

READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
MINUTES OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN-PERSON AND
VIRTUALLY
JANUARY 16, 2025

ATTENDANCE

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Chris Kufro, PennDOT District Executive, Chair*
James Mosca, PennDOT Program Center (V)
Tom McKeon, Berks County Planning Commission (V)
Commissioner Michael Rivera, County of Berks (V)
Lisha Rowe, 1st Class Townships (Cumru Township)
Dante Santoni, Jr., Reading Regional Airport Authority
Lauri Ahlskog, South Central Transit Authority (representing Greg Downing) (V)
Donna Reed, City of Reading (V)

*Tie-breaking vote only
(V) Attended Virtually

COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT ATTENDING

Arthur Lambert, 2nd Class Townships (Upper Bern Township)
Brian Hoffa, Boroughs (Sinking Spring)

OTHERS

Kenana Zejcirovic, Federal Highway Administration (V)
Michael Donchez, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Jennifer Ruth, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Lawrence Peterson, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Scott Voterro, PennDOT 5-0 (V)
Alan Piper, Berks County Planning Commission, MPO Secretary
Nick Raio, PennDOT Central (V)
Matthew Boyer, Commuter Services of PA (V)
Nyomi Nonnemaker, PennDOT Central (V)
Kenneth McFadden (V)
Eric Bowers (V)
Stephen Chiaramonte (V)
David Molinaro (V)
Kerri Cutright (V)
Lynne Burns (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 1:01 PM.

2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Piper stated that at the November 2024 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting, nominations were made for officers for the Coordinating Committee. Those nominations were for the PennDOT District 5-0 Executive, Mr. Chris Kufro, to remain as Chairman and the Berks County Planning Commission representative, Mr. Tom McKeon, to remain as Vice Chairman.

MOTION: Mr. Santoni made a motion to elect the nominees. Ms. Rowe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

- Mr. Piper informed the committee that staff has received the draft version of the Federal Certification Review from FHWA. Staff is currently reviewing the draft for any factual errors. There are no corrective actions recommended in the draft. A formal presentation on the final certification review will be given at the March 2025 meeting of the committee.
- Mr. Piper presented that on January 9, 2025 PennDOT accepted bids for the next major project on US 222 North. This project entails the new roundabout that will be installed at Long Lane in Maxatawny Township. This is the first intersection on the north side of the Kutztown bypass. Construction is anticipated to start later this year.

Mr. Kufro added that bids for the Long Lane roundabout were opened last week. The department received some good bids, and construction would be expected to begin later in the Spring of 2025. Most of the work will be taking place this summer (2025). Mr. Kufro informed the audience and committee that after completion there will be noticeable traffic improvements like what is seen at the other improved intersections along the corridor.

- Ms. Timochenko updated the committee on the status of LRTP development. Ms. Timochenko added that on November 18, 2024, staff held the second LRTP Steering

Committee meeting. At that meeting staff reviewed with the committee the comments and recommended changes received during the five outreach meetings regarding the existing goals and objectives and the vision statement. Currently, staff is reviewing all of the information and developing edits and changes to the goals and vision statement so that staff can take the information back to the LRTP Steering Committee for their review, input, and approval. The next meeting for the LRTP Steering Committee is scheduled for February 24, 2025.

- Mr. Piper informed the committee that on Tuesday evening, January 14, 2025, he was invited by the Berks County Commissioners to a Town Hall meeting in Bernville Borough. During the meeting Mr. Piper was asked to discuss the Route 183 corridor and potential improvements along it. He provided an update to the attendees about the current status of the various study phases of potential improvements along the corridor. Residents were also able to voice their concern. Mr. Piper added that through coordination with the department an update on these corridor studies will be given at the March 2025 Coordinating Committee meeting.

There was no other business from the floor. Mr. Golembiewski stated that there was no public comment.

4. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 14, 2024 JOINT TECHNICAL/COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

Chairman Kufro asked if there were any questions or comments on the November 14, 2024 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: Mr. Santoni made a motion to approve the November 14, 2024 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Mosca seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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

Mr. Piper started by informing the committee that this MOU is an update to an existing MOU that is currently in place with the above referenced agencies. Mr. Piper stated that staff has been working on the MOU with input from the various agencies identified in the agreement. He further stated that this agreement outlines the various specific planning responsibilities to be performed by the three parties identified in the MOU. The MOU documents which agency is responsible for each planning activity as well as who the lead agency is for those activities. Mr. Piper stated that the MOU sets up agreements for the ability to prepare the documents and prepare the needed information to move them forward. These documents include items like the LRTP, TIP, UPWP, and CMP. It also provides

coordination on the various planning activities that RATS does with SCTA, both individually and jointly.

Mr. Piper added that the MOU will not go into effect until it is signed by all of the parties listed in the document. Once the Coordinating Committee endorses the MOU, staff will circulate it for party signatures.

MOTION: Ms. Rowe made a motion to approve the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Responsibilities for Berks County between the Reading MPO, SCTA, and PennDOT. Mr. Santoni seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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 November 7, 2024 to December 31, 2024.

- There are nine (9) Administrative Actions – the adjustments address such things as adding a selected TAP project to the TIP, the Angelica Creek Trail Extension, increases to adjust low-cost bid amounts, increases for supplements, increases for recent estimates to the utility and construction phases, and aligning phase funding with anticipated need.
- There were no Interstate Management Administration Actions
- There were no Statewide Administration Actions or Amendments

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

7. SCTA REQUESTED AMENDMENTS / MODIFICATIONS TO THE FFY 2025-2028 TRANSIT TIP

SCTA provided information regarding one modification to the FFY 2025-2028 Transit TIP. Ms. Ahlskog presented that the modification includes adding 5310 funds to an existing project of purchasing a total of sixteen paratransit buses. These funds will match the statewide funding that PennDOT is applying for. The 5310 funds will be used specifically as a match for the purchase of four of the paratransit vehicles.

These are just administrative actions presented for information purposes. No action is needed.

8. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF FY 2025-2027 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP)

Mr. Golembiewski stated that at the November 14, 2024 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting the MPO staff received approval to forward the draft FY 2025-2026 and FY 2026-2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and PennDOT for their required 30-day review and comment period.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that during this time one comment was received from FHWA staff. Mr. Golembiewski went on to describe the comment from FHWA as a recommendation to add a section within the UPWP amendment and modification thresholds found on page 8 of the PennDOT Memorandum of Understanding for the Administration of Pennsylvania's State Planning and Research (SPR) Work Program. Staff updated the UPWP with relevant content from pages 6 and 7 (Sections 2.3 and 2.3.1) and added it to Pages 7 and 8 of the draft UPWP, and the Table of Contents was updated to reflect revised page numbering throughout the document. The updated document was forwarded to Ms. Zejcirovic (FHWA) for concurrence and no further response was received. Staff received no response to the original or revised drafts from FTA staff.

Mr. Mosca made a comment thanking staff of the Berks County Planning Commission for doing such an excellent job in crafting the work program and addressing the comments made by FHWA. The department looks forward to approval and submission.

MOTION: Mr. Mosca made a motion to approve the FY 2025-2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Mr. Santoni seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

9. REVIEW/RECOMMENDATION ON EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA FREIGHT ALLIANCE FREIGHT INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

Mr. Piper stated that in October 2024 the MPO had a regional briefing on this plan and at the November 14, 2024 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting we had a formal presentation outlining the plan document, regional freight profile, and associated appendices. Mr. Piper stated that after that presentation the committees had the opportunity to review the plan and come back with any comments on it. At the time of this meeting no comments were received from persons on either committee or the public.

