

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

Friday, August 16, 2024

9:30 a.m.

Hybrid Meeting

Minutes

Voting Members

Amber Concepcion	Centre County
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

Commissioner Concepcion called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

2. Minutes of the June 26, 2024 Projects Committee Meeting

Motion was made by Mr. Forziat and seconded by Mr. Schafer to approve the June 26, 2024 minutes as presented. The motion carried 4-0 (Mr. Rishel was not in attendance).

3. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

4. New Agenda Items

No new agenda items were requested.

5. Bridge Investment Program (BIP) – Snow Shoe Bridge

The Projects Committee received a report from MPO staff regarding the FY 2025 Bridge Investment Program (BIP) application. MPO staff met with PennDOT District 2-0 staff in early July to discuss the possibility of a BIP application for a bridge improvement project on State Route 4005 over I-80 in Snow Shoe Township. The project would address the poor condition of the bridge, increase the under-clearance on I-80 to reduce bridge strikes, and reconfigure the off-ramps to make them easier to navigate and reduce the occurrence of crashes at both intersections. This bridge project is a good candidate for a BIP application because preliminary engineering is nearly complete. In addition, the bridge serves several businesses such as FedEx Freight, Interfuse Manufacturing, Show Shoe Refractories, a truck stop, various emergency services, government buildings, and public schools. As of 2021, the bridge has an annual average daily traffic count of 7,141 vehicles, of which 20% are heavy trucks. Mrs. Hoffman explained that if the grant funding for this project is awarded, the funding that is allocated to this bridge on the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

could be utilized for other projects on the TIP that are underfunded. This project offers strengthened economic development, better traffic flow, enhanced connectivity, and improved structural benefits. Mrs. Hoffman communicated that this project rose to the top of the list because the other bridge projects aren't ready to move forward since preliminary engineering has not been completed. Mr. Schultz noted that the bridge uses a large portion of the TIP funds, and although it is over I-80, it does not qualify for interstate program funds. He stated that PennDOT District 2-0 did submit this bridge project as a statewide interest for BIP, but it did not rank high enough to move forward.

In response to Mr. Forziat's question about consulting funds, Mrs. Hoffman explained that the consultant would handle the application's technical components, such as the cost-benefit analysis.

Mrs. Hoffman communicated that after further review of the grant application, it was discovered that the MPO is not an eligible applicant for this program because it is not in an urbanized area of 200,000 people or more. However, Centre County and Snow Shoe Township are both eligible applicants. MPO staff has had initial conversations with Snow Shoe Township and County staff and proposes that the County serve as the lead applicant and the Township act as the co-sponsor. Mrs. Hoffman explained that neither the County nor the Township would have to provide a local match. As far as she could tell, the County would not need to provide administrative assistance for this project either. MPO staff will complete the application with assistance from the consultant.

A motion was made by Mr. Forziat and seconded by Mr. Schultz to recommend to the Technical Committee that staff utilize consultant funds to move forward with a Bridge Investment Program grant application for FY 2025. The motion carried 4-0.

6. Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) – Discretionary Grant Program

The Projects Committee received a presentation from MPO staff regarding a county-wide PROTECT grant application for Centre County's most vulnerable flood areas. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides the PROTECT Program with \$30 million per year for Planning Grants for 2024-2026. Planning Grants do not require a local match, and the notice of funding opportunity is anticipated to be released in September. The program's goals include helping make surface transportation more resilient to natural hazards, including flooding, extreme weather events, and natural disasters through the support of planning activities or resilience improvements.

The CCMPO staff have continued to review the PROTECT Program information along with information regarding Centre County's most vulnerable flood areas. Staff have utilized the 2021 Centre County Hazard Mitigation Plan, PennDOT's 2019 Extreme Weather Vulnerability Study, storm event data from the National Centers for Environmental Information, and FEMA's national flood data to gather more details about areas in Centre County that have experienced severe flooding and infrastructure damage. Staff is considering a county-wide Resilience Improvement Plan focusing on some of the more prominent risk areas. This plan may address some of the action components in the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan. Mrs. Hoffman reviewed program requirements, merit criteria, and data collection details.

Mrs. Hoffman reviewed the data for the areas that have experienced repeated road and bridge closures due to storm events and flooding:

- SR 53/SR 322 in Philipsburg Borough: Moshannon Creek and Cold Stream Recreation Dam
- SR 220 between Port Matilda and Unionville: Bald Eagle Creek and Laurel Run
- SR 1002 in Liberty/Curtin Townships: Marsh Creek
- SR 220 in Milesburg Borough: Moose Run and Bald Eagle Creek

- SR 2011 in Penn Township: Penns Creek
- SR 2012 in Penn Township: Elk Creek and Pine Creek

Mrs. Hoffman noted that Philipsburg Borough and Rush Township are considering a corridor study for SR 322 that would address pedestrian safety and resiliency needs through the MPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Supplemental Planning Funds. However, this effort is preliminary, and the full scope of work has yet to be determined. Mr. Schultz added that PROTECT funds at the state level have been approved for the extension of Philipsburg Borough's flood wall along Moshannon Creek following the removal of the bridge.

Mrs. Hoffman then reviewed the next steps for the PROTECT application, which includes meeting with the MPO's consultant and the County's consultant who is working on the Hazard Mitigation Plan to discuss whether a county-wide Resilience Improvement Plan is viable. If the application is feasible, staff will develop an initial scope of work to begin the application process.

Motion was made by Mr. Forziat and seconded by Mr. Schafer to recommend to the Technical Committee that staff utilize consultant funds to move forward with a PROTECT Program Grant application, contingent on the viability of a grant application. The motion carried 4-0.

