

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

**Tuesday, February 27, 2007  
6:00 pm  
Patton Township Municipal Building**

**Minutes**

**Voting Members Present:**

Ron Buckalew	Centre Regional Planning Commission (CRPC)
Bob Corman	Penns Valley Planning Region
John Elnitski	Benner Township
Chris Exarchos	Centre County
Elizabeth Goreham, Vice Chair	State College Borough
Dan Klees, Chair	College Township
Chris Lee	Harris Township
Karen Michael (for Kevin Kline)	PennDOT District 2-0 Office
George Pytel	Ferguson Township
Jadine Reese	Upper Bald Eagle Planning Region
Dean Roberts (for Tom TenEyck)	PennDOT Central Office
Frank Royer	Spring Township
John Saylor	Centre County
Jack Shannon	Moshannon Valley Planning Region
John Spychalski	Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA)
John Yecina	Mountaintop Planning Region

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Rob Cooper	Penn State University
Frank Halderman	Bellefonte Borough

**Others Present:**

Bob Crum	Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)
Trish Meek	CRPA
Tom Zilla	CRPA
Greg Kausch	CRPA
Lori Shingler	CRPA – Recording Secretary
Mike Bloom	Centre County Planning and Community Development Office
Michelle Barbin	Mountaintop Planning Region
Jim Eckert	Senator Jake Corman’s Office
Mike Joseph	Centre Daily Times
Tammy Ammerman	Representative Mike Hanna’s Office
Bert Kisner	Citizen
Cliff Warner	Harris Township
Mike Rose	Representative Kerry Benninghoff’s Office
Ann Glaser	Citizen
Leon Marshall	Howard Borough

**1. Call to Order**

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Mr. Klees called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 2. Approval of Minutes

*Mr. Pytel made a motion to approve the January 23, 2007 Coordinating Committee minutes. Mr. Corman seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.*

### 3. Citizens' Comments

There were no citizen comments.

### 4. Final Draft FY 2007-08 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Zilla reminded the Committee that the UPWP is adopted each year in February. It lists staff work tasks as well as key policy decisions that the Coordinating Committee must make throughout the year.

New tasks in the 2007-08 UPWP include preparing the 2009-2012 TIP, and participating in projects that are on the current TIP. Staff will be implementing any changes in MPO structure and procedures that come from the Performance Review Committee, and will participate in statewide workgroups for "smart transportation" and "right-sizing." After the opening of I-99, staff will be conducting traffic counts to determine impacts to the local road network.

Mr. Zilla also reminded the Committee that at the January meeting, two supplemental planning projects were approved as priorities, and subsequently submitted to the PennDOT Central Office for review. He reported that final approval has been received for both of the following projects:

- VII.A. – Coordinate Land Use and Transportation Planning
- VII.B. – Assessment of Public Transit Service in Centre County

Mr. Zilla reviewed the UPWP development schedule, stating that in November, the MPO reviewed a planning priorities letter from PennDOT as well as potential supplemental planning funds projects. In January, the MPO reviewed the first draft of the UPWP, and identified the priority supplemental planning projects to submit for funding. The final UPWP was presented to the Technical Committee on February 14, and that committee recommended adoption of the Work Program.

Mr. Lee noted that there was a change in the UPWP between January and February. Mr. Zilla responded by stating that he added language to indicate staff's participation with SEDA-COG in the Regional Economic Development Transportation and Land Use effort – a statewide initiative. Several years ago, the Governor and several state agencies sponsored a series of workshops in an effort to better coordinate economic development, transportation funding, and land use policies. Planners and local elected officials provided input to this process. As a result, it was recommended that the economic development agencies take the lead in identifying potential strategies and actions. These entities submitted proposals to PennDOT, and in November the first steering committee meeting was held. Mr. Zilla stated that this initiative will present some challenges based on the number of municipalities involved, competing interests in the Commonwealth, and the shortage of available funds.

