

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

**Tuesday, October 28, 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
Elizabeth Goreham, Vice-Chair	State College Borough
Ken Hall	Mountaintop Planning Region
Dan Klees, Chair	College Township
Kevin Kline	PennDOT District 2-0 Office
Chris Lee	Harris Township
Jeff Luck	Patton Township
Richard Killian (for Steve Miller)	Ferguson Township
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
Bob Jacobs	Centre County Planning & Community Development Office
Michelle Barbin	CCMPO Technical Committee - Mountaintop Region
Hugh Mose	CATA
Frank Hampton	PennDOT Central Office
George Khoury	Citizen
Terri Quici	CATA

**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**

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

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### 3. Citizen Comments

There were no citizen comments.

### 4. Centre Commute Program Update (Rideshare, Vanpool, Guaranteed Ride Home)

Ms. Terri Quici, CATA Rideshare Coordinator, reviewed each component of the Centre Commute Program.

Rideshare is a ride-matching program for long distance commuters. This program became web-based in 2007. Participants can now self-register, edit their own profile, and receive a list of the best possible matches for either a carpool or vanpool. Ms. Quici reported that in 2008, the Rideshare program grew significantly, with a total of 1,012 participants enrolled in the program as of late September. The program serves Centre County and ten surrounding counties, with the largest numbers of participants coming from Philipsburg, Tyrone/Warriors Mark, and Lewistown.

Ms. Quici explained that CATA assumed control of Penn State University's vanpool operation in October 2007. Today there are 14 vanpools in operation, with 6 more organized groups on a waiting list. Current vanpools originate in the Philipsburg, Tyrone, Lewistown and Lock Haven areas.

Each vanpool consists of 10-15 participants. CATA facilitates the vanpool organization and provides the van, insurance, maintenance, and a gas card. Fares are calculated on a base rate plus a per mile rate. Ms. Quici noted that between January and June of this year, carpool participation grew from 225 to 288, and vanpool participation grew from 106 to 160.

The Guaranteed Ride Home Program provides a taxi ride home up to four times per calendar year for emergencies such as illness, workplace shutdown, family disasters, and mandatory overtime. This costs just \$10 per year for carpool or vanpool participants. Ms. Quici explained that in general, CATA provides about two rides home per month program-wide.

Ms. Quici reported that outreach efforts are an important component of the Centre Commute Program, including presentations at local employers. The program is advertised on billboards, in newspapers and on the radio.

Mr. Lee asked why additional vans have not been purchased and deployed if there is a waiting list for the vanpool program. Mr. Kausch explained that CATA was recently approved for a grant award under the Job Access-Reverse Commute (JARC) Program. The grant will cover the purchase cost of eight new vans and four replacement vans.

Mr. Eich asked if lower gas prices have affected the level of carpool and vanpool participation. Ms. Quici explained that as gas prices have fallen, participation has slowed down. There are fewer new applicants, and it becomes more difficult to hold existing groups together.

Mr. Luck noted that the coordination function of the Rideshare Program does not seem to fit well with CATA's core operations, since it seems to be more of a "vehicle broker" or rental role. He explained that he did not mean to be critical of the program, but could not figure out how it fits philosophically with CATA's other service offerings.

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Mr. Spsychalski responded that one could argue that a public transportation authority has a mission of trying to serve the public's mobility needs in ways that transcend simple fixed route service. In doing so, they achieve some of the broad benefits to society that also attach to public fixed route transit service. Operating data shows savings in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, utilization of road capacity and vehicle trips. There is also the question of what type of entity can most effectively manage or provide vanpool services in a given area. Traditionally, these types of services have been employer-based. However, when a public transit entity operates the service, it is open to the entire community. Mr. Spsychalski questioned whether there was another entity that could better provide vanpool and carpool services in this community.

Mr. Luck re-emphasized that he supports the initiative, but it is not clear to him how it integrates into the other services that CATA provides in terms of operating efficiencies. Mr. Spsychalski explained that the Centre Commute program is simply another way to manage and provide mobility to the population.

