



TIP Development/Project Selection Process

2023-2026 TIP

Introduction

Federal law and regulations require that any urbanized areas with a population exceeding 50,000 form a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). This group provides a forum for local and state officials to work cooperatively to maintain a cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing transportation process. The Shenango Valley Area Transportation Study (SVATS) MPO, formed in 1981, is the MPO responsible for planning and programming transportation projects receiving federal funding within the 48 municipalities comprising Mercer County.

On a biennial basis, the MPO and PennDOT produce a local Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which contains the programmed transportation projects (covering a four-year period) throughout Mercer County. MPO and PennDOT staffs work closely to develop a TIP that takes into account the Long Range Transportation Plan's (LRTP's) priorities, Performance-Based Planning and Programming, Transportation Performance Management and asset management principles. As it is developed, all parties work to ensure that the TIP represents logical and beneficial projects for the county and the people living, working, and traveling within its borders.

This TIP—which covers fiscal years 2023 through 2026—is the culmination of many discussions and the preparation of numerous documents. The 2023-2026 TIP presented a unique challenge to all who prepared it: a significant federal transportation funding bill was passed right in the middle of the TIP development process. While this was certainly good news, it led to a lot of extra work as all partners figured out how to allocate this extra funding, and in a much shorter period of time than is typical.

This new federal funding helped close the growing gap between available funding and transportation needs within Mercer County, though funding needs still outweigh the available funding. So while this historically big challenge was significantly tempered, several accompanying challenges continued with this TIP development: additional—and often competing—metrics on project prioritization, increased workload in developing the TIP, different priorities/initiatives from various parties, over-burdened key staff at all levels, and the continuing pandemic-related challenges to effective coordination.

Despite these difficulties in developing the 2023-2026 TIP, MPO staff did all within their power to work toward maintaining and improving the 3C-compliant (cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing) transportation process in Mercer County along with each of their partners.

Process Overview

As illustrated on the accompanying *TIP Timeline* chart, development of Mercer County's 2023 TIP was a process that began in earnest about a year before final adoption. The initial draft guidance documents for the TIP were released by PennDOT's Center for Program Development and Management (CPDM) in July 2021. This included financial guidance, which initially resulted in funding cuts for Mercer County and all

other planning regions. The general/procedural guidance was similar to the previous TIP's guidance, which had several components dictating more thoughtful guidance on how TIPs were to be developed. Two noteworthy components had to do with how planning regions consider Transportation Performance Measures (TPMs) and Environmental Justice (EJ). The SVATS MPO and PennDOT District 1-0 staff members conducted several meetings to discuss not only the inclusion of TPMs and EJ, but also on general project priorities and directions for the TIP. A general agreement on what the draft TIP might look like began to take shape, and details were shared with the MPO Coordinating Committee in August 2021.

New with the 2023-2026 TIP, SVATS MPO worked with PennDOT to create a TIP coordination worksheet, which focuses in great detail about TIP development and coordination. This worksheet helped frame and guide many of these early TIP discussions. This narrative can be thought of as a more public-facing output from the TIP Coordination Worksheet. However, the additional detail from the worksheet is also on file should anyone wish to see even more detail on how the TIP was developed.

As autumn approached, it was looking increasingly likely that a significant new transportation funding bill was going to be legislatively approved. While the Executive and Legislative branches of the federal government continued their discussions and closer to passage, PennDOT CPDM took several steps to get planning partners as ready as they could be for additional funding. By November of 2021, the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was finally passed, resulting in a nearly 40% increase in funding.

Draft Highway TIPs project listings typically are submitted to Harrisburg by December 31 each cycle. Despite the major news of a nearly 40% funding increase being announced at the end of November, the MPO and PennDOT still had to submit a draft listing by the original deadline. This was quite difficult to do for a couple of reasons: (1.) it really only gave each of those involved about one month to make decisions about the programming of several projects, (2.) MPO staff and PennDOT District 1-0 had different philosophies on how this money should be allocated and (3.) none of the specifics were able to be shared with the MPO Coordinating Committee (they had met on 11/9, a few weeks before revised financial guidance was disseminated). Still, the MPO and District 1-0 worked closely and kept the conversations flowing. Each partner worked hard to try to get as close to consensus as they were able given the challenging timetable.

