

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

**Tuesday, September 23, 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
Jon Eich	Centre County
John Elnitski	Benner Township
Elizabeth Goreham, Vice-Chair	State College Borough
Ken Hall	Mountaintop Planning Region
Bob Jacobs (for Rich Rogers)	Centre County
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
Sue Hannegan (for Rich Rogers)	Centre County
Mike Savage	Moshannon Valley Planning Region
Barbara Spencer	Halfmoon Township
John Spychalski	CATA
Larry Shifflet	PennDOT Central Office

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Matt Smoker	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Rob Cooper	Penn State University

**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
Hugh Mose	CATA
Mike Joseph	Centre Daily Times
Frank Hampton	PennDOT Central Office
Mike Rose	Kerry Benninghoff's Office
Amy Story	State College Borough
Ray Gotshall	Marion Township
Bert Kisner	Citizen
Lucas Passmore	Citizen
Jessica Ames Passmore	Citizen
Deborah Fiume	Citizen

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Timothy Fiume	Citizen
Jackie Rutter	Citizen
Cathy Flood	Citizen
George Pytel	Citizen
George Khoury	Citizen
Rick Dylan	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.

### 2. Appointment of Secretary

*Mr. Corman made a motion to appoint Robert Jacobs, Director of the Centre County Planning and Community Development Office, as Secretary of the Coordinating Committee for the remainder of 2008. Ms. Goreham seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

### 3. Approval of Minutes

*Ms. Goreham made a motion to approve the September 23, 2008 Coordinating Committee minutes. Mr. Lee seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.*

### 4. Citizen Comments

Mr. Ray Gutshall, Marion Township Supervisor and Roadmaster, noted that there has been some controversy within his municipality regarding the I-80/I-99/Route 26 interchanges that are proposed for Marion Township. He read a letter (attached) that requests a meeting between PennDOT and Marion Township regarding the placement of the interchange, with several key questions included.

Mr. Klees explained that at present, there is an approved Long Range Transportation Plan that identifies the interchanges as "outside fiscal constraint" due to lack of funding.

Mr. Rick Dylan, owner of the Bellefonte KOA Campground, noted that this issue has been addressed before in a public hearing, and petitions were circulated and submitted to PennDOT. His concern with the proposed local access interchange is its proximity to two current quarries and one planned quarry in the area. He explained that this could potentially result in a mixing of car, school bus, Amish buggy, and heavy truck traffic along local roads, which he characterized as low-maintenance roads. He said that as quickly as quarry trucks could be put on to I-80, the safer things should be. Mr. Dylan said the campground is serving larger camping vehicles, and to force them to use circuitous routes to get to the campgrounds is an impediment to the business, the community and the safety of people in smaller vehicles. He thought the local access interchange, wherever it may be, is a necessity for Marion Township.

### 5. Federal State Routes to School (FSRTS) Program

Ms. Meek explained that the applications for the FSRTS Program were due on August 1, 2008. Projects are eligible for 100% federal funding, with \$12,649,000 available statewide. Projects must be located within two miles of a K-8 school. The funds are reserved for infrastructure improvements only that promote walking and bicycling to school, or otherwise improve safety who students who walk or bike to school.

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Ms. Meek noted that all applications for this program are to be reviewed and ranked by a statewide committee. The CCMPO has the opportunity to provide its own ranking and review comments to that committee; these are due on October 1, 2008. The MPO previously approved the formation of a local review committee to accomplish these tasks, and that local committee includes representatives from PennDOT District Office, PennDOT Central Office, Centre County Planning and Community Development Office, and the Centre Regional Planning Agency.

Centre County received one application, which is for the State College Borough Roundabout Project. The Borough is requesting \$801,405 to construct two roundabouts along Easterly Parkway at Pugh and Garner Streets, near the Easterly Parkway Elementary School. This application was reviewed by the local review committee, and a presentation was made to the Technical Committee. The Technical Committee recommended ranking the Roundabout Project as the number one Centre County Project and forwarding the application to the statewide committee, with supplemental project information, for their consideration. Ms. Meek noted that the local review committee did not feel that the application asked the correct questions to facilitate a thorough and proper review at the state level; therefore, additional comments were added for the statewide committee's consideration.

