

MINUTES

SHENANGO VALLEY METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION COORDINATING/TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Thursday, May 15, 2008 – 10:30 A.M. - MCRPC Offices
Hermitage, PA

PERSONS PRESENT

REPRESENTING

Kristin Egresits	PennDOT
Robert Hannigan	PennDOT
Mark Miller	Mercer County
Matt Stewart	MCRPC
Marcia Hirschmann	Hermitage City
Don Hall	PennDOT
Tom Tulip	Mercer County Regional COG
Barb Brown	Springfield Township
Bob Lucas	Sharon City
Frank Gargiulo	Farrell City
Wendy Campbell	Wilmington Township
Dick Brandes	Jefferson Township
Mike Wilson	Sharpsville Borough
Ryan T. Eggleston	Greenville Borough
Jeremy Coxe	Hermitage City
Diane Helbig	Rep. Michele Brooks
James Morton	Wolf Creek Township
Joe Pinchot	The Herald
Mirta Reyes-Chapman	Eastgate COG
Ken Pochatko	PennDOT
Erin Wiley Moyers	PennDOT
E. Mariah Hanson	PennDOT
Phil Yasnowsky	Interested Citizen
Chuck Gilliland	Shenango Township
Harmon Fennell	Shenango Township
Bill Williams	Shenango Township
Dave Beatty	Liberty Township
Ron Faull	Liberty Township
Mike Nashtock	South Pymatuning Township
Andrea Folkertsma	Grove City Borough
Pat Turner	Senator Bob Robbins
Brenda Tomko	Rep. Mark Longietti
Elliott Lengel	Findley Township
Daniel Gracenin	MCRPC
Chris Conti	MCRPC

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING FEBRUARY 12, 2008

Mr. Gracenin asked for any additions, corrections or deletions to the Minutes of the February 12, 2008 meeting. There being none, Mr. Gracenin asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Brandes so moved, Mr. Lucas seconded. The motion passed.

APPROVAL TO RESCHEDULE AUGUST 12, 2008 MPO MEETING TO JULY 15, 2008

Mr. Gracenin explained that we need to have a July meeting in order to approve our TIP, which must be submitted prior to July 21, 2008. A motion was made by Ms. Brown and seconded by Mr. Wilson to approve rescheduling the meeting to July 15, 2008. The motion passed.

2007 TIP MODIFICATIONS/ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

Ms. Egresits from PennDOT distributed a handout which shows the highway/bridge TIP modifications from February to May 2008. (A copy is attached to and made a part of the permanent record of Minutes.) Ms. Brown asked about the GR1 & GR2 projects. Ms. Hanson explained. Ms. Egresits explained that a motion is needed regarding the PA 258 over Daley Run project because they are adding the preliminary engineering to the 2007 TIP. A motion was made by Ms. Brown and seconded by Mr. Lucas to approve this TIP modification. Ms. Hanson explained that we need to amend the motion to include the 208 project because of the higher cost. Ms. Brown and Mr. Lucas approved to amend the motion to include both projects. The motion passed.

APPROVAL OF FINAL DRAFT 2009-2012 TIP

Mr. Gracenin explained that the final draft 2009-2012 TIP had been mailed. Also, he distributed to those present the transit portion of the TIP. Next he explained the final draft of the TIP and noted that there are a lot of new projects, many of which are new bridges, due to Act 44. He noted that Act 44 is providing the extra funding for the Commonwealth and the Department is putting that money into the bridge projects. He noted that back in February we reviewed this draft, and noted that there were not a lot of new highway projects added to the TIP. He noted that the air quality portion of the TIP has been started. He explained that he needs approval so that once the air quality documentation is completed; it will be put out for public involvement and public comment period, with approval of the final TIP at the July MPO meeting. In discussion, Ms. Reyes-Chapman had a question regarding separating charges for the following year on the transit portion of the TIP. Mr. Gracenin explained that until the TIP is adopted, we can add it to the transit portion of the TIP as an amendment. Ms. Hanson noted that Act 44 has close to 4 million dollars extra for the year. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Brown and seconded by Mr. Lengel to approve the final draft of the 2009-2012 TIP.

