

MINUTES

SHENANGO VALLEY METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE
VIRTUAL MEETING
Tuesday, April 12, 2022 – 10:30 A.M.

PERSONS PRESENT

Bob Fiscus
Cindy Black
Ben Prescott
Ronnique Bishop
Shelli Oakes
Lori Johnson
Courtney Lyle
Ken Robertson
Mike Nashtock
Holly Nogay
Gary Dovey
Emily Aloiz
Brandon Leach
Brian McNulty
Matthew Crea
Brad Elder
Tom McClelland
Christine Greig
Ed Reese
Debbie Sarvis
Dale Perry
Robert Lark
Jeremy Coxe
Lyndsie DeVito
Melinda Gosser
Darryl Chapman
Heather Maurer
Matthew McConnell
Mary Kay Mattocks
Bill Klumph
Brian Barnhizer
Matt Stewart
Dan Gracenin

REPRESENTING

Sharon City
Wilmington Township
Farrell City
FHWA
State Representative Tim Bonner
CAP of Mercer County
PennDOT
Sharpsville Borough
Mercer County Regional Council of Governments
Mercer County Housing Authority
Penn-Northwest Development Corporation
Erie County MPO
PennDOT
PennDOT
PennDOT
Mercer County Bridge Department
PennDOT
State Representative Parke Wentling
GPD Group
Mercer Borough
Shenango Township
West Middlesex Borough
Hermitage City
PennDOT
State Senator Michele Brooks
PennDOT
State Representative Mark Longietti
Mercer County Commissioner
Grove City Borough
South Pymatuning Township
MCRPC
MCRPC
MCRPC

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Jeremy Coxe called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. **A quorum was present.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 18, 2022 MEETING

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 January 18, 2022 meeting. There being none, **Mr. Coxe asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Lark so moved, Commissioner McConnell seconded. The motion passed.**

2021-2024 TIP MODIFICATIONS

Mr. Brandon Leach gave a quick background of the additional IJJA funds. Since the January 18, 2022 Coordinating Committee meeting, PennDOT received guidance on the distribution of these IJJA funds. The first round of adjustments for the current 2021 TIP received the green light from Central office on January 19th. This gave the PennDOT districts across the State the authority to add the IJJA/BIL funding for the Federal NHPP, HSIP, CMAQ and a new funding category known as Bridge Re-investment Program or BRIP, as well as a portion of the BOF Federal funds. About a month later, on February 16th, a second round of program adjustments were approved which gave the Districts the authority to add Federal funding for STP, the TAP/TAU funding, the STU funding and there was a remainder portion of BOF funds that were allowed. In essence, these two apportionments of funds were lumped into the Amendment Charts, which is additional funding to the Shenango Valley 2021 TIP, just for FFY 2022. Subsequent additions to the funding are then covered in the upcoming 2023 Draft TIP.

Next, Mr. Leach noted that there were 6 Amendments and 20 Administrative Modifications to the Shenango Valley TIP. The majority of these 20 administrative modifications were adjusting cash flow especially with this infusion of new funding to either move projects further up in the TIP this year or to change the funding so that the funding is properly lined up for the Draft TIP which will start October 1, 2022. Mr. Leach asked if anyone had any questions regarding the 20 Administrative Modifications, which do not require a vote or approval. There were no questions.

Next, Ms. Lyle reviewed the 6 amendments that involve the IJJA/BIL funding. She noted the first couple amendments that we need to vote on are simply to put the IJJA/BIL funds onto a line item, which will be the easiest way for PennDOT to track those funds and make sure they know what projects they assigned them to. The first two are to add the different type of funds, including the additional new BRIP funding, and see what the totals we will be receiving in 2022. The next page, starts to assign those funds as well as additional funds that we had sitting on in the line item onto projects. Specifically, we are looking at advancing the PE phase for the US 62 Bessemer and Lake Erie railroad tunnel, the PE phase for the US 62 bridge over I-79, as well as the PE phase for the SR 3039 Bridge over Lackawannock Creek and then changing the cash flow for SR 718 from West Middlesex to Broadway and the structure over the Shenango River on SR 3022. All of these projects either were already on the draft 2023 TIP. We had discussed the projects previously as being additions that we would be voting on for the 2023 and are looking at advancing them onto the 2021 TIP in 2022 or adjusting cash flow in order to be able to get these projects paid for in 2022.

