

Northeastern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization

Transportation Programming for the Counties of: Carbon ✧ Monroe ✧ Pike ✧ Schuylkill

January 17, 2023 Technical Planning Committee

Meeting Summary and Minutes

9:30 a.m.

Attendees:

David Alas*
Megan Beste
Marie Bishop
David Bodnar*
Annie Butkiewicz
Chris Chapman
Roger Christman*
Brendan Cotter*
Jennifer Crobak
Steve Fisher*
Brian Funkhouser
Kathy Henderson
Peggy Howarth*
John Malinchok*
Vanessa Koenigkramer*
Amanda Leindecker

Organization:

PennDOT Central
Rep. Wild's Office
PennDOT District 4-0
Carbon Co. Planning
Michael Baker Intl.
Luzerne Co. Planning
Ross Township
LANTA
FHWA
PennDOT District 4-0
Michael Baker Intl.
CCEDC
MCTA
Sch. Planning Comm.
PennDOT District 5-0
PennDOT District 5-0

Attendees:

Christine Meinhart-Fritz*
Mike Mrozinski*
John Petrini
Mike Rebert
Emma Pugh
Michael Schultz
Jonathan Shaw
Jason Skrimcovsky*
Susan Smith*

Jeff Box
Alan Baranski
Nettie Ginocchetti
Kate McMahon
Daniel Yelito

Organization:

Monroe Co. Planning
Pike Co. Planning
PennDOT District 4-0
PennDOT District 5-0
PennDOT District 4-0
PA Turnpike Comm.
Luzerne Co. Planning
Carbon Co. Planning
Schuylkill Co. Planning

NEPA Alliance
NEPA Alliance
NEPA Alliance
NEPA Alliance
NEPA Alliance

*Technical Committee members who voted at this meeting

Summary of Actions Taken by the NEPA MPO Technical Planning Committee:

During this meeting, the MPO Technical Committee voted on the following actions:

Action 1: Ms. Smith requested a motion from the Technical Committee to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2022 Technical Committee meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Howarth, seconded by Mr. Cotter to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Action 2: Ms. Smith requested a motion to confirm the email ballot approving MCTA amendments. A motion was made by Ms. Meinhart-Fritz, seconded by Mr. Cotter. The motion passed unanimously.

Action 3: Ms. Smith requested a motion on adopting the 2023 HSIP Performance Measure targets. A motion to adopt the safety targets established by PennDOT was made by Ms. Howarth, seconded by Ms. Meinhart-Fritz. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Smith called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

1) Business Items

a) Approval of minutes from the November 15, 2022 Technical Committee Meeting

Ms. Smith requested a motion from the Technical Committee to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2022 Technical Committee meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Howarth, seconded by Mr. Cotter to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

b) **Confirmation of Email Ballot Approving MCTA Amendments**

Ms. Smith requested a motion to confirm the email ballot approving MCTA amendments. A motion was made by Ms. Meinhart-Fritz, seconded by Mr. Cotter. The motion passed unanimously.

2) TIP Amendments and Administrative Actions

a) **District 4-0 and 5-0 2023-2026 TIP Amendments and Administrative Actions**

Information was included in the meeting packet which highlighted administrative actions on the 2023 TIP for District 4-0 and 5-0. Mr. Fisher highlighted the actions for District 4-0. Ms. Koenigkramer highlighted the actions for District 5-0.