Ms. Reese asked if there would be another round of applications for the FSRTS Program next year, and if all the school districts were informed of this program. Mr. Shifflet said that PennDOT will determine if a second round of funding takes place after it evaluates the success of the first round. Ms. Meek further explained that MPO staff sent notification of the program to all municipalities and school districts, and noted that staff did not receive any direct contact from these entities.

Mr. Shifflet explained that 102 applications were received statewide for approximately \$12 million worth of funding.

Mr. Cooper asked how roundabouts would improve safety around the school. Ms. Meek replied that because of the angle of deflection of vehicles in a roundabout, drivers must negotiate it at a much slower speed than a conventional four-way intersection. A roundabout also provides more visibility for pedestrians as they move through crosswalks.

Mr. Spsychalski asked if there was information about accidents in roundabouts versus those in intersections with signals or four-way stop signs. Ms. Meek read from a Federal Highway Administration pamphlet, which stated that there is more than a 90 percent reduction in fatalities, a 76 percent reduction in injuries, and a 35 percent reduction in all crashes. The slower speeds associated with roundabouts are generally safer for pedestrians, and with roundabouts, head-on and high speed right angle collisions are virtually eliminated.

Mr. Cooper asked if there would still be crosswalks associated with the roundabouts. Ms. Story explained that the Borough would evaluate the need for crosswalks, and place them if a need is warranted.

*Mr. Spsychalski made a motion to forward the State College Borough FSRTS application and supplemental comments and information to the statewide review committee. Mr. Luck seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

### **6. Route 322 Corridor Safety Improvements (Harris and Potter Townships)**

Mr. Kline explained that a PennDOT Route 322 safety study, examining both short- and long-term improvements, is under way and the report is in draft status. PennDOT also received an allocation of money, based on seat belt usage, to be used for rumble strips in the corridor; therefore, PennDOT is proposing, as a

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short-term measure, to put rumble strips on both the sides and center lines of the entire corridor. PennDOT has also reviewed crash data, speeds, and passing lanes within the corridor. Based on this review, they further propose the immediate closure of two passing zones, an action that could be accomplished in as little as one week's time. Finally, Mr. Kline explained that electronic speed display boards would be installed next week.

In the intermediate term, Mr. Kline explained that PennDOT will consider the Smooth Operator Program, which is a subsidized program to address aggressive driving. The pilot program has ended, but if the program continues and receives additional funding, PennDOT is proposing that the Route 322 corridor be considered. Mr. Kline noted that the Smooth Operator Program could reopen in early October.

Mr. Kline explained that a variety of longer-term measures could be considered once the aforementioned safety study is finalized. He suggested that these longer-term improvements be discussed by the Technical Committee with the goal of targeting specific priorities to various intersections. Recommendations could then be forwarded to the Coordinating Committee for implementation through the Long Range Transportation Plan.

Mr. Kline then reviewed the overall accident rate along the corridor between 2001 and 2007. He explained that the rate is actually slightly under the statewide average, although there are two sections that are over the statewide average. He noted that since 2004, PennDOT has completed five projects along the corridor at a total cost of \$6.4 million.

Mr. Klees asked if the rumble strip installation would be a maintenance project or come through the MPO. Mr. Kline explained that it would be a maintenance project and the strips could be installed by mid-October.

Mr. Corman asked if the findings of the safety study would be reviewed with the local municipalities. Mr. Kline noted that they would be.

Mr. Elnitski asked how many of the accidents took place in passing situations. Mr. Kline did not have the data available to answer that.

Mr. Luck affirmed PennDOT's approach to recent safety concerns along the Route 322 corridor. He noted that the recent fatal crash on Route 322, as well as the one at the Bald Eagle exit before I-99 was opened, involved large vehicles that were following too closely. He suggested dots on Route 322, like the ones on old Route 220, along with increased police presence and heightened enforcement. Mr. Kline explained that PennDOT does want to evaluate the road dot program for the Route 322 corridor.

