

READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN-PERSON AND
VIRTUALLY
MARCH 20, 2025

ATTENDANCE

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Chris Kufro, PennDOT District Executive, Chair*
Raymond Green, PennDOT Program Center (V)
Tom McKeon, Berks County Planning Commission (V)
Lisha Rowe, 1st Class Townships (Cumru Township)
Dante Santoni, Jr., Reading Regional Airport Authority
Donna Reed, City of Reading
Brian Hoffa, Boroughs (Sinking Spring) (V)
Keith Boatman, South Central Transit Authority (representing Greg Downing) (V)

*Tie-breaking vote only
(V) Attended Virtually

COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

Commissioner Michael Rivera, County of Berks
Arthur Lambert, 2nd Class Townships (Upper Bern Township)

OTHERS

Michael Donchez, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Jennifer Ruth, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Lawrence Peterson, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Scott Vottero, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Alan Piper, Berks County Planning Commission, MPO Secretary
Nick Raio, PennDOT Central (V)
Michele Scribbick, Commuter Services of PA (V)
Nyomi Nonnemaker, PennDOT Central (V)
Jeff Rai, PennDOT Central (V)
Donald Lerch, RK&K (V)
Amanda Timochenko, Berks County Planning Commission
Michael Golembiewski, Berks County Planning Commission
Shanice Ellison, Berks County Planning Commission
Devon Hain, Berks County Planning Commission
David Hunter, Berks County Planning Commission
Matthew McGough, Berks County Planning Commission
Melissa Lewis, Berks County Information Systems (V)
Carl Long, Berks County Information Systems
IS Production, Berks County Information Systems (V)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kufro called the meeting to order at 1:01PM.

2. INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBER, RAYMOND GREEN, PENNDOT CENTRAL OFFICE REPRESENTATIVE

Chairman Kufro introduced Raymond Green as the new member of the Reading Area Transportation Study Coordinating Committee. Mr. Green is a division manager with the Center for Program Development and Management at PennDOT Central Office. Mr. Green introduced himself to the committee and audience.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Mr. Golembiewski stated that there was no public comment.

Chairman Kufro provided an update on the request from representatives from Redner's Inc. at the November 14, 2024 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committees meeting regarding the need for a turning arrow for northbound vehicles making left turns onto westbound State Route 73. Chairman Kufro stated that after that meeting, he had forwarded the concerns to PennDOT engineers to examine the issue. Ultimately, after review and study by the engineers, the data did not support the installation of a turning arrow at the intersection. This information was relayed back to Redner's in a December letter for the department.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 16, 2025 COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

Chairman Kufro asked if there were any questions or comments on the January 16, 2025 Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: Ms. Reed made a motion to approve the January 16, 2025 Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Santoni seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

5. UPDATE ON USDOT FEDERAL CERTIFICATION REVIEW

Mr. Piper updated the committee on the status the Federal Certification review. Mr. Piper informed the committee that he was anticipating having the final report from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration for the Reading Area Transportation Study's (RATS) Federal Certification review for this meeting. Mr. Piper informed the committee that on March 3, 2025 staff received a letter stating that RATS is certified in its planning processes based on the findings of the certification review conducted on October 30th, 31st, and the follow-up on November 12, 2024. The overall conclusion of which is that the planning process for RATS complies with the spirit and intent of Federal Metropolitan Planning rules and regulations.

Mr. Piper explained that normally staff would get a final report that would have details on the findings. To date, staff has reviewed drafts of the report but at this time, due to changes in administration in Washington D.C., the findings and federal regulations are being rereviewed and the report will be edited to accommodate any changes in the federal regulations. At some point in the future, Mr. Piper anticipates that staff will receive a final report that documents the full finding of the report with recommendations and commendations.

6. 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, releasing of excessive funds due to current phase estimates, and aligning funding with when it is actually needed.
- There were two (2) Statewide Administration Actions – 1) 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 2) 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.

