

**CENTRE COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (CCMPO)
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, May 25, 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
Pamela Robb	Patton Township
Lisa Strickland	Ferguson 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
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

Matt Smoker	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
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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
Mark Long	Representative Benninghoff's Office
Brandy Reiter	Senator Corman's Office
Mark Lively	CCMPO Technical Committee
George Harrigan	CCMPO Technical Committee

1. Call to Order

Mr. Bernier called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and turned the floor over to Ms. Meek, who conducted a roll call of Committee members to ensure they could hear and be heard.

2. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

3. Transportation Funding Initiatives – PennDOT Pathways Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

The Coordinating Committee received a brief presentation from Mr. Zilla regarding PennDOT's Pathways Program, a new initiative to examine options for addressing the transportation funding shortfall in Pennsylvania. The Pathways initiative includes completion of a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study of potential funding options. A draft PEL Study was released for public review on April 29, 2021, with a deadline of June 1 for submission of comments to PennDOT. MPO staff received comments from two MPO Committee members, which were used to inform the preparation of staff recommendations about input the Coordinating Committee could provide to PennDOT. Mr. Zilla stated that the purpose of this meeting is for the Coordinating Committee to discuss the staff recommendations about input from Committee members and consider approval of input about the Pathways draft PEL Study for submission to PennDOT.

Mr. Zilla invited state legislator staff to provide comments related to the PennDOT Pathways initiative. Ms. Reiter of Senator Corman's office communicated that Senator Corman has always been supportive of transportation efforts and supported the federal dollars that came in for the I-80/I-99 High Speed Interchange project and the State College Area Connector (SCAC) project. Ms. Reiter stated that Senator Corman has concerns related to the proposals in the PennDOT Pathways PEL Study because the proposals are raising taxes, and there is no mention of reforms or cuts on the part of PennDOT. Ms. Reiter stated that the PEL Study is a planning tool, and no funding is in danger if the study is not completed. The PEL Study is being used to expedite the planning and development phase of projects. Ms. Reiter communicated that Senator Langerholc is working on his own legislation called the Drive Smart Act to address the transportation funding gap instead of waiting for the PEL Study to be concluded. The legislation focuses on reforms and investments, with priority given to reforms, and aims to reform the P3 statutes and void PennDOT's bridge tolling initiative. It also encourages PennDOT to resubmit the P3 Initiative to the P3 Board following a more transparent process. In response to a question from Ms. Spencer, Ms. Reiter stated she will provide more detailed information regarding Senator Corman's specific ideas regarding reforms for transportation funding once the discussions begin in the Senate.

Mr. Long of Representative Benninghoff's office stated that Representative Benninghoff is concerned about the implications of repealing or phasing out the standard gas tax and replacing it with another funding mechanism, whether it be tolling or vehicle miles traveled. If the gas tax structure is lowered or removed altogether, the wholesaler still has the option of not passing those savings onto the consumer. There is also concern from Representative Benninghoff that there may not be a favorable response to tolling even if the gas tax is removed or lowered. Representative Benninghoff would like to see transportation taxes and fees be used for transportation infrastructure, instead of taxing other aspects of life and using those taxes for transportation systems. Representative Benninghoff agrees that funding for the Pennsylvania State Police must be removed from the PA State Motor License Fund (MLF) and a separate funding mechanism should be created to fund the State Police operations. Mr. Long communicated that legislation for electric vehicle funding has been proposed by Representative Carrol and includes fee levels for electric vehicles and motorcycles, hybrid vehicles, and commercial vehicles. This legislation did pass out of the House Transportation Committee and will head to the House of Representatives soon. Mr. Long communicated that Representative Benninghoff is agreeable to amending legislation to refocus Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF) Program funding awards to only county and municipal governments, transit operators, and other public entities. Mr. Eich requested that Mr. Long provide the CCMPO with a list of amounts of funding that have come out of the MLF for projects not related to transportation over the last 20 years. Mr. Eich stated that this data would be used to compare those funding amounts to the projects that were not successful in receiving funding and to look at those areas where the unfunded projects are located and see how many deaths and severe injuries are associated with the locations that these projects are in. Mr. Eich stated that this may be a way to overcome legislature and public reluctance to provide the funds needed for a safe and reliable transportation system. Mr. Long and Mr. Eich will discuss this request outside of the CCMPO meeting.

