



Mercer County Regional Planning Commission

TO: Coordinating Committee Voting Members and Interested Individuals

FROM: Matt Stewart—Senior Planner, MCRPC

SUBJECT: August 10, 2021 MPO Meeting

DATE: August 3, 2021

The Coordinating Committee of the Mercer County MPO will hold a virtual meeting on Tuesday, August 10, 2021 at 10:30 A.M. The meeting will be conducted using the GoToMeeting platform, with online and phone-based options available to members and the public. Those able to attend can do so via the following methods: (1.) join from a computer, tablet or smartphone at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/151768021>, (all visual aids will show up on your screen), or (2.) join in using a phone by dialing [+1 \(669\) 224-3412](tel:+16692243412), and entering in the access code **151-768-021** (note that long distance rates may apply, depending upon your phone plan).

The meeting link and other meeting information will also be posted under the “Mercer County MPO and Public Information” page of MCRPC’s website (within the “transportation” sub-section) at <https://mcrpc.com/transportation/mercercountympo/>.

During this meeting, we plan to share initial details about the 2023 TIP—guidance documents recently were disseminated to our MPO and PennDOT—and will continue sharing what we know about the ever-changing funding outlook. As always, we will provide you with the most up-to-date information we have regarding the status of projects, planning efforts, and what’s new in the world of transportation and how it might affect Mercer Countians.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 724.981.2412, x3206 or mstewart@mcrpc.com). Should you have any technical difficulties in joining the meeting on the 10th, please contact Dan Gracenin or Brian Barnhizer (dgracenin@mcrpc.com or bbarnhizer@mcrpc.com).

Thank you, and I hope you’re able to join us on the 10th.



AGENDA

Shenango Valley Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordinating Committee Virtual Meeting Tuesday, August 10, 2021—10:30am

Join via computer, tablet or smartphone at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/151768021>

or

Dial by phone (long-distance rates may apply) by dialing [+1 \(669\) 224-3412](tel:+16692243412), then enter in the access code 151-768-021.

Note: Items marked with an asterisk (*) are action items requiring a vote.

- Roll Call
- Approval of Minutes of the May 11, 2021 MPO Coordinating Committee Meeting*
- Staff Changes at FHWA PA Division Office (Ronnique Bishop, FHWA)
- 2021-2024 TIP Modifications (Brandon Leach, PennDOT CPDM)*
Note: Information regarding these modifications will be posted to the “Mercer County MPO and Public Information” page of MCRPC’s website (within the “transportation” sub-section) at <https://mcrpc.com/transportation/mercercounty-mpo/>. (TIP Modifications will be available on or before 8/6/2021).
- Transit Safety Target Adoption* (Kim DiCintio, MCRCOG; Matt Stewart SVATS MPO)
- Long Range Transportation Plan Update (Matt Stewart, SVATS MPO)
- Project Update Summary
 - STU and TA Projects (Matt Stewart, SVATS MPO)
 - Major Projects/Other TIP Projects (Ron Johnson, PennDOT D-1)
 - Planning and Data Collection Updates (Brian Barnhizer, SVATS MPO)
 - Springfield US 19 Study
 - Annual Traffic Counts
- Transportation Funding Update
 - Transportation Alternatives Funding Reminder (Matt Stewart, SVATS MPO; Lyndsie DeVito, PennDOT D-1)
 - 2023 TIP Update (Various PennDOT staff; Matt Stewart, SVATS MPO)
 - Financial Guidance
 - General/Procedural Guidance—overview of process and timeline
 - Transportation Revenue Options Committee (TROC) Update (Kevin McCullough, PennDOT CPDM)
 - Federal Infrastructure Funding (Matt Stewart, SVATS MPO, various PennDOT and FHWA staff)
- Other Business
- Adjournment

MINUTES

SHENANGO VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE VIRTUAL MEETING

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 – 10:30 A.M.

PERSONS PRESENT

Laurel Alexander
Jeremy Coxe
Ken Robertson
Bob Lark
Bob Fiscus
Melissa Phillips
Brad Elder
Matt McConnell
Tim Stiffy
Stone R. Helsel
Lucinda Lipko
Mary Kay Mattocks
Kim DiCintio
Governments
Brian McNulty
Tom McClelland
Courtney Lyle
Lyndsie DeVito
Kevin McCullough
Brandon Leach
Paul Hamill
Richard Stachel
Charles Weber
Cindy Black
Gary Hittle
Gary Lowers
Darrell Chapman
Zach Miles
Gary Dovey
Sandy Swogger
Diane Helbig
Shelli Oakes
Scott Boyd
Emily Aloiz
Gene Porochniak
Heather Maurer
Travis Siegel
Ed Reese
Matthew Crea
Ron Johnson
Jason Skvarla
Ed Orzehowski
Brian Barnhizer
Matt Stewart
Dan Gracenin

