

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) provides context and detail to support future transportation funding and projects for Berks County's highways, bridges, and transit infrastructure over the next 20 years. This plan is developed following federal and state guidelines. Federal, state, and local plans are incorporated throughout this Long Range Transportation Plan to ensure consistency and help achieve the goals and objectives identified in this plan. The LRTP is fiscally constrained and does not program more projects than anticipated funding amounts. This plan identifies nearly \$2 billion in transportation projects and line items through 2050.

This plan uses performance-based and data driven planning to support more effective and structured project selection and programming decisions. In addition, this plan incorporates a lowest life-cycle cost approach, focusing on making improvements to extend the life cycles of roadways and bridges. The plan outlines the region's long-range transportation vision and identifies the projects that are necessary through the year 2050 in order to attain that vision. Most importantly, federal funding cannot be allocated to transportation projects unless they are included within the list of projects that is included in this plan.

The most recent federal legislation, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021, authorized \$351 billion for highway and bridge programs and \$91 billion for transit programs over the federal fiscal years 2022 through 2026. Pennsylvania's allocation for highway and bridge programs was approximately \$13 billion with approximately \$3.3 billion for freight and transit programs over the 5 years. Funds were also allocated for safety programs, climate change mitigation, expansion of the electric vehicle (EV) network, airport infrastructure improvements, and various discretionary grant programs. As of the writing of this plan, the IIJA has not been reauthorized, and a new transportation funding bill has not been established. As a result, funding for projects after FFY 2026 is assumed to remain flat at the last year of the bill's allocation levels, consistent with statewide financial guidance. As new legislation is developed and authorized, RATS will incorporate any changes into future transportation planning documents.

VISION STATEMENT

The Reading Area Transportation Study will promote a well maintained and balanced multimodal transportation system that will safely and efficiently move people and goods.

Background Trends

- In 2024, Berks County's population totaled 433,015, ranking 9th for most populated county in Pennsylvania
- By 2050, Berks County's population is projected to grow to 460,295 persons
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau definition of 'urban', 30 out of 72 municipalities in Berks County are considered 'urban'
- In Berks County, approximately 18% of the population is 65 and over
- In 2024, 13.5% of Berks County residents identified themselves as being disabled
- In 2024, 5.8% of Berks County households had limited to no proficiency with the English language
- In 2024, 8.7% of Berks County households do not have access to a vehicle
- According to the U.S. Census standards for identifying minorities, Berks County's average minority population was 26.1% in 2024.
- Berks County gained approximately 16,336 jobs from 2014 to 2024
- Over 97,000 Berks County residents commute out of the county for work
- More people are driving further distances for work than they had in 2018
- The predominant mode of travel to work remains driving alone versus carpooling or public transit use
- Agriculture remains the predominant land use accounting for 36% of the nearly 550,000 acres of land that comprises Berks County

State of the System Trends

- Berks County had 3,292.52 linear miles of roadway in 2024
- Berks County Total Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled (DVMT) in 2024 was 9,028,964
- In 2024, there were 303,238 licensed drivers in Berks County
- There were 407,561 registered vehicles in Berks County in 2024
- A large portion of Berks County's roadways were in 'Good' condition in 2024
- Berks County had a total of 880 bridges in 2024; 62 posted, 11 closed
- In 2024, 6% of state-owned bridges in Berks County were in 'Poor' condition and 30% of local-owned bridges were in 'Poor' condition
- The Congestion Management Process evaluates 33 corridors for congestion in Berks County – 3 were identified as highly congested and 19 as moderately congested
- Despite increases in population, vehicle registrations, and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), Berks County fatal crashes decreased nearly 30% and suspected serious injury crashes decreased approximately 8% from 2005 to 2024
- The majority of crashes in Berks County involve aggressive driving, speeding, and distracted driving behaviors

- Crashes involving Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs) increased from 2020 to 2024
- Truck freight is the region’s most utilized method of transporting goods with I-176, I-78, I-76, and portions of US 422, US 222, PA 724, and SR 61 being the primary routes for truck traffic
- Four railroad companies conduct business on 125 linear miles of operational railroad lines in Berks County
- BARTA provided Fixed Route Service to over 2 million passengers in 2025 in Berks County
- There are 1,319 miles of sidewalks in Berks County
- The Reading Regional Airport is Berks County’s primary general aviation facility

