

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

**Tuesday, May 22, 2007
6:00 pm
College Township Municipal Building**

Minutes

Voting Members Present:

Ron Buckalew	Centre Regional Planning Commission (CRPC)
Bob Corman	Penns Valley Planning Region
Bob Jacobs (for Chris Exarchos)	Centre County
Elizabeth Goreham, Vice Chair	State College Borough
Dan Klees, Chair	College Township
Kevin Kline	PennDOT District 2-0 Office
Chris Lee	Harris Township
Bob Neff	Halfmoon Township
George Pytel	Ferguson Township
Jadine Reese	Upper Bald Eagle Planning Region
John Saylor	Centre County
Jack Shannon	Moshannon Valley Planning Region
Harold Nanovic (for Tom TenEyck)	PennDOT Central Office
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
Matt Smoker	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Others Present:

Bob Crum	Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)
Tom Zilla	CRPA
Greg Kausch	CRPA
Lori Shingler	CRPA – Recording Secretary
Mike Bloom	Centre County Planning and Community Development Office
Jim Eckert	Senator Jake Corman’s Office
Mike Joseph	Centre Daily Times
Hugh Mose	CATA
Michelle Barbin	Mountaintop Region
Kenneth Hall	Mountaintop Region
Bob Burbidge	People Protecting Communities
Terri Burbidge	People Protecting Communities
JoAnn Gillette	People Protecting Communities
Andrew Moser	Representative Scott Conklin’s Office
Tor Michaels	Representative Scott Conklin’s Office
Cliff Warner	Harris Township
Mike Savage	Rush Township
Jaime Bumbarger	The Progress
Jenn Shufan	Rush Township
Mike Rose	Representative Kerry Benninghoff’s Office
Jon Eich	Citizen

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1. Call to Order

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

Ms. Goreham made a motion to approve the April 24, 2007 Coordinating Committee minutes. Mr. Pytel seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Mr. Yecina noted that he was resigning as the Mountaintop Region's representative on the Coordinating Committee, and he introduced Mr. Kenneth Hall, who has been nominated to serve as the Region's new representative.

3. Citizens' Comments

There were no citizen comments.

4. Member Reports

Centre Regional Planning Commission

Mr. Buckalew reported that the Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan was presented to the Centre Regional Planning Commission at its last meeting.

Centre County

Mr. Jacobs reported that the Centre County Planning and Community Development Office (CCPCDO) continues to coordinate transportation projects among multiple municipalities to make sure that needed improvements are completed as part of the land development approval process.

Ferguson Township

Mr. Pytel stated that the Board of Supervisors is monitoring the progress on the Route 26 Pine Grove Mountain safety project, and wants the MPO to continue to support this project as a high priority.

PennDOT Central Office

Mr. Nanovic recognized Mr. Kausch for an excellent job in advancing the Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan.

Penn State University

Mr. Cooper reported that the Porter Road Reconstruction project, which is on the CCMPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) with earmarked funding, is scheduled to begin during the week of June 4 and be completed by August 14. The Park Avenue/Porter Road intersection and University Drive/Curtin Road intersection projects are also on the TIP with earmarked funding. The design of both intersections is complete and the project will be bid this summer, but construction will be postponed until spring 2008.

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Mr. Cooper noted that the Curtin Road Transit Center project on the TIP is under construction, and is scheduled to be completed by August 15. Mr. Cooper also noted that the utilities for the new Dickinson Law School are being installed, and that as a result, Park Avenue will be closed from July 16-27.

5. Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan

Mr. Kausch explained that a Coordinated Plan is required in order for certain transportation providers to be eligible for various transit funding programs. He reviewed the four components of the Plan, as well as each of the three associated funding programs. The Plan must be adopted and submitted to PennDOT by May 31.

Mr. Kausch reported that the Stakeholder Committee meetings were an important element of the plan development process. Three stakeholder meetings were held, and a total of 28 people attending the meetings. The stakeholders reviewed an inventory of the public transportation systems, provided information about transportation services they provide for clients, and provided their perspective about the most critical unmet needs and priorities for projects.

