

RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES PUBLIC OUTREACH MEETING #2
JEFFERSON TWP. BUILDING, TULPEHOCKEN REGION MEETING, OCTOBER 2, 2024

Mr. Piper started the meeting at 6:00PM. There were 6 attendees. He welcomed everyone and gave a brief overview of the purpose for this meeting which is to review and gather public input on the Goals and Objectives of the current LRTP and revise them based on public input. He mentioned that specific projects will be discussed at the end of the meeting.

Ms. Timochenko next shared a PowerPoint presentation (see attachment at the end of these notes).

Ms. Timochenko described the Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) and the Committee structure.

Ms. Timochenko explained what the Long Range Transportation (LRTP) is along with some of the necessary items to be included under federal requirements; planning horizon and update process; performance measures; and serving as the foundation for the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The next few slides detailed the LRTP Plan Components by Chapter.

Chapter 1 is the Introduction. This provides the context for why the plan is done and its relationship with other federal, state, and local plans. The **Vision Statement** is included in this chapter: *The Reading Area Transportation Study will provide and maintain a balanced, multimodal transportation system that will safely and efficiently move goods and people.* The following comments were received:

Questions:

- Ms. Reifsnyder - Why does goods come before people in the Vision Statement? Is there any reason for that? Mr. Piper replied that after these meetings, staff will review the comments and can make the recommended change putting 'people' before 'goods' in the statement. He also noted that the Vision Statement will be edited to remove the word 'provide' as RATS does not provide the transportation system.

Chapter 2 contains the background Information, including demographics, economics, environmental integration, and resiliency.

Chapter 3 is the State of the System. Individual sections examine Roads and Bridges, the Congestion Management Process, Safety and Security, Transit, Freight, Non-motorized Transportation, Aviation, and Issues & Needs.

Chapter 4 is the recommendations of the plan. These include Goals/Objectives/Strategic Performance Measures, Project Prioritization, Project & Financial Planning, Travel Demand Modeling, and Air Quality Conformity.

Contained in the Appendix is documentation of the Public Participation Process, Amendment Procedures, and detailed tables/descriptions of the Highway and Transit Program Funding assumptions and calculations.

There are ten (10) Federal Planning Factors that must be incorporated into the LRTP:

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvement and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.

- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.
- Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation.
- Enhance travel and tourism.

The LRTP must be consistent with state and local transportation plans and programs.

- Mr. Gable - How do the formulas for funding for our area work? Mr. Piper explained the process and how funding formulas work.
- Ms. Reifsnnyder - What is resiliency? Mr. Piper explained that resiliency in this instance is the ability of the transportation system to adapt and withstand impacts from natural hazards.

Ms. Timochenko introduced Goal #1: Keep Travelers safe and secure, no matter the mode of transportation. The five (5) Objectives attached to Goal #1 were also read. She asked for questions/comments regarding the Goal and Objectives.

- Mr. Deck – definitely agree with goal and objectives. He asked how the speed enforcement in work zones is working and if work zone cameras be incorporated into this process because we need more of them. Mr. Piper replied that the program is working and it is incorporated into the LRTP.

Ms. Timochenko reviewed Goal #2: Maintain and improve the transportation system and services we enjoy today where financially feasible, then read the associated seven (7) Objectives. Ensuing discussion included:

- Mr. Himmelberger – What is the timeline for these plans? Mr. Piper replied that these plans will take some time to prepare. The anticipated approval of these plans will be sometime in Spring 2026.
- Mr. Gable - How do you predict warehousing? Do you see these coming? How does that work when they just pop up? Mr. Piper discussed the subdivision and land development review process at the County and the County Comprehensive Plan. He noted that municipalities are the approving body for plans and development involving warehousing.

Ms. Timochenko reviewed Goal #3: Invest in projects that strengthen the ability of Berks County commerce to access national and international trade markets and support regional economic development and tourism opportunities, then read the associated eight (8) Objectives. Ensuing discussion included:

- There was agreement on the Goals and Objectives.
- There was discussion regarding the current state of agriculture.

Ms. Timochenko reviewed Goal #4: Give travelers a variety of well-designed transportation choices that are in good condition, then read the associated four (4) Objectives.

- There were no comments on this Goal and Objectives.