Issues

- Funding impacts the ability to address issues identified within the transportation system in Berks County
- Driving behaviors and age are major factors influencing safety on Berks County roadways
- The lack of available truck parking along major roadways continues to impact the movement of freight and impact safety throughout the region
- Expansion in warehouse and logistics developments increase the vehicle and truck volumes on major roadways in Berks County
- The ‘Poor’ condition rating for local-owned bridges in Berks County is greater than state-owned bridges
- Funding to maintain and improve local-owned bridges is minimal when compared to the overall need
- Congestion on Berks County roadways increases travel times
- Gasoline taxes, a major source of revenue to fund transportation improvements, have not increased
- There is an increased need to expand the infrastructure for alternative fuel vehicles including electric, propane, and natural gas vehicles
- There is an increased need to plan for the integration of autonomous vehicles, highly automated vehicles, and connected vehicles
- The increased use of electric powered micromobility vehicles on a vehicular focused transportation system creates safety implications
- Berks County does not currently have passenger air service or passenger rail service
- There are gaps in the active transportation network in Berks County

Goals and Performance Measures

This plan identifies 5 goals to help guide improvements that address the issues and needs of the transportation system in Berks County. Several objectives are identified to help achieve progress towards the goals in this plan. Additionally, performance measures are identified and analyzed to help track how well we will meet our mission over time. The goals, objectives, and performance measures support the vision statement for the Reading Area Transportation Study.

Goal 1	Keep travelers safe and secure for all modes of transportation.
Goal 2	Maintain and improve the existing multimodal transportation system and services within fiscal constraints.
Goal 3	Invest in projects that strengthen and enhance economic development and tourism opportunities.
Goal 4	Give travelers a variety of well-designed transportation choices that are in good condition.
Goal 5	Enhance the County transportation system to address environmental impacts.

RATS employs a qualitative approach in selecting projects using data to make investment and policy decisions to achieve the goals. We expect these projects to make positive, substantive progress towards meeting this plan’s performance measures. Several performance measures and targets relating to safety, pavement and bridge conditions, and congestion management and air quality are identified in this plan. Additionally, projects that are programmed in support of the performance measures are identified. A map of all programmed projects identified in this plan can be found at the end of this executive summary.

The Long Range Transportation Plan is divided into three intervals as follows:

Short-Term (Years 1–4): This segment is also referred to as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). It includes the highest priority projects for the region. Most projects on the TIP have advanced to at least the environmental assessment/preliminary engineering state. Most are scheduled for construction during the four – year period. Projects must be on the TIP to receive federal funding. To view projects included in the draft FFY 2027-2030 TIP, please visit <https://onemap.penndot.gov/onemap/?mapId=113603>

Mid-Term (Years 5–12): Projects in this category are generally in the early stages of detailed study. Some but not all may have advanced to the environmental and engineering analysis stage. Most projects in this category will be in the Needs Analysis stage. In most cases, specific funding requirements for projects in this phase will be very preliminary. Projects in the short-term and mid-term project list constitute the Pennsylvania Twelve Year Transportation Program (TYP). Major capital projects must be on the Twelve Year Program to receive state funding.

Long-Term (Years 13+): These are projects that have been identified in the mid-term as extending beyond year 12. Projects on the long range plan will require substantial further analysis and funding commitments before they can move forward to the environmental assessment, preliminary design, final design and construction. These also include ongoing programs or practices expected to continue through this period. Finally, it includes line items within specific funding categories that will be drawn upon to fund both asset management and program driven projects as they are identified in subsequent LRTP and TIP updates.

Major Corridor Initiatives

Over the 20+ years of this LRTP, RATS has initiated project programming for several major corridors in Berks County.

US 222 North Corridor

Short-Range – Widening of US 222 from Maiden Creek Township through Richmond Township to the Kutztown Bypass including median barriers and construction of roundabouts at its intersections with Pleasant Hills Road and Richmond Road.

Mid-Range – Construction will be completed on the widening project.

Long-Range – Anticipated reconstruction of the section of US 222 North extending from the Kutztown Bypass to the Lehigh County Line.

US 422 West Shore Bypass Corridor

A phased reconstruction and widening to 6-lanes extending from SR 12 to just east of I-176 including upgraded interchanges and replacement of all related structures including the Bingaman Street Bridge.