REPRESENTING

South Pymatuning Township
Hermitage City
Sharpsville Borough
West Middlesex Borough
Sharon City
Sharon City
Mercer County Bridge Department
Mercer County Commissioner
Springfield Township
Springfield Township
Springfield Township
Grove City Borough
Mercer County Regional Council of

PennDOT
PennDOT
PennDOT
PennDOT
PennDOT
PennDOT
Greenville Borough
Pine Township
Wolf Creek Township
Wilmington Township
Hempfield Township
Pymatuning Township
PennDOT, District 1-4
PennDOT
Penn-Northwest Development Corp.
Mercer County Area Agency on Aging
State Senator Michele Brooks
State Representative Tim Bonner
Mercer County Commissioner
Erie County MPO
Federal Highway Administration
State Representative Mark Longietti
Northwest RPO
GPD Group
PennDOT
PennDOT
WRA
PennDOT
MCRPC
MCRPC
MCRPC

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Matt Stewart called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. **A quorum was present.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 9, 2021

Mr. Coxe stated that the Minutes were sent out with the meeting packet and asked if there were any additions, corrections or deletions to the Minutes of the February 9, 2021 meeting. There being none, Mr. Coxe asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Hittle so moved, Mr. Stachel seconded. The motion passed.

2021-2024 TIP MODIFICATIONS

Mr. Coxe introduced Brandon Leach from our PennDOT central office. Mr. Leach stated that over the past couple months we did not receive any amendments that require a vote; but we do have seven (7) administrative modifications for the Mercer County TIP and there are two (2) interstate statewide modifications also attached to the meeting information. Administrative modification #2 was to the SVTS 2021 TIP to add the Kelly Road Bridge project, to add design phase to the TIP, \$153,000 in Federal BOF funds; \$28,800 in State 183 funds, as well as \$9,600 in State 179 funds were added to the Federal FY 2021. The Mercer Highway/Bridge line item and a de-obligation from the Kelly Road Bridges CON Phase were used as funding sources. Administrative modification #6 was to the SVTS 2021 TIP had a decrease to the PA 18, Birchwood-Rutledge CON Phase. \$123,791 in Federal NHPP funds, \$83,125 in Federal STP funds, and \$12,528 in State 581 funds were removed from Federal FY 2021 and returned to the Mercer County Highway/Bridge line item. He noted that it is always a good thing when you can add money back on that was not needed.

Mr. Leach stated that there was an administrative action to the 2021 Interstate program that includes moving program funds for the I-80 mile marker 0 to mile marker 5 reconstruction #3 project to align with the current estimate let date of February 2, 2023. \$10 Million in Federal NHP funds were removed from Federal FY 2022 and \$5 Million in Federal NHP funds were removed from Federal FY 2023. To balance this, \$5 Million in NHP funds were added to years 2024, 2025 and 2026 respectively. The Interstate contingency reserve line item and the I-90 project in Erie County is being utilized as a balancing source to maintain fiscal constraints. (A copy of the 2021-2024 TIP modifications is attached to and made a part of the permanent record of Minutes.)

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDADE

Mr. Stewart stated that the Long Range Transportation Plan has been our major focus of staff time these past few months. At the February meeting we met with a couple members of our consultant team who gave an overview of the schedule for the project and public input process. A 30-day public survey period launched and we received 382 responses that captured several problem areas or issues and project ideas. One of the questions on the survey asked how is COVID-19 going to change the way you move about, how it will affect your transportation? The survey responses did not have many changes, most plan to drive to work, less teleworking than what would have been expected. Some of the long term affects of COVID-19 found that more people plan to travel to parks and trails. This accelerates a trend that we have seen in the past 10-15 years here in Mercer County. It seems the culture now is more focused on the importance of recreation and quality of life. Also, six focus group meetings were held with a variety of audiences to receive as much feedback and input as possible. We had six really good discussions and we heard multiple discussions about some of the same issues or specific project locations or areas of concern. We are currently reviewing the information in workgroups to go through all of the comments and deciding how we address these concerns and see what our project listing will look like. He noted that this project is on schedule to wrap up by fall so that the LRTP can be adopted.

