

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

Wednesday, September 6, 2023

9:30 a.m.

Hybrid Meeting

Minutes

Voting Members

Ray Stolinas	Centre County Planning and Community Development Office (CCPCDO)
David Lomison	Centre County Office of Transportation (CCOT)
Don Franson	College Township
Doug Erickson	Patton Township
Mark Lively	Upper Bald Eagle Valley Planning Region
Joel Myers	Penns Valley Planning Region
Rick Dillon	Nittany Valley Planning Region
Jim May	Centre Regional Planning Agency
Frank Hampton	PennDOT Central Office
Mark Schultz	PennDOT District 2-0

Others Present

Jim Saylor	Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)
Anne Messner	CRPA
Greg Kausch	CRPA
Marcella Hoffman	CRPA
Xochi Confer	Centre County Planning and Community Development Office (CCPCDO)
Kevin James	Michael Baker International
Lyssa Cromell	Centre Area Transportation Authority
Rich Deen	Jacobs

1. Call to Order

As Mr. Seybert was not in attendance, Mr. Lively called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. Mrs. Hoffman conducted a roll call to ensure the members could hear and be heard.

2. Approval of Minutes – June 7, 2023 Technical Committee Minutes

Motion was made by Mr. Dillon and seconded by Mr. May to approve the June 7, 2023 Technical Committee minutes. The motion carried 10-0 (Messrs. Seybert, Piper, Harrigan, Robbins, and Gribble and Mes. Merrow, Barbin, and Miller were not in attendance).

3. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

4. New Agenda Items

There were no new agenda items requested.

5. State College Area Connector (SCAC) Project Status Report

The Technical Committee received a report from Mr. James regarding the status of the State College Area Connector (SCAC) project draft Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study. He reported that the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Report was finalized in July and was posted to the PennDOT SCAC Project website in August. Next steps for this project include moving into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) phase which begins preliminary engineering and environmental clearance work. PennDOT has drafted a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement, which was submitted to the Federal Highway Administration for their review. During the NEPA process, the three recommended alternatives will be refined into alignments, along with identifying specific impacts associated with each

alignment. At the end of this process, one alignment will be recommended to move forward into the final design phase as well as the construction phase. In spring of 2024, PennDOT will host another round of public meetings to present the refined alignments to the public.

6. 2023-2026 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Revisions

a. High Friction Surface Treatments

The Technical Committee received a brief presentation from Mr. Saylor regarding a proposal from PennDOT to allocate \$220,000 in funding from the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) to add projects to apply High Friction Surface Treatments at two locations: a segment of Centre Hall Mountain Road (SR 144) and a segment of eastbound SR 322 on Port Mountain. Because these funds are adding new projects to the TIP, the CCMPO must formally approve the revisions.

With no discussion, *motion was made by Mr. Hampton and seconded by Mr. May for the Technical Committee to recommend that the Coordinating Committee approve the revisions to the 2023-2026 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program. The motion carried 10-0.*

b. Carbon Reduction Program Projects

The Technical Committee received a report from Mr. Saylor regarding a proposal from PennDOT to allocate \$865,061 in funding from the Carbon Reduction Program line item to add projects that will advance priorities identified in the Regional Operations Plan. These projects include the installation of Traffic Counter Stations and cameras at several locations to respond to traffic control needs and for intermittent and weather-related congestion. In addition, the data collected can be utilized to update a CCMPO regional Travel Demand Model.

With no discussion, *motion was made by Mr. Lomison and seconded by Mr. Schultz for the Technical Committee to recommend that the Coordinating Committee approve the revisions to the 2023-2026 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program. The motion carried 10-0.*

c. CATA Reimagine Project

The Technical Committee received a report from Mr. Kausch regarding the proposal to add a new project under a new MPMS number for the 2023 TIP to properly account for the federal Section 5307 funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). CATA kicked off its Reimagine Project with consultant assistance from Stantec in July 2021, and concluded it in January 2023. During this time, CATA received federal funding that was not added to the TIP at that time. MPO staff propose to include these funds on the TIP to properly account for these funds, allow the remainder to be drawn down, and permit the grant to be properly closed out.

Motion was made by Mr. Hampton and seconded by Mr. Schultz for the Technical Committee to recommend that the Coordinating Committee approve the revisions to the 2023-2026 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program. The motion carried 10-0.

7. Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) Program

The Technical Committee received a report regarding the proposed review process for the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) Program. The TASA Program provides funds to construct pedestrian and bicycle facilities to improve access to public transportation, create safe routes to school, incorporate community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management, provide environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity, create trail projects that serve a transportation purpose, while promoting safety and mobility, and provide for vulnerable road user safety assessment program projects. The Program has continued to be funded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), maintains all previously eligible uses of the set-aside, while adding new eligibility for vulnerable road user safety assessment activities. It also expands the range of eligible applicants to include nonprofit entities, small MPOs, and State DOTs.

