

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

**Wednesday, June 26, 2024**

**9:30 a.m.**

**Hybrid Meeting**

**Minutes**

**Voting Members**

Amber Concepcion	Centre County
David Rishel	Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA)
Ray Forziat	Centre Region Municipalities
Daryl Schafer	Outlying Planning Region Municipalities
Mark Schultz	PennDOT District 2-0

**Others Present**

Jim Saylor	Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)
Anne Messner	CRPA
Greg Kausch	CRPA
Marcella Hoffman	CRPA
Mike Tylka	CRPA
Xochi Confer	Centre County Planning & Community Development Office (CCPCDO)
Jamie Biblehimer	PennDOT District 2-0

**1. Call to Order**

Ms. Hoffman called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. A round of introductions was made.

**2. Election of Officers**

Ms. Hoffman opened the floor for nominations for the Projects Committee Chair.

*Motion was made by Commissioner Concepcion and seconded by Mr. Rishel to nominate Commissioner Concepcion for the 2024 Projects Committee Chair. No other nominations were made. The motion carried unanimously.*

Commissioner Concepcion then opened the floor for nominations for the Projects Committee Vice Chair.

*Motion was made by Mr. Rishel and seconded by Mr. Forziat to nominate Mr. Rishel for the 2024 Projects Committee Vice Chair. No other nominations were made. The motion carried unanimously.*

**3. Public Comments**

There were no comments from the public.

**4. New Agenda Items**

No new agenda items were requested.

**5. Meeting Dates for 2024**

Members of the Projects Committee discussed a regular meeting date and time for the remaining meetings of 2024. CCMPO staff provided several dates and times for the Projects Committee to consider.

After a brief discussion, a *motion was made by Mr. Forziat and seconded by Mr. Schafer to schedule the next meeting for Friday, August 2, and direct staff to confirm the meeting time after the conference room schedule has been settled. The motion carried unanimously.*

## **6. CCMPO Strategic Plan – Projects Committee Formation**

The Projects Committee received a presentation from MPO staff regarding the history and background of the Projects Committee. Mrs. Hoffman briefly reviewed what the MPO is, how it functions, and how the Projects Committee has developed over the past few years.

Mrs. Hoffman explained that in November 2021, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) was signed into law and provided \$550 billion over fiscal years 2022-2026 in new federal investment in infrastructure, including roads, bridges, mass transit, water infrastructure, resiliency, and broadband. In early 2022, the Coordinating Commission formed the BIL Subcommittee to review the new and expanded discretionary funding opportunities through the BIL, assess the MPO's capacity to pursue discretionary funding opportunities and identify options for building capacity, and identify opportunities most appropriate for stakeholders in Centre County. The BIL Subcommittee provided several recommendations to the Coordinating Committee, of which was the establishment of the Projects Committee. The CCMPO also adopted its first-ever Strategic Plan, which recommended the formation of a Projects Committee, along with a new Transportation Grant Specialist position and consulting support for grant application assistance. In April of 2024, the Coordinating Committee officially formed the Projects Committee and directed staff to request appointments.

Mrs. Hoffman then reviewed the Committee's responsibilities that are outlined in the Bylaws. Overall, the role of the Projects Committee is to provide recommendations and advice regarding the prioritization and selection of transportation projects for funding streams and plans for which the CCMPO has decision-making authority. As part of this responsibility, the Projects Committee may devise and maintain selection processes, collect information regarding transportation funding opportunities, review transportation-related studies and plans to determine regional priorities for the CCMPO, and the prioritization and selection of candidate projects and funding programs through which the CCMPO may pursue discretionary funding.

## **7. Safe Streets and Roads for All – BIL Discretionary Grant Program**

The Projects Committee received a presentation from MPO staff regarding the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Discretionary Grant Program.

Mrs. Hoffman provided a brief overview of the initiatives of the SS4A program and explained that the program funds initiatives to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries and supports the U.S. DOT's National Roadway Safety Strategy and its goal of zero roadway deaths using a safe systems approach. Mrs. Hoffman noted that the grant program has been open for the last two years and all eligible Planning and Demonstration applications have been awarded funds.