APPROVAL OF DRAFT SVATS MPO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Mr. Stewart explained that the FHWA has asked that we update our Public Participation Plan since we are now working with Youngstown and are classified differently. He stated that a draft public participation plan was reviewed by our Bylaws Committee, which was then forwarded to FHWA for their review. FHWA had some good comments regarding this plan which addressed policies for public comment, advertising, meetings, and outreach to special groups or communities that are not well served by existing transportation systems, such as low income, senior citizen and minority households. Mr. Stewart stated that we need approval of the draft SVATS MPO Public Participation Plan which will go out for a 45-day comment period.

Mr. Gracenin stated that we currently have a Public Participation Plan in place, but it has not been updated for many years. He also noted that in June the FHWA and FTA will be conducting our tri-annual review, and this Public Participation Plan is one of the requirements. There being no questions, a motion was made by Mr. Lengel and seconded by Ms. Brown to approve the Draft SVATS MPO Public Participation Plan. The motion passed.

APPROVAL OF DRAFT SVATS MPO BYLAWS

Mr. Stewart explained that over the past couple years, off and on, the Bylaws Committee updated their Bylaws, which is currently out for public review. Mr. Gracenin stated that the Bylaws have been in place since the early 1980s. The Bylaws explain how we are structured and what the voting membership consists of and things of that nature. He explained that when we were updating the Bylaws, we basically added more specifics regarding the size of our voting membership, language added regarding quorums at meetings, etc. Currently our voting membership is at 23 and would cap the membership of the MPO at 25 members. Membership does not have to be an elected official; it could be anybody from your municipality. He noted that we have membership currently that never attends meetings. Language was added explaining that if you do not attend 50% of the meetings you would first receive a warning letter. The letter would state that your membership would be revoked if you do not attend 50% of the meetings the following year. After a brief clarification on a few items in the Bylaws, a motion was made by Ms. Brown and seconded by Mr. Wilson to approve the Draft SVATS MPO Bylaws. The motion passed.

FY 2008-2009 WELFARE TO WORK (W2W) GRANT APPLICATION APPROVAL

Mr. Tulip explained that this is another new requirement under Act 44 which deals with public transportation requirements. He noted that the Mercer County Regional COG and Transit operations are the grantee/pass thru for this grant application. The Welfare to Work Program is actually operated by the Shenango Valley Urban League. In this year's grant application, they are requesting \$60,000 to continue an ongoing program that they operate at the Shenango Valley Urban League to assist LMI individuals with both the purchase and repair of vehicles. He noted that this is a new requirement under our consolidation efforts with the department and it is the first time it needs to come to the MPO Committee for approval. He noted that this project is a carryover and has been ongoing. There being no questions, a motion was made by Mr. Lucas and seconded by Mr. Wilson to approve the 2008-2009 Welfare to Work Grant Application. The motion passed.

TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PROJECT STATUS REPORTS

Mr. Stewart gave a brief update on the Transportation Enhancement Projects: 1) The **Mercer County Trails Association – Trout Island Trail Project** is moving along. The Army Corps of Engineers is in the process of preparing their lease agreement and the construction plans are complete. 2) The **Shenango Valley Bikeway/Pedestrian Walkway Project** is ready for bid letting, but there is an issue with the funding. 3) Construction is scheduled to begin May 14, 2008 for the **City of Farrell Mercer Avenue Sidewalk Phase II – Safe Route to School Project**. This project should be completed in late June. 4) The original design of the retaining wall was revised to incorporate a double landscaped tier for the **Borough of Sharpsville Retaining Wall Project – Streetscape Phase V Project** on Walnut Street. This revised design was forwarded to PaDOT for their review. 5) The **Borough of Sharpsville Streetscape Phase VI Milliken Avenue and Fourth Street Project** was recently awarded and construction is to begin in June. 6) The design work is underway and preliminary plans had been sent to PaDOT regarding the **City of Sharon 2007 Townscape Project** which addresses landscaping, street lighting, sidewalk improvement and crosswalks. The design work should be completed by June 15th. 7) The **Grove City Downtown Project** has been completed.

Mr. Gracenin explained that about 1 ½ years ago, money was moved from the **Sandy Lake Stoneboro Trail Project** so that other projects could move. The Sandy Lake Stoneboro Trail Project is still there and is starting to move again because the Trails Association from the County is going to take it over from the Conservancy and they may need money again soon. In discussion, Ms. Brown asked what the Committee's obligation would be to fund projects that have had their money removed. Mr. Gracenin stated that we removed the money from that year's funding, but we did not kill the project. He stated that there are no written rules, we could potentially remove a project and kill it; but we did not kill the Sandy Lake Stoneboro Trail Project. He explained that the Committee provides a brief update on the status of the Transportation Enhancement Projects at each meeting which shows the progress for each project. If the Committee has issues of whether projects should be removed due to lack of progress, it would be discussed at the meeting.