*Mr. Pytel made a motion to approve the 2007-08 Unified Planning Work Program. Mr. Spsychalski seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

**5. Centre County Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) 2007 Update**

Ms. Meek reminded the Committee that the LRTP was adopted last year, but revisions must be made this year to assure consistency with the SAFETEA-LU legislation. Final rules were published by FHWA on February 14. There are several compliance items that must be addressed before the end of the year, and tonight's agenda item deals with one of these – the Public Participation Plan. This Public Participation Plan must be in compliance with public laws, environmental justice, the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Current outreach techniques include public meetings, CNET, mailings and emails, and others. Public participation is actively solicited for major activities, including the LRTP, the TIP, the Public Participation Plan, and special studies. The types of items addressed for each of those is included in the Public Participation Plan.

Ms. Meek said that staff is recommending additional public participation techniques. There is an ongoing requirement to review the Public Participation Plan, and staff is recommending that this be done annually. In addition, staff will review Centre County demographics to ensure that information is reaching protected populations. Mailing lists will be enhanced, and the website will be made interactive. An annual report will be developed, along with additional informational brochures. Staff will conduct surveys in an effort to find other ways for the public to become more involved in the process. It is also recommended that environmental justice efforts be increased.

Review comments have been received from FHWA, but are not yet included in the Plan. They would like to see staff take credit for the activities that they are already doing, and enhance other existing activities. Added mapping for elderly and low-income populations is also recommended. Comments were also received from one of the Technical Committee representatives.

Ms. Meek reviewed the Plan development schedule, saying that in March staff will be asking the MPO for authorization to advertise the Public Participation Plan for a 45-day public comment period.

Mr. Pytel asked if monitoring air quality was part of this study. Ms. Meek said that is completely separate from the Public Participation Plan element. She said that with the updates to the LRTP, the MPO will be looking at air-quality exempt projects only. In March, staff will be presenting new projects that were recommended during the last public comment period. None of those projects would trip the threshold to re-run the air quality model.

Mr. Lee asked what question is being asked of the public, and if it was what projects they advocate. Ms. Meek said that the Public Participation Plan governs how staff gathers input from the general public. When staff seeks public comment, the question is whether there are other things that can be done as part of the process to gather additional input. Mr. Lee said that the purpose of the Plan is to get input. Ms. Meek said that the purpose is to lay the foundation for how the MPO gets input for all MPO activities. Mr. Lee asked what question staff was asking the public to answer. Ms. Meek said that they were asking if there were other things they could do in the form of outreach to gather input. Mr. Lee recommended that prompts be given when the public is asked a question.

**6. PennDOT District 2-0 Bridge Program Presentation**

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Ms. Michael said that since the TIP update is just beginning, this is the appropriate time to look at bridges and how the ranking criteria can be used.

Ms. Michael said that in the 1950s and 60s, the concentration was on building infrastructure, but not much attention was placed on maintenance or inspection of existing bridges. Due to several catastrophic collapses, the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1968 was enacted. Out of this legislation came the National Bridge Inspection Standards (NBIS) in 1971. This established national policies for inspection procedures, qualification of personnel, and inventory. NBIS inspections record the condition of the structure, and yield a structural sufficiency rating.

Even with the NBIS in place, there were problems. Bridge repair and replacement needs far exceeded available funding. In addition, NBIS activity was limited to Federal Aid Highway bridges, without provisions for local roads. These concerns led to the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1978. This established a funding mechanism to providing federal funds for bridge replacement. It also required that all public bridges over 20 feet in length had to be inspected and inventoried in accordance with NBIS.

Ms. Michael said that in 1983, Pennsylvania established the Billion Dollar Bridge Program, which developed criteria for bridge replacement. The criteria specified that the greatest need bridges, or bridges that are posted or closed, were to be replaced first.

Ms. Michael presented a chart showing that 15-20 bridges are replaced in District 2-0 each year. Between one and three of those are in Centre County. She said that one of the areas that PennDOT looks at is which bridges are structurally deficient. The nationwide average for structurally deficient bridges is 10 percent, and that is Pennsylvania's goal by the year 2010. Overall, District 2-0's average right now is 30 percent. In Centre County, it is about 13 percent.

Mr. Klees asked if 30 percent was typical for northeastern states. Ms. Michael replied that it was.

Mr. Exarchos asked if structurally deficient bridges were safe to use. Ms. Michael said that they were. Bridges are ranked on a scale of 1-7. It takes a rank of 4 to make a bridge structurally deficient, but this does not necessarily mean that the bridge will be posted.