Mr. Kausch noted that several demographic elements were documented in the Draft Coordinated Plan. The demographics were used to help determine where the greatest level of need was. These areas include the Moshannon Valley, the Mountaintop Region, and portions of the Bald Eagle Valley. Also exhibiting need were portions of Penns Valley and Nittany Valley, Bellefonte, Milesburg and Boggs Township. The lowest level of need is in the immediate vicinity of State College, where most of the existing services are concentrated.

Mr. Kausch reviewed and provided examples of the most critical unmet needs identified by the stakeholders, which include corridors, individual locations and operational enhancements. Mr. Kausch commented that night and weekend service in the outer areas of Centre County was mentioned, along with simplifying services, forming a countywide service agency, and same-day paratransit services. Stakeholders were also asked to rank several candidate projects for each of the three funding programs covered by the Coordinated Plan. The stakeholder rankings tended to be consistent with the CCMPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) project list, and CATA's Strategic Plan.

Mr. Kausch explained that for the Section 5310 program, both CATA and the Centre County Office of Transportation (CCOT) submitted applications to replace paratransit vehicles, and stakeholders assigned equal importance to these projects. However, stakeholders noted that merely maintaining the existing fleet was not going to address unmet needs, and fleet expansion should occur. Stakeholders also asked to be involved in the procurement process, noting that the CCOT's application included four non-accessible vehicles.

For the New Freedoms program, CCOT has proposed a project to provide group shopping trips for individuals with disabilities in five of their trip zones. The extra capacity needed for this service would be obtained by revising operations to provide feeder service to the CATA system in and around the Centre Region. This project was well-supported by the stakeholders, although there were concerns that more training was needed to educate employees about how to assist persons with disabilities.

Mr. Kausch noted that for the Jobs Access-Reverse Commute (JARC) Program, several projects were ranked:

- Moshannon Valley to the Centre Region
- Penns Valley to the Centre Region
- Snow Shoe to the Centre Region
- Expansion of the existing X Route to Milesburg and portions of Boggs Township
- Commuter service from the Blanchard area to the Centre Region, perhaps implemented in conjunction with the expansion of the X Route

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Mr. Kausch noted that there was not universal agreement about the priorities, with several persons stating that a connection between the Mountaintop Region and the Centre Region was the highest priority. He commented that the Mountaintop Region tends to be isolated, which increases the need for transportation in that area, but also presents challenges for providing transit service. Mr. Kausch added that the three top ranked projects are located in areas that either have existing Park and Ride facilities or exhibit good potential for these facilities. He stated that users of such service will want guaranteed ride home services and discounted fares for regular riders, and he noted that a 50 percent local match would be needed, which presented a significant obstacle.

Mr. Kausch said that the Coordinating Committee is being asked to adopt the Coordinated Plan, and begin advancing the projects as ranked. He commented that it will be important to keep the stakeholders informed as the projects advance.

Mr. Kausch noted that the assessment of how to better coordinate service provided by CATA and the CCOT will begin in July. He commented that there is a fair amount of overlap between the two services, highlighting the need to study the integration of services. Although some human service agencies provide transportation services, CATA and CCOT are the biggest providers of public transportation.

Mr. Pytel questioned where the 50 percent local matching funds would come from, noting that Ferguson Township is already a big stakeholder for CATA, with the Township's cost rising by 7 percent last year. Mr. Kausch responded that he could not answer that question, and noted that local funds provided by the Centre Region municipalities could not be used to support service outside the Centre Region. Mr. Pytel expressed concern about funds from the current municipal partners being used for service to outlying areas.

Ms. Goreham asked why the local matching share was so high. Mr. Kausch noted that "local" does not necessarily mean municipal-level. Matching funds could come from other sources that are not federal Department of Transportation funds, including other federal funds state funds.

