

**CENTRE COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (CCMPO)  
COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, February 23, 2021**

**6:00 p.m.**

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Minutes**

**Voting Members**

Eric Bernier	College Township
Theresa Lafer	State College Borough
Frank Harden	Harris Township
Lisa Strickland	Ferguson Township
Pamela Robb	Patton Township
Barbara Spencer	Halfmoon Township
Mark Higgins	Centre County Board of Commissioners
Michael Pipe	Centre County Board of Commissioners
Doug Johnson	Nittany Valley Planning Region
David Veneziano	Lower Bald Eagle Valley Planning Region
Dick Decker	Penns Valley Planning Region
Ken Hall	Mountaintop Planning Region
Keith Reese	Upper Bald Eagle Valley Planning Region
Jon Eich	Centre Regional Planning Commission (CRPC)
John Spychalski	Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA)
Tom Zurat	PennDOT District 2-0
Larry Shifflet	PennDOT Central Office

**Non-Voting Members**

Rob Cooper	The Pennsylvania State University (PSU)
Matt Smoker	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Chelsea Beytas	Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

**Others Present**

Tom Zilla	Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)
Jim May	CRPA
Trish Meek	CRPA
Greg Kausch	CRPA
Pam Adams	CRPA
Marcella Laird	CRPA
Anne Messner	CCPCDO
Frank Hampton	PennDOT Central Office
Louwana Oliva	CATA
Dean Ball	PennDOT District 2-0
Mark Long	Representative Benninghoff's Office
Matt Wise	Senator Corman's Office
Ford Stryker	Ferguson Township Resident
Ann Glaser	Centre County Resident

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Bernier called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and turned the floor over to Mr. Kausch, who provided an overview of the meeting procedures, which included directions for how to participate in the meeting and access the agenda.

## **2. Election of Officers**

Mr. May opened the floor for nominations for the Coordinating Committee Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary.

*Motion was made by Ms. Lafer, seconded by Mr. Johnson to nominate Mr. Bernier for the 2021 Coordinating Committee Chair, Mr. Pipe for the 2021 Coordinating Committee Vice-Chair, and Mr. May for the 2021 Coordinating Committee Secretary. No other nominations were made. The motion carried 17-0.*

## **3. Approval of Minutes**

*Motion was made by Mr. Spychalski and seconded by Mr. Higgins to approve the minutes of the November 24, 2020 Coordinating Committee meeting, as presented. The motion carried 17-0.*

## **4. Public Comments**

There were no comments from the public.

## **5. Special Announcement**

Mr. Bernier announced that on February 19, 2021, Ms. Rusnak, PennDOT District 2-0 Transportation Planning Manager, retired after over 34 years of service. Mr. Bernier stated that in 2019, Ms. Rusnak was honored with PennDOT's Star of Excellence Award. At that time, the CCMPO staff noted that Ms. Rusnak is recognized in District 2-0 and across Pennsylvania for her skill in administering the Transportation Improvement Program, which has resulted in great benefit to the MPOs and RPO in District 2-0. Regularly, District 2-0 and its MPOs and RPOs received additional funding for projects and programs because of Ms. Rusnak's ability to manage financial resources adroitly and creatively.

Beyond the skill that Ms. Rusnak exhibited in managing financial resources, she collaborated with the Centre and SEDA-COG MPOs and the North Central RPO with great enthusiasm, leading to the development of a cooperative working relationship that delivered many projects that benefit the traveling public. Ms. Rusnak's willingness to work closely with the MPO and RPO staffs has been a hallmark of District 2-0's efforts for 30 years. On behalf of the CCMPO Technical and Coordinating Committees and staff, we thank Ms. Rusnak for her outstanding dedication and resulting success, and we wish her the best of luck as she retires to focus on her family and other interests!