After the New Year, MPO staff met with all PennDOT and federal partners to review the draft program review. PennDOT CPDM acknowledged the extreme challenge of trying to react to the revised financial guidance and reach consensus on the TIP's mix of projects. They also clearly noted that there was still the ability to revise projects. MPO staff relayed their concerns about the TIP, and the conversation was productive. Several follow-up steps were established, most of which were addressed over the next couple of months.

The process for the transit component of the TIP works a little differently and is a much more cut-and-dry process. Mercer County has two transit providers—the Shenango Valley Shuttle Service and Mercer County Community Transit—which are staffed through the Mercer County Regional Council of Governments (MCRCOG). All PA transit agencies are required to utilize Pennsylvania's transit Capital Planning Tool (CPT) as part of their capital planning process. The CPT is an asset management and capital planning application that works as the central repository for all Pennsylvania transit asset and performance management activities and really helps guide the development of the transit portion of the TIP. MCRCOG staff relies heavily on the CPT, and works closely with the PennDOT Bureau of Multimodal Transportation and in accordance with the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) guidelines. A draft TIP

was shared with MPO and PennDOT CPDM staff members in early 2022. Shortly thereafter, this was shared with the MPO voting members and other stakeholders. As with past updates, most projects fund transit vehicles, facilities, equipment and other capital expenditures that allow the transit system to operate efficiently and safely. Operating assistance is also included within the TIP. Projects typically fall under similar categories year-to-year and older TIPs look rather similar to the 2023-2026 TIP.

The TIP is much more than just a listing of projects and accompanying costs and narrative descriptions. Myriad other documents comprise the TIP—this narrative included—and some of these are developed later in the process (the first quarter of 2022), even if the information leading to their development was decided early in the TIP-development process. These additional documents are listed in the chart below.

Additional TIP Documents (Beyond Project Listings and Public Narratives)

Submission	Description
Cover Letter	Document showing TIP approval date and organization name
TIP Development/Project Selection Process	Explanation of how TIP is developed (this document)
TIP Development Timeline	Graphic showing various milestones during TIP development
Transportation Performance Measure (TPM) Documentation	Narrative documentation regarding how TIP projects contribute toward safety, condition, system efficiency and transit PMs
TIP Financial Constraint Chart	Summary/overview table demonstrating project funding lines up with available funding amounts and sources
Transit Financial Capacity Analysis	Description of transit TIP’s financial capacity to complete projects
Environmental Justice (EJ) Analysis	EJ narrative, maps, Benefits and Burdens analysis
Air Quality Conformity Determination Report	Report explaining Mercer County’s AQ status and analysis of the TIP projects that are likely to affect overall AQ
Air Quality Resolution	Resolution stating that TIP contributes to the achievement of ambient AQ standards
Public Comment Period Advertisement	Legal ad notifying the public comment period and public hearing
Documentation of Public Comments Received	List, description, and results of any public comments received
Title VI Policy Statement	Document noting MPO’s commitment to nondiscrimination and providing information about how to file any complaints
MPO/RPO TIP Revision Procedures MOU	Memorandum of Understanding regarding processes for handling revisions to the TIP
Self Certification Resolution	Resolution affirming that MPO is operating in accordance with federal mandates regarding MPOs
List of Regionally Important and Significantly Delayed Projects from Previous TIP	Description and justification of 2021 TIP projects meeting these criteria
Financial Constraint Table	Table indicating that financial guidance amounts match the amounts programmed on the TIP and identifying additional sources of funding

On May 20, 2022, the TIP entered into a 30-day public comment period. A legal ad was placed in Mercer County’s widely-circulated newspaper (The Herald), while the TIP documents were posted on the MCRPC/MPO website, and various notifications were sent out to the transportation community, including native tribes, stating that the TIP was available for public comment. A Public Hearing was also scheduled during this 30-day public comment period (documentation of this process is included within this TIP submittal).

The final TIP is to be approved at the July 12, 2022 Coordinating Committee meeting, and will then be processed by PennDOT. After their review, PennDOT will bundle together this and all other PA MPO/RPO

TIPs, and submit as one Statewide TIP (STIP) to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for final approval. After final approval of the STIP by FHWA and FTA, the TIP takes effect at the beginning of the federal fiscal year on October 1, 2022.