The Coordinating Committee was then split into two breakout groups within the Zoom platform to discuss the MPO staff recommendations for consideration of approval of input about the Pathways draft PEL Study for

submission to PennDOT. After the two groups met for 30 minutes in the breakout groups, the groups came back into the main Zoom meeting room and provided a report about key items discussed within the breakout groups. After a lengthy discussion, the follow comments were supported by the CCMPO Coordinating Committee for inclusion into the comment letter to submit to PennDOT:

Near-Term Actions

1. Support near-term actions in PEL Study (bridge tolling and managed lanes).
Members acknowledged that the financial benefit of PennDOT's current P3 Bridge Initiative for Centre County and the Commonwealth is the ability to retarget funding that otherwise would be needed for the nine bridges in the program to other needs.
2. Advance implementation of Mileage Based User Fees (MBUFs) from the long-term period to the near-term period to reflect its importance in anchoring a long-term sustainable revenue source.
3. Implement a mechanism to ensure electric vehicle (EV) operators contribute funding that is comparable to the current state fuel tax amount paid by gas, diesel, and hybrid vehicle operators. Consider the EV usage fees proposed in legislation being introduced in the PA House of Representatives.
4. Amend legislation to refocus Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF) Program funding awards to only county and municipal governments, transit operators, and other public entities.
Because of the extent of unmet needs associated with maintaining and improving existing publicly owned transportation infrastructure, and the shortfall of funding for PennDOT, counties, municipalities, and other public entities, MTF Program funds should be made available to public entities first, before being allocated to private projects that do not correct existing deficiencies on the public system.
5. Change the name of the PA State Motor License Fund (MLF) to include the PA State Police (PSP) in the title, to recognize and call attention to the large amount of funding in the MLF that is currently allocated to the PSP.
6. Accelerate the removal of PSP funding from the MLF, and work to remove the entire amount so that PSP funding is shifted to another revenue source.
7. Study how adjacent and nearby states generate revenue to support transportation funding.
8. Perform an analysis of why the cost of doing business is so great for PennDOT, Counties, and municipal entities which are responsible for maintaining roads and bridges (e.g., high per mile cost of resurfacing, high cost for small bridge replacements, material costs, regulatory barriers, etc.). The CCMPO is interested in supporting cost saving measures but would need more information to prepare formal policy positions regarding specific measures.
Members acknowledged that the extent of the current and projected funding gap is such that reforms to current business practices and operations alone will not result in cost savings that fill the entire gap. Additional revenue will be needed to meet growing needs in the future.

Medium-Term Actions

9. Support medium-term actions in PEL Study (congestion pricing).
10. Consider tolling interstate highway facilities at PA state border locations to account for out-of-state users.
Members acknowledged there would be potential impacts from drivers diverting to parallel and secondary roadways to avoid tolls.

Long-Term Actions

11. Utilize a wide range of tax and fee mechanisms to provide revenue but ensure that mechanisms are sustainable in the long-term (minimum 10-20 years).
12. Provide authorization and flexibility for county and municipal governments to implement taxes and fees that can specifically be used for transportation improvements and services.

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Members noted that municipalities need local authority for taxing or requiring fees for special user groups who do not currently contribute to the revenue stream(s) that supports transportation funding.

13. Integrate public transportation funding considerations into an overall transportation funding strategy.
14. Update liquid fuels formula used to allocate funding for county and local system, and increase amount of funding for counties and municipalities.

Members acknowledged that the revenue stream for this action and the following recommended action would have to increase substantially.

15. Increase funding for state road turnback program to reduce size of state road system, contingent upon providing additional funding for counties and municipalities to assume responsibility for low volume state roads currently maintained by PennDOT.

The CCMPO applauds PennDOT's willingness to study the transportation funding problem and identify future revenue options, and supports the actions proposed to date. The Coordinating Committee acknowledged that as Governor Wolf's Transportation Revenue Options Commission and the state legislature discuss and prepare more specific proposals for generating revenue to maintain and improve Pennsylvania's transportation system, the CCMPO's policy positions may be altered based on the provision of more information.

Motion was made by Mr. Reese and seconded by Mr. Eich to approve the Pathways PEL Study input for submission to PennDOT, contingent upon staff compiling comments and providing a draft version to the Coordinating Committee for review by the Chair prior to submission. The motion carried 16-0.

4. Member Reports

There were no member reports.

5. Announcements

The next Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, June 9, 2021 via the Zoom meeting platform. The next regular Coordinating Committee meeting is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 22, 2021 via the Zoom meeting platform.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, the May 25, 2021 Special CCMPO Coordinating Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcella Laird
Recording Secretary