

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

**Tuesday, March 25, 2008
6:00 pm
College Township Municipal Building**

Minutes

Voting Members Present:

Ron Buckalew	Centre Regional Planning Commission (CRPC)
Bob Corman	Penns Valley Planning Region
John Elnitski	Benner Township
Jon Eich	Centre County
Elizabeth Goreham	State College Borough
Dan Klees, Chair	College Township
Kevin Kline	PennDOT District 2-0 Office
Chris Lee	Harris Township
Jeff Luck	Patton Township
Steve Miller	Ferguson Township
Jadine Reese	Upper Bald Eagle Planning Region
Bob Jacobs (for Rich Rogers)	Centre County
Frank Royer	Spring Township
Mike Savage	Moshannon Valley Planning Region
Barbara Spencer	Halfmoon Township
John Spychalski	Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA)
Tom TenEyck	PennDOT Central Office

Non-Voting Members Present:

Matt Smoker	Federal Highway Administration
Frank Halderman	Bellefonte Borough

Others Present:

Tom Zilla	Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)
Trish Meek	CRPA
Greg Kausch	CRPA
Lori Shingler	CRPA – Recording Secretary
Mike Bloom	Centre County Planning & Community Development Office
Michelle Barbin	CCMPO Technical Committee - Mountaintop Region
Harold Nanovic	PennDOT Central Office
Michelle Tarquino	PennDOT Central Office
Kim Ferroni	PennDOT Central Office
Hugh Mose	CATA
Bert Kisner	Citizen

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.

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2. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Elnitski made a motion to approve the February 26, 2008 Coordinating Committee minutes. Mr. Eich seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

3. Citizens' Comments

There were no citizen comments.

4. Member Reports

Mr. Miller reported that Ferguson Township is in the process of completing its Official Map.

Mr. Elnitski explained that Benner Township is close to finalizing zoning for the entire township. This should be finished by June.

Mr. Eich noted that the County has received a land development plan for the Resource Recovery landfill, which shows the primary access as an interchange off of I-80. Comments have been forwarded to Rush Township.

Mr. Spsychalski stated that CATA has taken over Penn State's vanpool service and the goal is to grow this service. Last month 56 new participants joined the program, bringing the total number to 625. CATA recently purchased a new van to accommodate program expansion.

Mr. Royer reported that Dominion Gas Company is building a new pumping and transmission station in Pleasant Gap, and there is a lot of lumber piled up along the roadway as a result.

Mr. Jacobs said that a meeting was held today about the Old Fort Park and Ride lot where it was determined that this facility would be located, as planned, on the northeast corner behind the District Justice's office. County staff is also coordinating with Sheetz and PennDOT staff for roadwork in Wingate.

Mr. Halderman stated that Columbia Gas will start replacing gas lines along Howard Street in Bellefonte Borough this week. He also noted that the streetscape project along Howard and Allegheny streets will be going out to bid in the next couple of weeks.

Mr. TenEyck explained that PennDOT Central Office is working with MPOs and RPOs to fine tune the TIP, and this process should be complete by April.

Mr. Corman thought that the Old Fort Park and Ride meeting was productive. He noted that the Route 45 bridge is getting ready to go out for bid, and that Dominion Gas will be doing construction work in Centre Hall.

Mr. Smoker said that the FHWA is in the process of developing the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and working on a consultation process to include tribal governments in public outreach processes. There are 14 recognized tribes in the state, and FHWA has been working with them for many years. With the new planning regulations, these tribes will have the opportunity to review and comment on transportation improvement projects as well as the higher statewide program. A letter will be sent to them outlining the process, and a copy of this letter will also be sent to MPO and RPO staffs.

5. Preliminary Draft 2009-2012 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Zilla noted that revised elements of the TIP, along with PennDOT's bridge program presentation, were included in the agenda package.

Reviewing the transit element, Mr. Zilla explained that the focus in this TIP will be on rebuilding rolling stock and new vehicle purchases. Also included are advanced technology implementation, service restoration/expansion, rideshare and vanpool efforts, and bus storage expansion. Several revisions have been made to the transit TIP since it was initially presented in January. Costs have been updated for vehicle rebuild and replacement projects, costs have been increased in later years to meet Year of Expenditure (YOE) requirements, and an already-completed bus purchase was removed from the list.

Mr. Luck asked if the new cost estimates were based on current CNG technology, or newer technology including hybrid equipment. Mr. Zilla stated, and Mr. Mose affirmed, that new technology was taken into account when developing the cost estimates.

