

READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY
MARCH 6, 2025

ATTENDANCE

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Nyomi Nonnemaker, PennDOT Central, Vice Chair* (Acting Chair)
Alan Piper, Berks County Planning Commission, MPO Secretary
Keith Boatman, South Central Transit Authority
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission
Kyle Zeiber, City of Reading
Timothy Krall, City of Reading
Michael Donchez, PennDOT 5-0 (representing Scott Vottero)

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

Zachary Tempesco, Reading Regional Airport Authority

*Tie-breaking vote only

OTHERS

Raymond Green, PennDOT Central
Nick Raio, PennDOT Central
Lawrence Peterson, PennDOT 5-0
Lauri Ahlskog, South Central Transit Authority
Matthew Boyer, CommutePA
Elvin Herrera, City of Reading
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission
Matthew McGough, Berks County Planning Commission
Melissa Lewis, Berks County Information Systems
Carl Long, Berks County Information Systems
IS Production, Berks County Information Systems

1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Nonnemaker called the meeting to order at 1:32 PM.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR (INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBER, RAYMOND GREEN, PENNDOT CENTRAL OFFICE REPRESENTATIVE)

Mr. Golembiewski stated that there was no public comment. Mr. Piper then introduced Raymond Green as the new PennDOT Central Office representative for the Reading Area Transportation Study Coordinating Committee. Mr. Green introduced himself to the audience and gave a background on his long history with PennDOT and the RATS Committees.

3. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 9, 2025 TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Acting Chair Nonnemaker asked if there were any questions or comments on the January 9, 2025 Technical Committee meeting minutes. There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: Mr. Golembiewski made a motion to recommend approval of the January 9, 2025 Technical Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Donchez seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PENNDOT REQUESTED AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS TO FFY 2025-2028 TIP

Mr. Donchez gave an update on PennDOT's requested Amendments/Modifications to the FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) from January 1, 2025 to February 26, 2025.

- There were fifteen (15) Administrative Actions – the adjustments address such things as increases to cover funds that were advanced constructed from the 2023 TIP, increases for preliminary engineering and final design supplements, increases to cover negotiated agreement amounts, increases for railroad agreements, for right-of-way acquisitions, adjustments for low bids, a modification for adding the Ontelaunee Township stormwater improvements project, and adjustments that deal with aligning funding with when they are needed.
- There were two (2) Statewide Administration Actions – adding of the surface transportation urban funds that were transferred over from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission as a result of the urbanized area boundary bleed over areas at about \$300,000 per year and shifting discretionary funding assigned to the US 422 West Shore Bypass project to align with anticipated need.
- There were no Interstate Management Administration Actions.

None of the modifications presented in the chart adversely affect the project delivery schedules or air quality conformity.

Mr. Piper added that the Ontelaunee Township stormwater project was a Transportation Alternatives Set Aside (TASA) project that should be going to construction in late 2025.

5. UPDATE ON EXECUTION OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) – METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR BERKS COUNTY, PA BETWEEN THE READING MPO, SCTA AND PENNDOT

Mr. Piper updated the committee on the status of the MOU. Mr. Piper stated that staff is currently in the process of getting signatures on the MOU from the various agencies. Right now, we have one signature from PennDOT District office and it will be going to both PennDOT Central Office (Kristen Mulkerin) and South Central Transit Authority (Greg Downing) to complete the MOU.

6. UPDATE ON FFY 2027 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROCESS

Mr. Piper stated that staff is in the beginning of the process of initiating the TIP and the 12-Year Program updates. Mr. Piper communicated that staff has been participating in the financial guidance workgroup as it tries to develop the funding programs for the TIP for this coming update. The workgroup has met three times and at this point there is no anticipation of any major changes in the overall funding program.

Mr. Piper continued that one of things that is going to influence this process and other funding programs is waiting to see how the President of the United States' executive orders may impact various funding programs. There are still many unknowns, but the impacts may fall primarily in environmentally related programs, potentially electric vehicle (EV) related programs, and some of the projects covered under the carbon reduction program. There should be more information as time progresses.

Mr. Piper stated that Federal funding runs out at the end of the next calendar year (2027). So, when the new TIP would start its going to be dependent on either a continuing resolution of the existing funding or some new funding. The distribution formulas that are being examined are no different, the only place that we are looking at some potential changes is the PROTECT or resiliency type programs. Currently, staff is working with PennDOT to determine whether these changes are going to be administered statewide and whether there are set-asides to individual regions.

Mr. Piper stated that by the time this committee meets again staff should have more details on this information on the financial side. The general and procedural guidance workgroup that puts together the documentation for how the program is put together has also been meeting. Mr. Piper stated that no staff from RATS is involved in that process but as we get feedback staff will report back to the committee on it.