The next page lists the HSIP projects that we would like to see added to the TIP. Currently, PennDOT is in the position to move final design into 2023 for the SR 518/3025 intersection. PennDOT will use those funds, as well as the funds that were sitting on the line item reserve and were new from the IJJA to pay for two additional projects that were asking to be voted and added to the TIP. One project would be to install high friction surface treatment and centerline reflective pavement markings along the curve on SR 965 in Worth Township as well as SR 62 in Coolspring Township, Mercer County. The other project would include installation of high friction surface treatment at multiple locations on I-80 that PennDOT had previously applied for to use HSIP set aside from Central Office. It was not awarded HSIP set aside and PennDOT is looking to use some regional HSIP to take care of those areas. Ms. Lyle noted that these are the 6 amendment items we will need to vote on. With this new funding that we are receiving from the IJJA/BIL as well as the line items funds that we had, we are requesting Central Office to add 6 additional projects to the letting for the fourth quarter of 2022. Ms. Lyle noted that she omitted mentioning that we will need the vote to include adding the SR 2014 structure over Coolspring.

Ms. Lyle noted that we will need two votes. The first vote would include Amendment #1 and #2 that would add the projects onto the TIP with a line item. The second vote would include Amendments #3 through #6 that would move the projects from the line items as the FC charts lays them out and puts them on the projects. Mr. Coxe asked if there were any questions prior to voting. There being no discussion, a motion was made by Mr. McNulty and seconded by Mr. Lark to approve Amendment #1 and #2 that would add the projects onto the TIP with a line item. The motion passed. The second vote would include Amendments #3 through #6 that would move the projects that Ms. Lyle spoke about from the line items as the FC charts lays them out and puts them on the projects. There being no discussion, a motion was made by Mr. McNulty and seconded by Mr. Lark to approve Amendments #3 through #6. The motion passed.

DRAFT 2023 TIP DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL

---Summary of TIP progress and conversations - Mr. Stewart noted that today's Draft 2023 TIP discussion is broken into four subcategories and just wanted to talk a little bit more about the process. The 2023-2026 TIP project listing was developed and adjusted based on various considerations, needs and requirements. Over the last two meetings, we had discussed the new Federal legislation IIJA/BIL, which has been a major adjustment midstream and there were a lot of questions on how this extra money is going to be distributed. Mr. Stewart shared a slide that compares the original Highway/Bridge allocation versus the IIJA/BIL Revised Highway/Bridge allocation. He noted that we are getting a little bit more money than what we had discussed at our last meeting, which is an increase of a little over 39% in total. This increase comes from both new programs and significant increases in certain funding categories.

---Other TIP documents, public comment plan and next steps - Mr. Stewart noted that the draft 2023 TIP has not changed significantly since our last meeting in January. There has been a lot of work on finalizing the project listing, the Environmental Justice Analysis and the Transit TIP was finalized. A lot of the other documents that are going to be a part of our submittal were worked on and the PennDOT Connects process has been started. He noted that there still are several little things that need to be done, and are hoping today that we can approve the draft Highway TIP and draft Transit TIP, which would be the project listings. If we get this vote today, in mid-May, we will go out for a 30-day public comment period in order for you or the general public to provide comments on the TIP and adopt the final TIP at our July 12th meeting. Once approved, we will submit the TIP to PennDOT for their review and then the TIP will become effective on October 1, 2022.

---Review and approval of Final Draft Highway TIP – Ms. Lyle stated that since the January meeting, there were no major or substantial changes made to the draft TIP. She noted that they adjusted some cash flow on certain projects, due to the increases that was received under the new Federal legislation passing. She asked if anyone had any questions or would need more information on any of the projects. Once this final draft Highway TIP is passed, PennDOT will look at reallocating any of the funds that they need to on the 2023 TIP onto projects that they will be advancing.