Ms. Goreham asked how many people could be served by the candidate projects, and how Centre County is coordinating with neighboring MPOs and RPOs. Mr. Kausch said that representatives from the adjacent areas were invited to participate in the stakeholder meetings and provide comments, and that he has been invited to discuss the issues as the North Central Regional Planning Commission and SEDA-COG RPOs prepare their respective plans.

In response to a question from Mr. Lee, Kausch responded that the three federal programs are not in competition with other funding streams.

Mr. Lee questioned how the projects rank with other projects, and with the MPO funding allocations. Mr. Kausch said that the priorities are slightly different than in the LRTP. Mr. Lee asked if any of the projects are on the current TIP. Mr. Kausch replied that some of the commuter service projects are, with JARC identified as a potential funding source. Mr. Lee asked if the TIP anticipates 50 percent local funding. Mr. Zilla said that it does.

Ms. Goreham made a motion to adopt the Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan. Mr. Lee seconded the motion.

Mr. Pytel asked if the funding for these programs would cease to exist in a year or two. Mr. Kausch said that based on experience in his previous position, he thought the JARC funds would not be reduced, noting that these funds have been distributed in large urban areas for the past eight years. The Section 5310 program has existed even longer. The New Freedom program is new, and he could not offer an opinion.

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Mr. Lee commented that a disadvantage of the JARC program is that it is an incentive to creating sprawl. The alternative would be to promote employment in the rural areas. However, he did support the program.

A vote was taken on the motion, which was approved unanimously.

6. State Funding for Pennsylvania's Transportation System

Mr. Zilla explained that the CCMPO discussed the state transportation funding issue in February. He reviewed the status of the Transportation Funding and Reform Commission (TFRC) report about funding for transit, highways and bridges, and reported on the proposals of Governor Ed Rendell to increase state transportation funding. Four options were considered by the Governor, all of which would generate the same level of funding. Mr. Zilla reviewed each of these options individually, and noted that Option 4 was recommended by the Governor. This option involves introducing an oil company gross profit tax, which would generate \$760 million for transit. It also calls for leveraging the Pennsylvania Turnpike, generating \$965 million for highways and bridges.

Several discussion topics were included in the agenda packet, along with a draft letter that might be sent to the Governor and state legislators. Topics included leasing the PA Turnpike, tolling additional roads, user fees, fuel taxes, taxes to finance public transportation, and transit funding programs. Mr. Lee said that in the long run, the answer is user fees because it was based on each individual's demand on the system. He stated that a sales tax was regressive because it taxes low income people equally with persons with more resources.

Mr. Lees said that he has heard that the funding generated by Option 4 would all go to the major urban areas. Mr. Klees said he has heard that there is some uncertainty about how to implement an oil company profits tax, and has heard questions about whether this tax would be challenged in court. Mr. Lee said that the challenge would be to accomplish a tax on oil companies without the cost being passed on to the consumer.

Ms. Goreham expressed opposition to leasing the Turnpike, noting that there was another proposal with options for obtaining income from the Turnpike. She added that states that have leased or sold their toll roads have received much opposition.

Mr. Klees commented that if a private entity can make a profit by leasing and operating the Turnpike, then why can't the state make a profit from operating the Turnpike. One of the options is to consider assigning operations of the Turnpike to PennDOT. He also recommended that if the Turnpike was leased, that the lease period be much shorter than the 99 years proposed by the Governor.

Mr. Smoker said that the state funding issue is not unique, and similar problems are occurring at the national level. The revenue going into the highway trust fund is not keeping pace with the outgoing funds. There is a national committee studying how to sustain the trust fund in the future by increasing the level of revenue coming into the trust fund, and how to determine what the role of the federal government is regarding transportation. Some of the issues being discussed include whether FHWA should only be concerned with interstates, with all other roadways being addressed by the states.

Mr. Smoker reported that the Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee issued a letter to all Governors, state legislators and transportation executives urging caution in entering into private/public partnerships involving national highways, because they might not integrate with the existing national perspective and might not be protecting the public interest as well as they should.