Ms. Michael said that there are 433 bridges in Centre County. Of those, 170 are over 50 years old. A third of those are structurally deficient. She said that Centre County has 60 bridges that are structurally deficient right now, and PennDOT only replaces one to three of those per year. It will take a long time to replace all deficient structures. She said that the Governor and Secretary have allocated bridge preservation funds for the past two years, which is to be used to make these bridges non-structurally deficient through small rehabilitation projects. The number of local bridges was presented, broken down by municipality. Ms. Michael showed charts depicting structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges in each township.

Ms. Michael reviewed the specific bridges that would be done in the near future, as well as their cost and bid let dates. These included:

- Spruce Run Bridge (Spring Mills)
- Bush Hollow Bridge (Unionville)
- Township Road 510 Bridge (Penns Creek)
- Penns Creek Bridge (Spring Mills)
- Moshannon Creek Bridge (Black Moshannon)
- Marsh Creek Bridge (Milesburg)
- Muddy Creek Bridge (Spring Mills)
- Township Road 523 Back Road Bridge (Miles Township)

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There are also several bridges that have just been programmed with funds in 2007 and 2008:

- SR 2014 Laurel Run Bridge Replacement near Spring Mills
- SR 3023 Laurel Run Bridge Replacement near Port Matilda
- Township Bridge 468 Bitner Hollow Bridge replacement near Spring Mills

Ms. Michael said that this background leads into discussion of the LRTP, and what should be looked at when ranking bridge projects. When the bridges have been ranked, they are coming in very low compared to the other projects. Staff is wondering if there are better criteria to use for bridges. Mr. Lee suggested that something be added to the criteria about catastrophic failure.

Mr. Zilla said that the Project Ranking Committee will be looking at bridge and bike/pedestrian projects during this LRTP update. Through that process, staff is hoping to get a better idea of how to handle bridge projects in the future. He said that Committee members can provide input tonight, or by email or phone. He felt that the criteria would have to be adjusted at some point, or additional steps added, in order to make these decisions. Funding issues will also need to be considered. Staff feels that some of the bridge problems are happening faster than the MPO can deal with them, particularly emergency situations or closed bridges.

Mr. Klees noted that there are different categories of funding, and asked where bridge monies usually come from. Ms. Michael said that the bridge allocations from each of the MPOs or RPOs are generally used. However, PennDOT is not opposed to using county funds or betterment funds in order to complete bridge projects. On the Route 45 bridge near Spring Mills, emergency funds were used.

Ms. Goreham asked how often bridges are inspected. Ms. Michael said that bridges must be inspected every two years. If a bridge does not meet certain criteria, it is inspected more frequently.

Ms. Goreham then asked how one would notice safety issues, and if that would show in the sufficiency rating. Ms. Michael said that previously PennDOT used the sufficiency rating, but found it did not give a true picture of what was happening with a bridge over time. The structural deficiency criteria are much better indicators.

Mr. Elnitski said that the MPO needs to talk to their representatives. He said that \$780,000 was spent out of the capital budget for new hangars at the University Park Airport. Perhaps these funds should have been used for bridge safety needs. Ms. Michael thought that there has been a shift in thinking and agreed that the more the word got out there about the importance of bridge safety, the better. Mr. Elnitsky noted that another \$500,000 is slated for a new tower at University Park Airport. He said that he did not know if the capital budget money was going where it should be.

Mr. Saylor asked who was responsible for inspecting local bridges, saying that at one time the county did that. Ms. Michael thought the county hires a consultant to inspect local bridges.

Mr. Pytel referred to an experiment in Ferguson Township where a bridge was built of wood rather than of concrete. He thought that the bridge was still in good shape, and wondered if that practice was still being used. Ms. Michael said that she did not know of wood bridges being constructed under any of the current programs.