Ms. Messner went on to explain that draft applications were due to PennDOT on July 17, 2023. This year draft applications meetings are to be completed by September 14, 2023 between the project sponsor,

PennDOT District, and MPO staff. This allows for a discussion on the project and to provide comments to improve the application prior to submission on September 15, 2023. It is anticipated candidate projects in Centre County will be provided to the CCMPO for review starting September 25, 2023. MPO comments are due December 1, 2023. Therefore, the MPO review will need to be completed before the end of October 2023 to be presented to the Technical and Coordinating Committees.

MPO staff recommends that the following process be utilized to facilitate the review process:

1. Form a TASA Review Committee comprised of members from PennDOT District 2-0, PennDOT Central Office, Centre County Planning and Community Development Office (CCPCDO), Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA), and two members of the Technical Committee representing entities that do not submit an application.
2. The TASA Review Committee will review, rank, and provide comments about applications using the PennDOT statewide evaluation criteria in October.
3. The Technical Committee will review the TASA Review Committee's recommendations in November and will consider providing recommendations to the Coordinating Committee.
4. The Coordinating Committee will consider approving the recommendations, and MPO staff will submit comments to PennDOT after the November Coordinating Committee meeting.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Dillon and Mr. Myers agreed to represent the Technical Committee on the TA Review Committee.

Motion was made by Mr. Harrigan and seconded by Mr. Lively to recommend that the Coordinating Committee approve a process to review and comment about candidate TASA projects in Centre County and nominate Rick Dillon and Joel Myers for the TASA Review Committee. The motion carried 10-0.

8. PennDOT's Vulnerable Road User (VRU) Safety Assessment

The Technical Committee received a presentation from Ms. Messner regarding a summary of the statewide VRU Safety Assessment, which is one of many tools to improve safety for people to walk, bike, and roll in Pennsylvania. The assessment is underway and the following screening factors were used: fatal and suspected severe injury crashes involving VRUs, other crashes involving VRUs, equity measures, and latent demand for walking and bicycling trips.

Ms. Messner communicated that the screening results were shared as part of the consultation with interested parties regarding their pedestrian, bicyclist, and rolling safety concerns and potential measures to address those concerns. Participants provided input to PennDOT's consultant leading this project regarding their concerns for the identified high risk areas, as well as potential recommendations to address those challenges. In addition, public comment for the high risk areas is being sought through an online survey, open until September 8, 2023. It was noted by Mr. Schultz, PennDOT District 2-0, that MPO staff did bring up concerns to the consultant regarding the limitations of the report and that there were only two locations in Centre County identified as high risk areas.

In response to a question from Mr. Dillon, Ms. Messner stated that unfortunately, the analysis of the VRU Safety Assessment does not prioritize Amish buggies. Mr. Schultz added that during the safety meetings with PennDOT and its consultant, there was a discussion about how, when, and where to incorporate Amish buggies as well as electric vehicles into the VRU Safety Assessment; however, for this round of assessment, these VRUs did not apply.

9. CCMPO Strategic Plan

The Technical Committee received a detailed presentation from Mr. Saylor regarding the draft Strategic Implementation Plan and the draft Bylaws that have been developed as a result of several CCMPO Strategic Plan Implementation Subcommittee meetings over the summer. With the help of the Subcommittee members, CCMPO staff reviewed the recommended actions in the plan, prioritized them, and evaluated the time, effort, and required sequencing to implement the actions. Implementing some of the actions will require changes to

the CCMPO Bylaws. Per the current Bylaws, proposed changes to the Bylaws cannot be voted upon at the first meeting at which the changes are presented.

Mr. Saylor explained that the high priority implementation steps for this fall include revising the Bylaws and the COG budget process. He explained that the proposed Bylaws include the revision of the Technical Committee structure from an 18-member body to a 6-member body to help with Committee representation and to help the Technical Committee focus on technical aspects instead of reviewing everything that the Coordinating Committee reviews. In addition, the Bylaw revisions include revising the member appointments from a two-year appointment to a four-year appointment, with the appointments being staggered to help retain institutional knowledge and to help lessen the workload of staff when the reappointments are made. Lastly, the Bylaws propose the addition of a Projects Committee; however, this proposal is conditional on whether the Transportation Grants Specialist is approved through the budget process. Mr. Saylor communicated that a focus area for implementation of the Strategic Plan is the request for a Transportation Grants Specialist through the COG Budget as well as the County budget. In addition to this request, staff have asked for funding for consulting support to aid the Transportation Grants Specialist as well as MPO staff on the update of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

Mr. Saylor then reviewed the proposed assignments of tasks between the Technical, Coordinating, and Projects Committees and then went on to outline the proposed member terms and appointment schedule. Mr. Saylor also provided an overview of the programs for consideration for the proposed Projects Committee. He briefly reviewed the summary of the deferred implementation items that will be considered for adoption in 2025. Lastly, Mr. Saylor reviewed the remaining timeline of the implementation of the first part of the Strategic Plan and the adoption of the 2024 MPO budget.

