

**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)**  
**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES PUBLIC OUTREACH MEETING #1**  
**ROBESON TWP. BUILDING, SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS REGION MEETING, OCTOBER 1, 2024**

Mr. Piper started the meeting at 6:00 PM. 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:

- Ms. Johnston – Vision is so generic that it does not have real meaning. RATS is not responsible for all roads (ex: local).
- Mr. Meraj – Remove “efficiently”. RATS provides guidance and assistance.
- Mr. Tucci – “aims to establish a balanced multimodal transportation system”. Existing vision statement is too cumbersome.

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. Meraj – Some of these contradict each other ex: motorized vs nonmotorized.
- Ms. Timochenko – We consider all modes of transportation throughout PennDOT Connects for design.

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.

- Ms. Johnston – Include access for First Responders/Emergency Service Access.
- Mr. Meraj – Drainage issues create dangerous situations. \*This is addressed in Resiliency Section.\*
- Mr. Tucci – asked if we look up crashes. \*PCIT was explained.\* then he asked if we could share that information with first responders. Discussed crashes on Lancaster Avenue.
- Mr. Lubenow – Asked if PCIT provides the cause for the accident. \*Explained that it provides factors.\*
- Ms. Showers – Replace “our highway system” with “the highway system” in Objective 1

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:

- Ms. Johnston – What is the meaning of effectiveness in Objective 2?
- Mr. Lubenow – Development is in conflict by creating congestion. \*It does and doesn’t. Municipalities force traffic on principal arterials rather than connecting local roads to each other, which forces traffic onto major roads. Municipalities should encourage connected subdivisions, not divide them.\* Mr. Lubenow agreed and thought this would be good to include in the Joint Comprehensive Plan that is currently being worked on that includes St. Lawrence Borough.
- Ms. Johnston – Cumru has 70 dedicated cul-de-sacs. \*Municipalities should connect across township lines, instead traffic needs to use primary corridors and main highways even for local trips.\*

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:

- Ms. Showers – What is a major activity center? \*Shopping/business/entertainment centers.\*
- Mr. Meraj – How do you support the airport? \*Ensuring access to rest of transportation network. If airport wants air freight. Make sure there is access via transit and highways.\*
- Ms. Johnston – Tourist destinations are not always in the most accessible locations. Ex: Nolde Forest. \*This goal and associated objectives allow for supporting more access to these types of places. Using Nolde Forest as an example, we can support and encourage further access of different types to this State Park, like Angelica Creek Trail Extension.\*

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. Ensuing discussion included:

- Ms. Johnston – Local officials do not enjoy mandating sidewalks and mandating repair to sidewalks and curbing by residents.
- Mr. Lubenow – St. Lawrence Borough insists new development include sidewalks. The developer is allowed to complete within 2 years.
- Ms. Johnston – Permitting traffic signal needs, pedestrian signals even though no pedestrians are allowed on roadway. Ex: Freemansville Rd/SR 10 Intersection, SR 10/SR 724 Intersection.

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:

- Ms. Showers – The objective that starts with “assist” is basically saying to share data.
- Ms. Johnston – Lancaster Avenue in Shillington. What are fine particulates? \*Explained how our projects relate to transportation emissions.\*

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:

- Mr. Tucci – Signs on exit ramps corresponding to letters they are assigned so that users of the transportation system that are broken down or in a crash can identify their location and communicate that to first responders.
- Mr. Meraj – Passenger rail to Reading.
- Ms. Johnston – BARTA Route along the east side of Cumru Township and underserved communities. The bridge at Church Rd/SR 625 Intersection to be replaced. \*This bridge is currently scheduled for rehabilitation. \*

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

- Notes were put onto map for this.

- Mr. Tucci – Intersection improvements (left turn lanes and signals) from SR 724 onto Gibraltar Road. Speed limit signs along SR 724.
- Mr. Meraj – Improvements to 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Heister Lane Intersection at Norfolk Southern underpass. \*This is difficult due to 3 owners: state, city, and railroad. Also difficult due to need to maintain train service along this track during entirety of project.\*

Hearing no other comments, Ms. Timochenko and Mr. Piper thanked the attendees for coming and their participation. The meeting concluded at 7:28 PM.