Project Selection Overview

A wide variety of information from numerous sources was considered in the development of the 2023-2026 TIP. The **Highway TIP** includes all roadway and bridge projects along eligible routes. Road improvements can include pavement resurfacing or rehabilitation projects, intersection improvements, signal projects, bicycle/pedestrian access or safety improvements, road widenings or alignment changes, and even the construction of new roadways (although no new roadways are on the current TIP). Bridge improvements would include either the replacement or rehabilitation (or more-intensive maintenance activities) along state-owned bridges. Additionally, funding is also set aside for off-system (i.e. “local”) bridges. The vast majority of off-system bridges in Mercer County are owned by the county rather than at the municipal level. The **Transit TIP** contains all eligible transit projects, from capital improvements to operational expenditures. Finally, the **Interstate Management (IM) and Statewide Program TIPs** contain all significant improvements to the Interstate Highway network or for projects using competitive statewide funds. These TIPs are developed at a statewide level, though project listings, descriptions, and funding amounts are included within this TIP for the public’s benefit.

Prioritizing improvements to this vast network of transportation infrastructure is a complicated and often varying process, depending upon the type and size of the project. The following sections capture the methods utilized to analyze which projects become programmed on the TIP.

Initial District 1-0 Staff Priorities

The first task in creating a new TIP is reviewing the current TIP to see which projects will carry over (termed “carryover projects”). A TIP is a four-year document that gets updated every two years, so there are many projects in years three and four that will continue onto the new TIP.

After carryover projects are determined—which often comprise a very large portion of the TIP—PennDOT’s Planning and Programming staff works with several other departments within PennDOT District 1-0 to get an idea of what their highest priorities are. The Planning and Programming staff invited MPO staff to listen in on various meetings. The table on the following page notes many of the departments within District 1-0 that weigh in on project prioritization.

These departments’ priorities, along with the carryover project considerations, were incorporated into an initial, “rough draft” TIP and this was presented to the MPO staff. Project-specific discussions between District 1-0 and MPO staffs took place several times over the fall of 2021 (see TIP timeline). When relevant, staff members from the aforementioned departments were brought into discussions regarding either specific projects, overall priorities, or to provide further details on how their priorities were developed.

D 1-0 Unit/Dept.	How Projects are Conceptualized and Prioritized
Traffic (Safety)	Consideration of safety hot-spots, based on various safety data. Analysis of possible projects that might qualify for highway safety funding. Also see the <u>(See also TPM Narrative’s PM-1 Section)</u>
Maintenance	Local (Mercer) maintenance staff contemplates their highest priorities, and which roadway projects would be better utilized with TIP dollars (as opposed to state maintenance funds) due to scope and size of project. Several quantitative measures are used to assess the current and projected future condition of an asset. Pennsylvania’s Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP) allows PennDOT staff to manage and plan for future asset management needs based on several quantitative measures of an asset’s overall performance (including cracking, roughness, rutting, concrete faulting, etc.) and understand what the lowest life-cycle cost would be for the system <u>(See also TPM Narrative’s PM-2 Section)</u> . Historical data (i.e. when the road was last resurfaced, and how it has held up historically) is considered along with less formal methods like observation and institutional-knowledge. This is all factored in with the traffic volume and use of the roadway, and considered alongside available funding to develop a prioritized list.
Highway Design	Some roadway projects cannot be completed with county maintenance funds due to their scope and size. Some of the largest and most-intensive projects involving extensive restoration and reconstruction work (sometimes including stormwater improvements, pedestrian facilities, and other less-simple project elements) are called <i>betterments</i> . The process for determining which roadway projects are placed on the TIP is similar to the process noted above in the “Maintenance” section. Engineers from District 1-0’s design unit make these final determinations, based on asset management data via the TAMP and the recommendations of the county maintenance engineers.
Bridge Design	The bridge design unit keeps a detailed list of bridge condition based on inspections, which occur at least every two years. The physical condition of the superstructure compared to its original as-built condition is reviewed. Overall bridge condition ratings are applied to determine which bridges not only need imminent attention (i.e. poor condition bridges), but as to what level of attention they need. Various methods are used to determine which bridges can be rehabilitated or preserved, vs. replaced. The Bridge Asset Management System (BAMS) helps understand lowest life-cycle cost treatments. <u>(See also TPM Narrative’s PM-2 Section for more information on bridge evaluating processes)</u> .
Executive Team	District 1-0’s District Executive (DE), Asst. DEs, and other high-level managers work to meet certain metrics. Internal initiatives and approaches are developed with the goal of meeting these metrics. One notable example is the decision to direct significantly-increased funding toward betterment projects in order to preserve pavement assets.