Turning to the bridge element, Mr. Zilla noted that the state is focusing on structurally deficient (SD) bridges, with the overall goal being 85 percent of capital bridge funding dedicated to SD bridges. He explained that there are 61 SD state bridges and 17 SD local bridges in Centre County. All 31 bridges listed on the TIP are structurally deficient. The TIP also includes dedicated line items for box culverts, maintenance/preservation, and bridge painting.

Last month, Governor Rendell announced a new state bridge initiative. Under this initiative, the target for Centre County is to complete four state bridges a year, with three of them being SD bridges. This new initiative will be funded through several mechanisms:

- Act 44 revenues shifted from pavement restoration
- Spike funding redirected to SD state bridges
- \$200 million per year over 10 years from a bond issue

Revisions were made to the bridge element of the Preliminary Draft TIP based on PennDOT District 2-0's bridge program. Under this plan, the target of the state bridge initiative is being met, with an average of five or more bridges being completed each year. Centre County will receive additional funding in the amount of \$3.35 million from the bond issue, and \$1.04 million will be shifted from pavement restoration into the bridge program. Mr. Zilla noted that costs, phases and schedules for these projects were all updated on the TIP and two new bridges were added (SR 879 - Burnside Township and SR 3027 - Rush Township). The maintenance/preservation line item was revised to shift funds to bridge projects. PennDOT Central Office would like the line items converted to projects, so the TIP will change again once specific projects are identified. Mr. Zilla explained that the MPO will know more about the status of spike funding requested for three bridge projects at the April meetings.

Mr. Klees stated that inspections are continuously being done, and more bridges could come on to the SD list. Mr. Zilla referred to the presentation made by PennDOT to staff, where it was explained that PennDOT tried to factor in not only current SD bridges, but also bridges that would become deficient in the next several years.

Mr. Zilla explained that two of the 31 bridges on the TIP are local bridges, with one having all phases programmed and the other having only the pre-construction phases programmed. Staff is working to identify one or two additional local bridges to place on the TIP. If spike funding is realized for state bridges, the expectation is to shift some of the base allocation currently programmed for state bridges to local bridges.

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Mr. Lee referred to the listing of \$1.5 million in bond funds on the table provided. Mr. Zilla explained that this additional funding comes from the new bridge initiative. Centre County's share of the bond issue would be \$1.5 million per year, although a smaller amount is shown in 2009-2010, because several bridge projects have already been identified that would utilize these bond funds.

Mr. Zilla reviewed the other revisions made to the Preliminary Draft TIP:

- Revised cost/phases for the widening of Whitehall Road/University Drive
- Reduced Pavement Restoration Line Item
- Will not show I-80/Route 26 Local Access Interchange, unless spike funding is later provided
- Municipal bridge(s) still proposed to be added

Reviewing the TIP process schedule, Mr. Zilla explained that staff would not receive a response from PennDOT until mid-April. He suggested that an MPO meeting be scheduled in April to further review the TIP so that a public comment period could be initiated in May.

Mr. Eich commented that the loss of the I-80/I-99 interchange really hurts the County. He explained that this project has always been a priority for the MPO, and I-99 will not be truly completed until the interchange is constructed. Mr. Lee agreed, saying that current development proposals in Marion and Walker Townships will impact I-80. He asked the reason why spike funding would be unlikely. Mr. Zilla replied that the state focus is on SD bridges. He further explained that the sheer magnitude of large projects across the state has put PennDOT in a bad position, as there is simply not enough money to complete all of them. PennDOT's response was to talk to the Turnpike Commission, and have them include the interchanges on their program for improvements. Mr. TenEyck added that with the Governor's bridge initiative and the major projects in the Twelve Year Program, the state cannot provide the necessary resources on its own, and there does not appear to be additional federal money coming. A combination of events and factors has led PennDOT to shift its focus to SD bridges at this point.

Mr. Zilla noted that there are efforts within PennDOT to establish a statewide capital improvement program, but this effort will take some time to complete. Ms. Goreham agreed with this approach, the number and size of needed projects exceeds the money available to fund them. She also thought that local funding would become a big factor in the future.

Mr. Buckalew made a motion to schedule a Coordinating Committee meeting for April 29, 2008 to review the TIP revisions before it is advertised for public comment. Mr. Lee seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

6. Centre County Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) 2008 Update

Ms. Meek explained that an interim update is being conducted for the LRTP this year, with a major update starting in 2009 for completion in 2010. For this interim update, general revisions include removing completed projects, adding Act 44 projects, adding line items, updating project cost estimates, adjusting for Year of Expenditure (YOE) requirements, and removing projects accordingly to maintain fiscal constraint. Ms. Meek reviewed the YOE regulations.