Statewide Informational Item 1- SR 611/Learn Rd. Safety Enhancements- added selected TASA project to the 2023 TIP. The source is the TAP Reserve Line Item. Statewide Informational Item 2- St. Clair to Frackville Reconstruction- defer intended use to let date 10/19/23. Action 1- SR 3012 over Wallenpaupack Creek- advance construction phase to bid project early and decrease PS&E estimate. The sources are SR 4004 over Blooming Grove Creek and the NEPA 4-0 Highway Reserve Line Item. Action 2- County Bridge #8- increase to revised estimate and program county owned bridge as 100% BOF. The sources are SR 2036 over PA 33 and the NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Action 3- SR 590 Pipes- add ROW phase per claim estimate. The source is SR 1002 over Greeley Lake. Interstate Informational Item 1- I-80 White Haven Bridges- add UTL and ROW phases to the TIP. The source is the Interstate Contingency Line Item. Action 4- 443 Roadway Improvements- increase for work orders for milling and paving, asphalt and diesel adjustments, retention ponds, etc. The sources are the CMAQ Line Item Reserve, Urban Line Item Reserve and NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Action 5- Golf Drive Buck Hill Branch Bridge- increase to cover work orders for undercut of subgrade. The source is the NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Action 6- T.S. Ida DF Emergency-Monroe- add actual Ida emergency costs for SR 3004 and SR 4007. Statewide Informational Item 3- NEPA Low Cost Signal Upgrades- increase the construction phase of the MPMS 116731 NEPA Low Cost Signal Upgrades project using sHSIP funds. The source is the HSIP Set Aside Reserve Line Item. Action 7- 209 Bus. Over Kettle Creek- increase utility phase for revised estimate include YOY. The source is the NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Action 8- T.S. Ida DF Emergency- Schuylkill- add actual Ida emergency costs for SR 895 and SR 339 repairs. Action 9- Tremont Rd over Swatara Creek- increase for revised estimate and federalize to use available BRIP in the region. The sources are 209 & 33 over Appenzell Creek and the NEPA Highway and Bridge Line Item. Statewide Informational Item 4- Tobyhanna Hike and Bike- increase for fourth construction inspection invoice. The source is the TAP Reserve Line Item. Action 10- SR 3012 over Wallenpaupack Creek- advance construction phase to bid project early and decrease to PS&E. The source is the Pond Eddy Crossing and NEPA 4-0 Highway Reserve Line Item. Action 11- Pike SR 1013 Paving- add construction phase to bid project. The sources are SR 6 over Delaware River and the NEPA 4-0 Highway Reserve Line Item. Interstate Informational Item 2- I-80/Exit 308 Realignment- decrease construction phase to match current obligations and need. I-80 I-380 to Tannersville Resurfacing- remove construction phase on current TIP as project was fully obligated on previous TIP. The source is the Interstate Contingency Line Item. Interstate Informational Item 3- SR 380 Tobyhanna Ramps and I/C- increase for additional temporary barrier and attenuators, detour signage and MPT due to time extension. The source is the Interstate Contingency Line Item. Action 12- Main Blvd over Trib Catawissa Creek- increase for int. charges and for additional PE tasks. The source is the NEPA Highway and Bridge Reserve Line Item. Statewide Informational Item 5- Third St. and Delaware Ave- adding ARLE grant funds to approved project. Statewide Informational Item 6- 611/715

Improvements- increase construction phase to match current estimate. The source is the NHPP Reserve Line Item.

Ms. Meinhart-Fritz asked what BRIP is. Mr. Fisher stated that BRIP is new bridge funding that was created under IIJA. It can only be used for bridges over 20 feet in length.

Mr. Rebert provided an update on an emergency situation on SR 611 in Delaware Water Gap Borough. SR 611 is currently closed for about 1 mile near the southern end of SR 611. There are several sections where rock has come down. There is a local emergency designation to address the problem. District 5 made a request to Central Office for emergency funds. They estimate that it will cost about \$3.5 million to address the issue. About \$500,000 in local match will need to be allocated. The solution will be similar to the Jim Thorpe rock wall project that was completed on 209. They will remove as much loose rock as they can and then use rock anchors and wire mesh to stabilize the rock wall. District 5 owns significant right-of-way but they will still need to coordinate with the National Park Service since it is in the Delaware Water Gap Recreation Area. NPS will have to issue an approval for them to do the work. Ms. Howarth asked where SR 611 is closed. Mr. Rebert said it is near the southern parking area and Cherry Valley Road. Ms. Howarth stated that MCTA runs a shuttle in that area between April and September. Mr. Rebert stated that they will not be able to go through. Ms. Meinhart-Fritz stated that the 9-11 Memorial Trail goes through that area of SR 611 and it now has a national designation which may be able to assist with the project. The county has funding to complete a survey to determine where the trail should go. Mr. Rebert stated that they will reach out for assistance. Mr. Rebert stated that an action to address the local funding for the project will come up at the future meeting.

b) Transit Amendments and Administrative Actions

None.

