CENTRE REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (COG)  
TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE (TLU) COMMITTEE  

Monday, February 6, 2017  
12:15 p.m.  
Centre Region COG Building  

Minutes

Transportation & Land Use Committee Members Present:

Theresa Lafer, Vice Chair  
Steve Lyncha  
Janet Whitaker  
Todd Kirsten  
Frank Harden  
Doug Erickson for Jeff Luck  
Rob Cooper  

State College Borough  
College Township  
Ferguson Township  
Halfmoon Township  
Harris Township  
Patton Township  
Pennsylvania State University (PSU)

Others Present:

Jim May  
Tom Zilla  
Trish Meek  
Mark Boeckel  
Greg Kausch  
Sarah Dunmire  
Lyssa Cromell  
Andrew Artz  
Mike Bloom  
Cecily Zhu  
Jim Steff  
Pam Adams  
Katherine Watt  

Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)  
CRPA  
CRPA  
CRPA  
CRPA  
CRPA  
CRPA (Intern)  
Centre County Planning/Community Development Office (CCPCDO)  
PSU Transportation Services  
Centre Region COG  
Centre Region COG  
Bailiwick News

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Lafer called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

2. CITIZENS’ COMMENTS

Refuse and Recycling Administrator Pam Adams presented information about the COG’s new organics collection program and the move towards “zero waste” Committee meetings.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Mr. Kirsten and seconded by Mr. Lyncha to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2017 Transportation and Land Use (TLU) Committee meeting, as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

4. OPEN DISCUSSION FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

There was no discussion.
5. ASSESSMENT OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

CRPA Director Jim May explained that at its January 9, 2017 meeting, the TLU Committee requested that staff examine actual projects that have been through the land development review process, rather than test projects or scenarios. He presented a list of potential projects for study (included in the agenda), noting that land development plans and requests to expand the Regional Growth Boundary (RGB) and Sewer Service Area (SSA) are the areas over which the municipalities have the most influence.

As a member of the development community, Mr. Lyncha spoke about his experience working on the Weis Gas N’ Go/Dunkin Donuts project in Ferguson Township. Based on this experience, he suggested it may be beneficial for developers to time the submission of land development plans around the review timelines of state agencies. In this instance, land development plans were not submitted to Ferguson Township until after the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) had been completed, and design for the land development was not initiated until after the Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) application had been submitted to PennDOT, since this was identified as the biggest potential hurdle.

Mr. Kirsten asked if it would be possible to survey the developers of recent large-scale projects such as The Metropolitan and The Fraser Centre to help differentiate the areas over which the municipalities have influence for projects of that size. Mr. May explained that State College Borough has been asked to provide feedback on these projects, but the development review process in the Borough is somewhat different than in the other Centre Region municipalities. Ms. Lafer noted that both The Fraser Centre and The Metropolitan moved smoothly through the Borough’s review and approval process.

Mr. Lyncha remarked that the land development review and approval process in Pennsylvania is somewhat unique. He suggested reaching out to Sheetz and Weis Markets for an assessment of how the review process works in Pennsylvania, and how it differs outside of the state.

Mr. Harden suggested the need to generate a list of the steps required for development plan approval and the typical timeframes for each. In response, Mr. May explained that the municipalities provide general guidance, but there is currently no standardized list; generally, the land development process in the Centre Region tends to be consultant led.

CRPA staff will begin drafting an assessment of the review process for discussion at the TLU Committee’s May meeting.

6. BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY\textsuperscript{SM} DESIGNATION UPDATE

CRPA Senior Transportation Planner Trish Meek presented the Feedback Report from the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) related to the State College-Centre Region’s November 2016 redesignation as a Bronze level Bicycle Friendly Community\textsuperscript{SM} (BFC\textsuperscript{SM}). As Ms. Meek explained, the BFC\textsuperscript{SM} application has been reformatted since 2012, and scores are auto-generated based upon the boxes checked. Because many of the questions require yes/no answers, there is concern that the scoring may not reflect “soon to be adopted” bicycle planning/projects. Furthermore, many of the recommendations in the Feedback Report are auto-generated, raising concerns that the feedback provided may not be responsive to open-ended portions of the application. These concerns have been discussed with the BFC\textsuperscript{SM} contact at the League, and one positive outcome is that a professional relationship is being built.

Ms. Meek noted that based on discussions with the League, the findings of the Feedback Report should be treated as guidance and not as a replacement for local bike planning. She recommended the Region continue to focus its efforts on implementing the high priority actions from the Centre Region Bike Plan and reported that during the coming year, additional bike education programs will be offered in partnership with Centre
Region Parks and Recreation (CRPR), and CRPA staff will be participating in the development of a pilot “complete streets” program in State College Borough.

In response to a question from Mr. Kirsten regarding areas in which the Region’s scores have improved, Ms. Meek explained there is no way to compare the 2012 and 2016 results because the BFC℠ application and scoring systems have been completely revamped. She further explained, however, that because the scoring system has become more technical, it may be possible to narrow down a list of projects on which to focus to attain a Silver level designation. For comparison, Ms. Meek will ask the League to provide the average Silver level score for each section of the application, and she will reach out to Silver level BFCs to help gauge where the State College-Centre Region stands.