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With respect to base highway and bridge funding, Ms. Meek noted that funding provided by PennDOT includes base highway (federal and state), base bridge (federal and state), the bridge bond (state), rail crossing funds (STX), and TE funds. Act 44 funds are allocated 20 percent to highway projects and 80 percent to bridge projects. Ms. Meek explained that there is some flexibility in these percentages, as Centre County's SD bridge problem is not as bad as other areas. Although these percentages are only provided to staff for the first four years, staff carried them throughout the life of the LRTP in order to estimate funding levels. In addition to state and federal funding, local funding is shown for the Fraser Street/Beaver Avenue intersection improvements and local bridge contributions.

Regarding spike funding, staff took a conservative approach, and did not assume any spike money for 2009-2010, even though spike funding was requested for several bridge projects. Thereafter, \$1 million in spike funding was included for each four-year period starting with the 2011-14 period. Staff also included SXF earmark money in 2009-2010 (\$6,918,040). \$55,000,000 in Appalachian (APD) funds have been set aside for the I-80/I-99 high speed interchange, although these cannot be used until the project is under way. Interstate Maintenance funding would be used solely for I-99, since the Turnpike Commission will be taking over I-80 under Act 44.

Mr. Eich asked how long the county would have access to APD funds if the interchange project is taken off the list. Mr. Kline explained that these funds are distributed by application process, so he thought the money would remain available. He further noted that if the project remains stagnant for a long period, the funds may be lost, and agreed to check on this.

Several line items were added to the Highway and ITS project list: Pavement Restoration, Safety, CMAQ and Interstate Maintenance (starting in 2011-2014). Mr. Lee asked if line items were added in order to provide flexibility, and Ms. Meek responded affirmatively. For example, in terms of pavement improvements, specific needs are identified year by year, so a line item is included so that projects can be identified and funded on an annual basis. Mr. Smoker added that the federal view is that maintenance comes first, so the MPO must show that they can maintain current facilities. Mr. Kline added that line items can also be used to cover cost increases if necessary.

Mr. Lee asked if the projects covered by line items are voted on by the MPO. Mr. Kline explained that these projects come before the MPO in the form of TIP amendments, which are voted on. Mr. Lee noted that the disadvantage of this approach is that projects are approved or rejected in isolation, rather than in the context of the entire program. Mr. Zilla explained that line items also provide a cushion for unexpected projects or cost increases. At the same time, the MPO has a long waiting list of projects. Staff is attempting to strike a balance by using line items. Mr. Lee suggested that when there is a proposal to fund a project with a line item balance, that the project be ranked alongside all the other projects.

Mr. Bloom explained that three projects were added to the highway/ITS element of the LRTP. The first is a betterment project in Pleasant Gap that was programmed on the previous TIP, but delayed because I-99 construction was taking place in the area. Second, a Benner Pike Improvement project was added; this project is being conducted with discretionary funds, but must be shown on the LRTP. The Beaver/Fraser intersection project was also added, but being constructed entirely with local funds.

Mr. Halderman referred to the Route 550/Bishop Street turning lane, explaining that a new Weis store is responsible for that project. Mr. Kline noted that the project listed referred to utility relocation and right-of-way acquisition.

Ms. Meek noted that the I-80/Route 26 interchanges were moved to the list of Projects for Future Consideration because no funding is available for these projects.

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Ms. Meek reviewed other projects that fall outside fiscal constraint:

- SR 26 West College Avenue widening
- Regional traffic management center
- Waddle Road corridor
- Computer aided reservation, scheduling and dispatch (CARSD)
- Alternate 220 corridor improvements from Martha's Furnace to Wingate
- Presque Isle Street from North Centre Street to 13th Street
- Airport Road connector road
- SR 350 connector in Philipsburg

Mr. Buckalew noted that some projects, like SCCCTS, were moved to the list of projects for future consideration because they are too expensive to fund. This approach is somewhat misleading, because SCCCTS is actually a combination of several projects. Mr. Bloom said that such projects could be broken into phases, or the MPO could re-prioritize projects to move projects like SCCCTS up the list.

Mr. Klees noted that YOE adjustments make the list more accurate, but new projects will come up to be ranked. He recalled that the list of projects has changed dramatically in the last two years. Mr. Elnitski added that the list has to be fluid. He explained that the airport connector road may not be necessary now because the Airport Authority is saying that there will be fewer connector flights out of University Park in the future, and travelers will be forced to fly out of bigger cities.