---Review and approval of Final Draft Transit TIP – Mr. Nashtock stated that the Transit TIP does not change a whole lot from year to year since it basically is the same categories like bus purchases and some capital purchases. They are currently looking at purchasing a new compressed natural gas bus, which would be a total of three in the fleet. They are also looking for a new bus wash system, since the current one in use was purchased back in 2009 and it has exceeded its useful life. Mr. Stewart noted that the transit has different performance measures that they need to adhere to and they use what is called the Capital Planning Tool which helps them plan for new vehicles, updating buildings and technologies. PennDOT's public transit staff reviewed this and they had some minor comments to this, but they were more concerned on how we label certain projects. He noted that the projects are the same, as well as the dollar amounts.

Mr. Stewart asked if anyone had any questions regarding the draft Transit TIP. There being none, Mr. Coxe first asked for a motion to approve the Draft Highway TIP. **A motion was made by Mr. McNulty to approve the Draft Highway TIP. Mr. Lark seconded. The motion passed.** Next, a motion is needed to approve the Draft Transit TIP. **A motion was made by Mr. Lark to approve the Draft Transit TIP. Ms. Sarvis seconded. The motion passed.**

2021-2045 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN RE-APPROVAL

Mr. Stewart explained that the MPO approved the LRTP in November 2021. Upon Federal review, we were asked to specifically and separately prepare and approve an Air Quality (AQ) Resolution, which would then trigger a re-adoption of the plan itself so that approval dates align, subsequent to the AQ Resolution. Somehow this was overlooked when we approved our LRTP back in November. When the LRTP is approved, we have to explicitly approve the AQ conformity report and then prepare a resolution for that, which needs to happen before we approve the LRTP. He noted that the LRTP and the AQ Conformity Report have not changed, so this is merely a procedural action. This simple AQ Resolution first talks a little bit about the background of the legislation, all the different subsequent court cases affecting AQ determinations and explains what Mercer County's status is. Next, the AQ Resolution describes that the MPO is responsible to coordinate with PennDOT and for the MPO to create programs conforming to CAAA guidelines. The end of the AQ Resolution says that this LRTP contributes to achievement and maintenance of AQ standards and is consistent with final conformity rule and those subsequent amendments.

Mr. Stewart noted that two motions are needed. The first motion is to accept the AQ Conformity Report and Resolution. The second motion is to re-adopt the LRTP. Mr. Stewart asked if there was any discussion. Mr. Dovey asked if this is part of the environmental justice criteria. Mr. Stewart stated no, this is totally separate from that, this is just about the actual air quality. There being no further discussion, a **motion was made by Mr. Klumph to approve the AQ Conformity Report and Resolution. Mr. Nashtock seconded.** The motion passed. Next, a **motion was made by Mr. Klumph to re-adopt the LRTP. Mr. Lark seconded.** The motion passed.

STU DISCUSSION

---Details of STU Funding Announcement – Mr. Stewart mentioned that STU dollars can be used for a large variety of transportation projects. The Shenango Valley Area Transportation Study is the only northwest PA planning partner receiving STU dollars. He noted that we are getting close to \$1 million a year annually. He noted that under the submittal process, the applicant would submit their application by PDF and there are different forms that would be filled out as part of the application, which had some minor changes. Also, they added more guidance on project maps, which we can assist with. Also, one of the bigger changes is they would strongly encourage all potential applicants to work with the MPO to schedule a pre-application meeting. This would not be required, but there is a big incentive for doing that – two bonus points out of 50 points and the pre-application meeting would need to be scheduled by May 27th.

There were a few changes made to the scoring criteria, which were minor. More overt consideration of environmental justice as an incentive for funding projects in low income or high minority block groups is one of the biggest changes. There were some minor alterations to project readiness and hopefully these changes will make it a little bit easier to prepare the application. The type of project is very important and there are incentives for certain projects over others.