7. UPDATE ON FY 2025 – 2027 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP)

Mr. Piper presented that similar to the Federal Certification Review staff received a letter from PennDOT informing us that the State had approved RATS' Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) as submitted for FY 2025-2027. PennDOT has now forwarded the RATS UPWP to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration for their review and approval. Once that review is complete staff will find out whether or not there are any modifications needed. Pending Federal approval PennDOT will then incorporate the UPWP into an agreement that RATS is going to have with PennDOT for funding transportation planning staff for the two-year period that extends from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2027.

8. 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

PennDOT Financial Guidance Workgroup as it tries to refine 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 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 on 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 in FFY 2027 it is 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 than the current program, 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.

Mr. Piper stated that one of staff's concerns is the fact that all of RATS' funding only projects up to whatever the last year of the Investing in Infrastructure and Jobs Act (IIJA) was (FFY 2026). This TIP begins in Federal Fiscal Year 2027 so our process says that until there is new legislation we assume that we hold steady at the last year of the current legislation. If there is any adjustment in the overall funding levels when we get there, we may see changes. The distribution process, as we are looking at it now, will not be impacted but there is potential the funding levels will hopefully be higher. Mr. Piper stated that he has never seen a reduction in funding but that remains to be seen.

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

Ms. Timochenko updated the committee on the State Transportation Commission's (STCs) 12-year program update and associated public outreach. STC began the process to update their 12-year program. The 12-year program lists the planned projects across Pennsylvania and assigns funding over a 12-year period for those projects. Local and regional Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) feed into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which then feeds into the 12-year program. As part of the update process the STC provides a review of the progress and needs of the transportation system across the state in their transportation performance report as well as scorecards that

the STC prepares. The areas addressed in the report and scorecards include safety and mobility, preservation, accountability, funding, and freight.

In addition to the performance report and scorecards the STC conducts public outreach at the start of the update to their 12-year program. Currently, the STC has an online survey that opened on March 3rd, 2025 and remains open until April 30th, 2025. The survey includes an interactive map where users can identify locations of concern where they feel transportation issues exist by clicking on the map and submitting the information. The interactive map also identifies where projects on the TIPs are currently programmed. The responses submitted that relate to Berks County are shared with the RATS MPO for consideration as part of the TIP development process. Staff generally receives that information in May or June of 2025 and after reviewing the information and consolidating it by municipality staff will report back to the committee, usually in July 2025.

Ms. Timochenko continued that there will also be an online public forum that will take place on April 10th, 2025 from 6:30PM to 7:30PM with keynote speaker Michael Carroll, PennDOT Secretary of Transportation. There will be a live question and answer portion of the forum. Registration is not required, although it is preferred. The forum will also be livestreamed on PA Cast and PennDOT social media platforms. To date, staff has distributed this information via email, Berks County Planning Commission Facebook page, and website. Additional reminders will be sent out prior to the online forum and towards the end of the public comment period.

Mr. Piper added that if staff or members of the committee talk to people and they have concerns with the transportation system to please tell them to go to the website: <https://talkpatransportation.com/> and fill out the survey and submit comments as the results of the survey and comments will come back to staff and the State to let everyone know and document where regional concerns are.

10. UPDATE ON FFY 2027 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Ms. Timochenko updated the committee on the status of the FFY 2027-2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update. Ms. Timochenko informed the committee that the third 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. Also discussed was the public input received during the October 2024 round of public meetings that staff held.

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 2025. 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. Currently there are seven in-person meetings scheduled and two virtual meetings scheduled. The meetings are as follows:

- Reading City Hall Council Chambers – Wednesday, April 2 6PM-7PM
- Womelsdorf Borough Hall – Monday, April 14 6PM-7PM
- Tilden Township Municipal Building – Thursday, April 16 6PM-7PM
- Colebrookdale Township Municipal Building – Tuesday, April 22 6PM-7PM
- Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, April 23 11AM-12PM
- Cumru Township Municipal Building – Thursday, April 24 6PM-7PM
- Maiden Creek Township Municipal Building – Tuesday, April 29 6PM-7PM
- Virtual Meeting – Thursday, May 1 6PM-7PM
- Caernarvon Township Municipal Building – Tuesday, May 13 6PM-7PM

Mr. Piper added that one of things staff has tried to do is make the meetings available to everyone. An example of which is holding the virtual meetings at two different times. One in the morning and one in the afternoon/early evening so it gives the public more options to attend if they cannot make an evening timeslot. Another thing that staff is trying to do is offer more options per region of the county. An example of which is holding two or more meetings in the urban area surrounding and including the City of Reading. Also, meetings are spread out throughout the County in an effort to allow persons from all regions the opportunity to comment on the plan.