Mr. Eich noted the six accidents that have taken place along this corridor since the beginning of summer. He expressed appreciation to PennDOT and the MPO for reacting to safety concerns quickly. He explained that the safety study and subsequent evaluation of specific projects should be as expansive as possible. Specifically, he noted that message boards, a realignment of the Taylor Hill Road intersection and reduced speed limits should be evaluated.

Mr. Corman explained that his biggest concern in the corridor was school bus traffic and the presence of school bus stops along the road. He noted that one dip along the corridor has been corrected, with a turning lane installed, but there are still a number of other locations to address. He recalled that improvements to the Taylor Hill Road area have been discussed for many years, and explained that one good entrance is needed, but the other could possibly be closed.

Mr. Zilla reviewed Route 322 projects that are currently identified on the LRTP. These include improvements to the Church Hill Road, Wagner Road, Taylor Road, and Dogtown Road intersections. Turning lanes are also included on the LRTP, but specific locations are not identified. There is a total of \$2.5 million included on the four-year TIP and a little under \$1.5 million for construction in 2011-2012. Mr. Zilla explained that these

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projects are included as a result of the SCCCTS project being terminated in 2004. For all Route 322 improvements on the LRTP, staff conducted field views and put projects through the ranking process.

Mr. Elnitski noted that increased police presence and enforcement is needed along the Route 322 corridor. He suggested that the MPO write to the State Police and Governor to lobby for increased patrols. Mr. Zilla asked PennDOT if there were any resources that the MPO could access to support increased patrolling, and Mr. Shifflet replied that he will check.

*Mr. Elnitski made a motion for the MPO to write a letter to the state police, Governor Rendell and legislators requesting more police presence along the Route 322 corridor between Harris and Potter Townships. Mr. Eich seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

Mr. Corman suggested that the individual municipalities and the County also write letters to request increased enforcement along the corridor.

Mr. Timothy Fiume suggested that the MPO and PennDOT concentrate their efforts on the speed limit along Route 322. He referred to the earlier discussion about roundabouts, noting that at lower speeds, accidents are less severe. Mr. Fiume explained the importance of separating car and truck traffic to overall safety. His opinion is that with an increase of trucks on Route 322, commuters will move to Routes 45 and 144. Accordingly, this creates a hazard for commuters traveling toward Lewistown because of the "Y" at Routes 144 and 322. A driver turning left from Route 144 onto Route 322 is in a hazardous situation by virtue of the curves near that intersection. He asked PennDOT to consider reconfiguring or relocating the Route 144/322 intersection.

Ms. Jessica Ames Passmore explained that she lives on Route 322 and supports any improvements that can be made. She noted that it can be dangerous just turning into her driveway. Further, she expressed disappointment in the fact that the Route 322 dangers have been talked about for decades, but nothing has been done.

Mr. George Brown explained that his wife was in the accident that happened two weeks ago. He agreed with the suggestions made by other area residents. He also explained that following too closely, rather than speeding, was the cause in recent accidents where heavy trucks have hit cars; this is made worse by a lack of visibility at locations throughout the Route 322 corridor. He noted that some of these visibility issues are the result of vegetation. Mr. Brown explained that he did not think it was likely that the speed limit would be reduced along the entire corridor, but perhaps there could be a couple of zones where the speed limit was dropped to 45 miles per hour. He noted that there are a few more homes being built in the Colyer Lake area and wondered if the resulting increase in traffic is being taken into consideration. He supported the idea of closing one access and perhaps putting a stop light in at the Taylor Hill Road intersection. Finally, he also noted that a lot of heavy trucks pass illegally on the shoulder. Mr. Brown noted that Route 322 safety concerns are even more urgent than PennDOT and the MPO realize.