Initial MPO and Local Priorities

Prior to initial discussions with PennDOT District 1-0’s staff—including deeper conversations about meeting performance measures and other more quantitative data collected through PennDOT—most of the project ideas on behalf of the MPO are borne out of previous planning efforts. These generally fall into two categories: (1.) Mercer County’s Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and (2.) other, locally-developed planning studies. A brief description of these processes and how they fit into TIP development are described in the following subsections.

LRTP

The MPO’s most recent LRTP was completed in November 2021. Although finishing up the LRTP and beginning the TIP concurrently caused some workload issues, tying these processes together led to a more integrated process. The LRTP is federally-mandated to be used as a primary tool in TIP development. The

MPO has put significant effort toward developing meaningful LRTPs over the past 5-6 years (two cycles). This most recent LRTP was highly successful for various reasons. First, it was developed collaboratively with direct input from municipal officials, the general public, various agency stakeholders, and PennDOT officials. Second, it provided a clear roadmap that could directly feed our TIP's development by laying out a detailed listing of prioritized projects. Because it was developed with regular input with PennDOT's District 1-0 staff, it allowed their planning and programming unit to have a thorough understanding of our region's priorities and needs, and enabled them to easily communicate this information to project managers and other staff within the agency.

Many of these improvements can be found under the "Highway Projects" section of the LRTP (see pages 93-95 of the 2021 LRTP). All of these were prioritized using DecisionLens software, where our MPO voting members decided on various criteria to rank projects (see Appendix C of LRTP), and voted on how important each of these criteria were in comparison to others. Pre-determining how projects should be ranked and scored allowed for an objective ranking/prioritization of our projects. Projects were run through the DecisionLens model only after the ranking criteria were decided upon.

The list generated through Decision Lens provides a clear project ranking, but of course feasibility of constructing improvements and cost play a role as well. For example, if a top-ranked project is \$20m, it cannot be constructed nearly as quickly and easily as a \$1m project. Moreover, decisions about when to program certain improvements are affected by other projects within the vicinity.

Local Planning Studies

Numerous planning studies fully or partially relating to transportation have been undertaken within Mercer County in recent years. These include corridor studies, comprehensive and strategic community plans, traffic impact studies, feasibility studies, access management studies, bicycle/pedestrian master plans, safety-related studies and various other studies. Often the MPO funds these studies, and has a primary role in their development. Many other studies are initiated and managed through D 1-0's office and funded through the TIP or other sources. In either scenario, a planning study almost always involves substantial input from both D 1-0 and the MPO.

All of these studies provide project recommendations resulting from a comprehensive planning process, and include cost estimates and an implementation and funding plan. The past two LRTPS have also recommended many studies based on identified issues, and many of those from the 2016 LRTP were complete or in-process at the time of the 2023-2026 TIP's development.

Over the past 10-12 years, the MPO has worked increasingly-closely with the District to ensure that project scopes are feasible and that cost estimates are reasonable from their perspective. This has led to the development of more implementable, relevant, and realistic plans. A list of many of the planning studies either underway or completed within the past decade is listed in the table on the following page.

In addition to the transportation-specific studies, several communities have comprehensive plans. These can be developed by a single municipality or can be multi-municipal in scope. Many of these plans have a dedicated transportation section. Most comprehensive plans developed prior to 2016 were reviewed as part of Mercer County's LRTP, and applicable projects were scored within the LRTP.