Ms. Reed asked if the in-person meetings will have a hybrid option. Mr. Piper answered that there will not be a hybrid option.

11. APPROVAL OF 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 approve the letter of compliance. Once approved, the letter will then be sent to West Reading Borough officials for their records and submittal with the grant application.

MOTION: Mr. Santoni made a motion for the Coordinating Committee to approve the Letter of Compliance for West Reading's WalkWorks grant application. Ms. Reed seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

12. PENNDOT MAJOR PROJECT UPDATE – PA 183 CORRIDOR STUDIES

Chairman Kufro started the presentation by informing the committee that over the last several years there has been concern and comments made to the MPO and on PennDOT's transportation plan about increased traffic flowing through the PA 183 corridor in Berks County. The issues of concern are the increases in vehicle and truck traffic, speeding, and multiple accidents along the corridor. Chairman Kufro informed the committee that PennDOT has just started a study on the corridor within this past year. A consultant has been hired to study the issues, primarily around the Bernville Borough area and specifically the three intersections within the borough as well as areas both north and south of the Borough.

Chairman Kufro proceeded to introduce PennDOT project consultant-manager engineer, Mr. Donald Lerch of RK&K, to continue the presentation on the status of the corridor study. Mr. Lerch started his presentation by introducing himself and then giving an update on the background and status of the projects. Mr. Lerch described four projects along the corridor that are currently on the Transportation Improvement Program. Three of the projects are

currently just programmed for studies. Ultimately, they would have to be programmed on the TIP for subsequent phases – Final Design, Right-of-Way/Utilities, Construction.

Mr. Lerch first described the Bernville Road Study – New Schaefferstown Road North (MPMS #117719). This project involves a study of the corridor just south of I-78 to just north of New Schaefferstown Road in Upper Tulpehocken and Jefferson Townships. The study is complete. Recommendations from the study calls for a roundabout or traffic signal at Old 22, widening of shoulders to 6 feet where practical, and coordination with proposed development west of SR 183 between I-78 and Old 22. All work done along this corridor will be done avoiding impacts to stream and cultural resources found along the corridor.

Mr. Lerch then described the bridge projects on PA 183 over the Little Northkill Creek and a tributary to the Little Northkill Creek (MPMS #91976). This project will involve the replacement and widening of shoulders to 8 feet. This project will be constructed in a way that will minimize impacts to topographical and cultural resources. Preliminary engineering began in January 2025 and adjacent landowners will be notified later in March 2025.

The third project is the most significant from a financial perspective. The limits of the project are from the northwest of Solly Lane to southeast of Byerly Hill Road. This project (MPMS #117719) is in Bernville Borough and Jefferson, Penn and North Heidelberg Townships. The project will include safety improvements with a special focus on Shartlesville Road and North Heidelberg Road intersections. As part of the analysis the department will prepare and ICE (intersection control evaluation) for both intersections with a target completion of this evaluation by April 2025. The ICE will provide recommendations for what improvements to implement.

Mr. Lerch then described the fourth project on the corridor. The SR 183 (Bernville Road) Lane Drop Hourglass Fix (MPMS #117721). This project runs from the northbound entrance ramp to US 222 to just east of West Leesport Road in Bern Township. The goal of the project is to widen PA 183 between these two intersections to eliminate the current inconsistent travel lane profile that exists there currently. Ultimately, making it two through lanes in each direction with a center turning lane and right turn lanes where warranted. The project will also include lengthening the queuing lane for traffic going eastbound turning north onto US 222. This project will involve a significant amount of right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation.

After Mr. Lerch's presentation Mr. Piper added that he wanted to commend PennDOT on the speed at which the department responded to the issues the municipalities along the PA 183 corridor were experiencing.