Mr. Piper added that as of now the draft plan is in the process of being adopted as the final plan by each of the constituent MPOs in the EPFA region. Mr. Piper went on to inform the committee that he is very happy with the results of the plan. Mr. Piper commended the project consultant and team that was involved in preparing the draft document.

Mr. Chiaramonte, WSP consultant project manager involved in preparing the plan, was available to answer any specific questions regarding the plan. The committee had no questions.

MOTION: Mr. Santoni made a motion to adopt the Eastern Pennsylvania Freight Alliance Freight Infrastructure Plan. Ms. Rowe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

10. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF RATS TRAFFIC SAFETY REPORT 2019-2023

Ms. Timochenko stated that the draft RATS Annual Traffic Safety Report 2019-2023 identifies trends and potential mitigation strategies that can be used to reduce overall traffic related crashes, fatalities and serious injuries. This is done through the examination of crash trends and identification and programming of mitigation strategies.

The report is used as a tool to help monitor our existing transportation conditions and to help identify and program projects on both the TIP and the LRTP. Included in the report is information on both the State Strategic Highway Safety Plan and the PennDOT District 5-0 Safety Plan and incorporates those themes and focus areas that are identified in those plan as progressing towards zero deaths across the State.

The annual traffic safety report covers the 5-year period from 2019 to 2023 and the data for the report was obtained using the Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool (PCIT). The trend summary reports were updated for the document which identified trends for the indicator over the 5-year period.

New to the report this year, actual values for the performance measures were added for the 5-year period. At the end of November 2024 staff had met with PennDOT staff to go over which datasets and calculations the department used to determine the 2019-2023 targets so that our staff could use the same datasets and calculations to determine the actual performance numbers and include that information in the RATS report.

Overall, RATS met the target numbers for both number of serious injuries and serious injury rates. The other three targets, number of fatalities, fatality rate, and number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries were not met for the Reading MPO.

The document contains mitigation strategies to improve roadway safety. RATS staff will continue to consider those strategies and coordinate and work with PennDOT to identify strategies and projects that can improve safety on Berks County roadways for all users.

Ms. Timochenko added that also included in this year's report is an executive summary at the beginning of the report that gives a brief overview of the report as well as a brief summary of the performance measure findings and the scorecard trends.

MOTION: Mr. Mosca made a motion to approve the RATS Annual Traffic Safety Report 2019-2023. Ms. Ahlskog seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

11. REVIEW/APPROVAL OF RATS ANNUAL PAVEMENT AND BRIDGE SAFETY REPORT 2019-2023

Ms. Hain presented the updated Bridge and Pavement conditions report for the 2019-2023 5-year period. Similar to the traffic safety report the annual pavement and bridge conditions report is based on the performance measures for pavement and bridge conditions. Every year PennDOT transmits an annual performance measures report. The RATS Annual Pavement and Bridge Report expands on this data and puts it into a report as presented.

Ms. Hain went through the report by introducing the table of contents and the five sections contained within the report. The ultimate goal of the report is to help guide investment decisions to keep Berks County roads and bridges in good working order. This is done by determining potential projects for inclusion in the RATS TIP and LRTP.

Ms. Hain continued her presentation by reviewing multiple maps, tables, and charts outlining the pavement and bridge conditions throughout Berks County. Like the Traffic Safety report, this report identifies trends by using the same scorecard method to evaluate the performance measures of both pavement and bridges.

Mr. Piper wanted to address the committee about one of the issues that has been discussed with the department, with relation to the pavement side, is that some of the information contained within the report can be a little deceiving. This is because of the way PennDOT collects its data. There tends to be a little bit of a lag between areas that have already been improved and areas that are showing up as poor condition. Because of this there could be some areas on the list that are showing up as poor but that have already been improved. More coordination between staff and the department should be conducted to address those gaps for later reports.