Short-Range – Phase 1 - Completion of utility relocations and start of reconstruction from the Buttonwood Street overpass to just east of Lancaster Avenue, including the Penn Street/Penn Avenue and Lancaster Avenue interchanges, the reconstruction of the Bingaman Street Bridge, reconstruction of 2 bridges west of I-176 over Norfolk Southern railroad and the Schuylkill River and relocation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities associated with the Thun Trail.

Mid-Range – Construction will continue on Phase 1. Construction will begin on Phase 2 which extends from PA 12 to the Buttonwood Street overpass and from east of the Lancaster Avenue interchange to east of I-176, including reconstruction of the North Wyomissing Boulevard and I-176 interchanges and major bridge crossings of the Schuylkill River.

Long-Range – Anticipated completion of the US 422 West Shore Bypass reconstruction.

US 222 Auxiliary Lanes

Short-Range – Completion of utility relocations and construction of an additional auxiliary lane on US 222 southbound beginning where Berkshire Boulevard passes over US 222 to the Paper Mill Road exit.

Mid-Range – Construction of a northbound auxiliary lane on US 222 from the entrance ramp of the State Hill Road interchange to the SR 422 eastbound exit ramp.

Other major road and bridge projects that are identified in this plan include intersection and safety projects on PA 12 extending from Elizabeth Avenue to Mount Laurel Avenue in Alsace Township; intersection improvements on SR 183 at Old 22 in Upper Tulpehocken Township and in the area of Bernville Borough, Jefferson Township, and Penn Township; widening of SR 183 between US 222 and West Leesport Road in Bern Township; and three phases of widening and safety improvements to the SR 3023 State Hill Road Corridor extending from Colony Drive to Penn Avenue in the Borough of Wyomissing.

RATS also prioritizes and programs funding for transit projects with the South Central Transit Authority for its BARTA service area in Berks County. Transit projects consist primarily of scheduled vehicle replacements, facility improvements, and operational subsidies. This plan includes the Berks County portion of SCTA's Capital Improvement Program through 2050.

Funding from various discretionary grant programs is also planned and programmed based on the program requirements. PennDOT, SCTA, and municipalities are responsible for project implementation.

The Reading Regional Airport is a general aviation airport located in Bern Township and operated by the Reading Regional Airport Authority. It is the only public use airport in Berks County with asphalt runways. The Reading Regional Airport Authority receives federal, state, and local funding outside of RATS highway, bridge, and transit funding programs. While RATS does not fund airport improvements, RATS continues to support and coordinate with Reading Regional Airport in implementing their Strategic Plan. The Reading Regional Airport Authority Capital Improvement Program is included in this LRTP in support of the Reading Regional Airport achieving its goals.

The Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority (SRPRA), comprised of Berks, Chester, and Montgomery Counties and other stakeholders, was established in 2022 to evaluate and analyze the potential for reestablishing passenger rail service between Reading and Philadelphia. The process being undertaken by the SRPRA is building upon the lessons learned from prior studies and is primarily focused on partnering with Amtrak as the proposed operator and participating in the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Intercity Rail Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP). Funding from FRA is integral to the success of SRPRA's objectives. RATS and staff continue to support the efforts of the SRPRA to reestablish passenger rail service in Berks County.

Plan Consistency

RATS considered previously developed plans and policies to ensure consistency in direction. At the federal level, it must be consistent with applicable laws, rules, and regulations. It must be consistent with the state's transportation plans, programs, and policies. It must also be consistent with the policies and objectives of the Berks County Comprehensive Plan.

RATS Long Range Transportation Plan Steering Committee

To ensure plan consistency and consideration of all modes of transportation, MPO staff established the RATS LRTP Steering Committee in July 2024. The Steering Committee included federal, state, and local transportation organizations and stakeholders that helped coordinate, review and advise MPO staff throughout the development of this LRTP. The first meeting of the Steering Committee was held in August 2024, and quarterly meetings thereafter were conducted virtually throughout the development process. The committee provided valuable insight in identifying current transportation system trends and future considerations based on trends identified throughout the document.

Public Participation

Multiple outreach meetings were conducted throughout the development of this LRTP. The official 30-day public review and comment period began on March 22 and ended on April 24. There were 4 public outreach meetings (2 in-person and 2 virtual) conducted during this period. There was a total of X comments received during this period. The comments received and responses to those comments can be found in the TIP and LRTP Appendix document.

