

DRAFT
READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE JOINT TECHNICAL AND COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD VIRTUALLY
DECEMBER 21, 2023

ATTENDANCE

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Chris Kufro, PennDOT District Executive, Chair*
Mark Tobin, PennDOT Program Center
Tom McKeon, Berks County Planning Commission
Sam Kalbach, 1st Class Townships (Cumru Township)
Keith Boatman, South Central Transit Authority, Alternate
Kevin Barnhardt, Reading Regional Airport Authority
Commissioner Michael Rivera, County of Berks
Mike Kocher, 2nd Class Townships (Spring Township)
Chris Miller, City of Reading, Alternate

*Tie-breaking vote only

COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

Brian Hoffa, Boroughs (Sinking Spring)

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Scott Vottero, PennDOT 5-0, Chair*
Tim Krall, City of Reading
Alan Piper, Berks County Planning Commission, MPO Secretary
David Alas, PennDOT Central
Keith Boatman, South Central Transit Authority
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

Zachary Tempesco, Reading Regional Airport Authority
Kyle Zeiber, City of Reading

OTHERS

Vanessa Shamberg, Federal Highway Administration
Michael Donchez, PennDOT 5-0
Jennifer Ruth, PennDOT 5-0
Donald Lerch
Matthew Boyer, Commuter Services of PA
Kevin Lerch, Muhlenberg Township
Nyomi Evans, PennDOT Central
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission
David Hunter, Berks County Planning Commission
Matthew McGough, Berks County Planning Commission
Heather Berger, Berks County Information Systems
IS Production, Berks County Information Systems

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kufro called the meeting to order at 1:32 PM.

2. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Mr. Rivera stated that he would need to leave the meeting to attend his swearing in ceremony for Berks County Commissioner. Mr. Barnhardt also stated that his presence is required at the swearing in ceremony and would need to leave the meeting to attend. Both Mr. Rivera and Mr. Barnhardt designated Mr. Piper to be their voting proxy.

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

3. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF SUBMISSION OF DRAFT FFY 2025-2028 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TO PENNDOT

Mr. Piper stated that as required by PennDOT's General and Procedural Guidance, the Reading MPO is required to adopt a draft Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project list by the end of this calendar year.

In terms of funding, earlier this year we discussed the base allocation of funding that was available within each funding program category which totaled approximately \$254 million. The total base allocation for the first four years of the FFY 2025-2028 TIP is approximately \$17 million more than was anticipated in the current FFY 2023-2026 TIP. This equates to approximately a 7.3% increase in allocated funding. Projects currently programmed on the TIP have cost increases associated with them due to inflation which erodes the increase in funding available for this draft TIP.

In addition to the base allocated funding, the state has funding set aside for use at the Secretary of Transportation's discretion to be applied to programs across the Commonwealth. Within the first four years of the State's Twelve-Year Program (TYP), there is approximately \$14.6 million in Federal and State Spike Funding that is applied to the US 222 Widening project (allotted in FFY 2026 and 2028). Also, within the first four years of the State's TYP, there is another \$48 million in Federal and State Spike Funding that is applied to the West Shore Bypass project (allotted beginning in FFY 2028). The first four years of the State's TYP covers the four years of this draft FFY 2025-2028 TIP cycle. For the West Shore Bypass project, there is approximately \$258.5 million in additional Spike Funding in FFYs 2029 - 2036. That means, for the overall draft FFY 2025-2028 TIP program, we are looking at a total estimate of \$316,342,655 for highway and bridge projects. There is an additional \$82 million programmed for transit projects. The draft FFY 2025-2028 transit projects will be discussed after the highway and bridge projects.

The draft FFY 2025-2028 TIP identifies 33 separate highway projects, 52 bridge projects, and 17 line items. Because of the inflation factor using up most of the new dollars, there are only a limited number of projects being recommended for addition to the program. The

NEPA Urban Flex Line Item on the current TIP will be removed and replaced with the DVRPC STU Flex-In Line Item. Previously, our Urban Area extended into the adjacent NEPA MPO which required us to provide funding from our allotted amount to the NEPA region in the amount of approximately \$15,000 annually. Due to the change in the Urban Area boundaries as a result of the Census 2020, our Urban Area no longer extends into the NEPA region. Due to other Urban Area boundary changes, a portion of the Philadelphia Urban Area now extends into eastern Berks County. As a result, we anticipate being able to negotiate with DVRPC MPO to provide us a transfer from their Urban funds to us in the amount of approximately \$335,000 annually. The amount is not official yet until both parties approve a Memorandum of Understanding which is anticipated to be completed early next year.