## **6. PennDOT Pathways Initiative**

The Coordinating Committee received a presentation from Mr. Shifflet regarding the PennDOT Pathways Initiative that was announced by PennDOT on November 18, 2020. This new initiative will examine possible near and long-term options for addressing the \$8.1 billion gap in annual highway and bridge transportation funding that is needed to keep the network in a state of good repair. Mr. Shifflet explained that PennDOT has conducted a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study to determine possible alternative funding options. Mr. Shifflet communicated that the alternative funding solutions that were derived from the PEL Study include bridge tolling, managed lanes, congestion pricing, corridor tolling, road user charges, and fee and tax increases. In the spring of 2021, PennDOT will hold a public comment period of the final evaluation of the alternative funding solutions. Mr. Shifflet encouraged Committee members to visit the PennDOT Pathways website where members can learn more about the specific alternative funding solutions. *The entire Pathways presentation can be found on the CCMPO's website under CCMPO Committees - Presentations.*

In response to a question from Mr. Pipe regarding the approval process for the nine candidate bridges, Mr. Shifflet explained that the Public-Private Partnership (P3) Board, which includes legislative staff, industry members, and budget representatives, will approve the proposed candidate bridges based on specific guidelines.

Mr. Hall expressed his concern regarding the deficit in funding and stated that gas mileage gets better on newer cars and more and more electric vehicles are being used with no mechanism for electric vehicles to contribute to taxes to pay for infrastructure. Mr. Eich agreed and stated that road user charges should be given high

priority so that the state can capture the shift from gas to electric vehicles. He went on to say that most commercial fleet vehicles already track their mileage, so it would make sense to start there, especially because there is no additional equipment needed to capture that mileage. Mr. Shifflet responded and stated that the Pennsylvania legislation, along with PennDOT, has discussed legislation to tax electric vehicles, however, no legislation has been passed yet.

In response to a question from Mr. Eich, Mr. Shifflet explained that PennDOT hopes to implement bridge tolling for the 9 candidate bridges in late 2022, but most likely will take place in 2023 as PennDOT needs to gather input on the impacts bridge tolling may have on different communities. He went on to say that in most cases, tolling would begin right before or during the bridge construction to collect the funding needed to pay for the bridge repairs.

Ms. Lafer expressed the importance of finding a mechanism, such as vehicle miles traveled (VMT), to close the funding gap and to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of taxes, sooner rather than later. In addition, she stated that the funding that is collected from the bridge tolling initiative needs to be dedicated specifically for the bridge that it is collected from.

Mr. Harden communicated that from Mr. Shifflet's presentation, it seems that car manufacturers plan to have all electric vehicle models by 2035, so it is important to figure out how to recoup taxes from electric vehicles now rather than later. He suggested that the Coordinating Committee make a policy statement about this issue.

## **7. State College Area Connector (SCAC) Project Update**

The Coordinating Committee received an update on the timeline of the State College Area Connector (SCAC) Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study. PennDOT finalized the SCAC Purpose and Need document after receiving comments from residents, municipalities, and cooperating and participating agencies through the virtual public meeting and comment period in late 2020. After the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approves the final Purpose and Need document, PennDOT will begin creating a methodology for developing alternatives to meet the Purpose and Need of the SCAC project. In May and July, PennDOT will present its methodology for developing the range of alternatives, as well as the alternatives analysis during the Agency Coordination Meeting (ACM). In August, PennDOT will hold a public meeting to present and receive comments regarding the possible alternatives to meet the Purpose and Need. PennDOT intends to have a live interaction meeting to be able to answer questions and address comments in real time. After the public comment period concludes, PennDOT will present possible future projects to meet the Purpose and Need for the SCAC project to move into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) phase.

## **8. Performance Based Planning and Programming**

### **a. Annual Update of PM1 Safety Performance Measure Targets**

The Coordinating Committee received a presentation from Ms. Anne Messer, Centre County Planning and Community Development Office Senior Transportation Planner, regarding PennDOT's 2021 PM1 Safety Performance Measure Targets. The CCMPO supported PennDOT's initial targets for 2018 as well as the targets in the annual updates for 2019 and 2020 because the MPO does not have the staff resources and technical capacity to establish and monitor its own quantifiable targets. Ms. Messner reviewed the 2021 targets and noted that the fatality number listed in 2019 is correct.