Ms. Timochenko reviewed Goal #5: Enhance the performance of the county transportation system in environmentally sustainable ways that increase resiliency to both climate change and vulnerability, then read the associated six (6) Objectives. She asked for questions/comments:

- Mr. Deck - Does this include alternative fuels? Or plainly, different fuels for vehicles, NG, hydro, electric, etc? Mr. Piper explained the current planning initiatives for electric vehicle infrastructure.
- Mr. Gable – Where are we now? What plan are we under technically? Mr. Piper commented that the current plan is the FFY 2023-2045 LRTP and the update will be for FFY 2027-2050.

Ms. Timochenko reviewed the anticipated LRTP development timeline:

- October 2023 – 30-month Kickoff Meeting
- July/August 2024 – Establish Steering Committee
- September/October 2024 – Public Outreach Meetings
- November 2024 – June 2025 – Gather background information.
- March-May 2025 – Gather public input on issues and needs (in coordination with State Transportation Commission [STC] public outreach on the State's Twelve—Year Program Update)
- July 2025 – Review STC survey responses
- August-December 2025 – TIP and LRTP project meetings with PennDOT
- November/December 2025 – Present at Agency Coordination Meeting (ACM) meeting
- February 2026 – Complete Draft LRTP
- March/April 2026 – Begin 30-day public comment period and conduct public meetings.
- May 2026 – Response to comments
- May 2026 – Anticipated RATS Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Adoption
- September 2026 – Anticipated Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approval.

Ms. Timochenko reviewed Slide #18 and asked the question: “If you could instantaneously make one change (big or small) to the transportation system without concern for cost or other potential obstacles, what would it be?”

Responses included:

- Ms. Greth – lights all the way along Route 183. People speeding and truck traffic.
- Ms. Raifsnnyder – agreed with the need for lights along Route 183.
- Mr. Deck – all of Route 183 needs to be looked at. Upgrade all of it. Traffic is heavy all of the time. Unsafe driving. It should be 4 lanes from Route 222 to Interstate 78.
- Ms. Greth – how does the state pick and choose projects? Money? Agree with the need for lights along Route 183. Mr. Piper discussed the prioritization process used by the State and RATS to identify projects.
- Mr. Gable – suggested turning lanes on Route 183 through the Borough of Bernville.
- Mr. Gable – recommended public transportation for the elderly.

The next step in the LRTP development process is continued public outreach. Staff has four (4) more in-person meetings scheduled, and an additional meeting will be held virtually. A survey is available in English and Spanish as part of this initial public outreach, and she encouraged the meeting attendees to take the survey and spread it among their peers to garner more input.

Ms. Timochenko asked for any final questions/comments, particularly related to roadways, bridges, or other transportation issues in the area that are considered problematic.

- Mr. Gable – Church Road intersection with Route 183 is an issue. Not sure if that is being looked at with the existing study that will be done.
- Mr. Gable – asked if any of the projects along Route 183 include Shartlesville Road? Mr. Piper discussed the current projects and study phases for the Route 183 corridor.

- Mr. Gable – The culvert along Shartlesville Road near his home creates a water sitting issue that freezes over in the winter. Could be a drainage issue. Mr. Piper directed Steve to PennDOT Customer Care center.
- Mr. Deck – Road painting has not been what it used to be. Especially in rain because you cannot see the lines. They hear a lot of excuses. Mr. Piper noted that the paint mixture has changed over the years to be more environmentally friendly.
- Ms. Raifsnyder – Enforcement by the State Police is non-existent. How can we get more enforcement activities from the SP. Mr. Piper discussed factors that influence the ability for police enforcement on roadways.
- Mr. Gable – mobile cameras for speed enforcement might be a good idea.
- Mr. Gable – Traffic lights...who pays for them? Mr. Himmelberger explained how it works.
- Ms. Raifsnyder – question about bridge near Christmas Village. What is happening with that bridge? Mr. Piper explained that the bridge is closed and will be removed.
- Mr. Deck – the newly reconstructed bridge on Route 625 is still posted but just redone – posted signs need to be taken down.
- Mr. Gable – North Heidelberg Road sharp turn hard to navigate and guardrail has been impacted a number of times.

Hearing no other comments, Mr. Piper and Ms. Timochenko thanked the attendees for coming and their participation. The meeting concluded.at 7:29 PM.