7.a. CCMPO Project List for Prioritization

The Projects Committee received a presentation from MPO staff regarding the initial project list that CCMPO staff compiled using the Centre County 2023-2026 and 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and 2050 Long Range Transportation Improvement Program. At its June meeting, the Projects Committee directed staff to organize the projects into categories to prepare the Committee for prioritizing projects to secure grant funds. The project list is categorized into the following categories:

- Safety/congestion
- Bridge
- Major highway/capacity adding
- Technology
- Resiliency
- Transit/Rail/Aviation
- Active Transportation

The Committee also instructed staff to identify projects that are no longer relevant. Staff has completed an initial review of the out-of-date projects, but further work is needed to determine which projects on the list are no longer necessary. Staff has not included these projects on the list and will continue to work with the municipalities to identify these projects. Mrs. Hoffman reviewed each of the project categories and the projects contained in those lists. Mrs. Hoffman noted that when staff reviewed the projects, the main improvement was identified, and the project was categorized into the appropriate category. For example, a project on Atherton Street that addresses safety and congestion may have a pedestrian and bicycle component, but it isn't the main concern; therefore, the project would be categorized under the safety and congestion category. The Committee had a detailed discussion regarding the projects in each category. There was consensus from the Committee that the initial project category list was sufficient. Discussion on this agenda item will take place at future meetings for further review and refinement.

7.b. Criteria for Project Prioritization

The Projects Committee received a presentation from MPO staff regarding the criteria that is proposed to be applied to each project for the project prioritization process. Staff recommends that the prioritization process be simple but repeatable and transparent. The criteria will be used for the current project prioritization process and will serve as a foundation for future grant funding opportunities. Furthermore, the criteria will contribute to developing the project list in the CCMPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Mrs. Hoffman communicated that each project category would include multiple criteria that would be used to inform, describe, or provide data related to the project. Some criteria will have data that can be assigned to the project, while other criteria will be linked to the objectives that the project aims to accomplish. Mrs. Hoffman stated that there is a set of general criteria that can be included for every project category – project sponsor, preliminary engineering/concept plans, and equity. The Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration put a high emphasis on equity, which for transportation projects, is how a community or project area is experiencing transportation disadvantages compared to other census tracts.

Mrs. Hoffman reviewed each criteria set for the project categories, which are as follows:

- Safety/congestion
 - PennDOT Network Screening (excess value)
 - Crash data (fatalities and serious injuries)
 - Traffic volume
- Major highway/capacity adding
 - Traffic volume
 - Economic development/impact
 - Travel time reliability
 - Intermodal access and efficiency
 - Environmental impact
 - Population growth projections
- Technology
 - Travel efficiency (travel times, congestion, delays)
 - Safety enhancement for motorists/pedestrians/cyclists
 - Environmental impact
 - Integration with existing infrastructure
 - Cost-effectiveness/scalability
- Bridges – use PennDOT's ranking and prioritization methods – list of Local Poor Condition Structures
- Active Transportation
 - Accessibility/Connectivity
 - Safety
 - Health/wellness impact
 - Environmental impact
 - Economic development/impact
- Resiliency
 - Redundancy/reliability of transportation network
 - Risk assessment/mitigation
 - Emergency response and evacuation
 - Reinforcement of infrastructure
 - Addresses climate impacts
 - Economic development/impact
- Transit/Rail/Aviation
 - Ridership demand
 - Accessibility/equity
 - Environmental impact
 - Intermodal access and efficiency
 - Cost effectiveness/efficiency
 - Economic development/impact
 - Asset management/state of good repair
 - Safety and security
 - Service reliability

The Projects Committee provided the following comments for staff to consider:

- Under the Safety/congestion project category, traffic volume should include the types of vehicles, not just the number of vehicles. This will help the Projects Committee better determine the safety aspect of the project.

- Under Active Transportation, the economic development criterion should also capture tourism.
- Under Resiliency, cost-effectiveness should be included as a criterion to capture information related to whether the project cost will be greater or less than the expected cost of natural hazard damages in the future.
- Staff should include economic impact and environmental impact as general criteria to be used in every project category.

Mrs. Hoffman explained that the Projects Committee will discuss weighting criteria for each project category in the future. Staff will work on refining the criteria for each project category and bring this back for discussion at the next meeting.

7.c. CCMPO Project Request Form

The Projects Committee received a report from MPO staff regarding the project request form. The CCMPO currently does not have a formal process in place for evaluating and considering new projects for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). As of now, projects are added to the plans upon request from planning regions, municipalities, CCMPO members, PennDOT, and other stakeholders. Additionally, including projects on the list is influenced by concerns and input raised during various meetings.

Staff developed an initial Project Consideration Application form that contains basic information such as municipal sponsor, project type, need/description, project location, project description, and additional project details. After discussion, the Projects Committee provided the following comments for staff to consider:

- Instead of “municipalities,” staff should change the box to “Entity/Organization/Interested Party” and include a box for the project's location.
- Staff should establish a procedure where, after the entity submits the Project Consideration Application and the Projects Committee reviews it, the entity offers additional details related to the project's associated criteria. This additional information will supply staff with data to include in the prioritization matrix and ensure transparency regarding the factors the Projects Committee will use to prioritize projects.

Staff will revise and update the Project Consideration Application form for review at the next meeting.

7. Member Reports

There were no member reports.

8. Announcements

Mrs. Hoffman reviewed the announcement page for the Committee’s information.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business, the August 16, 2024 CCMPO Projects Committee meeting was adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcella Hoffman
Recording Secretary