In response to a question from Mr. Harden regarding the number of fatalities in 2020, Ms. Messner stated that she does not have any of that data yet. Mr. Zurat added that the accident data for 2020 is not completely accounted for; however, Mr. Zurat can get the most up to date data regarding fatalities in Centre County. Mr. Smoker explained that PennDOT has to submit the data to the FHWA by June of 2021 to have the data certified.

With no further comments or discussion, *motion was made by Ms. Spencer and seconded by Ms. Lafer to select the option to plan and program projects that contribute toward the accomplishment of the statewide PM1 safety targets. The motion carried 17-0.*

**b. Adjustment to PM3 Travel Time Reliability Performance Measure Targets**

The Coordinating Committee received a report from Mr. Zilla regarding an adjustment to PennDOT's PM3 Travel Time Reliability Performance Measure Targets. He explained that in September 2020, PennDOT submitted a required Mid-Performance Period Progress Report to the FHWA for the PM2 and PM3 performance measures. Based on the data collected and documented in the report, PennDOT is adjusting two PM3 travel time reliability targets. The primary reason for adjusting to less stringent targets is that roadway construction scheduled for the interstate system across Pennsylvania in 2021 is anticipated to result in delays that will negatively impact travel time performance. The impact of construction work zones on the interstate system cannot be mitigated in 2021, but PennDOT will be developing appropriate mitigation strategies to address impacts in future years.

With no comments or discussion, *motion was made by Mr. Hall and seconded by Mr. Eich to select the option to plan and program projects that contribute toward the accomplishment of the statewide adjusted PM3 performance measure targets. The motion carried 17-0.*

**9. 2021-2024 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Mr. Zilla communicated that because of a significant increase on the estimated cost for construction of the Route 64/550 intersection safety project, PennDOT has been working to identify a source of funds that can be added to the TIP to address the cost increase. Mr. Ball, Assistant District 2-0 Engineer, explained that there is a need to stabilize soil under the proposed new section of road way due to the type of soil. In addition, because of the extent of the work that needs to be done to stabilize the soil, a community water line must be relocated.

Mr. Zilla explained that there are three options to obtain the funding needed for the Route 64/550 intersection safety project: uncommitted funds from a reserve line item on the Centre County TIP, new funds from the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) from the statewide TIP, or shifting funds from the construction phase of the Route 26 Jacksonville Road Betterment project. The schedule for the construction of the Route 26 Betterment is closely linked to the schedule for completing the I-80/Route 26 Local Access Interchange. Because the schedule for opening the Local Access Interchange has been pushed back, the schedule for completion of the Betterment project will also be pushed back. Thus, funds could be shifted from the construction phase of the Betterment project and replenished in the next 2023-2026 TIP without impacting the pre-construction phases of the project.

In response to a question from Mr. Johnson, Mr. Zurat explained that the cost for stabilizing the soil underneath the new section of road will cost about \$1 million, and the new community waterline will cost around \$500,000. He went on to say that based on the excavation limits that were in place at the start of the project, there was originally no effect on the waterline nearby; however, now that more intensive work is needed, the waterline will be affected, and Walker Township opted to upgrade its community waterline to accommodate a growing community. Mr. Johnson expressed his disappointment in the cost increase of this project and stated that the boring should have been done in preliminary phases of the project to capture an accurate cost.

*Motion was made by Mr. Decker and seconded by Mr. Shifflet to approve the amendments to the 2021-2024 Centre County TIP to provide additional funds to the Route 64/550 intersection project. The motion carried 17-0.*

**10. CCMPO Safety Subcommittee**

The Coordinating Committee received a report from Ms. Messner regarding the formation of a CCMPO Safety Subcommittee to help identify candidate roadway safety improvement projects to be considered for the

next 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Planning and preparation of the next TIP will begin this spring with an adoption date of June 2022. The new subcommittee would be comprised of a small number of members from the Technical Committee. At the November 17, 2020 Technical Committee meeting, the following members agreed to participate: Ron Seybert, Ferguson Township, Technical Committee Chair; George Harrigan, Harris Township; Joel Myers, Penns Valley Region; Dean Ball, PennDOT District 2-0; Frank Hampton, PennDOT Central Office, and Matt Smoker, FHWA

It is anticipated this committee will begin meeting in late February/early March and will continue to meet as needed through the timeframe when the new TIP is being developed in 2021.