### 5. Centre County Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Ms. Meek explained that discussion at this meeting should focus on elements key to starting the LRTP major update. These include the schedule, the ranking criteria, how candidate projects will be handled, the update of the travel demand model and socioeconomic forecast data, and transportation funding. She further explained that the law requires an update to the LRTP every four years, which means that a new plan needs to be in place by June 2010. This would fit with the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) cycle, meaning that the public comment period and the air quality conformity analysis for both documents can run simultaneously. Ms. Meek noted that staff is recommending the new LRTP cover a 30 year time period.

Ms. Meek reviewed the schedule of activities leading up to plan adoption, anticipated in June 2010.

Mr. Klees asked how this update differs from the most recent update two years ago. Ms. Meek explained that this update would place more emphasis on vision, goals and objectives. At the time of the last major plan update, project-ranking criteria were used by almost every MPO in the Commonwealth. By putting more emphasis on vision, goals, and objectives, the MPO will be developing a plan that may be more in line with local preferences. These criteria will guide project selection.

Mr. Eich noted that the next census questionnaires must be returned by April 2010. He asked if there was a timeline for 2010 census data to be released, and how important raw census data is to the LRTP. Ms. Meek replied that census information would not be available in time for this plan update. Staff will use 2000 census data as well as all resources available to bring that data current to the baseline year of 2008. During the last update, staff used building permit data to project changes to the 2000 census data.

Mr. Lee expressed encouragement, explaining that he feels the MPO is going to incorporate some new principles to the ranking criteria, such as linking land use solutions to transportation demand. He noted that he would like to consider reversing the existing ranking process – rather than having a list of projects that the criteria are applied to, take the criteria and ask what the ideal projects would be to meet them.

Mr. Klees said that formulating the vision, goals and objectives would be the next major step in the process, before ranking criteria are refined or any projects are ranked. He expressed hope that the vision, goals, and objectives would drive project requests. He suggested that the overall objectives of the LRTP be articulated to entities when soliciting projects.

Mr. Lee asked how staff would measure demand. Ms. Meek explained that as part of the model update, the basic inputs staff will provide to the consultant are population and employment. The model also takes parking into consideration. She further noted that the consultant selected to update the model will provide a presentation on this process at a future MPO meeting.

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Mr. Lee asked whether origin and destination studies would be incorporated into the updated plan. Mr. Zilla explained that the travel demand model focuses on vehicle trips. He further noted that some elements are entered by hand, including census and other survey data. Mr. Zilla pointed out that much of the work done to build the model from 2000 through 2006 was based on four Origin and Destination studies. These include studies completed for Corridor O, SCCCTS, Route 26 South, Route 220, and the Eastern Inner Loop; altogether five or six major transportation corridors are covered. Mr. Zilla noted that staff does not have a lot of internal data on hand, but explained that this is where modeling really becomes useful. He further explained that new origin and destination studies are very time-consuming, often taking four to five years to complete.

Ms. Goreham noted that solicitation of new projects would occur in April 2009, which leaves a lot of time to update the ranking criteria between now and then. She asked if those refined criteria would be applied to the existing project lists. Ms. Meek replied affirmatively.

Mr. Lee suggested that the word “mobility” in the criteria should be changed to “access.”

Mr. Zilla explained that the vision, goals, and objectives set for the LRTP could be of great utility in collecting data. For example, if the MPO sets a goal of accomplishing a certain level of transit ridership, that goal can help drive the process. He expressed hope that the MPO would elect to include performance measures against which the effectiveness of the projects on the LRTP could be benchmarked and periodically evaluated.

Mr. Lee noted that PennDOT has the discretion to apply spike funds to certain projects of statewide significance, and asked if there was a process for ranking these projects. Mr. Shifflet replied that no such process exists. Mr. Lee then suggested that the MPO write a letter to ask PennDOT to establish such a process, as this would take allocation of spike funds out of the political realm. Mr. Shifflet replied that spike funds were allocated much differently during the most recent round, with any previously unallocated funds targeted to structurally deficient bridges. To evaluate candidate projects on these bridges, there is a standardized risk assessment tool. Mr. Lee surmised that if a system were developed to rank projects of statewide significance, Route 322 improvements and SCCCTS area would be high on the statewide list. Mr. Klees agreed, noting that even a little more transparency regarding significant projects statewide would give the MPO a better appreciation of other issues outside of Centre County.