Ms. Reese commented that bridge inspections are paid for out each municipality's liquid fuel money. The municipality does not even arrange for it. She asked about the communication between PennDOT and the municipality when a bridge becomes structurally deficient. Ms. Michael said that if a consultant does an inspection, they will contact PennDOT's bridge unit if there is a problem. Usually the township is

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contacted, but she did not know if happens right when the bridge is deemed structurally deficient. Ms. Reese asked that the communication between the consultant and PennDOT put the township back in the loop. Mr. Zilla noted that the same issue was brought up at the Technical Committee. Mr. Bloom has suggested that the MPO staff should take more responsibility for monitoring the conditions of bridges and serving as a communication point. Other MPOs and RPOs are doing this and Mr. Bloom has good ideas about how to accomplish this.

Mr. Lee said that another criterion could be the effects on traffic if a bridge is closed. He asked why the cost is so high to fix bridges. Ms. Michael said that PennDOT is seeing 30 percent higher asphalt costs now compared to last summer. Steel is also very expensive and in addition to that, there are not many bidders for bridge jobs. Ms. Reese said that she was told that the design was one of the biggest costs in replacing bridges. Ms. Michael said that design can cost as much as construction on some small bridges.

### 7. Funding for Pennsylvania's Transportation System

Mr. Zilla reported that in 2005 the Governor created the Transportation Funding and Reform Commission (TFRC) to study operations, structure and funding for transit, highways and bridges. This was part of the effort he made to flex highway and bridge funds to transit authorities across the Commonwealth, as well as providing additional highway and bridge funds. The TFRC completed their report in 2006. Mr. Zilla said that in 2007, flex funding for transit is no longer available. This has resulted in many transit authorities cutting back service and raising fares.

The charge of the TFRC included operational audits of several transit providers. The Commission was to look at recommended levels and sources of funding, identifying sources that are reliable, dedicated, inflation-sensitive and adaptive. The TFRC was also charged with evaluating the relationship of growth and development patterns to transportation systems, and determine how to encourage patterns that are easily served by transit.

The TFRC made several recommendations in their report. One of these is to restructure the state public transportation funding program. This includes several components:

- Establish a new dedicated transit trust fund
- Streamline transit funding structure
- Link funding to need and performance
- Strengthen transit accountability

Another recommendation was to provide an additional \$820 million annually for transit. Mr. Zilla said that this would nearly double the amount available now. This money is proposed to come from the following:

- \$576 million from increasing the realty transfer tax
- \$184 million by providing authority to local governments to raise revenues through dedicated sales, earned income, or realty transfer taxes
- \$60 million from instituting reforms and efficiencies

On the highway side, the TFRC recommends providing an additional \$1.013 billion annually:

- \$750 million from adjusting the Oil Company Franchise Tax
- \$150 million by increasing vehicle and driver licensing fees
- \$120 million from instituting reforms and efficiencies

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The TFRC recommends providing \$65 million annually for county and municipal roads and bridges, assuming another one cent per gallon increase in the Oil Franchise Tax. They also encourage the use of public/private partnerships to reduce the need for tax increases.

Governor Rendell, as part of his budget address, released his recommendations for funding highways and bridges. On the highway and bridge side, his proposal is to lease the Pennsylvania Turnpike to increase revenues. That will take the place of the increase in the Oil Company Franchise Tax. On the transit side, he recommends levying a 6.17 percent tax on oil company gross profits, beginning in March 2008. By these two actions, the Governor is attempting to remove the burden from tax and fee type increases and place it in another location.

Mr. Zilla said that the Coordinating Committee needs to identify programs between the County and CATA on the transit side that they would like to see if additional funding is made available. The LRTP provides an excellent inventory of projects, but the MPO needs to be in a position to know what will move forward in the future if more funding is made available.

Mr. Pytel said that several years ago, Ferguson Township raised their transfer tax, the occupation tax, and the property tax to put into a highway renovation program. The Governor's plan calls for raising the taxes again in Ferguson Township and he asked if this was to do somebody else's roads. Mr. Klees thought it was the difference between municipal and state roads. Mr. Pytel said that he can see all the money going to Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Mr. Klees thought that if taxpayers in the state pay a little bit more to keep all the transit systems accessible, it would in turn keep those municipalities from competing for highway funds.

Mr. Spychalski said that several transit systems have already announced plans for significantly curtailing services. Each system has unique conditions. He said that CATA is fortunate because they had a natural gas tax credit that will carry it into 2008. For other systems, this credit is not available. He said that the news tends to criticize the two big-city systems, but those systems have very different circumstances and requirements.

