

**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #1
AUGUST 19, 2024, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Attendance:

Amanda Timochenko (BCPC staff)	Michael Donchez (PennDOT District 5-0)
Michael Golembiewski (BCPC staff)	Ed Burns (Burns Logistics Specialists)
Alan Piper (BCPC staff)	Lisha Rowe (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member)
Lauri Ahlskog (South Central Transit Auth.)	Nick Raio (PennDOT Central Office)
Scott Vottero (PennDOT District 5-0)	David Mattes (BCPC Board Member)
Stephanie Quigley (Abilities in Motion)	Donna Reed (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member)
Chris Kufro (PennDOT District 5-0)	Elaine Schaefer (Schuylkill River Greenways NHA)
Ron Young (PennDOT District 5-0)	Zachary Tempesco (Reading Reg. Airport)
Ashley Showers (BCPC staff)	Matthew McGough (BCPC staff)
David Hunter (Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority)	

Meeting Notes:

Ms. Timochenko started the meeting at 1:02 PM. She welcomed everyone and screen shared a list of attendees. All attendees introduced themselves, their affiliation, and what they hoped to gain from serving on the Steering Committee.

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

She described the organizations participating in the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee participants represent a diverse group of organizations with interests in the future of the transportation system. She mentioned that staff has reached out to our local Spanish speaking organization for representation but have not yet received a response. Efforts will continue to seek representation from the local Spanish speaking community on the Steering Committee. In addition, Ms. Timochenko will continue to seek participation from organizations representing low-income persons.

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

Ms. Timochenko explained what the Long Range Transportation Plan (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.*

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.
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- 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.

- Statewide plans applicable to long-range transportation planning include (but are not limited to): Statewide LRTP, Comprehensive Freight Movement Plan, State Rail Plan, Active Transportation Plan, Transportation Asset Management Plan, Regional Operations Plans, Extreme Weather Vulnerability Study, and the Strategic Highway Safety Plan.
- RATS developed plans and programs that must be incorporated into the LRTP include (but are not limited to): Berks County Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, the Congestion Management Process, System Condition Reports (annual Pavement & Bridge and Safety), Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, SCTA's Transit Development Plan, the FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program and included Environmental Justice Summary and Air Quality Conformity Analysis, Public Participation Plan and Limited English Proficiency Plan, and the Title VI Program Plan.
- Berks County developed plans and programs applicable to long-range transportation planning include (but are not limited to): the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Update, the Greenway, Park & Recreation Plan, Imagine Berks Economic Development Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan, Solid Waste Management Plan, and the Reading Airport Authority Strategic Master Plan.

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 the roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee. These include:

- Advise on federal and state regulations to ensure compliance.
- Provide system analysis / data.
- Assist in project selection and prioritization.

- Assist in providing cost estimates for new needs.
- Provide technical assistance on public transportation service operations and needs.
- Review components of the plan throughout plan development and provide input and recommendations.
- Assist in public outreach efforts.

The next step in the LRTP development process will be initial public outreach. Staff will conduct in-person meetings in each of the Berks County Planning Commission's (BCPC) five (5) Planning Regions in the County. An additional meeting will be held virtually. This initial outreach would be used to gather input on the Goals and Objectives in the current LRTP (FFY 2023-2045), along with gaining knowledge on current transportation issues experienced by residents and businesses.

A survey will be available in English and Spanish as part of the initial public outreach. Ms. Timochenko screen shared a draft of the survey (survey attached). She reviewed the proposed questions for inclusion in the survey and asked for any questions/comments.

- Mr. Donchez recommended including a question regarding teleworking as it has changed commuting patterns and has implications on transportation funding for roads and bridges as taxes on fuel are a funding mechanism for transportation infrastructure. All agreed to include the question in the survey.
- Mr. Golembiewski asked if the survey was going to be translated into Spanish and available to Spanish-speaking constituents. Ms. Timochenko answered that it would be translated, and we would work with the local Hispanic Center to reach out to the Spanish-speaking community.
- Mr. Burns asked in the MS Teams group chat: "Who gets the Survey / How is it Delivered?" Multiple BCPC staff answered that we currently use multiple methods including direct emails with links, the BCPC website, Facebook (it was noted that Facebook is the only social media platform presently available to County staff), and printed copies available in our office. Additionally, local news media would be sent a press release.
- Ms. Showers asked if the LRTP addresses the issue of agricultural equipment on roadways and bridges. Ms. Timochenko responded that in the survey an objective for Goal #3 (*Economic Development: 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.*) can be added regarding the movement of agricultural equipment on the transportation system. Mr. Mattes commented that in Berks County farming is an economy in and of itself.
- Ms. Showers inquired if an interactive mapping feature would be included as part of the public outreach survey. Ms. Timochenko responded this survey is to set the framework for the Goals and Objectives in the LRTP which will guide the development of the LRTP going forward. We will look to incorporate an online mapping feature that can be used to identify transportation issues later in the development process as we get more 'project specific' in plan development.

- Mr. Burns asked about a launch date for the survey, and how we distribute the survey to the public. Ms. Timochenko responded that it would be released sometime in September. We need to first identify public meeting dates and locations, advertise the public meetings, and also get the survey translated into Spanish.
- Mr. Burns inquired about survey participation from the public outside of Berks County. Since the draft survey has a question regarding zip code, there was concern about someone from outside the County completing the survey. Staff acknowledged that there was no way to completely guarantee that only Berks County residents completed the survey, but filtering by zip code should still yield acceptable results. We are aware that there are always margins of error in surveys.
- Mr. Mattes volunteered to use his network of contacts to help forward the survey. Ms. Timochenko thanked Mr. Mattes and requested that all Steering Committee members would be willing to do the same.
- Ms. Timochenko read an email from Ms. Kenana Zejcirovic (Federal Highway Administration representative, unavailable to attend the meeting). Ms. Zejcirovic made two recommendations. One was to specify which questions were 'required' to be answered. All agreed. Her second recommendation was to add a general question that she's seen in other LRTP surveys: 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? All agreed that such a question could yield interesting answers and should be included.
- Ms. Timochenko asked if there were any additional questions/comments regarding the survey. None were received.

The Steering Committee's anticipated meeting schedule was the final topic of discussion. It was proposed to meet quarterly, starting with today's meeting, through Plan adoption in May 2026. Ms. Timochenko asked the group if they would prefer to either schedule each meeting individually or use a consistent schedule. After brief discussion it was concluded that the Steering Committee would meet quarterly on the 3rd Monday from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM. All meetings would be held virtually using Microsoft Teams.

A final call for general questions/comments was placed; none were received. Ms. Timochenko thanked all for their time today and their willingness to participate over the next several months. She finished by announcing the next meeting date: Monday, November 18, 2024, beginning at 1:00 PM, via MS Teams. The meeting concluded at 2:18 PM.

*Prepared by,
Michael D. Golembiewski
Transportation Modeler*

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION