

Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO)

Proposed Amendment to 2019-2022 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the State College Area Connector (Route 322/144/45 Corridors)

Public Comment Period Summary

I. When Was the Proposed Amendment to the 2019-2022 TIP for the State College Area Connector Project Made Available for Public Comment?

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| May 2, 2019 | Documents for the proposed amendment to the 2019-2022 Centre County TIP for the State College Area Connector project were posted on the CCMPO's website. The website included the option of submitting an online comment form. |
| May 2, 2018 | A notice about the public comment period was placed on the C-NET public access cable television bulletin board. A press release was sent to 33 broadcast and print media outlets, including web-based community news publishers and three newspapers serving Centre County. A Facebook post was created and shared; 110 people were reached. |
| May 2, 2019 | A notice was emailed and mailed to the municipal managers or secretaries for the 35 municipalities in Centre County. The notice included the website address to access the documents; the dates for the start and conclusion of the public comment period; and date, time and location of the public meeting. |
| May 2, 2019 | A notice was emailed to 140 persons on the mailing list for CCMPO meetings and reports. The notice included the website address to access the documents and the dates for the public comment period and public meeting. The mailing list includes local officials and citizens, committee members, and staff members for federal and state legislators. |
| May 2, 2019 | A notice was emailed to 92 organizations designated as "interested parties" in the CCMPO's Public Participation Plan (PPP). The interested parties include: affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other entities. The notice included the web address to access the documents and the dates for the public comment period and public meeting. |
| May 3, 2019 | The 30-day public comment period was formally initiated. Classified advertisements were placed in The Progress (Clearfield/Philipsburg), The Express (Lock Haven), and The Centre Daily Times (State College) newspapers. Notices included the dates for the start and conclusion of the comment period; the locations at which the proposed TIP narrative was available for review; the date, time, and location of the public meeting; and the date, time, and location of the meeting at which the Coordinating Committee would consider approving the proposed TIP amendment for the State College Area Connector Project. |
| May 10, 2019 | A notice was emailed and mailed to eight Native American Tribes and Nations whose ancestors had at one time lived in Centre County. The notice directed tribal representatives to the website, where all documents could be accessed. |
| May 15, 2019 | A Public Meeting was held at the Mount Nittany Middle School from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Staff members from the Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA), the Centre County Planning and Community Development Office (CCPCDO), and the PennDOT District 2-0 Office were present to respond to questions and receive comments. |
| June 3, 2019 | The 30-day public comment period concluded at 12:00 p.m. |

II. Public Meeting

Format and Attendance

A public meeting was held on May 15, 2019 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm at the Mount Nittany Middle School. The meeting included an open house display of graphics and written materials about the proposed TIP amendment for the State College Area Connector (SCAC) Project, and about PennDOT's Route 322/144/45 Data Refresh Report. Staff members from the CRPA, the CCPCDO, and the PennDOT District 2-0 Office were present to respond to questions and receive comments. Fifty-two (52) citizens and officials signed in on the attendance list for the session. A small number of attendees declined to sign the attendance list.

Attendees were provided with the narrative description of the proposed TIP amendment, and a survey form which could be completed at the meeting or returned to the CCMPO staff during the public comment period.

Verbal Comments Received at the Public Meeting

The verbal comments and questions received at the May 15 meeting focused on several topics, including but not limited to:

- What is the process and timeline that PennDOT will follow to complete the Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase for the SCAC project?
- Will information from the previous South Central Centre County Transportation Study (SCCCTS) would be utilized in the SCAC project?
- The results of the Route 322/144/45 Data Refresh Report, which will be utilized for the PE phase of the SCAC project.
- Where is the location of the future roadway improvement(s)?
- Opinions about the need for improvements in the SCAC study area.

III. Public Comments and Responses

Verbal comments and questions were received at the public meeting, as noted in Section II.

Written comments were received via the public meeting survey form and the online comment form.

Written comments are noted in the attached documents:

- Public Meeting Survey Form Comments Questions 1-4
- Public Meeting Survey Form Comments Questions 5-12
- Online Form Comments
- Comments received after June 3, 2019

The majority of comments received were in favor of the proposed addition of the PE phase funding to the TIP. Substantive comments and questions regarding the process, schedule, and scope of the PE phase for the SCAC project will be forwarded to PennDOT for consideration when PE work begins in early 2020.

Proposed TIP Amendment for the State College Area Connector Project -- Responses from Survey Form Questions #1 - 4

Municipality	Support adding funds to tip?	If no, why?	Comments about Data Refresh	Topics to be addressed through PE and PEL phases
State College Borough w/ interests in Harris Twp	Yes		I, of course, wish you to choose a route that affects me and my family the least. That being said, I think the new Potters Mills exit/interchnage should be linked to the existing Boalsburg/Business Rt. 322 interchanges by the straightest line possible.	Preservation of wildlife, natural areas, and historical preservation
Harris Township	Yes			
State College	Yes		Where/how do I find it?	
Harris Township				I am interested in seeing a close, critical assessment of the fraction of traffic in the Potters Mills - Boalsburg corridors that is External-External, and some projection of how much this would increase if the 4-lane were completed. My fear is that we are unnecessarily bringing traffic through a major metropolitan area. It makes no sense. How much more would it cost to connect with I-99 through or over Nittany Mountain?
Potter Township	Yes			
Potter Township	Yes			
Potter Township		Trying to understand it all.	Public comment after all data? Prior to final decision?	
Potter/Coyler Lake	Yes		Most interested in proposed routes	Routes and timelines
Potter Township	No	The total miles that would be included in this project does not warrant the expected outrageous funding.		
Potter Township		I suppose PSU should get a bill too since they create the traffic for special events.	Fine/good to ask questions.	It seems a shame that we are spending so much money on repeat studies. Also, the road is safer now do we really need to spend millions on a 13 mile stretch of road? Don't forget to think about light and sound pollution.
State College Borough	Yes	Absolutely--this has been a high priority project for the community for decades (some say as far back as the 19060's when I-80 was constructed). It is needed	Data refresh CONFIRMED the findings of SCCCTS that this replacement of the 2-lane portion of US 322 between Potters Mills and Boalsburg with a four-lane limited access highway is warranted for safety and capacity reasons.	1. Since the project has been designated the State College Area Connector, eliminate consideration of routes over/through Nittany Mt. that takes traffic to Bellefonte/Pleasant Gap. 2. While it is necessary to address increased traffic on the western portion of PA 45, eliminate consideration of a sprawl-inducing clover leaf interchange at the Potter/Harris Line that is inconsistent with both the Centre Region and the Penns Valley Regional Comprehensive Plans (no water/no sewer/outside of Regional Growth Boundary).
Potter Township	Yes		There are no good solutions here. However, most of the traffic causing this issue do not live here. Consequently, the optimal solution would displace the absolute minimum of property owners. Far better for visitors to travel and extra 10-20 miles than disrupt long-time property owners.	Please schedule as many public meetings as possible. Given the existing work on I-99, we should use as much of that infrastructure as possible.
Potter Township	No	You have completed 3 main studies. Please look at last study as solutions about 3-5 prioritized routes and ask why the results are not acceptable today. I know circumstances today have changed but I'd like you to look at the 3-5 prioritized options and assess why, if true, these are not still viable.		Want to see results of last study and hear why results do not now provide viable options.

Municipality	Support adding funds to tip?	If no, why?	Comments about Data Refresh	Topics to be addressed through PE and PEL phases
Gregg Township	Yes		The origin destination tables should have been readable by a layman.	Cut and cover for wildlife crossing should be included in any planning. Remember that human-built structures can be rebuilt elsewhere. Natural items, wetlands, prime agricultural soils cannot be replicated.
Potter Township	Yes		It looked good. Most was easy to interpret except for the "O&D" chart. Could not understand it.	Concern for right-hand turns off of 322. People are moving to the berm to turn because of fast traffic which could cause an accident. Big concern for getting onto 322 from an access road. Traffic is FAST and close. I have waited up to 15 minutes to get onto the 322 road. I think when Potters Mills Gap is done, it will be worse! I also want to make sure the farmland is preserved.
Potter Township	Yes			
Harris Township	No	I'm not sure at this time. My support would depend on many things including location, environmental impact, and whether the concept of induced demand is carefully considered.	Please place me on any public advisory committee or group that will be formed around the project.	
Potter Township	No	I'm perplexed why this wasn't finished so many years ago before expensive developments went in, businesses, and more. It's too late.	I understand that our \$800,000 home that we put everything we had into now could have 322 running through our backyard. Businesses that have been built up on existing 322 destroyed, farm land taken away, developments next to a highway and more. The time was 20 years ago. To cast \$800 million + for 13 1/3 miles is absurd when so many roads need repair along with the bridges. The only time we see congestion is during football games. The accidents where there were fatalities is being fixed. None of us in our area is for this.	

**Proposed TIP Amendment for State College Area Connector Project
Responses from Survey Form Questions #5 - 12**

Responses to Questions 5 - 12	No. of Responses	
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5. How did you find out about the meeting?	18	Comments
CDT/newspaper	9	Very last minute, terrible short notice. Very late, much more advanced notice is needed.
WTAJ	2	
1390 radio	1	
Facebook/online	2	
Friend/neighbor	2	
CCMPO meeting	2	

6. Was the meeting advertised far enough in advance?	17	Comments
Yes	5	As per PA law - yes. As for getting it out there to the public - maybe.
No	12	Advertise in the Penns Valley Grapevine. (Notified) day of.

7. Was the meeting held at a convenient time and location?	18
	Time
Yes	16
No	2
	Location
Yes	17
No	1

8. Were the maps, graphics and other information understandable?	18
Yes	6
No	1
Somewhat	11

9. Were the maps, graphics and other information helpful?	18
Very Helpful	4
Somewhat Helpful	12
Not Helpful	2

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**Proposed TIP Amendment for State College Area Connector Project
Responses from Survey Form Questions #5 - 12**

Responses to Questions 5 - 12	No. of Responses	
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10. Are you satisfied with how your questions and comments were addressed?		Comments
Yes	11	But learned you are starting from scratch-makes no sense.
No	4	The format was wrong. The presenter did a good job of answering questions. An organized presentation of the (information) would have been useful. (No) Routes. Yes and no. Informal group sessions were useful. I was under the impression there would be a central presentation at some point for all attendees.
No Response		I don't know enough to know what to ask! I didn't have many, but the format is vulnerable to people who monopolize the presenters with irrelevant questions and complaints. I would have appreciated a brief presentation of the project, where it stands now, and its likely progression, rather than just individual random questions.

11. Were you able to review the proposed TIP amendment and Data Refresh documents prior to the meeting?	18
Yes	6
No	12

12. If you visited the CCMPO website, was the information helpful?		How can website be improved?
Very Helpful	2	
Somewhat Helpful	3	I would have like to see the routes that were being considered in 2004 on a current map. Some of the graphics were not fully understandable because critical information has been omitted.
Not Helpful	0	
No Response	13	I didn't know there was one! Have not yet visited the site. Have not visited the website yet.