Mr. Eich cited the urgency of the MPO making its priorities well known. He explained that there would be a natural shifting of priorities at the federal and state level following the upcoming election. Moreover, the federal reauthorization process will begin next year, therefore, Mr. Eich stressed the importance of letting our elected officials know what the most critical needs and missing links are. He noted that in this area, certain road improvements have been on the books for 40 years or more, hence that message needs to be conveyed to Washington so that important projects can be completed.

Mr. Luck noted that the current LRTP covers a duration of 25 years. He explained that if the next LRTP will be extended to 30 years, it would be useful to have a set of normalizing metrics. He expressed concern that if somebody looked at a 30 year LRTP, and compared it to a 25 year LRTP, they might misconstrue the presence of additional projects as progress. Ms. Meek explained that given Year of Expenditure requirements, even a plan of longer duration would likely have a smaller total number of projects. She also added that if significant changes are made to the ranking criteria, many current projects might drop off the list. Nevertheless, staff will examine this issue.

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Mr. Bloom reviewed the current ranking criteria, noting that the Coordinating Committee directed staff and the Technical Committee to cooperatively develop these criteria in 2004. Working criteria were based on a model from the Harrisburg area, with a total of ten ultimately adopted by the MPO. Subsequent to adoption of criteria, a Project Ranking Committee was formed, comprised of eight members from the Technical Committee and staff.

An independent analysis was performed on the validity of the ranking criteria, and this yielded several suggestions. First, the community planning objectives criterion should be reevaluated. Mr. Bloom explained that when the raters looked at this criterion, it tended to default to a "5" score. Since making changes at that point would have taken a significant amount of time, it was decided to leave the criterion as it was, and make changes during the next update.

Another suggestion was to add more project impact statements for Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Transportation Enhancements (TE) project types. Mr. Bloom explained that as the policy objectives are set, the MPO may want more ITS and TE projects. Staff will look to policymakers for a decision.

The analysis also suggested that fewer raters would be needed on the Project Ranking Committee, specifically that six raters would work just as well as eight.

The fourth suggestion was to obtain input from individual raters on items that are confusing or difficult to use. Mr. Bloom noted that staff obtained this input, and it will continue to be collected and used to fine-tune the process with each new LRTP update.

Mr. Bloom explained that the analysis of the ranking criteria suggested a requirement that project sponsors provide sufficiently detailed and accurate information about each project. The biggest complaint from raters was that they did not know enough about the projects. He noted that this suggested improvement would be implemented with the current update.

The last issue with the ranking criteria comes from the 2006-2007 Bridge Risk Assessment performed by PennDOT. This assessment marked a change in methodology from the sufficiency rating system to the structural deficiency rating system. Mr. Kline explained the difference between the two, stressing that the current system yields a more detailed rating. Mr. Bloom noted that when the last set of criteria was developed, it used sufficiency rating as a specific criterion for bridge projects; but examining a more detailed set of ratings is a very technical process that does not mesh well with the current ranking process. This disconnect suggests a need to re-evaluate the methodology for ranking bridge projects. Another issue is comparing local bridge projects to state bridge projects, since PennDOT only analyzes state bridges.

Mr. Bloom explained that staff is recommending the formation of a new Project Ranking Committee for this LRTP update. Committee members will reevaluate the ranking criteria, assess the bridge ranking process, and ultimately rank the candidate projects. Potential members would include two Coordinating Committee members, two Technical Committee members, two PennDOT officials and two staff members. He again noted that if the MPO chose to scale back committee membership, the independent analysis suggested that a total of six members would work just as well.

Mr. Klees noted that as part of the last update, the Coordinating Committee formed a group to evaluate the project list as presented by the Project Ranking Committee. As part of this process, a few minor changes were made.