7. REPORT ON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (STC) 12-YEAR PROGRAM UPDATE OUTREACH

Mr. Piper stated that on March 1st the State Transportation Commission (STC) kicked off its 12-year program update. The public comment period is open from now until April 30th. In addition to the public comment survey there will be an online public forum April 10th in the evening from 6:30pm until 7:30pm. Mr. Piper continued that staff has received material from the STC that we have distributed to the municipalities in Berks County and will continue to forward the information to other groups letting them know about the public comment period and the survey associated with it.

Mr. Piper then informed the committee that the current 2025 Pennsylvania Transportation Performance Report is now available on the STC's webpage. This report provides an update on the various factors across the Commonwealth in terms of performance of highways, bridges, safety, and basically all things transportation related. The surveys that are conducted

by the STC attempt to solicit responses in terms of performance, goals and objectives, funding levels, and project specific recommendations.

Mr. Piper stated that one of the things that is key for RATS is that on the survey itself citizens that complete the survey have an opportunity to use geographic input to identify projects of all types that they consider as transportation needs. The mapping and software program will let the public know whether or not there is a project in that area that would appear to address their concerns. Comments on any projects that fall within the RATS jurisdiction are provided back to staff for use in the local TIP and LRTP updates.

8. UPDATE ON FFY 2027 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Ms. Timochenko updated the committee on the status of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update. Ms. Timochenko informed the committee that the last LRTP steering committee meeting was held on February 24, 2025. During this meeting the goals and objectives for the LRTP were reviewed and discussed by the steering committee. The steering committee provided feedback/edits to the goals and objectives and also came to consensus on them based on the edits they provided staff.

Ms. Timochenko continued that the next steering committee meeting will be held on May 19, 2025. At which time, staff, along with the steering committee will review any updates or changes that staff might have to make to the goals and objectives based on any guidance staff may receive as a result of new presidential executive orders. Materials related to draft text of the LRTP will also be reviewed as well as a discussion about next steps in the process.

Ms. Timochenko updated the committee on the next steps in the process. The second round of public outreach will begin in April. These outreach sessions will consist of seven regional in-person meetings across Berks County and two virtual meetings both in the daytime and evening. Discussion at these meetings will center on the outcomes of the goals and objectives, projects programmed on the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and LRTP, and current transportation issues and potential future transportation issues and/or needs. As dates become finalized staff will prepare a flyer and distribute it to everyone for their information.

9. REVIEW OF UPDATES TO SCTA DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PLAN (SUMMARY OF CHANGES)

Mr. Boatman presented the updates to South Central Transit Authority's (SCTA) Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) plan. Mr. Boatman explained that on April 4, 2024 the final DBE rule was adopted and placed into the Federal register. As such, SCTA has updated their DBE plan to adopt the changes provided in the final rule. Changes that were made were under the monitoring and prompt payment sections 26.29(d) by adding language with regards to performing the duties and monitoring the enforcement of the work performed.

Section 26.55 was also updated to require determination if a DBE firm is a distributor or a regular dealer. SCTA has added language to the DBE Plan to document and determine such.

10. REVIEW /RECOMMENDATION ON WEST READING WALKWORKS GRANT APPLICATION LETTER OF COMPLIANCE

Ms. Hain presented that West Reading Borough is seeking a Letter of Compliance for a WalkWorks grant application to develop an active transportation plan for the Borough. Ms. Hain explained that West Reading Borough adopted the Suburban Berks West Joint Comprehensive Plan (SBWJCP) along with Sinking Spring Borough, Wyomissing Borough, and Spring Township in 2018. The SBWJCP notes the priority to develop a regional trail/pedestrian/bicycle plan.

Ms. Hain continued that, following up on this priority, West Reading was a grantee for the WalkWorks 2024-2025 round of funding for the Justin R. Lehman Community Capacity-Building Pre-Planning Assistance Program and WalkWorks is funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Pennsylvania Downtown Center. The funding received provided technical assistance to complete the pre-planning steps with WalkWorks guiding them through the preparatory process.

This pre-planning has positioned West Reading to better develop an Active Transportation Plan and West Reading has continued this forward momentum by applying to WalkWorks Development of Active Transportation Plans to Guide the Establishment of Activity-Friendly Routes that Connect to Everyday Destinations for \$30,000 with NO match required.

As such, West Reading has requested a Letter of Compliance from the Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) regarding their application for funding through this program. The guidelines published for this funding asks the applicant to provide evidence that the proposal is in compliance with an existing comprehensive plan or other relevant plans of the municipality, county, and/or MPO/RPO through letters of support and/or compliance.

This draft letter references goals, priorities, and strategic performance measures found in the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Berks County Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan 2020 that call for and encourage the development of municipal active transportation plans. Also referenced is the Berks County Planning Commission letter of compliance that identifies other relevant planning documents such as the Berks County Comprehensive Plan Update 2030, IMAGINE Berks, and the Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan.