MOTION: Mr. Santoni made a motion to adopt the Annual Pavement and Bridge Safety Report 2019-2023. Ms. Rowe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

12. REVIEW/ADOPTION OF SCTA 2025 SAFETY PLAN

Ms. Ahlskog made a presentation regarding the updated SCTA Safety Report. In accordance with the requirements of 49 CFR Parts 673.13(a) SCTA as authorized in 49 CFR Parts 673.11(d) does hereby certify that it has established a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan, meeting the requirements of this part effective April 9, 2024.

Ms. Ahlskog continued that SCTA further certifies that on an annual basis it will certify its compliance with 49 CFR Parts 673.13(b) in accordance with the SCTA Safety Plan

adopted by the Board of Directors on December 18, 2024. The original adopted plan was on September 16, 2020 and has been updated in 2022, 2023 and currently in December 2024 as well.

The summary of changes to the SCTA Public Transportation Safety Plan for 2025 were included in the committee packets. The summary includes tables showing FY 2023 and 2024 results that were received on pages nine and ten of the plan. One item added was the number of assaults of transit workers as a category to track moving forward. The safety target plan for FY 2025 includes fatalities, injuries, safety events, and system reliability.

MOTION: Ms. Rowe made a motion to adopt the SCTA Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan 2025. Mr. Santoni seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

13. REPORT ON PLANNING PARTNERS PM2 & PM3 MID PERFORMANCE TARGET ADJUSTMENT LETTER

Mr. Golembiewski began his presentation by informing the committee that this is for information only and no formal action needs to be taken. PM2 measures relate to pavement and bridge conditions whereas PM3 measures relate to freight movement, congestion management and air quality.

In February 2023, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) established 2-year and 4-year targets for the PM-2 and PM-3 measures for the 2022-2025 performance period. The targets were developed in coordination with Pennsylvania's Metropolitan and Regional Planning Organizations (MPO/RPO). Each MPO/RPO agreed to support the PennDOT statewide and regional PM-2 and PM-3 targets established at that time. PennDOT submitted a final version of the Mid Performance Period Progress Report to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on October 31, 2024. Based on the performance review, there were no changes to the Statewide targets or the MPO-specific targets impacting the Reading MPO.

14. REPORT ON RATS ANNUAL LIST OF OBLIGATED PROJECTS FOR FFY 2024

Mr. McGough presented that in accordance with federal regulations (FAST Act) the RATS Annual List of Obligated Projects was prepared and posted to the MPO's website. The document identifies all the highway, bridge, and transit projects in Berks County that have received obligated Federal funding during the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024.

Mr. McGough stated that this report is for informational purposes and matter of record. No formal action is required by the committee.

15. PENNDOT UPDATE – US 222 WIDENING PROJECT (MAIDENCREEK AND RICHMOND TOWNSHIPS)

The presentation was started by Mr. Dave Molinaro, the project consultant manager for the project. The formal name of the project being SR 222 – Section 28M, Berks County Widening Project. The project consists of approximately 4.5 miles of widening and center median barrier installation on this section of US 222 in Richmond and Maiden Creek Townships in Berks County. The project also consists of installing two roundabouts and one bridge replacement. Mr. Molinaro informed the committee that the engineer for the project is Urban Engineers and the project manager is Mr. Ken McFadden. Mr. Molinaro then turned the presentation over to Mr. McFadden so that he could present the details.

Mr. McFadden continued the presentation by giving an overview of the project, design features, environmental features/constraints, a schedule, and finally a cost estimate. Mr. McFadden started by presenting a map and describing the limits of the project area. Mr. McFadden detailed that they will be taking a currently 50-foot wide section of roadway and turning it into an 80-foot wide cross section. Current configuration is one-lane in each direction. Engineers will be taking that current configuration and widening it to two lanes in each direction with a median barrier. Outside shoulders will also be widened to accommodate bicycle and horse and buggy traffic that utilizes the roadway. Roundabouts will be installed at Pleasant Hill Road and Richmond Road.

One of the major components of this project has been the stormwater management element. Because of the construction/installation of more impervious surface and the presence of karst topography, over 30 stormwater control features have been included as part of the project. NPDES permit submissions have been completed and submitted and they are currently waiting to hear back from the conservation district.