Mr. Gracenin noted that the Sharpsville Streetscape Phase VI Milliken Avenue Project came in under budget. Mr. Wilson asked if the money could be transferred to the Borough of Sharpsville Retaining Wall Project which is going to exceed its current allocation. Ms. Hanson noted that the money cannot be transferred because the funding source is different. Mayor Lucas suggested that we might want to put something in our Bylaws stating that if any project were to be removed from the Transportation Enhancement list, it should be discussed first so that certain individuals have fair warning. Mr. Gracenin stated that this probably does not need to be in our Bylaws, but the Committee could send out a format letter to the recipient stating that funding could be removed if there is no action on their project.

Mr. Gracenin explained that the Shenango Valley Bikeway/Pedestrian Walkway Project is having some funding issues. He noted that this project involves the Shenango Valley communities and the sponsor of the project is the Mercer County Regional COG, but is being handled by the local officials in each community. Ms. Hirschmann stated that the estimate came in higher than the funding that has been allocated for the project. Ms. Hanson stated that \$283,000 was approved for

this project and the estimate is \$505,000. Ms. Hanson stated that there is a possibility of using STU funding, which requires 80% Federal and 20% local match. Mr. Tulip stated that this project has been around for quite some time and it predates him. He thought some additional money was going to be allocated to it. Mr. Gracenin stated that the costs keep going up. Ms. Egresits stated that no extra funds have been allocated statewide in the past. Mr. Gargiulo suggested that the bikeway project be broken into different phases. Mr. Gracenin stated that it would be hard to break this into different phases since most of the work is in Hermitage. He stated that the City of Hermitage did \$105,000 of their own work on this project hoping that they could have cut the costs back. Mr. Coxe explained that about 2/3 of the cost is in Hermitage. The other four municipalities do not have a lot of costs associated with the project. He noted that at the May 2007 MPO meeting this item was discussed. There was a misunderstanding in the Minutes; Hermitage thought they received an additional \$150,000 towards this bikeway project. Hermitage did the storm water work on the south side of Highland Road in preparation to getting this project out to bid. He explained that the City is looking for some guidance on how they can get this project out to bid and done, since the money is not actually allocated. Mr. Gracenin stated that the \$150,000 from the Sandy Lake Stoneboro Trail project could potentially be available for the Bikeway project, but they would still not have enough money. STU funds could potentially be a possibility. Ms. Hanson stated that there is \$270,000 available in STU funds. Ms. Hirschmann asked if the \$270,000 STU funds are what is left outside of what is already allocated. Ms. Hanson stated yes. Mr. Gargiulo felt that a letter should be sent to Sandy Lake explaining that the allocated money could be taken away. Mr. Gracenin stated that TE projects are 100% Federal dollars, but requires the municipality to do all of the up front work (pre-construction). Mr. Hannigan stated that he would look back to whether this project was funded 80/20 or otherwise. Ms. Wiley-Moyers stated that this project has been on the TE list for quite some time and has two different funding sources. It has \$77,000 set aside from ISTEA and the Sandy Lake Trail was 100% Federal for construction for a Federal tune of \$230,000. She noted that there was no local match from Sandy Lake. Mr. Lengel questioned if any municipality put money into the Bikeway project. Mr. Gracenin stated yes, Hermitage put in labor (which had a value of over \$100,000) to cover up the drainage ditches; install pipe as well as engineering.

Mr. Gracenin explained that this has been an overlying problem with the TE process. Requests are coming in, the MPO Committee is making the approvals to transfer additional funding to a certain project, then projects stall and the process is delayed. Mr. Hannigan questioned if all the TE funds will be used this year. Mr. Hanson stated that all of the 2008 dollars will be used. Mr. Hall noted that you do not want to confuse approved project costs with actual funding from the TIP; they are two different things. He noted that the cash money that you would get out of the line item is \$240,000 - \$260,000 year, regardless of what your budget is; and it based on first come, first serve. He stated that you would need to use the line item money first before you would consider going to the state-wide line item. Mr. Gracenin stated that all TE projects are moving, except the Sandy Lake/Stoneboro Trail project. Mr. Hall noted that the problem is the actual construction costs are escalating so much. Mr. Lengel stated that projects should be completely ready to go before funding is approved. He stated that if a municipality's project is removed, the vote should be unanimous. He stated that there should be written rules and certain criteria should be followed. Ms. Egresits explained that the TE projects will not show up on the TIP until they are ready to go. Mr. Hall explained that COG would be responsible for the extra amount of money over if bids were let now for the Shenango Valley Bikeway project. Mr. Brandes, who is a member of COG, stated that COG has no extra money. Ms. Hirschmann stated that the intent never was to have COG pay; they were

acting as a pass thru (sponsor) of the project.