3) **Transportation Planning & Programs**

a) Current Project Status

Mr. Fisher provided an update on TA/MTF/ARC/FLAP projects in District 4-0. Mr. Vottero provided an update on TA/MTF/ARC/FLAP projects in District 5-0.

b) 2023 Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Performance Measures (PM-1)

Ms. McMahon stated that there is a letter in the meeting packet from Central Office about safety performance measures. As we have for the past several years, the MPO has to adopt safety performance targets by either adopting the targets proposed by the state or coming up with our own targets. Each year, we have adopted the targets proposed by the state. Ms. McMahon stated that Pennsylvania has not been meeting its safety targets. A recommendation was included in the 2023 TIP Planning Finding Letter from FHWA regarding the programming of safety projects since some projects were selected without following the correct process. There was also an issue with obligating safety funds in a timely manner. In addition, there have been meetings held in each PennDOT district regarding the district's Highway Safety Plan. A meeting with District 4 was held earlier in January. A meeting with District 5 is scheduled for February. The safety plan identifies areas with safety issues and recommends solutions. There has been an emphasis on programming systemic safety improvements that can be implemented in multiple locations in a timely manner.

Ms. Smith requested a motion on adopting the 2023 HSIP Performance Measure targets. A motion to adopt the safety targets established by PennDOT was made by Ms. Howarth, seconded by Ms. Meinhart-Fritz. The motion passed unanimously.

c) IIJA Discretionary Programs

Mr. Baranski said that IIJA funding opportunities continue to roll out. We share them whenever possible. The RAISE grant round recently opened and the deadline is at the end of February. It is a complex application involving a cost-benefit analysis and a lot of data. Other discretionary programs will open later this year. We will continue to share opportunities as they become available.

Ms. McMahon stated that we are anticipating a Transportation Alternatives Set Aside application round to open in the coming months since there is additional funding from IIJA. We will share the information when it becomes available. It is probably easier to get a TASA grant since it is at the state level and isn't nationally competitive. Ms. Meinhart-Fritz asked about the potential RAISE application in Monroe County. Ms. McMahon stated that Stroudsburg Borough was looking at doing an application and requested data from NEPA but did not indicate what the project was. Mr. Fisher stated that District 4 is applying for a RAISE grant for the Water Street Bridge and Fort Jenkins Bridge in Pittston. They have a consultant on board to assist with the application.

d) National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Funding

Ms. McMahon stated that PennDOT anticipates to begin accepting applications for the first round of funding through the NEVI Program in late February. The first round of funding will go towards installing DC Fast Charge stations where needed, to ensure charging stations are available every 50 miles along the interstates and interstate look-alikes. Once that goal is met, funding in later rounds can be used for other charging stations. Ms. Meinhart-Fritz stated that Monroe County already has a lot of EV charging stations and they will not be eligible in the first round. Mr. Mrozinski asked about installing the charging stations at rest areas. Ms. McMahon stated that PennDOT cannot install them there because there is something in state law that prevents them from receiving revenues from the rest areas. Mr. Mrozinski asked who should apply. Ms. McMahon stated that it would likely be businesses applying. It will still take 20-30 minutes to charge even at a DC Fast Charge station, so it makes sense for them to be located at places with other amenities. It is estimated that a DC Fast Charge station will cost about \$1 million. A 20% match is required for NEVI funds.

e) NEPA MPO Long Range Transportation Plan

Michael Baker has begun the analysis of existing conditions within the NEPA MPO region and will begin stakeholder interviews in the coming weeks. The State Transportation Commission's public outreach early in 2023 for the next Twelve Year Program will be leveraged for the development of our LRTP. Listening sessions within the MPO will occur in Spring 2023. A meeting of the LRTP Steering Committee will follow the Technical Committee meeting.