Mr. Lee suggested that the total workload could be divided, with one group amending the criteria and another group ranking projects.

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Ms. Meek explained that candidate projects came from several sources during the last major LRTP update; these included the Mobility Action Plan, municipalities and organizations, public input, FHWA pilot safety review, CATA Strategic Plan, and the travel demand model. Mr. Lee suggested that projects also come from application of the new criteria as a vision or ideal to identify innovative solutions, but questioned who would be responsible for that. Ms. Meek further explained that during the last major update, staff reviewed the consultant's recommendations in conjunction with the travel demand model, and that process helped to identify individual projects. She noted that staff relied heavily on the consultant's findings regarding level of service.

Ms. Meek explained that when the last LRTP was drafted, there was a commitment from the MPO that if a project were already programmed on the TIP, it would automatically be included in the LRTP; this was by virtue of the already-existing financial resources and MPO support for such projects. Staff is recommending this same approach as part of the current update.

During this update, as projects are solicited from municipalities, staff recommends a request for additional information on any projects that are submitted. As previously noted, this information can simplify and strengthen the ranking process. Staff would also like to ask each municipality to identify their priority projects, an action which should help the Project Ranking Committee evaluate projects relative to the community planning objective criterion. Moreover, the municipality should indicate if there is money available for a local match.

Ms. Meek explained that during the previous major LRTP update, the MPO accepted candidate projects from any source, and ranked every project. During the 2007 minor update, staff requested municipal endorsement. That process took a considerable amount of time, but was beneficial because projects that a municipality might be opposed to were eliminated from consideration. Mr. Killian stressed that, by virtue of the time commitment involved, municipal endorsements should be sought sooner rather than later.

Mr. Klees referred to projects currently on the LRTP, both in and out of fiscal constraint. He asked if these should be sent back to municipalities for their continued endorsement. Ms. Meek explained that staff has not yet examined this specific issue, but agreed with the concept.

Mr. Klees asked if there is a mechanism for a municipality to request a project not located within its own boundaries. Mr. Zilla replied that this depends – on who owns the facility, whether it was a state road or a municipal road, and the whether the issue is related to safety or level of service. He admitted that a project that raises these questions has never been ranked high enough to necessitate a solution.

Mr. Zilla surmised that if a blanket list of projects were sent to all municipalities, each would automatically endorse all of their projects; he expressed the need for policy direction to limit that. Mr. Klees suggested that the plan vision, objectives, and goals be included with the endorsement request, to provide a framework for municipal responses. Mr. Zilla questioned the effectiveness of this approach. He noted that there has been discussion at the state level about a project development process, which would involve a screening process before TIPs and LRTPs are completed. This process involves getting information from municipalities up front, identifying environmental issues, and gauging financial commitment and policy support by the MPO or RPO. He noted that this model could be readily applied Pine Grove Mills intersection. Mr. Smoker suggested that agency support also be considered.

Mr. Klees questioned the ability of the MPO to program very large projects with the resources available. He noted that there may be more projects on the next LRTP, but they will likely be smaller projects. Mr. Zilla explained that during one project solicitation cycle in the late 1990's, staff asked for the top three project priorities from each municipality; one potential drawback to this approach is that some very important projects might be left out.

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Mr. Luck noted that given the reality of fiscal constraint, there would be a high level of competition between projects. Moreover, there are a lot of parameters that dictate whether or not a project will be successful. He suggested that the first step should be to determine the general feasibility of each project. Mr. Lee agreed, but suggested that the resulting filtered list be presented to the Coordinating Committee to endorse or pick out any exceptions.

Mr. Lee referred to the practice of automatically placing TIP projects on the LRTP. He questioned whether this practice was keeping other projects from being ranked or moving up through the rankings. Mr. Zilla explained that at least half the highway projects on the TIP went through the ranking process. Three betterment projects did not go through the ranking, but one was ranked very high. He noted that one-third to one-half of the bridge projects also went through the ranking process.