Ms. Wanda White explained that she prefers the travel Routes 144 and 45 due to the dangers on the Route 322 corridor. She has personally been tailgated by heavy trucks along Route 322 on numerous occasions. She also noted that safety concerns have been discussed since the SCCCTS study and there has been no major improvement in conditions. Ms. White agreed that dots on the road would help to serve as a reminder not to follow too closely. Her opinion is that the recent paving of Route 322 may be contributing to the high number of accidents this summer, because vehicles are able to travel faster. Last, she explained that school bus stops are a particular danger because there are no signs indicating their location, and suggested installation of flashing lights to warn people of this.

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Ms. Sue Smith noted that in Europe there are devices that take pictures of the license plate of speeding drivers. She asked if that was legal in Pennsylvania. Mr. Kline said that it was not, and would require legislative action to make legal.

Mr. Klees noted that any further updates from PennDOT would be reported to the Coordinating Committee.

### **7. I-80 Toll Conversion Project**

Mr. Zilla provided a status report on the I-80 toll conversion project. In October 2007 the Turnpike Commission (PTC) and PennDOT submitted an initial application for I-80 tolling to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). That application was amended and resubmitted in July 2008, with an addendum to the revised application submitted in August. In September, FHWA denied the request because the proposed lease payments do not meet statutory requirements.

At this point, there is no indication from the Turnpike Commission whether the proposal to implement tolls on I-80 will be continued, changed, or dropped. Mr. Zilla explained that Act 44 remains in effect, and lease payments from the PTC to PennDOT will continue, at least for the short term. He noted that under the original and revised tolling plans, revenue was not anticipated to be generated until 2010.

Mr. Zilla reviewed some of the highlights of the presentation that was given to the Technical Committee by PTC consultants:

- Open road tolling approach, using EZPass or license plate readers
- Incentive program for passenger vehicles (tolls begin at the second gantry for each trip)
- Volume discount for commercial vehicles (same as existing Turnpike)
- Two potential toll zones in Centre County
- Identified traffic diversions (Routes 53 and 144, Route 322, I-99, Route 64, Routes 45 and 192)
- Increase in truck traffic on Route 322 may occur without I-80 tolls because of the increase in mainline Turnpike toll rates

Mr. Zilla explained that the PTC prepared and presented a Capital Improvement Plan to the Technical Committee, showing an average investment of \$250 million per year along the length of I-80. Investments in Centre County would total approximately \$412 million in the first ten years. This includes funding for the I-99/I-80 High Speed Interchange and I-80/Route 26 Local Access Interchange, as well as funding for rebuilding of the mainline pavement and bridges.

Mr. Shifflet noted that there is still time for action to occur on this project. However, he also explained that in July 2010, the lease payments from the PTC to PennDOT will drop from \$900 million down to \$450 million if I-80 tolling does not take place, and this is a real concern for PennDOT and planning partners. He noted that in any case, Act 44 is still the law, and the PTC will still be making payments for the next two fiscal years.

Mr. Lee noted that legislators are saying that they are not going to lease the Turnpike. He explained that transportation should be treated as a utility, and people should pay for it as they use it.

### **8. Centre County Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)**

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Ms. Meek explained that she will be facilitating a very broad discussion about the next major update of the LRTP, scheduled to be adopted in 2010. She asked that the Coordinating Committee consider scheduling a special meeting in October to focus entirely on the LRTP.

There are four primary discussion items:

- Goals and objectives
- Funding strategies
- Land use and community development factors
- Performance measures

Discussion questions were provided to Coordinating Committee members in advance, and results from the Technical Committee's discussion was included with the agenda. Ms. Meek explained that in a general sense, the Technical Committee expressed a consensus to assign priority to the relationship between transportation and land use, alternative modes, safety, and the Year of Expenditure regulations in the next major LRTP update. She further explained that the Technical Committee generally supported the project ranking criteria, but realized that these may need to be refined.

The first discussion question included in the agenda was "What is the goal(s) of the LRTP and what are key objectives that should be utilized to shape the future of Centre County's transportation system in the next 20 to 40 years?"

Mr. Klees asked for reaction and comments from other members of the Committee.

Mr. Miller explained that YOE and funding formulas would have a strong influence in the next version of the LRTP, as the MPO must decide up front if any of the big projects are even feasible without an additional source of funding. He noted that this philosophy must be developed and finalized before the MPO can really focus on specifics.

Mr. Luck noted the cultural changes happening right now. There has been an expectation of infinite growth over the past 50 years, and now we are at a point where that they may not hold true. Accordingly, a lot of the townships are not interested in adding capacity right now. Further, he questioned the strategic vision of PennDOT, citing the example of Valley Vista Drive near North Atherton Street, where six sets of lights were required because of traffic projections that have not materialized; he noted that gas efficiency and drivability of the area has suffered as a result. Mr. Luck noted bicycle transportation as another issue, explaining that there must be a threshold distance where bicycle use is not going to be feasible. Last, he suggested that multi-modal transportation (such as transit/bicycle) should receive more consideration in the next LRTP update.

Mr. Klees noted that the days of the MPO being able to program large projects are likely over, short of a process where spike funds are programmed and can be planned for. He explained that the municipalities need to take a role in the MPO process by thinking about the things that are most beneficial to their communities, including commuter, safety, and efficiency improvements. He further explained that available funding would need to be focused on these types of projects in the future.

Ms. Goreham stated that the landscape is changing dramatically, and the MPO needs to readjust its traditional way of thinking. She suggested that one of the highest priorities should be the Route 322 corridor. Further, she explained that the MPO needs to focus more on energy conservation, with a corresponding emphasis on transit and the relationship between transportation and land use.

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Mr. Eich noted that if the MPO has an LRTP process that is so fiscally constrained that it does not allow large projects and missing links to be completed, it is a fatally flawed process. This will take the completion of missing links out of the planning process and throw it into the political arena, as the region competes for discretionary funds. He suggested that the state find a way to provide for these large, regionally significant projects.

Mr. Elnitski explained that skyrocketing construction costs, including the prevailing wage rule, is making it difficult to complete projects. He suggested that an effort be made to reduce costs so that more improvements can be delivered.

Dr. Spychalski noted that transit is an efficient use of the road structure. However, he explained that other related improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian networks should be considered, as CATA is concerned about inadequate pedestrian access to transit, particularly in winter. It is difficult to cultivate a willingness to use transit if bus stops are difficult to access. Specifically, he noted that some developments do not have sidewalks because they were not required at the time the developments were built. Moreover, Dr. Spychalski suggested that something should be done with the motor fuel tax, which has not increased since the 1980s; adjustments should not be limited to diesel and gasoline, but should be expanded to alternative fuels. Dr. Spychalski noted that the price of fuel has been, and may continue to be, a great modifier to behavior, as seen in the significant increases to CATA's vanpools and carpool matching program.

Mr. Buckalew referred to urban sprawl and its link to transportation facilities. He noted that more efficient methods of transportation can help to control sprawl.

Mr. Lee distributed his written comments. He explained that the LRTP should be seen as more than a listing and ranking of projects; its performance should be judged by how it contributes to reduced travel demand and travel times, cost of living, regional economy and the livability of the community. He suggested that the LRTP process begin with the education of the Coordinating Committee and staff on the geography and demography of Centre County. This includes where growth is desired, the distribution of travel demands with respect to travel choice and land use and the trends and patterns in the anticipated movement of people and the shape of the geography. He explained that the overall goal should not be mobility, but access. Accordingly, rather than investing in increased capacity, the MPO should consider obtaining more flow out of our existing system and closer alignment of people with what they do. He added that perhaps interstate maintenance funds should be ranked and subject to a five year capital plan. If PennDOT did that, it would help take politics out of the process and help the MPO with planning for large projects.

Mr. Savage explained that in terms of economic development, transportation is the most overlooked element, and is not recognized as a planning tool. Key employment centers and workforces should be identified so as to identify specific corridors and alternative modes of transportation. He noted that the Moshannon Valley is requesting regional commuter bus service from CATA and financial support from the County Board of Commissioners.