Mr. Spychalski said that SEPTA is a very infrastructure-intensive system. It has three different kinds of rail infrastructure. In addition to that, there is a large city transit system that operates in both the city and suburban areas, including street cars.

Mr. Spychalski said that the Port Authority Transit system is encumbered with many issues from the past. It has some of the highest transit labor costs in the United States. When it was a private entity, there was a militant union that provided high wages and benefits. Former employees have very generous benefits. He said that this is just a fact of life for this system today.

Mr. Spychalski said that CATA has been experiencing growth and growth opportunities. The existing funding formulas and programs do not provide adequate support for a growing transit system.

Ms. Reese referred to transportation funding and asked if the funding was also for maintenance. Mr. Klees thought it was.

Mr. Lee read a quote that said that taxing on the basis of the use of vehicles is the answer. Another quote suggested that charging fees electronically for using the system and through credit card bills rather than through fuel taxes. Delaware Department of Transportation has the authority to reduce demand by using transportation dollars to purchase development rights from land owners in their Capacity Preservation Program. Mr. Lee said that 90 percent of the investment in transportation is

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from private households and businesses. If you deliver more travel choice, then you reduce the cost to the individual.

Ms. Goreham commented that the funding approaches and needs are complex. She asked if the MPO should consider writing a letter after they determine what they do and do not support. She thought the Committee should take advantage of this opportunity to influence the legislators.

Mr. Klees asked what type of input the legislators would like to hear from groups like the MPO. Mr. Eckert said that the elected officials are always seeking input. One of the big questions is the leasing of the Turnpike. On the transit side, the efficiencies of each system have to be addressed and plans must be made to create better systems in the future. At the same time, the local effort has to rise. Smaller systems have always done well in their share of the funding formula. However, that has not been the case for the large systems. Mr. Eckert said that he would try to keep the MPO apprised of what is going on. He thought that major steps would need to be taken by the end of the June, but doubted that everything would be in place by then.

Mr. Buckalew said that many people are unclear why the state would lease the Turnpike instead of running it themselves. Mr. Roberts thought that what was being considered was a step before leasing the Turnpike. Mr. Klees said that the money raised by the Turnpike has to go back into the Turnpike. It cannot raise more than it needs. He thought it was a fairly entrenched political entity. Ms. Ammerman said that communication is key to the process. Mr. Rose said that now was the perfect opportunity to provide input, as the hearings are occurring.

Mr. Shannon referred to using sales tax as an option for generating more money. He said there are a couple of different groups that are considering taking from the sales tax. He thought it would be better to steer clear of this and stick more with those things that are transportation related. Mr. Klees said that some of the discussion involves the local municipalities being asked to contribute more and to provide the local municipalities with some taxing authority to raise that money to increase the local share. He did not think the current revenue streams would cover a larger local share. Mr. Shannon referred to PSATS, saying that they have been looking for some time to change the formula to increase the amount coming back for local roads. It has been a stagnant figure for at least 8-10 years. Mr. Lee said that regional fund raising does not have to be just taxes. The state can also authorize bodies to have user fees and the like.

Ms. Goreham commented that the Federal Highway Trust Fund is experiencing problems as well. These same issues affect federal funding dollars. Ms. Goreham said that this is an urgent issue. She said that the federal agencies are trying to push more financial responsibility to the local entities.

Mr. Pytel said he had a hard time understanding how the Turnpike could be rented to somebody so that they could make a profit if the government cannot do it. He asked if the Governor was talking about selling it or renting it. Mr. Roberts said they were talking about extracting money from it right now. Leasing could be an option later.

### **8. Announcements**

Mr. Klees reviewed upcoming meetings.

Mr. Pytel noted that PennDOT is still surveying Route 26 over Pine Grove Mountain and reviewing options for safety improvements.

Ms. Reese brought up an issue that is a problem for rural areas. The state has determined that the Emergency Services tax should be brought down to the local municipal level, but rural areas do not

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want to tax residents for the traffic going through their municipality. She did not think it was fair to these smaller municipalities where the budget is less than what it takes to pay that cost. She suggested a county-wide dialogue to try to find a solution to this problem.

**9. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Shingler  
Recording Secretary