In response to a question from Mr. Dillon regarding Projects Committee responsibilities, Mr. Saylor explained that much of the priorities of the Projects Committee will come from the TIP, the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and the Long Range Transportation Plan; however, there is a lot still to be determined. Mr. May added that a standing committee is needed to go after discretionary funds and reiterated that a Projects Committee can only be supported with the addition of a Transportation Grants Specialist position. He also stated that there should be a core group of Project Committee members and the membership should not change annually.

Mr. Lively suggested that staff have the Centre Region municipalities start their initial term for two years with their next reappointment occurring in 2026, instead of the member agencies. That way the elected officials from the municipalities are being appointed directly after a municipal election in odd-numbered years.

Mr. Erickson stated that with how small the Projects Committee is proposed to be, he felt that CATA would be an outlier on this committee since they don't have much of an impact on Township road projects. Mr. Saylor stated that CATA is a funding partner of the MPO and has been active in pursuing funding opportunities under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) discretionary grant programs. Mr. Erickson suggested that staff consider developing an appeals process for municipalities to pursue if their project is not recommended for funding by the Projects Committee. Mr. Saylor explained that the Project Committee would prioritize the projects, which would then be reviewed by the Technical Committee, who would then recommend that the Coordinating Committee approve the prioritizations, nominations, and processes. Mr. Saylor confirmed that a municipality would approach the Coordinating Committee to ask them to reconsider prioritizing a project for grant funding opportunities.

10. Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Technical Committee members received a presentation regarding the first draft of the FY 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which lists certain policy actions that must be taken by the CCMPO as well as work tasks to be completed by the CRPA, CATA, and the Centre County Planning and Community Development Office (CCPCDO) on behalf of the MPO. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and PennDOT have requested that MPOs and RPOs prepare a one-year UPWP for FY 2024-25 and return to a two-year format the following year. This one-year approach will help to better phase the review process in succeeding cycles. As of August 30, program guidance for the preparation of the UPWP was not available. It is assumed that adoption of the UPWP will still be required no later than January 31, 2024. To

comply with this schedule, CCMPO staff have moved ahead to create a draft UPWP ahead of the guidance, assuming nominal funding increases compared to previous funding years.

Mr. Saylor reviewed the task priorities, which staff assume will remain consistent with the current UPWP. Staff are also assuming a minor funding increase, and the draft UPWP allows room for the implementation of the CCMPO Strategic Plan. The Technical Committee did not offer staff any comments regarding additional work tasks or candidate special studies.

11. CCMPO Draft Calendar Year (CY) 2024 Budget

The Technical Committee received a presentation regarding the CCMPO's 2024 CY Budget to the Centre County Government, the six Centre Region municipal funding partners, and the Centre Region Council of Governments (COG) for consideration. There are several major areas of uncertainty, including the funding information for the 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) not being available for the development of the budget, the request to hire a Grant Specialist as part of the recommendations from the Strategic Plan and the BIL Subcommittee, and a request for matching funds to support the update to the Long Range Transportation Plan 2050. Expenditures for the 2024 budget are proposed at \$1,211,519, with 29% of that amount accounting for recommendations from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Subcommittee and Strategic Plan. This budget is still a work in progress and changes are anticipated as guidance for the 2024-2025 UPWP becomes available.

In response to a question from Mr. Lively, Mr. Saylor communicated that MPO staff does not have concurrence from the Centre Region municipalities or Centre County regarding the severe increase in their contributions; however, staff has had many discussions with all entities regarding the numbers, so the municipalities and Centre County should not be surprised by the increases. MPO staff developed the plan based on the BIL Subcommittee's recommendations, with confirmation from the Technical and Coordinating Committees. He stated that staff knows this is a heavy lift and is certainly expensive, but the proposed budget is the baseline of what it would take to establish a successful and ongoing grant program to drive results.

12. Member Reports

Mr. Lively communicated that Port Matilda Borough has put out the final bid for a project to fix the flooding issues near the Borough building and railroad tracks that Mr. Lively had reported on many years ago. The project should be completed by the end of the month.

13. Announcements

The next Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at the Centre Region COG building via hybrid meeting technology.

Mr. Saylor called out several support letters that MPO staff provided to several municipalities between the June and September Technical Committee meetings.

14. Adjournment

There being no further business, the September 6, 2023 CCMPO Technical Committee meeting was adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcella Hoffman
Recording Secretary