Staff felt that there was an opportunity to pursue funding this year to support and expand the Centre County Active Transportation plan to conduct a comprehensive gap analysis for Centre County's Borough and Borough-like areas, along with a comprehensive assessment of lane departure crashes in high-priority locations. On May 15, 2024, staff submitted an application for Planning and Demonstration grant funds. The application comprises a two-page narrative addressing the program criteria, a map depicting the jurisdiction locations, and a budget outlining the estimated cost of the proposed Supplemental Planning Activities. A 20% local match is required; however in-kind

contributions are allowable. staff are confident that the administration and management of the grant will provide sufficient support to cover the 20% local match through in-kind contributions.

Because the Projects Committee membership was not finalized prior to the May 16 second SS4A application deadline, staff received consensus from the MPO Coordinating Committee to prepare an application for supplemental planning activities to support and expand the Centre County Active Transportation Plan, the CCMPO's current Action Plan. The May 16 round of applications will be reviewed this summer, and awardees will be notified of successful funding by August. The SS4A program has a third and final application deadline of August 29, 2024. It is unclear whether applicants will be notified before the August 29 deadline in order to revise and resubmit their applications for another opportunity for review. Because of the timing of the grant program deadline and the timing of the Coordinating Committee meetings, staff presented this item to the Coordinating Committee at its June 25 meeting and received approval to develop and submit a second application for the August 29 deadline.

Staff have had initial conversations to begin the development of a second application for the August 29 deadline. In addition to a gap analysis and a comprehensive review of lane departure crashes, staff are investigating road safety audits, which is a systematic process for checking the road safety implications for various road improvements.

The Projects Committee members had a few clarifying questions regarding the outcomes of the Planning and Demonstration grant, to which staff answered.

## **8. Bridge Investment Program – Discretionary Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity**

The Projects Committee received a presentation from MPO staff regarding the federal Bridge Investment Program (BIP), a competitive discretionary program that focuses on the replacement, rehabilitation, preservation, or protection of existing bridges to reduce the overall number of bridges in poor condition, or fair condition at risk of falling into poor condition. The Notice of Funding Opportunity provides up to \$9.62 billion in FY 2023 through 2026 for Bridge Project grant applications. Mrs. Hoffman briefly reviewed the program requirements and explained that the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program lists over 30 bridge projects for planning and construction phases over the 4-year program.

Mrs. Hoffman went on to review possible bridge projects that staff and PennDOT personnel feel could be pursued for discretionary grant funding under the BIP. Included on the draft 2025-2028 TIP is a bridge improvement project on State Route 4005, Exit 147, over I-80 in Snow Shoe Township. This project is expected to progress over the entire four-year period of the TIP. However, it is anticipated that the funding of nearly \$12 million is insufficient to cover all associated costs. This bridge is nearly 300 feet in length, is a state-owned bridge, and is structurally deficient. The timeline for this bridge project is well-suited for pursuing funding under the BIP, which says that the project is reasonably expected to begin construction no later than 18 months after the date on which the funds are obligated, and preliminary engineering is completed for the project.

Other bridge projects for consideration for the FY 2026 application round include bridge bundles, which are allowable in the BIP and can include a state-owned bridge to allow local entities to leverage state bridge funds as the 20% local match that is required. Mrs. Hoffman reviewed the bridge bundle projects which include a box beam bridge rehabilitation bundle, a bridge replacement bundle, and a location-based bridge bundle. Mrs. Hoffman explained that bridge bundle projects can attract larger and more experienced construction firms, allow for economies of scale, and may be more financially beneficial for the contractor and the bridge owner. It also streamlines the

procurement process during the bidding process, which can save staff time and resources. Bridge bundles can also help with coordination efforts and allow the contractor to plan and execute multiple projects in a synchronized manner, which reduces disruptions to motorists and overall project delivery time.

Mrs. Hoffman concluded that staff believes the Snow Shoe bridge over I-80 would be a good candidate for the FY 2025 BIP grant application round. Staff will meet with PennDOT personnel in early July to discuss bridge bundle projects for future rounds of the BIP. Staff will provide more information about a potential BIP application at the August meeting and will ask for a recommendation to the Technical and Coordinating Committees to move forward with a BIP application for the FY 2025 round.