Mr. Eich asked what role PennDOT would play in putting forward candidate projects. Mr. Zilla explained that the bridge projects would require discussion. Moreover, PennDOT identifies its top safety project priorities based on crash data, and presents those to the MPO for discussion. Mr. Zilla suggested that PennDOT should be very much involved in suggesting candidate projects since they are legally responsible for a significant part of the highway system. Ms. Meek noted that safety will be included in the analysis, and that data will come from PennDOT; the project list becomes self-evident based on the data. Mr. Kline added that another bridge ranking would be completed at some point. For new or capacity adding projects, inclusion as a candidate project depends on the funding available.

Mr. Lee referred to the betterment projects on the LRTP. He suggested a higher degree of coordination since, as betterment projects ideally reflect local priorities. Mr. Kline responded that PennDOT considers MPO and municipal input, and tries to prioritize betterments accordingly.

Mr. Smoker explained that a federal transportation reauthorization is needed by September 30, 2009. This is a complex process, involving both the Senate and House. In July, the federal Transportation Secretary unveiled the Administration's reauthorization proposal for SAFETEA-LU. In doing so, she was very adamant that this reauthorization would require more than merely tweaking existing programs. Her proposal is to refocus, reform and renew the program. Mr. Smoker noted that the inevitability of a new administration in January makes it very likely that a different proposal will be put forward.

The Refocus, Reform and Renew proposal is completely different from SAFETEA-LU. Currently there are 108 transportation program categories, and this proposal would bring that number down to about 12 basic programs. Mr. Smoker explained that the current Administration desires to cut down on excessive earmarking. This new proposal would make use of cost-benefit analysis that is more data-driven than political. It is likely that direct pricing of roads and private sector innovation/competition would assume a more prominent role. Other components of this reauthorization proposal include:

- Increased flexibility
- Increased accountability
- Encouragement of innovation
- More effective environmental stewardship

Mr. Smoker said this program would have a heavy focus on a multi-state, corridor planning process. It will be driven more by outcomes rather than by process so as to correct a perceived lack of simplicity and efficiency.

Mr. Smoker then showed several slides depicting the various sources of federal transportation funding, and how these funds are spent. For a long time, the Highway Trust Fund carried a large balance of funds. The premise of SAFETEA-LU was to spend down that balance.

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Ms. Goreham referred to recent legislation that provided \$9 billion to the Highway Trust Fund. Mr. Smoker explained that this was a transfer from the General Fund back to the Highway Trust Fund, intended as a payback of money transferred in the other direction under TEA-21.

Mr. Smoker reviewed potential impacts if the Highway Trust Fund ran out of money. He said that spending programs would continue as new revenues are received. However, payments may not be timely and would be based upon availability. This could be problematic for the states, which rely on prompt and full reimbursements.

Mr. Smoker noted that when TEA-21 expired, it took an additional 22 months and 12 extensions before the SAFETEA-LU was passed.

Mr. Eich asked about the possibility of an economic stimulus package, and what role infrastructure projects might play in that. Mr. Shifflet replied that the House did pass a package in September totaling \$60 billion, including roughly \$12.8 billion for highway and bridge infrastructure improvements nationally. The Senate did not pass this bill. Pennsylvania would have received approximately \$560 million if it had passed. He said the Administration is pushing to have the Senate reconsider the bill. Mr. Smoker said that one advantage to receiving money for transportation is that the funds are used on highly visible projects.

### 6. Announcements

Mr. Klees reviewed the schedule of upcoming meetings.

Correspondence from Senator Corman was attached to the agenda; this correspondence was a response to a letter sent to his office requesting additional police enforcement activity in the Route 322 corridor between Boalsburg and Potters Mills.

Correspondence from PennDOT to municipalities and counties, concerning the local bridge inspection program, was also attached to the agenda.

An additional correspondence from PennDOT was attached to the agenda containing information about the Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative (PCTI). This program is intended to advance "Smart Transportation" principles in the Commonwealth. Staff will make a presentation on the PCTI in November.

### 7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Shingler  
Recording Secretary