*Motion was made by Mr. Johnson and seconded by Ms. Robb to form a safety subcommittee comprised of members of the Technical Committee. The motion carried 17-0.*

#### **11. U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) – Federal Registrar Notice**

The Coordinating Committee received a report from Mr. Zilla regarding the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) notice in the Federal Registrar seeking comment on recommended changes to OMB's standards for designating "metropolitan" and "micropolitan" statistical areas. The recommended changes would increase the population threshold for designating an area as "metropolitan" from 50,000 to 100,000 persons and reclassify areas between 50,000-99,999 persons as "micropolitan". The proposed change would reclassify nine areas in Pennsylvania from metropolitan to micropolitan status, including the State College Metropolitan Statistical Area (Centre County).

The OMB designations are used as the basis for collection and reporting of data by various agencies and are not used to designate metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). MPO designations are based on Urbanized Areas delineated by the U.S. Census Bureau and by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) in federal transportation legislation and rulemaking. Currently, the population threshold used by the Census Bureau to designate an Urbanized Area is 50,000 persons.

Mr. Zilla communicated that MPO staff is coordinating with PennDOT and the other affected areas in PA to share information and determine whether the submission of comments to the OMB is relevant and appropriate. At this time, there is no evidence that the proposed OMB changes would directly impact the designation of the nine areas as MPOs. However, staff is concerned that later in 2021, the Census Bureau may redefine standards for designating Urbanized Areas and the USDOT may change the definition of MPOs to be more consistent with the new OMB standards, should they be enacted.

Public comments about the OMB's recommended change in standards must be submitted by March 19, 2021. Because it is unclear if the submission of comments would be necessary, staff is requesting that the Coordinating Committee authorize staff to submit comments by the March 19 deadline, if relevant and appropriate, and contingent upon review and approval by the CCMPO Chair. Staff is also seeking authorization to share any comments with Centre County's Congressional delegation.

In response to a question from Mr. Pipe, Mr. Zilla explained that the task force involved in this recommended change has been in place since 2018, and the new presidential administration has not addressed the report that the task force put out in 2020.

In response to questions from Mr. Eich, Mr. Zilla explained that the OMB's reason for this proposal had to do with the United States' population growth, and since the population has been redistributed over time, there has been a proliferation of areas right around that 50,000-population threshold. The OMB is proposing this change so that a true definition of urbanized area is reflected in the demographic data.

*Motion was made by Mr. Johnson and seconded by Ms. Strickland to authorize staff to prepare and submit comments about the OMB's proposed changes for updating the standards establishing metropolitan and micropolitan areas, if relevant and appropriate, contingent upon review and approval by the CCMPO Chair, and to share any comments with Centre County's Congressional delegation. Motion carried 17-0.*

## **12. Member Reports**

Mr. Harden communicated that a citizen's group in Harris Township has formed to discuss safety issues on Route 45. The group has been meeting regularly and is working with PennDOT District 2-0 to address bus stop safety in this corridor. There have been discussions about putting up signage and doing line paintings in this corridor to notify drivers that there is a bus stop nearby.

There were no other member reports.

## **13. Announcements**

The next Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 14, 2021 via the Zoom meeting platform. The next Coordinating Committee meeting is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 27, 2021 via the Zoom meeting platform.

Mr. Bernier recognized Ms. Meek for her efforts in helping the Centre Region attain a Silver-level Bicycle Friendly Community designation by the League of American Bicyclists in December 2020. Mr. Bernier also recognized Ms. Meek for her coordination with Centre County municipalities on providing information and submitting comments regarding Act 106 – Personal Delivery Devices that Pennsylvania legislature adopted recently that took effect on January 31, 2021.

## **14. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the February 23, 2021 CCMPO Coordinating Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcella Laird  
Recording Secretary