In addition to the potential DVRPC STU Flex – In Line Item, there were four additional Line Items added to this draft TIP. The RATS ITS Camera Gaps project is for the installation of 4 new closed circuit tv cameras for use for traffic monitoring. The cameras will be installed at Interstate 176 at exit 13 (US 422), US 222 South near Gouglersville, US 422 at the Perkiomen Avenue split in Exeter, and US 222 at the North 5th Street highway split in Ontelaunee Township. The Berks High Volume Microsurfacing project is a new project that the District requested for addition to apply Ralumac Microsurfacing to various high volume roadways within the County. The roadways to receive treatment are determined on an annual basis based on the conditions of the roadway. Another new project is the RATS Vulnerable Road User Project - Tier 2 which applies programmatic Spike Funding to install pedestrian countdown timers at high volume pedestrian intersections at various locations within Berks County. Vulnerable Road Users are people who share the road system with vehicles and their drivers, but have limited ability to protect themselves in dangerous situations which includes pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized means of transportation. The last new project included on the draft TIP is the Municipal Bridge Line Item. We have discussed in the past about the need to address our municipally owned bridges within the County and hope that this line item can expand over time to provide additional funding to address locally owned bridges in the County. Funding for this line item will begin in FFY 2027.

All of the remaining projects that are included in the draft TIP are projects or line items that have been initiated or were included on the prior/current TIP. Many of the projects involve bridge replacements or rehabilitation. There are several significant projects anticipated to start during the Reading MPO FFY 2025-2028 TIP. In FFY 2025, the PA 61 Restoration Phase 2B project in Perry and Windsor Townships will begin and has a total project cost of \$15,883,300. The project extends from 4th Street in Hamburg south to the traffic light just north of Shoemakersville. As part of that, the SR 61 Median Barrier project will install median barriers and upgrade the roadway from 4th Street in Hamburg south to the traffic light just north of Shoemakersville for approximately \$500,000. The SR 2016 Bellevue Avenue Bridge replacement over Reading and Blue Mountain Railroad project in Muhlenberg Township is anticipated to begin in FFY 2025 for an estimated total project cost of \$6,984,043.

There are 6 projects anticipated to begin in FFY 2026. The projects include:

- SR 12 Alsace Manor – this project involves widening the roadway to install center turn lanes and making intersection improvements in Alsace Township for an estimated total project cost of \$4,887,168.
- SR 12 Elizabeth Avenue – this project involves installation of a roundabout at Elizabeth Avenue, widening of the roadway from Elizabeth Avenue to Skyline Drive intersection, and installation of a traffic signal at the Skyline Drive intersection in Alsace Township for an estimated total project cost of \$14,898,900.
- US 222 Auxiliary Lanes – this project involves adding an extra lane in the southbound direction where it merges with the bypass and adding an extra lane in the northbound direction between State Hill Road, Crossing Drive, and US 222 exit to facilitate traffic movement through that area in Wyomissing Borough for an estimated total project cost of \$17,150,000.
- US 222 Widening – this project involves widening US 222 to 4 lanes from just north of Schaeffer Road in Maidencreek Township through the interchange at the beginning of the Kutztown Bypass in Richmond Township. The project also includes the installation of 2 additional roundabouts at Pleasant Hill Road and Richmond Road. The total estimated project cost is \$92,529,825.
- PA 419 Bridge over Tulpehocken Creek – this project involves the replacement of the bridge along PA 419 over the Tulpehocken Creek just north of Womelsdorf in Marion and Heidelberg Townships for an estimated total project cost of \$8,807,500.
- US 422 Intersection – this project involves the construction of the US 422/PA 724/Mull Avenue intersection in Sinking Spring Borough for an estimated total project cost of \$12,560,000.

There are 3 projects anticipated to begin in FFY 2027. The projects include:

- US 422 West Shore Bypass Phase 1 – this project includes the reconstruction of the bypass from Buttonwood Street to just east of the Lancaster Avenue interchange and reconfiguring both the Penn Street and Lancaster Avenue interchanges. Also included in this project is the rehabilitation of 2 bridges on the West Shore Bypass further east. One bridge goes over Brentwood Drive and another bridge goes over the Schuylkill River. Also included in this project is the full reconstruction of the bridge just to the west of Interstate 176. The project also includes the reconstruction of the Bingaman Street bridge over the Schuylkill River. There will be work done on the Buttonwood Street bridge as well as part of this project that will provide for more vertical clearance for traffic on the bypass. The project extends through the City of Reading, West Reading Borough, and Cumru Township for an estimated total project cost of \$375,550,000.
- PA 662 at Oley Turnpike Road – this project includes installation of a roundabout at PA 662 and Oley Turnpike Road in Oley Township for an estimated total project cost of \$5,357,965.