13. COMMUTEPA UPDATE

Ms. Scribbick gave an update on CommutePA's January 2025 monthly activities. Ms. Scribbick informed the committee that staff recently met with State representative Eric Weaknecht to ensure the State leadership is aware of the programs offered by CommutePA. In addition, CommutePA staff has met with the newly hired human resources manager at

Ashley Furniture to connect and partner to further expand their successful partnership of 495 employees enrolled in their program. Ms. Scribbick continued that staff has been working with Berks Technical Institute, Reading Area Community College, Empire Beauty School, and Alvernia University to educate and engage students with their program and to encourage mode shift from them driving alone to more efficient and economical modes of travel.

Ms. Scribbick reminded everyone that on Friday, May 16, 2025 CommutePA will be holding their annual bike to work event. She also wanted to recognize that the Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership is one of the first nine national associations for commuter transportation to be an accredited Transportation Demand Management (TDM) organization.

14. REVIEW / APPROVAL OF RATS LOGO

Mr. Piper presented the final option for the RATS logo. After many iterations and input from the committees, staff has developed the logo as presented. Mr. Piper stated that he is looking for formal approval for the first ever logo for the Reading Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization.

MOTION: Mr. Santoni made a motion for the Coordinating Committee to approve the Reading Area Transportation Study's newly created logo. Ms. Rowe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

15. OTHER BUSINESS/PUBLIC COMMENT

a. URBAN BOUNDARY / FEDERAL FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION REVIEW / UPDATE

Mr. Piper informed the committee that just recently the United States Department of Transportation has formally approved the new urban area boundaries. The next step in the process is for staff to go back and review changes in the Federal Functional Classification system within the County. Most of this change will involve changing the designations from rural to urban where the urban areas have expanded. Staff will be taking a complete look at all of the routes across the County to determine whether or not there are any other changes in either recommendations to the National Highway System (NHS) or to the individual functional classifications themselves.

These designations impact the design criteria that both PennDOT and the Federal Highway Administration apply to the areas. As changes are recommended it's going to be a result of increased traffic or additional freight movement across different portions of those areas. Staff will work closely with both the PennDOT district office and with Federal partners as we develop those recommendations before bringing them back to the committee. At some point the committee will formally have to submit a request for any changes that are made. If staff elects to not make any changes the committee is still required to send a letter that says it was reviewed and no changes are recommended.

b. BCPC OFFICE MOVE

Mr. Piper informed the committee that the Berks County Planning Commission (BCPC) office is officially scheduled to move the week of April 7th, 2025. The Technical Committee meetings are virtual and are going to remain as such throughout the year. The Coordinating Committee meetings will remain at the Commissioner's board room at least for the near future. Once meeting space at the new facility is figured out a determination will be made on where Coordinating Committee meetings will be held in the future. Mr. Piper informed the committee that the address for the new facility is 400 East Wyomissing Avenue, Mohnton, PA 19540.

c. DCED MTF AWARDS FOR 2025

Mr. Piper presented that the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has announced their awards under their 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.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that there was no public comment.

Chairman Kufro wanted to briefly update the committee on two additional items. The I-78 project in Hamburg at the SR 61 interchange is substantially complete. The barrier has been removed going westbound so now all lanes are fully usable. Improvements are readily evident to motorists using the roadway. It is expected that this is going to be a major safety

improvement. Chairman Kufro acknowledged the contractor for completing the work a year earlier than originally anticipated.

Chairman Kufro then updated the committee on the 222/ Long Lane roundabout construction project. That project will be starting shortly and users can anticipate another improvement along that vital corridor.

Ms. Reed added that at some meetings there has been discussion on the issues on Hampden Boulevard in the City of Reading. She informed the committee that there continues to be a significant amount of speeding accidents and things of that nature. The City, along with other agencies are continuing to look at ways to alleviate some of these issues. One of the ways the City is addressing the problem is by enacting an ordinance on parking in the area. This is a first step in addressing the problems along the corridor and more efforts will be forthcoming.

15. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Rowe made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Santoni seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 2:07PM.

Date: _____

Alan D. Piper
(MPO Secretary)