Study Name	Year	Project Type	Lead Sponsor
US 19/SR 208 Corridor Study (Springfield)	2021-2022	Corridor Study	MPO/Twp.
I-80 Roadside Safety Audits (MM 0-15)	2021	Safety Corridor Study	D 1-0
US 62 Bessemer RR Tunnel Study (Coolspring)	2019-2020	Feasibility Analysis	D 1-0
Mercer County Traffic Signal Improvement Study	2019-2020	Signal Inv./Analysis	MPO
US 62 Safety Study (Hermitage-Mercer)	2019	Safety Corridor Study	D 1-0
PA 58 Corridor Safety Study (Greenville-Mercer)	2019	Safety Corridor Study	D 1-0
Greenville Pedestrian Circulation Study (Greenville area)	2018-2019	Pedestrian Study	MPO/Town
SE Mercer Co. Bike/Ped Master Plan (G.City/Sprngfld./Pine)	2017-2018	Bicycle/Pedestrian Study	MPO/Twp.
CMP County Wide Summary Report	2018, 2022	Congestion Mgmt. Prcss.	MPO
Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Plan (County)	2016	Coordinated Plan	MCRCOG
SR 208 Access Management Study (Springfield)	2016	Access Mgmt. Plan	MPO/Twp.
Bridge Closure and Removal Study (Local County Bridges)	2014-2015	Bridge Redundancy Study	MPO/Cnty.
SR 18 Traffic Signal Retiming Study (Hermitage)	2014-2015	Congestion/Signal Study	MPO
Williamson Rd. Traffic Impact & Planning Study (Hmpfld.)	2012-2013	Corridor Study	MPO
State Street/Irvine Ave. Corridor Study (Sharon, Hrmtge.)	2011-2012	Corridor Study	MPO

Other Agency Priorities

Transit and local bridge projects are also a major component of the TIP. Because the decisions about these aspects of the overall program are made largely outside of the PennDOT District office and the MPO, these are noted separately. The processes for developing these projects are detailed in the table below:

Agency	How Projects are Conceptualized and Prioritized
Mercer County Bridge Department	Some bridge funding can be used on off-system, or “local” bridges. In Mercer County, the county itself owns the vast majority of non-state owned bridges. The County bridge engineer uses a similar process to what the PennDOT bridge unit uses to prioritize needs. These needs are communicated with the Mercer County Commissioners, District 1-0 bridge unit, planning and programming staff, and the MPO staff so that consensus is reached on which bridges are able to be programmed. The County has also pursued bonds to ensure they remain proactive in replacing a large number of bridges nearing the end of their useful life.
Shenango Valley Shuttle Service/Mercer County Community Transit	Mercer County has two transit providers—the Shenango Valley Shuttle Service and Mercer County Community Transit—which are staffed through the Mercer County Regional Council of Governments (MCRCOG). The transit portion of the TIP is developed separately the MCRCOG staff and their board, based on guidance from the PennDOT Bureau of Multimodal Transportation and in accordance with the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA’s) guidelines. The transit portion of the TIP is also developed with consideration to the adopted Coordinated Public Transit/Human Services Transportation Plan, MCRCOG’s Citizens Advisory Board, and PennDOT’s Capital Planning Tool (CPT). Once the transit portion of the TIP is developed, it is shared with MPO staff and PennDOT’s CPDM staff for review. (See page 2 for additional detail on the CPT).

Next Steps—Refining Project Priorities Through TPM and EJ

As noted in the previous three sections, numerous people housed within several agencies contributed to the public-ready version of the Draft TIP. As always, PennDOT District 1-0 Planning and Programming staff took the lead on developing the project listing and narrative documents. As explained in the process overview section on pages one through three, getting to this point requires several meetings and a spirit of compromise. There were some additional considerations worth noting that affected the TIP, which are summarized in the following sub-sections. While neither consideration was new, both warranted substantially increased attention/focus as part of the past two updates, and are likely to be further refined and increasingly important on subsequent TIP updates.

Transportation Performance Measures

The past three federal funding bills have included performance management requirements. Performance-based planning will ensure that PennDOT and the MPOs collectively invest Federal transportation funds efficiently towards achieving national goals.

Transportation Performance Management (TPM) is strategic approach that uses data to make investment and policy decisions to achieve national performance goals. In essence, Mercer County is evaluated on how well PennDOT and the MPO were able to select a mix of projects that contribute toward a safer, more efficient and manageable transportation system. Four transportation performance measures addressing five topics were evaluated as part of the 2021 TIP development process as noted in the table below.

The 2019 TIP was the first TIP to directly consider TPMs, but only the PM-1 (Safety) PM was formally evaluated. As specific guidance and approaches have been refined, a more holistic look at the (additional) PMs has become part of the TIP development process in 2021, and has further evolved as part of this TIP update.