Mr. McFadden then presented detailed information on the roundabout configuration and how they will be located as to not adversely affect neighboring properties or impact sensitive environmental resources. A discussion was had with Richmond Township regarding the installation of a shared use path at the northern limit of the project area. This path would be installed to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists that travel or cross the corridor to get to areas of interest on either side of the roadway between Schuler and Kempsville Roads.

Emphasis was made on avoiding sensitive environmental constraints. The project was designed to eliminate conflicts with identified properties in the Richmond-Maxatawny Rural Historic District, cemeteries, areas of archeological significance, and preserved farmland.

Mr. McFadden went on to report the project schedule. The environmental clearances were received in August 2022. Final design was approved in April 2024, ROW acquisition began in fall of 2024, NPDES permit submission was made in December 2024, and let date is set for July 2026.

Costs for the project include construction at \$75,390,424, utility installation/relocation \$1,000,000, and ROW acquisition \$6,493,000.

Mr. Piper questioned what the approximate timeframe will be for construction. Mr. McFadden replied that construction will most likely take about three seasons. During construction the existing two lanes of traffic will be maintained. There may be some detours on side roads related to construction of the roundabouts.

16. COMMUTEPA UPDATE

Mr. Boyer presented CommutePA's activity report from the month of December 2024. Mr. Boyer explained that CommutePA has continued to meet with employers, including Berks Nature, Berks Community Health, the City of Reading, the Berks CareerLink office, and PSU Berks. During the month of December, 82 new members were signed up for the program. Over 7,600 trips were tracked during the month of December, saving over \$93,000 for commuters and taking over 193,000 miles off the road because people are carpooling or using other forms of transportation as an alternative to driving alone to work.

Mr. Boyer updated the committee on major initiatives being undertaken by CommutePA. One being the regional BikeShare Program, another being the Regional Congestion Management Plan, lastly the application by the Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership for the national TDM accreditation.

17. REVIEW/DISCUSSION/APPROVAL OF RATS LOGO

Mr. Piper presented the final two options for the RATS logo concept. Mr. Piper continued by stating that there have been a number of iterations but these two are the ones that have floated to the top based on previous review and comment by both the Technical and Coordinating committees. Mr. Piper stated that he is leaving the final determination of the logo up to the Coordinating Committee for selection.

Mr. Piper described the two options as "A" being a more stylized depiction of the Reading Area Transportation Study. Option "B" contains the outline of the County, as RATS is the MPO representing the whole of Berks County. Staff is comfortable with either selection the Coordinating Committee makes. Mr. Piper then opened the floor for comment from the committee on the options.

Mr. Kufro added that he wanted to thank MPO staff on putting these two options together. Mr. Kufro stated that he likes option "B" because it incorporates the outline of the County.

Ms. Ahlskog informed the committee that she prefers option "B." Mr. McKeon stated that he prefers "B" as well. Ms. Reed responded virtually by indicating she is in favor of option "A." Mr. Santoni added that he is leaning towards option "A." Mr. Mosca informed that PennDOT representation collaborated on the side and select option "B." Ms. Rowe stated that she likes option "A."

Ms. Reed then made the suggestion that it may be a good idea to superimpose option “A” over the County shape that exists in option “B.” Mr. Mosca responded that that is a good idea to have the County boundaries on the logo. Mr. Kufro agreed with that, and it was determined that the conceptual logos will be looked at again to incorporate those proposed changes and then be brought back to the Committee for final determination at another date.

Mr. Piper then stated that staff will make the changes, create one more iteration of the concept, and bring it back to the committee at its March 2025 meeting. Mr. Piper thanked everyone for their input.

18. OTHER BUSINESS/PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Piper stated that there was no public comment.

19. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Santoni made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Rowe seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 2:20 PM.

Date: _____

Alan D. Piper, MPO Secretary