---Application period timeline and next steps – Mr. Stewart noted that the STU applications will need to be submitted by PDF and are tentatively due by June 17th. If anyone is interested in this funding source, they need to contact him. Once the application round is closed, the Technical Advisory Committee will review all of the applications prior to the next Coordinating Committee meeting on July 12th at which time the Committee will make the final decisions on how we will award the dollars.

---FY 2022 STU Funds – City of Sharon request – Mr. Stewart mentioned that our MPO is in somewhat of an unusual situation of having approximately \$750,000 in FY 2022 STU funds which must be obligated or will lapse if not obligated in the next few months. The City of Sharon recently opened bids for their previously-funded Sharon Gateway STU project and found the bid amounts to be significantly higher (\$226,000) than what the engineers estimated due to rapid inflation. Although our MPO staff has repeatedly stressed that applicants should ensure that cost estimates are reasonable at the time of initial request and not request additional dollars, the cost increases in recent months have been

unprecedented. The Technical Advisory Committee discussed possible ways to allocate this money. The recommendation from that board suggested that the City of Sharon make a formal request in writing to bring before this Coordinating Committee. The City of Sharon subsequently wrote a formal request letter. The other option would be to put the money towards other TIP projects and if we go that route, we would like to trade our STU with other STP, if possible. Mr. McNulty mentioned that we are usually not in this position where we have STU funds, but in the case of Sharon, their request makes sense. With STU funds, there is a very tight timeline and the City of Sharon STU project would have the opportunity to use these funds and would be a good way to use this money. Mr. Fiscus mentioned that the City of Sharon appreciates your consideration on this project. On multiple occasions, they had talked with their engineer to see if there was anything the City could do to lessen the expense, without taking away from the Gateway project. Ms. DeVito mentioned that she reviewed the bids with their construction unit and stated that they would not be able to reduce the project, since they would have to do a complete redesign in order to reduce the project and PennDOT would support adding these STU funds to the City of Sharon's Gateway Project.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Stewart stated that a motion will be needed if the MPO wishes to consider approving the City of Sharon's request, but noted that we would roughly have a half million dollars left. Mr. McNulty stated that they were going to look into what their options for that would be and they will follow up on this by the end of the week. Mr. Coxe suggested that we make a motion regarding the City of Sharon money, and if for some reason something comes up that we need to allocate those additional funds before our next Coordinating Committee meeting, we could hold a special meeting or an e-mail vote, or whatever might be needed. Mr. McNulty agreed. **A motion was made by Mr. Klumph to approving moving \$226,000 in STU funds to the City of Sharon's Gateway Project. Mr. Nashtock seconded.** The motion passed.

PROJECT UPDATE SUMMARY

---Transportation Alternatives and STU Project Status Reports - Mr. Barnhizer gave a few brief summaries of the TA and STU projects. First, he mentioned the **Mercer Borough McKinley Avenue Bridge Replacement Project**. PennDOT held a virtual scoping meeting on this project last month and ironed out some issues that looked to delay the project. The Borough's engineer, Kurtanich Engineering, did inform him that they have done the needed PNDI Notification and PA OneCall submission and plan to have the required survey work done next week. At this time, the demolition and construction work on the bridge is planned for 2024. Next, PennDOT is looking to start the public involvement process toward the middle of May for the **SR 58/18 Intersection Project in the Town of Greenville**. Some advertisement of the upcoming meeting will hopefully be coming out within the next two weeks, including posters at the Thiel College Campus. The last project is the **Springfield Township SR 208 Multimodal Path Project, Phase II**. It is his understanding that coordination with the Solicitor and affected property owners can be initiated after PennDOT signs off on the right-of-way plans. Ms. DeVito, mentioned that PennDOT did sign off on the right-of-way plans two weeks ago and it was sent back to the designer from Gateway Engineers. They were informed that they can move ahead to get acquisitions and negotiations in place. They are currently waiting on the utility clearance as well and are hoping to meet the let date without any issues.