Ms. Goreham noted that the regional traffic management center could yield very broad efficiencies, and similar priorities may need to be adjusted due to social and political changes. Mr. Lee added that the ranking criteria itself may need to change.

Mr. Bloom referred to project number 38 on the Highway and ITS project list, SR 350 S-Curve. He explained that this is a long term project and the original cost estimate in 2006 was \$40 million. Given YOE adjustments and the anticipated time frame for project delivery, costs are now estimated at \$84 million. Staff is asking whether the MPO would like to consider converting the preliminary engineering phase to a "corridor analysis" to determine if this project is still needed or feasible. Mr. Eich noted that this project was at the top of the list several years ago, but was bumped so that the Corridor O analysis could be completed. Now Corridor O is off the list. Mr. Klees said that it was agreed to install rumble strips and a turn-off, then to reassess truck traffic after I-99 opened completely.

Ms. Spencer wondered how some projects were assigned to the list, whether it was for convenience, safety or economy. She did not think that Corridor O was even necessary. Mr. Klees explained that the challenge is that background information is not available for the list of projects. He noted that the project list was condensed a few years ago. He suggested that these issues be tackled during the major update of the LRTP.

Mr. Lee said that the access of people to towns, rather than around towns, should be the goal. Some solutions rest in land use rather than transportation planning. In the major LRTP update, it should be determined where growth should occur. Ms. Goreham added that the MPO may need to adopt policies to incorporate complete streets, bikeways and other things that are considered important at that time.

Mr. Bloom referred back to project #38, saying that if preliminary engineering is pulled from the project list, several other projects could remain on the LRTP. This is a policy issue that members should consider. Mr. Klees said that rather than taking the known list and adjusting it to match available money, perhaps a new ranking criteria needs to be developed.

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Mr. Zilla explained that the real question is whether the MPO can live with the projects that are coming off the active list for at least a couple of years before adopting the next LRTP. Staff has simply gone by the ranking of the projects, bumping the lowest ranked projects to the list for future consideration where funding runs out.

Mr. Klees asked how projects could come back onto the next LRTP once they are dropped. Ms. Meek explained that the projects do not disappear – all of them are listed in Appendix I of the LRTP. For the current LRTP, all the projects from the former Plan were ranked, along with new projects.

Mr. Klees thought that any decisions to adjust the relative ranking of projects on the list should wait until the next major update. Ms. Spencer thought that a goal for that update should be to develop strong policy about where the MPO wants to go in the future.

Mr. Bloom reviewed changes to the Bridge Project List:

- Additional Act 44 revenue
- Add structurally deficient (SD) bridges (35 new state bridges, 1 local bridge)
- Bridge Preservation/Maintenance line item
- Bridge Maintenance Box Culvert line item
- Adjust project costs
- No bridge projects were removed
- Propose adding one additional local bridge (T-365 in College Township)

Mr. Luck asked about the required match for local bridge projects. Mr. Bloom explained that the local match is 20 percent for such projects.

The Transportation Enhancements (TE) project list has changed considerably. Completed projects were removed, and only the two approved TE projects are now listed (Centre Hall and Boalsburg Streetscape Projects). A TE line item is added and a list of projects is being attached.

Ms. Goreham asked about the Whitehall Road bike path. Ms. Meek explained that PennDOT is moving ahead with that project under a complete street concept. A bike path and separated sidewalk are being recommended as part of that concept.

Mr. Bloom reviewed the transit element, explaining that more information would be available around the April meeting of the Technical Committee. Mr. Kausch noted that much of the methodology from other elements was used for the transit element: removing completed projects, updating costs, and adding Act 44 funding. He noted that the first list of adjustments was presented to staff and the CATA Board, but it still requires significant changes. For example, he said that the allocation of federal discretionary funds will need to be reviewed, because the availability of such funds is difficult to predict. A completed fiscal constraint analysis and project list will be made available to both the Technical and Coordinating Committees in mid-April.

Ms. Meek noted that the schedule for the LRTP update is the same as the TIP process. Comments and spike funding decisions will be received from PennDOT in mid-April. The TIP and LRTP should be reviewed and approved at the April 29th MPO meeting.

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7. Announcements

Mr. Zilla reported that staff has heard back from PennDOT regarding supplemental planning projects in the UPWP. The travel demand model/forecasting project was approved for funding. The local bridge database project was not approved, but several MPOs submitted similar projects, and PennDOT has committed to developing a scope of work to ensure consistency of the completed databases. A meeting will be held in two weeks to discuss this with PennDOT.

The next Technical Committee meeting will be held on April 16 and the next Coordinating Committee meeting will be held on April 29.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Shingler
Recording Secretary