Proposed TIP Amendment for the State College Area Connector Project -- Responses from Online Survey Form Questions

Municipality	Comments about proposed TIP Amendment for SCAC	Support Adding Funds to TIP?	If no, please explain.
Gregg Township	No matter what is done, somebody will be unhappy. Doing nothing and dealing with the increased volume of traffic that will be spilled at the Red Mill/Mountain Back intersection is likely the worst option. So let's evaluate the alternatives knowing that there will be naysayers regardless.	Yes	
Harris Township	I am a resident of the Willowbrook neighborhood along Route 45. There are many people who live in my neighborhood and the neighborhoods nearby who ride bicycles, walk, run, etc. Currently, 45 is very dangerous to do those things, which prevent us from using alternative means of transportation to get to the village of Boalsburg and access the South Atheron shared use path. I would encourage those who are planning this project to consider creating shared use paths that connect the neighborhoods along 45 (around Willowbrook) to connect into the village of Boalsburg. Not only will that give my son (and fellow kids in the area) a safe route to Boalsburg, but it could also be a great economic driver to connect those staying at the Wyndham Hotel to the village.	Yes	

Proposed TIP Amendment for the State College Area Connector Project -- Comments Received After June 3, 2019

Email Comments

Municipality	Comments about proposed TIP Amendment for SCAC	Support Adding Funds to TIP?	If no, please explain.
College Township	<p>We have a genuine concern that the proposed amendment will facilitate more pass-through truck traffic, with commensurate noise and air-pollution, on State Route 322, in the residential heart of our community.</p> <p>If one looks at a map of the area, the "missing link" is one that would allow truck traffic directly between Potters Mills and I-80 in the Pleasant Gap area. Improving this route would probably mean significant improvements to route 144 around Centre Hall and over the mountain. Admittedly, it might require almost as much effort as the current Potters Mills project. But ultimately, creating the alternate truck pathway would be in the best interests of both the vehicle drivers, and the area residents.</p>		
College Township	<p>We live on Squirrel Drive near Rt 322 and Slab Cabin Park. It can be pretty noisy here along the Expressway. As part of the upgrade to make Rt 322 part of I-99, would PADOT consider adding a sound barrier/wall along Rt 322 on the west-south side from Branch Road to E. College Avenue? If PADOT would consider such a barrier, who would I contact to make the request?</p>		

Mail-In Comments

Municipality	Comments about proposed TIP Amendment for SCAC	Support Adding Funds to TIP?	If no, please explain.
Harris Township	<p>Centre County and the Centre Region face the very serious problem that an intense flow of interstate and transcontinental truck traffic traverses our area. Apparently a strong interest in facilitating that traffic has now developed. Many decades ago, the US 322 traffic actually moved through downtown State College before the Mount Nittany Expressway was constructed. As it was being planned, a distinguished Penn State professor of Geography predicted: If that bypass is built, we will have every truck going from New York and Philadelphia to Chicago coming through our valley. And so it has turned out.</p> <p>Perhaps unintentionally, the Bypass made the free route on US 322 more attractive to truck dispatchers than the shorter, faster route with tolls on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The paramount guiding principal for the new construction must be that it does not disturb or disadvantage existing residential areas and developments. We should not adversely affect the quality of life of our Centre Region residents for the convenience of long-haul trucking.</p> <p>Thus the planning process should explore routes that would connect US 322 from Old Fort to Interstate 80 without passing through residential areas or areas already imperiled by heavy traffic. In the 2004 study, the routes designed to satisfy this requirements would make a wide circuit around Centre Hall and then proceed over or through the mountain to join I-80 north of Bellefonte. If that is done, then the present US 322 from Old Fort to State College and the Nittany Expressway can be upgraded to a two-or four-lane parkway designed primarily for auto traffic to serve the needs of the community and Penn State. Without the trucks, it could be an attractive entrance to the community.</p> <p>It would be manifestly unfair and disadvantageous to the residents and businesses in Harris and College Townships near the present US 322 to upgrade it and thereby increase traffic noise and airborne pollutants, and also seriously complicate local traffic movement. The South Central Centre County Transportation Study in 2004 benefited immensely from collaboration with an active citizens' advisory committee. Apparently this new study will not have that advantage. There is an evident and very real danger that PennDOT will build a road that serves the heavy trucks while inflicting a burdensome and ongoing cost on Centre Region residents.</p>	Yes	