UPDATE: MPO CONTACT LISTS/ORGANIZATION PROJECT

Mr. Stewart wanted to remind everyone if you have not updated, even if there were not any updates in your community or agency, to please let him know as soon as possible. For those that have responded so far, he would like to thank you.

PROJECT UPDATE SUMMARY

---Transportation Alternatives and STU Project Status Reports - Mr. Stewart gave a few updates on the STU and TA projects. The **Springfield SR 208 Phase 2 Multimodal Trail** is moving along according to schedule. Gateway Engineering will be meeting with Springfield Township to review and submit the final plans to PennDOT for review of the Right-of-Way Plans. Work is progressing on time for the **Greenville Alan Avenue Sidewalk Project**. Mr. Stewart next touched base on two STU projects approved last summer. The first was the intersection of **Route 58 & 18 in Greenville**. One very important recommendation noted from the Greenville Pedestrian Study was a major jaywalking issue in front of the main intersection with Thiel College. The MPO was able to get this project STU funding and funds the intersection improvements, which is part of a much larger investment on our TIP, to do a Betterment Project through this corridor. PennDOT and the consulting engineer are looking to hold a public meeting soon. The preferred scenario for this intersection would be the Angle T, but another idea was discussed in detail of a more conventional plus intersection. The planning study also had looked into a roundabout, but the costs were higher and there were issues with slope. The other STU project approved last summer is the **McKinley Road Bridge in Mercer**. We have not received any updates recently, but should have some information on this in the near future.

---Major Projects/Other TIP Projects – Mr. Johnson touched base on a few projects. The **State Street Pedestrian Improvements Project** is continuing to progress through final design and the let date is set for September 2021. The **Sharon Gateway Project** is currently in preliminary engineering and WRA was the consultant selected to work with the City of Sharon on this project. PennDOT is aware that a right-of-way is needed for the **Springfield SR 208 Phase 2 Multimodal Trail** as well as archeology, since there are some sensitive areas that require further evaluation. The **South Hermitage Road Sidewalk Project** changed up the scope at the location for this project and are waiting to hear back from the multimodal deputy. He noted that we are still working with environmental agencies regarding the **Ohl Street Bridge** in getting all of the environmental documents in order and hopefully get that project out this year. The let date is July 2021. Next, he noted some recent activity under the TIP is the SR 1008, District Road over Otter Creek, received notice to proceed and Shingledecker has this contract. Mr. Helsel from Springfield Township had a question regarding the archeology sensitivities for the Springfield SR 208 Phase 2 Multimodal Trail. Ms. DeVito stated that some of the issues started back by the new Wendell August Forge store when the project limits were longer, but have since been shortened due to some funding and the environmental archeology is complete and are working towards the evaluation to get closed out. A right-of-way plan is currently being worked on for various easements, permanent and temporary, so this could hold up the project.

---Planning and Data Collection Updates – Mr. Barnhizer mentioned that it was recommended from the 2016 LRTP that a safety study be done for the US 19 Corridor Safety Study. We are preparing a Request For Proposal with the Township and working with PennDOT to engage the services of an engineer and consultant in order to carry out the study that would have the use of 2021-2022 FHWA funds in the amount of \$24,000. PennDOT is contributing \$3,500+ and the local match would be just under \$2,500. When the RFP is completed, we hope to have somebody under contract by July and finish the work by the end of June 2022 and they would be looking at various issues regarding US 19 with sight lines, safety issues with shoulder width, any kind of drop off, traffic congestion, and any distraction points that could be addressed; as well as evaluate various intersections (SR 208) because there are issues with those in terms of traffic flow at certain times of the day. Lastly, he mentioned that we will coordinate with Springfield Township in figuring out that if we have a detour on I-79, how would the traffic get routed safely around the detour.

Mr. Barnhizer mentioned that the traffic counting season for 2021 is now underway. He noted that we have 72 counts scheduled with PennDOT to complete by mid-November. On occasion, we carry out traffic counts for municipalities for either a 24- or 48-hour count in order to provide them some information. We are currently doing 3 counts for the City of Farrell (Roemer Boulevard & MLK Boulevard).

STU PROJECT DISCUSSION

Mr. Stewart mentioned that a few years ago the MPO awarded some STU dollars for the Route 62 Gateway Project in the City of Sharon, which is along the Ohio line. After talking with the City, as this project moves along, they have decided to make some changes to the scope of project. Changes would be made to the details of the landscaping and put some money toward updating the 2 signals that exist in this project area.