Performance Measure Addressing...	Also Known As...
Safety	PM-1
Pavement Condition	PM-2
Bridge Condition	PM-2
System Performance	PM-3
Transit Asset Management	TAM
Public Transit Safety	Transit Safety

Additional detail regarding TPM considerations can be found in the *Transportation Performance Management/Performance Based Planning and Programming* document also included as part of the 2023-2026 SVATS MPO TIP.

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice (EJ) is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Presidential Executive Order 12898 of 1994 requires Federal agencies to achieve Environmental Justice by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. In layman’s terms, it is essential for the MPO to evaluate the effects/impacts of all TIP projects on traditionally underserved minority and low-income populations and mitigate any inequities in the disbursement of funds or the process itself.

In April 2019, the FHWA PA Division, FTA Region III, PennDOT Central Office, PennDOT Engineering District 8-0, and six MPOs within District 8-0 Pennsylvania, jointly developed the *South Central Pennsylvania Environmental Justice Unified Process and Methodology Guide*. This was developed to help these agencies

collaboratively analyze potential EJ impacts to minority and low-income populations in a straightforward manner. This “best practice” guidance was then shared with the remaining MPOs and RPOs for consideration of their future programs including their respective Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) and the Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTP).

The Guide outlines several strategies for accomplishing the core elements of an EJ analysis acceptable to FHWA and FTA. It identifies specific core activities that MPOs in Pennsylvania should complete during an EJ analysis, and reiterates the need for EJ to be a meaningful component of TIP development.

SVATS MPO’s EJ Analysis for the 2023-2026 TIP can be found in the *Environmental Justice Documentation* section of the TIP.

Consideration of Public and Stakeholder Input

There were several opportunities for our MPO voting members, transportation stakeholders, and the general public to provide public input before, during, and even toward the end of the TIP development process. These are noted on the *2023-2026 TIP Development Timeline*, and some of these conversations were also summarized in the earlier *Process Overview* section of this document.

MPO voting members, and all others attending MPO meetings, were afforded several opportunities to question the inclusion (or exclusion) of particular projects, suggest changes to initial project listings, and ask general questions about overall approaches, financial guidance, etc. Most of these opportunities were during regularly-scheduled MPO Coordinating Committee meetings. However, as always, MPO staff had numerous conversations about the TIP (and often specific TIP projects) with individual community/agency representatives as necessary and during other regularly-occurring conversations.

Overall, most MPO Voting Members placed their trust in the primary developers of the TIP—namely PennDOT District 1-0 and MPO staffs—and rely on them to make the best decisions for Mercer County given the available funding. Historically and currently, this has been a good working partnership between MPO members, MPO staff and District 1-0 staff. Though there some minor comments or questions from stakeholders, there were not any substantial changes to the overall TIP project priorities based on these many opportunities.

Further opportunities to contribute to TIP project priorities take place during the 30-day Public Comment Period, which also includes a Public Hearing.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The 2023-2026 TIP Update process was challenged significantly by the midstream change in financial guidance related to the new federal funding bill (IIJA/BIL). There was to some degree a sense that we ran out of time, not allowing partners to have the kinds of conversations about the prioritization of projects and how the additional funding might be allocated. Overall, though, TIP development and project selection processes have continually become much more substantive and have, in many cases, improved.

The success of the next (2025-2028) TIP update will be at least partially measured on how it aligns with the 2021 LRTP, how community priority projects advance (from the TYP to the TIP), and how the conversations about priorities are made. Much of the work has already been done through the LRTP, so

if we rely on this document, future TIP updates will contain fewer surprises and frustrations and improve partnerships between various agencies.

Perhaps even more important than relying on the existing LRTP and TYP, a successful TIP development process must involve open and regular communication. In many ways, this already exists, and the overall relationships are positive. On the other hand, significant challenges exist in finding the time to collaborate. Every one of the aforementioned organizations has seen staff pulled in new and different directions. Consequently, simple collaboration too often takes a lower priority against the many other tasks that dominate each day.

Nevertheless, and despite the challenges that still exist, MPO staff and other stakeholders will continue to consider new ways to achieve a federally compliant, 3C (cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing) transportation process.

Any questions or concerns regarding the 2023-2026 TIP development and project selection process may be directed to Matt Stewart of the SVATS MPO/MCRPC (mstewart@mcrpc.com; 724-981-2412, x3206).