Mr. Spychalski made a motion that the draft letter included with the agenda be sent to the Governor and state legislators. Mr. Lee seconded the motion, with the understanding that recommendations be included with the letter.

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Mr. Pytel suggested that every MPO member ask their municipality to write letters to the legislators asking that something be done with the transportation funding situation.

Mr. Klees noted that the letter did not specify that the “option of doing nothing” is not an option. There was general agreement with this comment. Several editorial changes to the letter were suggested.

A vote was taken on the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Mr. Zilla said that the intent of the draft comments included with the agenda was to see if the Committee could quickly reach consensus on each comment.

- **Should the Pennsylvania Turnpike be leased?**

Mr. Pytel said that 90 percent of the problem is political, and said there is no reason to lease the Turnpike. If a private entity can make a profit, why not turn it over to PennDOT so that they can receive the profit. The committee agreed to recommend that the leasing of the Turnpike be deferred until other options for operating the Turnpike were explored, including having PennDOT operate and maintain the Turnpike. The Committee also agreed that if the Turnpike was leased, the term of the lease should be much shorter than the proposed 99-year lease.

- **Tolling of additional roads - Should other non-interstate roadways be tolled?**

Mr. Shannon said that he did not support picking and choosing interstates to toll. He said that if it were to occur, it should be on the entire interstate system. There was consensus that if additional roads were to be tolled, all the interstate roads should be considered for tolling. The Committee also expressed concern about the potential diversion of traffic from toll roads to non-toll roads.

- **Should vehicle and driver licensing fees be increased to assign more of the costs to the actual users of the transportation system?**

Mr. Pytel said that the cost of implementing user fees is higher than the revenue generated from the fees. Mr. Lee commented that the ultimate solution to the funding crisis was user fees. Mr. Pytel asked if he would be charged to use roads in other states and how many people it would take to keep track of when he was traveling on Pennsylvania roads. Mr. Neff said it was not fair to people making minimum wage. Mr. Lee thought that usage fees would replace other fees currently levied. There was no consensus on this item.

- **Should the revenue from increased fees be dedicated to local roadway and bridge needs to meet the proportions advocated by the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS)?**

Mr. Klees noted that the municipalities’ costs are increasing along with PennDOT’s costs. There was consensus to endorse PSATS position.

- **Should all state, local, educational, etc. agencies that are exempt from paying fuel, registration, and license fees be required to pay for the fees to spread the costs over all users, and provide incentives for these agencies to consumer less?**

Mr. Klees noted that municipalities do not currently pay these fees, yielding an uneven distribution of costs across user groups, including taxpayers. Mr. Pytel commented that he did not agree with this approach because it would include schools, ambulances and police. There was no consensus on this item.

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- **If a gap continues to exist between local governments' current 14.7% share of the liquid fuels fund and the 20% share advocated by PSATS for local governments, should the Oil Company Franchise Tax (gas tax) be increased to close the gap?**

Mr. Zilla explained that this is an existing tax, with a cap on the amount. There was a consensus to support this comment.

- **Should the increase in the Oil Company Gross Profits tax proposed by Governor Rendell be pursued to finance highway and bridge needs on both the local and state transportation systems?**

Mr. Lee felt that it was a mistake to not pursue the Oil Company Gross Profits tax just because it would be difficult to get it approved because of opposition from the oil companies. Mr. Pytel thought it should be pursued. There was a consensus to support this comment.

- **Highway funding should not be flexed to public transportation again as was done in 2005.**

Mr. Zilla explained that in 2005, Governor Rendell flexed state funds typically used for highways over to public transportation operators. The tradeoff was that there were additional federal funds made available for highway and bridge projects. Mr. Smoker noted that some federal funds were flexed to transit as well. He said that comments might want to be more specific since money is flexed all the time from highway to transit. Ms. Reese thought that this may be too complicated for the MPO to address. Mr. Mose explained that the intent of the statement is not to repeat what was done in terms of a wholesale, statewide flex of funds to transit agencies. Although CATA was a beneficiary, he did not think this was good public policy. There was no consensus on this item.