Ms. Hain asked the committee to recommend forwarding the letter to the Coordinating Committee for their approval. Once approved by the Coordinating Committee the letter will then be sent to West Reading Borough officials for their records and submittal with the grant application.

MOTION: Mr. Piper made a motion to recommend sending the Letter of Compliance for West Reading's WalkWorks grant application to the Coordinating Committee for their approval. Mr. Golembiewski seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

11. PENNDOT UPDATES ON TASA/MTF AND BRIDGE PROJECTS

Mr. Piper gave an update on the status of Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside projects, Multimodal Transportation projects, and bridge projects. Mr. Piper also noted that the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has announced their awards under the Multimodal Transportation Program as follows:

- Washington Township will receive \$116,782 to make pedestrian crossing improvements on Niantic Road
- The City of Reading was awarded \$200,000 to implement pedestrian safety improvements along Skyline Drive
- Refined Plastics, a plastics manufacturer from King of Prussia, will receive \$250,000 to make upgrades to the rail terminal at a former coal generating power plant (Titus Station) in Cumru Township
- Spring Township was awarded \$250,000 to replace curbs and install ramps on Harvard Boulevard
- PDC Northeast, a Delaware based development company, will receive \$500,000 to make transportation improvements related to the construction of the Southern Berks Industrial Park (warehouse/distribution facility along Route 10) in New Morgan Borough
- Home Elite Limited, a company located in Montgomery County, was awarded \$700,000 to make improvements related to the construction of the Perry Commercial Center on Mocerri Drive
- Philly Office Retail, a real estate development company based in Philadelphia, was awarded \$850,000 to install new sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, planters, trees, bicycle racks and benches at the corners of Fifth and Penn Streets in the City of Reading.

12. COMMUTEPA UPDATE

Mr. Boyer gave an update on CommutePA's January 2025 monthly activities. Mr. Boyer first informed that committee that at the last Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership (SRTP) board meeting the board elected officers for the year and Lauri Ahlskog from SCTA will remain the chair of the SRTP board. The new vice-chair is Kristiana Barr from Lancaster County Planning and the secretary is Diana Harlow from the Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Boyer then informed the committee that during the month of January CommutePA met with various businesses to conduct outreach. Outreach was conducted at Alvernia

University, Berks Technical Institute, PA CareerLink Berks and Capitol Region, Home Hub Solutions and various other entities.

In January CommutePA acquired 121 new members, created 7,615 greener trips, reduced 147,226 miles from our roadways, saved \$102,885 for commuters and 6,132 gallons of fuel.

Mr. Boyer updated the committee on the current status of the regional Congestion Management Process (CMP) facilitated through SRTP. This CMP encompasses the four MPOs in its region and is expected to be completed in the near future. The next deliverable from this process will be a live portal developed by the consultant. This should be complete within the next couple of weeks. Mr. Boyer then updated the committee on SRTP's twenty years of operations and its application for accreditation through Association for Commuter Transportation. This accreditation is due to the operating excellence for which SRTP operates and strives to achieve on a day-to-day basis.

13. REVIEW/DISCUSSION OF RATS LOGO CONCEPTS

Mr. Piper updated the committee on the recommendations made by the Coordinating Committee on the draft RATS logo concept. Mr. Piper displayed the logo for the committee to see and went over the changes from the draft logos that were presented at the prior meeting. Mr. Krall added that he was pleased with the new iteration. Mr. Piper informed the committee that barring any other issues or comments this logo design will be forwarded to the Coordinating Committee for their ultimate approval.

14. OTHER BUSINESS/PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Piper stated that he had three other items to discuss under other business. Mr. Piper stated that all of these items came to staff's attention after the original agenda was forwarded out. These items are for information and no action is needed on them.

- On Monday, March 3, 2025 RATS staff received notification from the US Department of Transportation acknowledging that Federal Certification of our transportation planning activities and reports have been formally approved. A formal report will follow at a later date.
- PennDOT completed their review of RATS' FFY 2025-2027 Unified Planning Work Program and are forwarding it to the US Department of Transportation for their review.
- Mr. Piper provided a follow-up to the urban area extension that was done as a result of the 2020 census. The next step in this process will be to go back and begin to review our Federal functional classification system. In the next couple of months staff will begin working on this review to see whether any updates are necessary. As this is being done there will be coordination with RATS, PennDOT, and the Federal Highway Administration.

Mr. Piper finished by updating the committee on the upcoming office relocation of the Berks County Planning Commission. Mr. Piper informed the committee that the office is

scheduled to be moved the week of April 7, 2025 and all operations will take place at the County's new South Campus location located at 400 East Wyomissing Avenue, Mohnton, PA 19540. Mr. Piper explained that more information will be forthcoming as things move forward with the relocation.

Mr. Golembiewski stated there were six individuals watching the meeting via YouTube and that there was no public comment.

15. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Golembiewski made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Krall seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 2:42 PM.

Date: _____

Alan D. Piper
(MPO Secretary)