Mr. Kirsten expressed concern that the League’s BFC Public Survey lacked clarity with regard to whether the questions applied to the individual municipalities or the Region. Ms. Meek agreed, noting the League’s survey was problematic because the State College-Centre Region is a multi-municipal BFC℠.

With regard to the idea of “bike shop deserts,” Ms. Lafer felt that consideration should be given to the size of the community and its rural surroundings. As one possible solution, she suggested a European model in which kiosks containing emergency bike repair parts could be located throughout the Region. As an alternative, Ms. Meek felt it might be possible to convince area businesses to install bike repair stations, similar to those in State College Borough.

Mr. Cooper asked if the scoring system might favor warm weather communities. In response, Ms. Meek said she did not believe so, since the application no longer includes questions about average daily temperature or average annual precipitation by season.

Mr. Harden cautioned against chasing a moving target with regard to the Silver level BFC℠ designation and suggested focusing on the bike initiatives that are best for the Centre Region.

Mr. Kirsten also felt the focus should remain on issues of local importance, such as bicycle safety, regional connections, and implementing recommendations in the Centre Region Bike Plan.

Ms. Whitaker cautioned against gauging the success of a bicycle program on the size of the community and recommended looking at communities of all sizes when researching initiatives that could be of benefit in the Centre Region.

Ms. Lafer observed that despite its limitations, the Feedback Report does provide ideas upon which the Region can build.

The consensus of the TLU Committee was to continue to focus on bicycle planning/projects that most benefit our community, rather than on a narrow set of projects aimed at attaining Silver level BFC℠ status.

7. REVIEW OF THE PENNDOT CONNECTS POLICY

CRPA Principal Transportation Planner Tom Zilla provided a presentation about the new PennDOT Connects policy, instituted by Pennsylvania Secretary of Transportation Leslie Richards in December 2016. As Mr. Zilla explained, the new policy will require changes in how PennDOT, the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO), and municipal officials work together during the project development and delivery process, particularly in soliciting and documenting community input much earlier in the process. PennDOT Connects emphasizes the importance of having community plans in place to document local needs (i.e. comprehensive plans and planning studies), and new project screening forms will be used to document community desires. Bicycle/pedestrian accommodations, transit access, stormwater management, green
infrastructure, planning studies, and contextual issues will be taken into account. Project cost will be a consideration, but will not be the sole reason to disregard improvements. The expected outcomes are an expanded leadership role for MPOs, increased community satisfaction, improved communication with the municipalities, improved project delivery, and more accurate programming on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Implementation of PennDOT Connects is currently focused on projects on the 2017-2020 TIP that have not started into the design phase. However, the new policy is expected to “catch up” with the normal TIP update cycle, and future projects will be assessed prior to being included on the TIP.

Ms. Lafer observed that given legislative efforts to eliminate small MPOs in recent years, it is encouraging that the CCMPO and municipal officials are being given more influence over local projects.

In response to a question from Mr. Kirsten regarding the timing of right-of-way acquisition in PennDOT’s project development process, Mr. Zilla explained that the need for right-of-way is considered during the preliminary engineering (PE) phase of projects, but PennDOT cannot contact property owners until there is an approved final design. Because PennDOT is able to take property through eminent domain, Mr. Zilla could not recall a highway or bridge project that was stopped due to an inability to acquire right-of-way.

Mr. Erickson added that at the municipal level, right-of-way acquisition is considered during the PE phase, but it is up to the policy-making body to decide early on whether it would be willing to exercise eminent domain for the project. As an example, he cited Patton Township’s Circleville Path Phase II project, which was discontinued because the Board of Supervisors did not want to exercise eminent domain.

Mr. Kirsten acknowledged that acquiring right-of-way for local projects could be more of a challenge. He recalled an example in Halfmoon Township in which property owners were asked if they would be willing to dedicate right-of-way for a connecting bike path, but due to a lack of property owner interest, the Township did not pursue design work for the path.

Mr. Erickson asked how PennDOT Connects might impact the Centre County Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which must be prioritized and fiscally constrained. In response, Mr. Zilla said his impression is that Secretary Richards’ intent is for this collaboration process to take place during the next update of the LRTP, before new projects are added.

Ms. Lafer noted the benefit of early input, but expressed concern about potential shifts in local priorities over the course of multi-year projects. On a related noted, Mr. Erickson expressed concern about how community input might play into scoping changes once projects are underway.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

The next TLU Committee meeting will be held on Monday, March 6, 2017 at 12:15 p.m. in the Forum Room of the Centre Region COG Building.

The next meeting of the CCMPO Coordinating Committee will be held on Tuesday, February 28, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the College Township Municipal Building. Agenda items will include the election of officers, a presentation from Centre County Commissioner Michael Pipe regarding the optional $5 vehicle registration fee, a project status report from PennDOT, action on the repurposing of un obligated federal earmarked funding on the 2017-2020 TIP, action on a TIP amendment for the Route 322/144/45 Corridors Data Refresh project, and a presentation about PennDOT Connects.
Mr. Harden observed that *PennDOT Connects* presents a good opportunity for Harris Township to coordinate with PennDOT on the implementation of transportation recommendations in the Boalsburg Small Area Plan.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kirsten moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Harden. There being no further business, the February 6, 2017 meeting of the COG Transportation and Land Use (TLU) Committee was adjourned at 1:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyssa Cromell
Recording Secretary