

**RATS FFY 2027 - 2050 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN  
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #7  
JANUARY 28, 2026, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**Attendance:**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Amanda Timochenko (BCPC staff)  | Michael Donchez (PennDOT District 5-0)   |
| Michael Golembiewski (BCPC staff)   | Zackary Tempesco (Reading Regional Airport)                                    |
| Donna Reed (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, Reading City Council Pres.) | Lisha Rowe (RATS Coordinating Committee Board Member, Cumru Twp. Commissioner) |
| Lauri Ahlskog (South Central Transit Auth.)                                       | Ed Burns (Burns Logistics)   |
| Scott Vottero (PennDOT District 5-0)  | Matthew McGough (BCPC staff)   |
| Nyomi Nonnemaker (PennDOT Central Office)   | Alan Piper (BCPC staff)  |
| Alex Roche (Greater Reading Chamber Alliance)                                     | Devon Hain (BCPC staff)  |
| Ronique Bishop (Federal Highway Administration)                                   | Elaine Schaeffer (Schuylkill River National Heritage Area)                     |
| Ron Young (PennDOT District 5-0)  |  |

**Meeting Notes:**

Ms. Timochenko started the meeting at 1:01 PM. She welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. There will be three (3) sections reviewed today: Introduction, Environmental Integration, and Public Participation.

Ms. Timochenko reviewed the Introduction Section first. Notable discussion items in this section include:

- What must be included in the LRTP
- The Vision Statement as adopted by the MPO
- Who is RATS, the various committees and staff, and the history of the MPO
- A history of the LRTP, local needs, and current focus issues
  - Asset Management and Fiscal Constraint
  - Federal legislation to be addressed and the LRTP’s consistency with it
  - How the current federal legislation [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)] ends on September 30, 2026, and the effect of ‘flat’ federal funding assumptions made for time periods after that date
- State legislative requirements and consistency with them
- Consistency with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan
- The LRTP Steering Committee structure, membership, and function
- The Public Participation Process and Plan Adoption processes

Ms. Rowe commented that the wealth of information in this section “...was amazing...”, as it was easy to read and thought it was overall a great introduction into the LRTP document and process.

Mr. Donchez commented that the first page should mention the Federal Gasoline Tax has not been raised since 1993 which has a large effect on federal funding (the primary source of funds), and while the State raised its gas tax in 2023 that was repealed. Also, on Page 3, a definition/explanation of what a

Transportation Management Area (TMA) should be included (Census-defined Urban Area with a population >200,000 persons, but also additional planning requirements).

With no other questions or comments, the Environmental Integration Section was reviewed next. This section discusses environmental impacts that must be considered in the project planning process and possible mitigation strategies for those impacts. Federal and state laws that need to be addressed as part of the process include but are not limited to:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Clean Air Act Amendments of 1991
- Clean water legislation
- Stormwater legislation
- Noise impacts
- Wetlands
- Agricultural and historic preservation

The PennDOT Connects process gives municipal officials the opportunity to highlight local plans and priorities early in the project planning process. Additionally, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) inform the process with mapped features of many types. The overall goal of the environmental review process is to avoid negative impacts as much as possible and mitigate where necessary.

Ms. Timochenko shared a '**Potential Project Impacts**' chart that displayed the number of projects that had various environmental impacts. The "Top 3" impacts were PA Act 167 (Stormwater), Prime Agricultural Soils, and Flood Plains.

The goal of Resiliency in this section is to minimize the impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters to the transportation system. There was coordination with the Berks County Department of Emergency Services (DES) that included a Historical Events review that documents previous natural weather events that impacted Berks County. Additionally, there was coordination with PennDOT's *Extreme Weather Vulnerability* study.

Ms. Bishop questioned whether this section was to satisfy the appropriate Federal Planning Factors. Ms. Timochenko confirmed that it was. Ms. Bishop then asked what the MPO's 'environmental resource inventory' is? She would like to see that statement expanded upon. Mr. Golembiewski mentioned that BCPC / MPO staff maintains an extensive GIS library of environmentally related layers that make up that inventory. Ms. Bishop was satisfied with that explanation.

The Public Participation section was next to be reviewed. This section reiterates the relevant content of the MPO's *Public Participation Plan* as it relates to what specifically is required for the LRTP and how those requirements are related to certain Executive Orders. There are specific yet similar processes for the LRTP and TIP, including the requirement to have the *Air Quality Conformity Determination Report* completed for inclusion in the Public Input process. (EDITORS NOTE: The *Air Quality Conformity Determination Report* will be discussed in further detail during the Travel Demand Modeling and Air Quality Conformity sections to be reviewed at the February 9, 2026 meeting).

Mr. Donchez mentioned on Page 1, last paragraph, a grammatical error (too many 'communities'). Sentence will be corrected. Ms. Bishop requested that the reference to Executive Order 12898 related to Environmental Justice be removed based on current Executive Orders. Additionally, a typographical error needed to be corrected (Title VIA).

Ms. Timochenko made mention of the Agency Coordination Meeting (ACM) presentation that was made on December 10, 2025. The presentation went well with few negative comments; many were very positive. A wide range of natural resources were reviewed. A request was made by the Meeting attendees to include Important Bird Areas and Naturally Reproducing Trout Streams in various analyses. Additionally, a discussion on Wildlife Crossings needs to be included. Since PennDOT's draft guidance is not yet finalized, we should include our own, which at least references PennDOT's *Design Manual #2* (DM2) which does mandate wildlife crossing reviews at the project level and references relevant safety issues.

Ms. Timochenko asked for questions and comments; none were offered. She next discussed the Next Steps in the LRTP process:

- The final sections will be reviewed at the next Steering Committee meeting on February 9<sup>th</sup>
- The LRTP is being created in conjunction with the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- The travel demand and air quality modeling processes and conformity determination will be undertaken in the next few weeks
- MPO Board approval for release and to begin Public Input and Comment period is anticipated for March 19, with the Public Comment Period to take place (tentatively) March 22 – April 24
- Four (4) public meetings will be held
  - 4/7, 1:30 p.m., Berks County South Campus (in-person only)
  - 4/14, 6:00 p.m., Berks County Agricultural Center (in-person only)
  - 4/21, 11:00 a.m. AND 6:00 p.m. (virtual only)

The next Steering Committee meeting will take place on February 9, 2026, starting at 1:00 p.m. To be reviewed will be all of Chapter 4 (Recommendations, Performance Measures, Federal Planning Factors, Project listing, other items), and the Demographics and Economics section.

The full, final draft of the LRTP will go to the group when completed for a final review.

Ms. Timochenko asked for any additional comments or questions. Hearing none she thanked everyone for their time and input. The meeting concluded at 1:43 PM.

*Prepared by,  
Michael D. Golembiewski  
Transportation Modeler*

**BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**