Ms. Hannegan noted that, in addition to current employment centers, future employment centers should also be identified. She predicted that future drilling of natural gas may have a huge impact on the location of emerging employment centers.

Mr. Shifflet stated that the preservation of the existing transportation network should be first and foremost; this is an ongoing issue, as are safety improvements. He suggested that the MPO and PennDOT need to find ways, through ITS and other mechanisms, to improve mobility at lower costs. He further noted that inflation is affecting what can be done to improve existing infrastructure.

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Mr. Smoker explained that one federal requirement is to accurately document the true cost of operating and maintaining the existing transportation system. Rehabilitation and reconstruction of major roadways is going to occur over the next 20 or 25 years, and therefore funding is going to be constrained. He noted his satisfaction with the enthusiasm and professionalism of the CCMPO. He encouraged the Coordinating Committee reach out to new and different stakeholders to solicit their input as the LRTP update proceeds.

Mr. Kline noted that system preservation and safety should assume primary importance in the upcoming update; this will be difficult with the dwindling state and federal funds. He explained that out of PennDOT District 2-0's maintenance budget, in the past year or two they have been able to push about \$20 million in pavement projects, but said that they will be lucky to hit \$8 million this year. He noted that the structurally deficient bridge problem in Centre County is fortunately not as bad as it is in the rest of the District.

Mr. Hall agreed with the approach of reducing costs in an effort to deliver more improvements. He cited the aforementioned discussion of Route 322 as an example of how the MPO should address the existing system first, suggesting that the MPO look carefully at where accidents occur, and try to find solutions to address those critical areas. He explained that rather than build a new highway, intersections can be improved and turning lanes built. He expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that even minor improvements have not been implemented on the Route 322 corridor.

Mr. Corman noted that the current state of transportation in Centre County will require a different kind of thinking. For example, Penn State is starting shorter work weeks for their employees to reduce travel demand and energy consumption. He explained that currently, many rural residents have to travel to State College and other areas to obtain what they need. His biggest concern was rural infrastructure, because that is how the farm products get out to the world; but at the same time, he suggested looking at alternative modes to move products.

Ms. Spencer emphasized the need to take what we have and make it better, including support for alternative modes such as rail and bicycle. There is a study being conducted at Penn State to examine more efficient energy use, and some of that includes things like roundabouts, ways to save gas, and encouraging alternative fuel companies to come to the area.

Mr. Zilla explained that this a fluid process and items change. He said that finding a way to deliver public transportation is a key issue, as the MPO has struggled for many years with how to adequately finance public transportation. Another question is how to address all the needs that policymakers bring up while still meeting all planning requirements. Moreover, bureaucracy does not allow the MPO to react as quickly or be as proactive as possible. Mr. Zilla suggested that the LRTP take the form of more of an ongoing process rather than a plan.

Ms. Meek explained that staff will organize the comments received at this meeting and come back in October. She noted that the Technical Committee could also be invited to the special October meeting to participate in this ongoing discussion.

Mr. Zilla added that, as part of the new LRTP, he would like the Committee to consider some method to gauge the progress being made in improving transportation as projects are carried out. He thought this was missing from the current Plan.

*Mr. Eich made a motion to hold a special meeting in October. Mr. Lee seconded and the motion carried unanimously.*

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**9. Member Reports**

Mr. Eich reported that the County liquid fuels applications are out, and asked municipalities to complete and return these as soon as possible.

Mr. Smoker reported that FHWA met with FTA regarding the overall STYP, and explained that approval will occur by October 1, 2008. He also noted that Congress passed, and the President signed into law, an \$8 billion transfer from the General Fund to the Highway Trust Fund. This is a shift that affectively “pays back” the Highway Trust Fund for funds that were previously borrowed.

**10. Announcements**

Mr. Klees noted that a special Coordinating Committee meeting will be held on October 28.

Mr. Shifflet reported that FTA announced a \$540,000 grant to CATA under the Section 5308 Clean Fuels Program.

**11. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Shingler  
Recording Secretary