

**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #8
FEBRUARY 9, 2026, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Attendance:

Amanda Timochenko (BCPC staff)	Michael Donchez (PennDOT District 5-0)
Michael Golembiewski (BCPC staff)	Zackary Tempesco (Reading Regional Airport)
Donna Reed (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, Reading City Council Pres.)	Lisha Rowe (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, Cumru Twp. Commissioner)
Lauri Ahlskog (South Central Transit Auth.)	Ed Burns (Burns Logistics)
Chris Kufro (PennDOT District 5-0)	Matthew McGough (BCPC staff)
Nyomi Nonnemaker (PennDOT Central Office)	Alan Piper (BCPC staff)
Alex Roche (Greater Reading Chamber Alliance)	Devon Hain (BCPC staff)
Ron Young (PennDOT District 5-0)	Pamela Menet (Berks County Economic Development)
Lawrence Peterson (PennDOT District 5-0)	Elaine Schaeffer (Schuylkill River National Heritage Area)
David Mattes (BCPC Board Member)	Nick Raio (PennDOT Central Office)

Meeting Notes:

Ms. Timochenko started the meeting at 1:01 PM. She welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. There will be three (3) sections reviewed today: Demographics & Economics, Travel Demand Modeling & Air Quality Conformity, and Goals & Strategic Performance Measures, along with several draft Maps.

Mr. McGough reviewed the Demographics & Economics section first. Notable discussion items in this section include:

- Current population trends and population projections
- Urban vs. Rural population (Note: Ms. Menet commented that the US Dept. of Agriculture uses different metrics to determine Urban vs. Rural)
- Other demographic components of the population including
 - Households and composition
 - Income and Poverty
 - Elderly
 - Disabled
 - Limited English Proficient
 - Zero Vehicle Households
- All the above factors have effects on the transportation and transit networks, travel needs, and changes that may affect future travel

Next, Mr. McGough reviewed the Economy section with highlights that included

- How changes in Economy affects regional traffic
- Employment and Unemployment trends, and employment projections
- The County's and regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

- Commuting patterns (distances and locations)
- Mode of travel (Single vehicle, carpool, transit, bike/walk) and travel times
- Major traffic generators

Mr. Donchez made several comments including

- It would be beneficial to sort the various tables in descending order (numeric versus alphabetically) as it would better highlight where Berks County ranks
- *Berks County 2021 Annual Averages* table, please check the math as there appear to be some errors in calculations
- *Top 25 Employers* table, why is Kutztown University not included? Mr. Piper noted that it is included in the #18 entry (PA State System of Higher Education)
- Referencing the bar graph, the second paragraph above it should include a discussion on the emergence of E-Commerce and resulting fewer ‘brick and mortar’ stores and the effects of e-commerce on traffic
- Question regarding the *Persons per Household by Municipality (Map #3)*, why is western Berks so high in household size? Is it due to large farmsteads, or the effect that a low number of households has on the calculation. Same could be considered in Hereford Township and New Morgan Borough

Ms. Menet asked why the American Community Survey (ACS) was used so extensively for data when there are other sources available. She specifically highlighted a report recently approved by the Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB) pertaining to future workforce development. Mr. Golembiewski responded that to get data at the municipal level, the ACS 5-year Survey is the most consistently updated and the most comprehensive of the data reported. While certain items like the WDB’s report can be valuable – and we will include a reference in the LRTP – we use ACS primarily for consistency between both municipal and county data.

With no other questions or comments, Mr. Golembiewski reviewed the Travel Demand Modeling & Air Quality Conformity section. He began by giving an overview of the Berks County Travel Demand Forecasting Model (BCTM) including its history, why it’s required, some of its components and how it works. Output from the BCTM is forwarded to a consultant who runs the USEPA’s 5th-generation Motor Vehicle Emissions Simulator (MOVES5), which is required based on the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. The MOVES5 model uses BCTM traffic information to generate estimates of pollutants that contribute to ground level ozone.

RATS is required by the CAAA to prove that future transportation plans and projects do not increase levels of ozone-creating pollutants; using the BCTM and MOVES5 are how we accomplish that. The Air Quality Conformity process (Conformity) involves coding future roadway projects into the BCTM, running the model, then taking the resultant output and using it as input into USEPA’s MOVES5 air quality model. The resulting amount of pollutants created by the roadway network is compared to emissions ‘budgets’ – allowable limits of motor vehicle pollution – to ensure that planned projects don’t add to overall vehicle emissions. Should emissions exceed the budgets, then the overall grouping of plans and projects would need to be adjusted and the models re-run to ensure exceedances do not occur.