Mr. Fiscus mentioned that the City, as well as PennDOT, have held public meetings with the City's design engineer and realized that some of the infrastructure, including the sprinkler system and cul-de-sac might not make the most sense. The City would like to revise the scope from the original application to simplify the landscaping to make it more maintenance friendly and remove the sprinkler system as well as eliminate the cul-de-sac and create more green space and free up some funds. The City would like to add the funds in order to upgrade the traffic signalization and remove the wires from pole to pole and put mast arms up and new signalization. Mr. Stewart felt that this was important to be brought before the MPO because we are looking for consideration of approving this proposed change in scope. He also noted that the City is not requesting any additional money. There being no discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Lark to approve the changes made to the scope of work. Ms. Black seconded. The motion passed.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING UPDATE

---2023 TIP Update - Mr. McCullough noted that we are already preparing for the 2023 program update. The program will go live October 1, 2022 and we are already underway with a lot of things going on with regards to the TIP updates. He noted we recently opened up with the 12-Year Program, which is unique to the Commonwealth of PA and is not a Federal requirement. The 12-Year Program is meshed in-between the MPO TIP and is the kick-off for PennDOT and the Commonwealth of PA to announce that Mercer County along with other planning partners that we getting involved with the TIP update. Under the TIP update, we have been working on the financial guidance which determines how the funding is split up amongst all of the planning partners so they can work with their engineering district. Mercer County works with District 1, not only in the 4-year TIP but also through the 12-Year Program. He noted that we also have general and procedural guidance which is the directory on how we update the program. It incorporates a MOU on how we modify the TIP, which the MOU is a very important component of the general procedure guidance.

Some other items within procedural guidance are transit components, performance measures, project selection, safety, and air quality conformity. Air quality conformity includes documents which are required to be reviewed and updated, and then forwarded to PennDOT's Federal Highway's FTA and EPA for review as we move into finalization of the Program update for 2023. Another component is the schedule, which is very important. Later this summer we will start the program updates regarding the TIP updates, not only on highway and bridge side of things, but also on the transit side moving forward. Regarding timing, the program update documents, as well as the draft TIP are due by the end of December. The FHWA and PennDOT will start the review of projects followed by a public comment period. The TIP will be finalized and then presented to the State Transportation Commission, along with the 12-year program and then, in essence, adopt which normally takes place in August. The documents are turned over to Federal Highway, FTA and EPA for review and approval. Once approved, we will be able to access all the Federal and State funds to begin the new program around October 2022.

---PennDOT Pathways Overview/Draft – Mr. McCullough mentioned that there has been discussion regarding tolling nine (9) bridges across the Commonwealth that do not fit into our financial capabilities. They have been following their procedures for public private partnerships and are looking at exploring how we can fund these projects. Some discussions at the legislative level are trying to halt this particular process. He noted that this is only one component of looking at alternative funding solutions.

---Transportation Revenue Options Committee (TROC) Update – Mr. McCullough noted that shortly after we started the PennDOT Pathways Overview looking for alternative funding other than tolling bridges, the governor came out with a commitment to address the funding needs in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania is

looking at phasing out the gas tax because it is becoming an unreliable source of funding, due to hybrid and all electric vehicles, and continue to explore various other alternative funding options.

--Infrastructure Funding – Mr. Stewart noted that there are a lot of unknowns, but the funding world is changing and there has been a lot of talk about some type of infrastructure funding and what that means or how that ends up. He reviewed a chart that compares the current White House and GOP proposals. He also compared them to the current FSST Act legislation. Currently, we do not know if and when something might happen, and how substantial that is going to be, but it could have significant effects.

--Return to Earmarks – Mr. Stewart stated that we were asked to put together a list of projects that could be candidates for the current Appropriations Earmark process. He noted that the projects need to be included on a TIP, have a substantial amount of funding attached to it, and have 20% non-Federal matching funds be available as well as have a let date prior to 12/31/2023 with an emphasis on the Interstate network and projects that had state discretionary funds programmed on them. The list could be utilized to supplement the local effort of this Congressional Earmark request. Commissioner McConnell noted that they are floating a bond for \$12 million and will have ready jobs to be put on the TIP, in case any additional funding becomes available.

--Urbanized Boundary Discussion – Mr. Stewart noted that we are part of the Youngstown Metropolitan Area (MSA) because of a relatively narrow ribbon between Hubbard, OH and the Shenango Valley. The Census Bureau is looking at some substantial changes to how urbanized areas are calculated. There has been some speculation about the Shenango Valley being removed from the Youngstown MSA, but after more detailed analysis, we believe Mercer County is likely to remain a part of the MSA.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. McNulty to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Lark seconded. The meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel M. Gracenin,

DMG/ew