- **Should an increase in the realty transfer tax be utilized to help finance public transportation systems?**

Mr. Lee did not see a relationship between the realty transfer tax and transit funding. Mr. Klees said that it is one source of funding that has a built-in inflation factor. Mr. Pytel said that Ferguson Township used this strategy to fund several road improvements, and he had no problem with other municipalities doing that. However, he did oppose Ferguson Township subsidizing another municipality's projects or public transit. Ms. Reese agreed that this might be feasible for municipalities. Mr. Klees was not in favor of this statement. There was no consensus on this item.

- **Should the legislature give local governments the ability to levy a sales tax, to generate additional funding for public transportation systems?**

Mr. Lee said that this is a regressive tax which taxes low-income persons equally as persons with more resources. Mr. Shannon argued that it only says that it gives the ability to levy the tax, not that it would automatically be done. Mr. Neff did not support the statement. There was no consensus on this item.

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- **One transit funding formula should be developed for use in all areas of the Commonwealth, based on system needs and performance, and favor the distribution of revenue to growing, locally-supported systems.**
- **The public transportation funding system should be streamlined into a single-program system, unlike the current system of multiple systems.**
- **All rural areas in the Commonwealth should receive public transportation funding.**

Mr. Lee was in favor of all these statements. Mr. Neff questioned the statement that all rural areas should receive public transportation funding. Mr. Mose explained that the intent was not to provide public transportation everywhere. Rural transit funding is currently restricted to a certain set of counties, and the idea is that it should be available to all counties. He thought that any funding program that might be developed by the General Assembly should be broader than the current one in terms of rural transit funding. Mr. Pytel thought that the statement was ambiguous. There was consensus with this statement as revised to indicate that all rural areas should be *eligible* for funding.

Mr. Zilla explained that there are multiple programs that transit operators can request funding from. The intent of the second statement was that it would be easier to administer one single program.

- **Support the CATA Board of Directors in its policy statements relative to public transportation funding.**

Mr. Spsychalski distributed a set of statements that the CATA Board of Directors adopted. These included:

- Create a new source of funding that is unified that is adequate and dedicated to transit that is predictable and growing
- Fund transit at the levels identified by the Transportation Funding and Reform Commission
- Stabilize and simplify the existing transit funding sources by transferring it into a single program
- Develop a simple, forward looking allocation formula based on transit system needs and performance
- Use the same funding formula for all transit systems in the Commonwealth
- Allow for a limited transition period for transit systems to adjust to the new levels of funding
- Include an incentive account to support new services and programs that further the integration of transit with land use, economic development and environmental policies
- Fund the transit programs of statewide significance, including alternatives for long distance commuters
- Establish a hold harmless condition so that no transit systems receives less than it currently does
- Allow sufficient time for local governmental units to identify funding for their share of transit funding

The consensus of the MPO was to endorse the CATA Board of Director's adopted statements, with suggestions for changes in wording.

Ms. Goreham made a motion to endorse the preparation of comments based on the discussion, which would be included with the correspondence that was already approved. Mr. Corman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

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7. 2009-2012 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Zilla noted that the TIP can be modified by project sponsors without formal approval by the MPO, as specified in the CCMPO's adopted TIP Modification Procedures. One of the stipulations is that staff report the changes made. A list of changes that have been made since the TIP was adopted was included with the agenda. He noted that the majority of the changes related to funding needed to advance the Wingate Betterment project on Route 504 (Alternate Route 220).

8. Announcements

Mr. Klees reviewed upcoming meetings and the list of announcements included with the agenda.

In response to Rush Township's letter requesting that the MPO include a proposed interchange on I-80 in the Long Range Transportation Plan and TIP, citizens distributed a letter for the MPO's consideration. Mr. Klees noted that this item was not on tonight's agenda, and will probably not be on the June agenda because of advertising which requires that the meeting be held in the College Township Municipal Building.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Shingler
Recording Secretary