Mr. Golembiewski discussed the various National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) that have affected Berks now or in the past:

- 1997 and 2008 8-Hour Ozone
- 2015 8-Hour Ozone

- 1997 Annual PM2.5 and 2006 24-Hour PM 2.5
- 2012 annual PM2.5

At one time we were designated as ‘nonattainment’ and therefore responsible for modeling against the 1997 Annual PM2.5 standard. Subsequently, Berks was designated as ‘in attainment’ as of the updated 2006 24-hour PM2.5 standard and, effective April 2015, is no longer responsible for modeling PM2.5.

At present, we are still considered nonattainment against the 2008 Ozone standard and, therefore, model the ‘criteria pollutants’ [Oxides of Nitrogen (Nox) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)] against the aforementioned Emission Budgets. There is a more stringent 2015 8-hour Ozone NAAQS, but numerous court cases nationwide have delayed the implementation of that standard.

Finally, the actual analysis was discussed. The models must be run (for the current TIP and LRTP) for three (3) analysis years: 2030, 2040, and 2050. Based on FHWA guidance, these years are chosen as (2030) a year within the draft TIP; (2050) the last year of the LRTP; and (2040) an interim year that is no more than 10 years beyond prior analysis years. Regionally significant highway projects are coded into the respective years based on the year they are expected to be substantially complete and open to traffic. The resulting pollutant estimates are reviewed against the budgets and either a ‘Pass’ or ‘Fail’ for each year are issued, thus resulting in a final conformity determination.

Mr. Donchez had the only comment, asking that examples of PM2.5 (i.e., brake dust, tire wear) be added to the text to provide context. Staff agreed.

With no other questions or comments, Ms. Timochenko reviewed the Goals and Strategic Performance Measures section. This section builds on all of the background information, federal requirements, and various processes to ultimately assemble project lists. Items included are:

- Goals and Objectives and how they relate to ten (10) Federal Planning Factors
- Project prioritization strategies and federal Performance Measures (PM’s), along with funding sources pertinent to those PM’s
- FHWA’s Transportation Performance Management (TPM), including nationwide Goals, Performance-Based Planning and Programming and associated PM’s and related target setting
 - PM-1, Safety, and how the LRTP and project selection works toward meeting PM-1 targets
 - PM-2, System Conditions, and how the LRTP and project selection works toward meeting PM-2 targets
 - PM-3, Congestion, and how the LRTP and project selection works toward meeting PM-3 targets
- Transit PM’s and related targets, as set by SCTA

Various initiatives and key projects (Highway/Bridge and Transit) by period were discussed. Related to this, the Financial Plan was reviewed. Numerous issues include

- Issues related to federal transportation reauthorization or extension of the current Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) which ends on September 30, 2026
- Without reauthorization, we cannot assume more federal funding than already authorized
- Longer-range time periods show many line items due to the difficulty of programming projects so far out, due to lack of funding estimates, inflation effects, and other factors
- Financial tables from the Reading Regional Airport’s Capital Improvement Program have been included in the LRTP

- Due to the uncertainty surrounding future funding, a list of ‘unfunded projects’ is included. This can be considered our ‘wish list’ of projects to be considered in future updates of the LRTP and TIP
- The Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority’s (SRPRA) Passenger Rail project is identified in the LRTP but is presently outside of any TIP/LRTP funding streams
- The statewide Interstate Maintenance (IM) TIP items are listed on our TIP only but are not funded out of any RATS allocations
- The SCTA/BARTA Capital Improvement Program is attached

Discussion regarding several of the maps ensued. Mr. Piper mentioned that the IM TIP projects shown are considered Draft, since the final IM TIP has not yet been released by PennDOT. Also, PA Turnpike projects are shown but need to be added to the Bridge and IM project lists as they are funded completely by Turnpike funds and not TIP allocations.

Mr. Raio mentioned the PM discussion, specifically PM-1. The header information in the table had a wrong date; 2024 Safety Measures and Targets should read 2026. Staff will correct the text.

Public Outreach and next steps were the last to be discussed. Staff noted that a full draft of the LRTP document is being prepared and will be sent to the Steering Committee members when completed for their feedback. Additionally:

- The formal Public Input and Comment period is anticipated to take place from March 22 – April 24, with the advertisement running (English and Spanish) in the Sunday (3/22) *Reading Eagle*
- Four (4) public meetings are anticipated to be held
 - 4/7, 1:30 p.m., Berks County South Campus (in-person only)
 - 4/14, 6:00 p.m., Berks County Agricultural Center (in-person only)
 - 4/21, 11:00 a.m. AND 6:00 p.m. (virtual only)

This was the last scheduled Steering Committee meeting. Ms. Timochenko extended to the members her gratitude for their participation and attention to the materials. Their participation made staff’s jobs much easier. A number of members expressed their thanks to Ms. Timochenko for presiding over the Committee. The meeting concluded at approximately 2:30 PM.

*Prepared by,
Michael D. Golembiewski
Transportation Modeler*

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION