading Area Transportation Study

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c/o Berks County Planning Commission
Berks County Services Center
633 Court Street, 14th Floor
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To: Reading Area Transportation Study Coordinating Committee

From: Michael D. Golembiewski, Transportation Modeler

Re: 2020 Census-Defined Urban Areas and Boundary Smoothing

Date: May 9, 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.

While the designation of Urban Areas has several implications, those specific to transportation planning include the functional classification of roadways, resultant design criteria, 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 6th Technical Committee meeting, staff gave 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, was discussed. At the May 6th Committee meeting, staff presented our draft Smoothing concept.

On May 6th, the Technical Committee reviewed the draft Smoothing concept and made a recommendation to the Coordinating Committee to approve the draft Smoothing subject to feedback from surrounding MPO's. At the May 18TH Coordinating Committee meeting, staff will present the same information to the Committee with a request to approve the Smoothing.

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

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