f) Eastern PA Freight Study

Mr. Baranski stated that WSP is currently working on the freight study. They are collecting GIS data from all of the MPOs. We sent emails to each county requesting GIS data for the freight plan. We set up folders in One Drive for each county to upload their data. Pike County has sent in their data so far. Mr. Cotter asked when the plan will be complete. Mr. Baranski stated that it will likely be late summer or early fall. Ms. Smith asked if the other counties are seeing as much distribution center development. Schuylkill County has a lot in development. Ms. Meinhart-Fritz stated that Monroe is seeing a lot as well. Mr. Fisher stated that Lackawanna and Luzerne counties have a lot of distribution facilities that have been developed, especially in the Hazleton area.

g) Functional Classification Update

Ms. McMahon stated that we received a response from FHWA regarding our submission. They had about 15 items they were looking for clarification on. NEPA is working with Central Office to address all of their questions and concerns.

h) PennDOT Connects Municipal Outreach

Mr. Baranski stated that more municipal outreach sessions will be held this spring. Sessions have been set in District 4 on March 28th and on May 16th in District 5. They will be hybrid meetings held at the district offices and virtually. One of the topics that came out of the last sessions was the need for information about HOPs. Hopefully they will cover it during the upcoming sessions. We will get more information out once it becomes available.

4) Other Business

Mr. Baranski stated that there is an issue with Census Bureau and the 2020 Census data. In 2021, the Census Bureau announced that they were redefining how urban areas are established. The urban areas over 50,000 in population were defined under certain criteria as urbanized areas (UZAs) and smaller urban areas under 50,000 in population were defined as urban clusters. Now, they are all classified as urban areas (UAs). Last year, OMB was also looking at redefining metropolitan statistical areas. We raised concerns about the changes that OMB was proposing and were successful in getting the proposed changes withdrawn. We raised similar concerns about the proposed Census Bureau changes, but we were not successful in stopping them. The new model for determining urban areas included new data such as housing density and impermeable surface. The Census Bureau did not fully reveal the model or how areas would be impacted. The new urban areas based on the 2020 Census were issued at the end of December. The East Stroudsburg UZA is now the East Stroudsburg/Stroudsburg UA and the population of the UA is 47,891. This puts us below the 50,000 population threshold which is used to establish and designate MPOs. There are other MPOs in Pennsylvania that are also likely impacted. We know that the 2020 Census is flawed because of counting issues and temporary population movements during the pandemic shutdown.

Falling under the 50,000 population threshold, our MPO designation is in question and we anticipate losing federal funds including Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), 5307 urban transit funds, etc. Other federal programs besides transportation programs are also likely to be impacted. We are still trying to assess the impacts and determine the position of the USDOT. We have been in touch with AMPO and PennDOT Central Office about it. AMPO representatives have met with USDOT on the issue. We feel it is in everyone's best interest to maintain the status quo and for the NEPA MPO to continue to operate as it has for the past 10 years.

Ms. Meinhart-Fritz noted that several of the areas that lost significant population are areas with a college or university within their vicinity. We know that college students went home during the pandemic and were probably not counted. The East Stroudsburg University students would likely have pushed us over 50,000 population threshold if they were counted. Ms. Meinhart-Fritz noted that there is another UA in Monroe County now, but it is not near 50,000 in population.

Mr. Baranski noted that other areas such as the Allentown UA lost about 40,000 in population although the population in the Lehigh Valley continues to grow rapidly. In addition, most of the bleed-over areas from other adjoining urban areas are no longer crossing into the NEPA region. The Allentown UZA previously went into Carbon and Monroe counties. Now it doesn't and a new UA has been established encompassing Jim Thorpe, Lehighton and Palmerton.

Mr. Cotter asked if there are requirements that NEPA would no longer have to meet if they are no longer an MPO. Ms. McMahon stated that in Pennsylvania, MPOs and RPOs are held to the same standard, so we would still have to complete an LRTP and continue many of the other planning requirements. Ms. Crobak stated that this is an issue that FHWA is currently working on with PennDOT Central Office. They are discussing the impacts for MPOs that have dropped under 50,000. It is too early to say anything definitive. FHWA will release GIS files of the Census data shortly. It will also file a Federal Register notice for the establishment of TMAs and new MPOs.

5) Adjournment

There being no further business, the NEPA MPO Technical Planning Committee meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.