## **9. PROTECT Discretionary Grant Funding Program – Notice of Funding Opportunity**

The Projects Committee received a report from MPO staff regarding the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Discretionary Grant Funding Program, which was established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). This program assists surface transportation to be more resilient to natural hazards, including flooding, extreme weather events, and other natural disasters through the support of planning activities, resilience improvements, community resilience and evacuation routes, and at-risk coastal infrastructure. The BIL provides the PROTECT Program with \$30 million per year for FY years 2024 through 2026 in Planning Grants. The Notice of Funding Opportunity for this round of applications will be released in July. Mrs. Hoffman noted that planning funds are 100% federal and do not require a non-federal match.

Mrs. Hoffman explained that MPO staff are interested in developing a Resilience Improvement Plan to address repeat flooding issues across the county. The 2021 Centre County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) addresses floods, flash floods, and ice jams as vulnerabilities for residents as well as the surrounding infrastructure such as roads, bridges, dams, and levees. The Centre County HMP includes an action item to, “coordinate the performance of detailed flood studies for the County’s high-hazard areas to determine a full range of flood recurrence intervals for use in future vulnerability analyses.” In addition, during the MPO’s BIL Subcommittee meetings, the County’s reoccurring flooding issues were discussed as a potential project to pursue discretionary funding through the PROTECT program.

Mrs. Hoffman communicated that staff have initially reviewed the data from the County’s HMP, along with PennDOT data that shows historical road closures due to flooding. The areas that consistently show up as areas with reoccurring flooding issues include Philipsburg, Julian, Port Matilda, Unionville, Milesburg, Spring Mills, and Coburn. Mrs. Hoffman went on to say that this review is the first step in working with the County to assess which activities could be further studied and developed for a Resilience Improvement Plan. MPO staff will continue to coordinate with the County as it updates its HMP to determine the feasibility of submitting a grant application for this year’s PROTECT Program.

## **10. Project List and Grant Funding Programs**

Mrs. Hoffman provided a brief report to the Projects Committee regarding a list of high-priority projects using the Centre County 2023-2026 and 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program, along with the project list contained in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) 2050.

Mrs. Hoffman explained that the list provides information on the project name, a description of the project, the project’s location, projected costs if known, and the federal or state discretionary grant

program that could be pursued to obtain additional funding. The project list also includes projects such as the Benner Pike Corridor Study, the Airport Road Connector, and other projects that planning regions, municipalities, and other stakeholders have asked the MPO to include as potential projects for future plans. Mrs. Hoffman explained that the list is organized based on where the projects were found. Projects from the LRTP 2050 are grouped together, projects from the TIP are also grouped together, and BIL projects and other projects are grouped together. Mrs. Hoffman asked the Committee members for feedback regarding how the list is organized, if there are any projects that are missing, or if there are projects that are no longer relevant.

There was a lengthy and detailed discussion between Committee members about organizing the project list to prepare for prioritizing projects and securing grant funding. It was decided that the list should be grouped into categories such as safety, bridge, transit, and active transportation to make it easier to prioritize projects in the future. Mrs. Hoffman emphasized that categorizing projects this way would be helpful for prioritization, as different project types have different criteria. The committee directed staff to revise the list, create appropriate categories, and identify projects that are no longer relevant for consideration.

The Committee members also discussed its future responsibility of creating a formal process for accepting new projects to the list. Staff explained that the current process is quite informal, with projects being added at the request of planning regions, municipalities, CCMPO members, PennDOT, and other stakeholders. Projects are also added to the list based on concerns raised at various meetings. The Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to have an application form for interested parties to complete and submit to the Projects Committee for consideration in adding new projects to the list.

Staff will continue to work on organizing the project list and will bring this agenda item to a future projects Committee meeting for review.

## **11. Member Reports**

There were no member reports.

## **12. Announcements**

Mrs. Hoffman reviewed the announcement page for the Committee's information, but there were no questions or comments.

## **13. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the June 26, 2024 CCMPO Projects Committee meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcella Hoffman  
Recording Secretary