---Major Projects/Other TIP Projects – Mr. Tom McClelland mentioned that they have a lot of project scoping meetings set up two weeks from now. He also noted that this is Work Zone Safety Week across the Commonwealth and asked everyone to drive carefully and pay attention in the work zone areas. He noted that they are working on the right-of-way plans for the Hermitage Sidewalk Project. There are a lot of unknown owners along this project, but expect to have the final right-of-way plan by the end of June to start this process.

---Planning and Data Collection Updates - Mr. Barnhizer mentioned that the **Springfield US 19 Corridor Study** will cost \$30,000 and will be carried out by TranSystems of Pittsburgh, consultant working with the Township. The contract was executed in mid-September and work began at that time. Three (3) Steering Committee meetings were held since November 4th. The first Public Meeting was held in early December. TranSystems is currently finalizing their analysis of public survey comments from an extended survey process and is also working on completing a priority

matrix of potential projects. A fourth Steering Committee meeting is expected to be scheduled for later this month or early May and one final public meeting will be held prior to project completion in late spring of 2022. Next, he noted that the **2022 Traffic Counts** will start in last May or early June and will have 48 counts to perform (half classification and half volume counts).

Mr. Stewart discussed the **Congestion Management Processes Update**. The MPO is required to analyze the congestion that we have in the county. This CMP was first set up about 13 years ago because we are a part of the Youngstown metropolitan area. Even though Mercer County does not have congestion compared to larger metropolitan areas, they can still do detailed looks at corridors shown on the map. This CMP was developed in 2009, with an update in 2013. An update was done in 2018, due to technology that has helped in getting real time and more current information. Now in 2022, we are looking at doing another update since our approach should change as technology changes and rely even more on the big data corridors. More information is available under the www.mcrpc.com/congestion-management web page.

MPO STAKEHOLDER EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES UPDATE

Mr. Stewart wanted to thank Ms. Lyle and her team for holding two planning and programming 101 sessions. We had a pretty good attendance at both of the meetings held on March 14th and 23rd. He also thanked Ms. Aloiz from the Erie MPO for putting together common abbreviations and acronyms that can be used as a cheat sheet.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING UPDATES

Mr. Brandon Leach mentioned that the major bridge P3 updates currently have the environmental assessments taking place. If anyone would like more information, they can go to the chat box after the meeting. Next, he touched base on the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program, which has been made available through the IIJA/BIL passage. Basically, this is providing States with \$7.5 Billion dollars to expand the EV charging network across the Country, and over 5 years, Pennsylvania will have access to \$171.5 Million in formula funds for this charging infrastructure. There will be \$2.5 Billion in discretionary grant funding opportunities for alternative fueling infrastructure. This funding supports the Commonwealth's goal of expanding EV charging along previously designated Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFC's) as well as interstate lookalikes. Formula funds will flow through PennDOT, and will be primarily focused on developing electric charging infrastructure on these AFC's and will collaborate with key stakeholders to help with this development. He noted that there is a public webinar to be held on April 27th from 2:00-3:00 PM that will basically give more information on how this formula program will work.

Ms. Ronnique Bishop, from FHWA mentioned that there is a Notice of Funding Opportunity that has been sent out. The notebook combines three major discretionary grant programs into one multimodal project discretionary grant opportunity. The three grants are the Rural Surface Transportation Grant, the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America and the National Infrastructure Program Assistance. Basically, putting these three programs under a single notebook makes it easier for communities to apply to one or all of these grant programs with a single application in a common set of criteria. She also noted that the full appropriations for the bill have been recently passed and there are some earmarks in those full appropriations. The Central Division office will be going through this process for discretionary programs that are involving earmarks.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mr. Stewart mentioned that the next MPO Coordinating Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 12, 2022 and hopefully we will be able to hold a "hybrid meeting", which means that attendees can join via the GoToMeeting platform, with online and phone-based options available to members and the public, or in-person.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Stewart shared some upcoming LTAP classes that the Northwest Commission will be holding in Hermitage at Linden Pointe. On April 27th from 8-Noon there will be a Pedestrian and Crosswalk session and then on May 10th there is an Asset Management Training Session from 8-Noon.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. McNulty to adjourn the meeting at 12:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel M. Gracenin,
MPO Secretary

DMG/ew