Mr. Gracenin stated that he agrees with Mr. Lengel's statement. All projects should be ready to go when they are asking for TE funds. Ms. Hirschmann asked what are our choices regarding these two projects. Mr. Gracenin stated that we need to determine how to allocate the \$150,000 TE funds, with the potential use of STU funds, but the local match money would have to be found. Mr. Wilson questioned if the work that the City of Hermitage had already done, could it be considered the match.

Ms. Hanson stated no; the TE funds are already funded at 100%. Mr. Wilson stated that the City of Hermitage needs to make a decision on whether to go after the 80/20 match. Mr. Hall did some rough math. Ms. Hanson stated that there is \$230,000 for construction of the Sandy Lake Stoneboro Trail project. Mr. Hall stated that if all of the money that is allocated for the Stoneboro trail is moved to the Shenango Valley Bikeway project; that project would still need roughly \$54,000 or (\$14,000 in local match). Mr. Lucas asked how much would be left in STU funds. Ms. Hanson said there is \$270,000 in that line item to be used. Ms. Hirschmann stated that the question to the MPO would be are they willing to allow the STU money to go towards this project and/or the trail.

Mr. Tulip asked who the supporters are for the Sandy Lake Trail. Mr. Gracenin stated that it is the Sandy Creek Conservancy and Mr. Lee McCoy could not attend today's meeting. He stated that Mr. Parke Wentling from the County Trails Association is planning to take it over. Mr. Gracenin stated that the County Trails Association is still interested in this project; the hold up on this project was a right-of-way issue. Ms. Brown had a copy of the May 2007 Minutes. She stated that she had made a motion to move the funds from the Sandy Lake project to other projects that were ready to go. Mr. Brandes asked is the Shenango Valley Bikeway project could be done this year. Mr. Coxe stated that almost all work could be done, except paving.

Mr. Brandes made a motion to move and allocate the money from the Sandy Lake Stoneboro Trail Project to the Shenango Valley Bikeway Trail Project. Ms. Egresits stated that you are not removing funds; you would be moving their award. If you move their award, they would have to resubmit their project under the next TE round to get their award back. She stated that the next TE round would be in 2010. Mr. Gracenin stated that since no one is present from the Sandy Creek Conservancy or the County Trails Association, he will need to contact them and inform them of what is going on with these funds.

Mr. Gracenin stated that there is a motion to move \$230,000 from the Sandy Lake Stoneboro Trail Project to the Shenango Valley Bikeway project; contingent on the City of Hermitage getting together the rest of the funds. The additional funds that may be necessary would be allocated from the STU pot of money, with the understanding that the 20% local match would be made up by the locals involved in this project; and all contingent on the City of Hermitage being able to complete their project. Ms. Brown seconded. The motion passed.

UPCOMING SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL FUNDING

Mr. Hannigan explained that there is \$12.6 million available in this round, which starts May 1st; and is a State-wide competition. He noted that this program is for capital projects to enhance the safety for children to walk to school as well as to encourage children to walk to school, both for safety, as well as for their health. The State will have a task force that will review all of the applications. The State would also come back to the MPO for their input and to rate their projects prior to them

making a decision. He stated that this would include schools from K-8; the school and the municipality have to apply. The application due date is August 1, 2008. Once they receive the applications, they will be reviewed and hopefully award all the projects by October 2008.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Gracenin explained that the County GIS project is well underway and is anticipated to be completed by late summer. Next, he wished Andrea Folkertsma a Happy Birthday. Also, the Transit Coordinated Services Plan is basically done and is waiting for the final draft. Once we have the final draft, we will mail it to the MPO Committee so they can approve it at their July meeting. It was also noted that the Special Studies funds were approved for the Congestion Management Project for the County.

Mr. Lengel from Findley Township stated that they are working with PennDOT on changing some guide rails in their Township and wanted to know if there was any money for this. Mr. Hall stated that there are no State funds available for Township roads.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel M. Gracenin,
MPO Secretary