- SR 3023 State Hill Road - this project includes widening State Hill Road from Colony Drive to Mall Drive that includes installation of roundabouts at Woodland Road and at Mall Drive in Wyomissing Borough for an estimated total project cost of \$12,560,000.

There are 3 projects anticipated to begin in FFY 2028. The projects include:

- SR 3023 State Hill Road – this project extends from Mall Drive to the Norfolk Southern Railroad bridge and addresses the interchanges with US 222, as well as the intersections with Spring Street and Granite Point Drive in Wyomissing Borough for an estimated total project cost of \$12,355,000.
- SR 2087 Centre Avenue over Norfolk Southern Railroad – this project involves the replacement of the bridge on Centre Avenue over Norfolk Southern Railroad in the City of Reading for an estimated total project cost of \$9,998,750.
- SR 2005 Fifth Street over Norfolk Southern Railroad – this project includes the replacement of the bridge on 5th Street over Norfolk Southern Railroad in the City of Reading for an estimated total project cost of \$4,594,000.

Mr. Kalbach asked if there are any provisions for emergency access as part of the US 422 West Shore Bypass Phase 1 project. Chairman Kufro responded that part of the benefit of widening the West Shore Bypass to 3 lanes in each direction includes the addition of full width inside and outside shoulders along the bypass. The information regarding emergency vehicle accessibility will be provided to the design team at PennDOT for further review and consideration.

Mr. Piper stated that every dollar has to be accounted for in each individual year and then each of those dollars have to be assigned to appropriate projects based on their funding categories. Mr. Piper stated that it takes great effort to account for all the dollars in all the years for all the projects programmed and commends PennDOT staff for being able to put together the material and work out the projects across the program years.

Mr. Piper stated that for the draft FFY 2025-2028 Transit TIP, each year of the program has approximately \$20 million in funding available. Mr. Boatman stated that some of the major projects for the four-year program include replacing the Farebox System to provide for a Mobile Ticketing System, installing solar panels at the Operations Center and the Berks Transfer Center (BTC) to help with reducing costs, implementation of the Boss Mobility Hub in Sinking Spring, and upgrades to the Franklin Street Station and updates to the Transit Development Plan. Throughout the 4-year program there will be 7 fixed route bus replacements and 54 shared ride vehicle replacements.

Mr. Piper stated that in the past we were able to allocate CMAQ funds to SCTA for vehicle replacements. Beginning in FFY 2027, we put in \$450,000 in CMAQ funds and carry \$900,000 in CMAQ funds from FFY 2028 on through the rest of the TIP years and the next 8 years for transit vehicle replacements.

Mr. Golembiewski asked Mr. Boatman to provide information on how many buses will be replaced using just CMAQ funds so that he can perform the Air Quality Conformity analysis. Mr. Boatman replied that he will provide the information to Mr. Golembiewski.

Mr. Piper stated that the process moving forward would be to submit the draft FFY 2025-2028 TIP project list to the Department and then review the information with the Department in January 2024. It is likely that funds related to Spike Funding for other discretionary programs could potentially be added to this program. The goal is to have the final TIP project list by our March 2024 meeting at which point we would have our draft report available for approval as well. The goal is to have a final approval at the May 2024 meeting.

MOTION (Technical): Mr. Piper made a motion to recommend approval of the draft FFY 2025-2028 TIP and to submit it to PennDOT. Mr. Golembiewski seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

MOTION (Coordinating): Mr. Kalbach made a motion to approve the draft FFY 2025-2028 TIP and to submit it to PennDOT. Mr. Tobin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (Mr. Piper cast yes votes on behalf of Mr. Barnhardt and Mr. Rivera).

4. OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr. Kalbach noted that he was not re-elected and this meeting will be his last RATS Coordinating Committee meeting. Chairman Kufro and Mr. Piper thanked Mr. Kalbach for his efforts and participation on the RATS Coordinating Committee.
- Mr. Piper stated that the next RATS Technical Committee meeting will be January 4, 2024 as a virtual meeting and the next RATS Coordinating Committee meeting will be on January 18, 2024 as a hybrid meeting.

5. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Kalbach made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Boatman seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 2:09 PM.

Date: _____

Alan D. Piper