

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

**Tuesday, January 27, 2009
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
Dan Klees, Chair	College Township
Kevin Kline	PennDOT District 2-0 Office
Chris Lee	Harris 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
Frank Hampton (for Larry Shifflet)	PennDOT Central Office

Non-Voting Members Present:

Rob Cooper	Penn State University
Frank Halderman	Bellefonte Borough

Others Present:

Tom Zilla	Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)
Trish Meek	CRPA
Greg Kausch	CRPA
Lori Shingler	CRPA – Recording Secretary
Bob Jacobs	CCPCDO – Secretary
Mike Bloom	CCPCDO
Mike Joseph	Centre Daily Times
Hugh Mose	CATA
Karen Michael	PennDOT District 2-0
Michelle Barbin	Mountaintop Planning Region
Michael Rose	Kerry Benninghoff’s Office

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. Election of Officers

Mr. Jacobs opened the floor for nominations for officers of the CCMPO in 2009.

Mr. Corman nominated Dan Klees to serve as Chair, seconded by Ms. Goreham. Mr. Buckalew moved to close nominations, seconded by Mr. Corman.

Members elected Mr. Klees unanimously to serve as Chair for 2009.

Mr. Savage nominated Chris Lee to serve as Vice-Chair, seconded by Mr. Buckalew. Mr. Corman nominated Elizabeth Goreham to serve as Vice-Chair, seconded by Mr. Hall. Mr. Buckalew moved to close nominations, seconded by Mr. Miller.

A vote was taken and Ms. Goreham was elected to serve as Vice-Chair for 2009.

Mr. Hall moved to reappoint Mr. Jacobs as Secretary, seconded by Mr. Corman. The vote was unanimous to reappoint Mr. Jacobs to serve as Secretary for 2009.

3. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Buckalew made a motion to approve the November 25, 2008 Coordinating Committee minutes, with one correction. Mr. Hall seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

4. Citizen Comments

There were no citizen comments.

5. FY 2009-10 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Zilla explained that the UPWP is adopted every year in February for the period July 1 – June 30. It lists important actions for the MPO and work tasks for staff. He briefly reviewed the tasks in the base UPWP.

Mr. Zilla reported that there would be no increase in Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) funding this year. In 2008-09, total FHWA funding was \$115,831, which included a one-time addition of funds in the amount of \$23,000. In 2009-10, total FHWA funding will be \$92,831.

He further explained that there may be potential new projects for supplemental planning funds, and reviewed the current status of existing supplemental planning projects:

- FY 2007-08 Task VII.A – Coordinate Land Use and Transportation Planning (Halfmoon/Patton Area Plan and Route 64/550 area): This project has not moved forward.
- FY 2007-08 Task VII.B – Assessment of Public Transportation Services in Centre County: This project is currently underway.
- FY 2008-09 Task VII.A – Update Travel Demand Model and Socioeconomic Forecast Data: This project just beginning.

Mr. Zilla explained that given the status of the existing supplemental planning projects, time extensions will be needed for two of the three projects. PennDOT's current guidance is to complete existing projects before requesting funds for new projects.

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Therefore, staff recommends that no new supplemental planning funds projects be proposed in the FY 2009-10 UPWP. Mr. Zilla then reviewed new projects that were discussed as candidates for supplemental planning funds in November:

- Detailed inventory of municipal bridges;
- Coordination of land use and transportation plans (additional funds to enhance the current project);
- Socioeconomic forecasts and travel demand model for LRTP (additional funds to enhance the current project);
- Update of Centre Area Public Transportation Plan;
- Education efforts for municipalities relative to natural gas drilling activities; and
- Additional traffic counts to document new patterns following the opening of I-99.

Both the Technical Committee and staff recommend that no new requests be made for additional supplemental planning funds projects. It was recommended, however, that additional funding be requested for the socioeconomic forecasts and travel demand model to cover multiple software licenses that will be needed to complete the project. The need for these additional licenses was not discovered until after the initial project was underway.

Mr. Lee referred to page 14, item 5A of the draft UPWP, where Needs Studies are referenced. He asked how needs would be measured. Mr. Zilla replied that the definition of “needs”, in this instance, refers less to performance measures and more to needs in terms of the necessity for a project. Examples might include safety/crashes, congestion, and land use issues. Mr. Lee explained that he was looking for an indication that it was access, rather than how much people travel, that is being discussed. Mr. Kline noted that this probably ties in with “smart transportation” theories. Mr. Lee replied that there are non-transportation solutions to needs, including affordable housing and transit-oriented design. Mr. Zilla explained that item 4.C, Land Use Coordination, and item 6.A, Streamlining Project Implementation, references these approaches.

Mr. Lee then referred to page 13, item IV.C, Land Use Consideration. He expressed a desire for a policy-level forum to coordinate land use and transportation concerns. Such a forum would include elected officials, as well as representatives from various authorities, who could take ideas back to their host municipalities and agencies. Mr. Klees explained that item IV.C also refers to the LRTP and TIP processes, which have been discussed extensively. He further noted that as those processes progressed, a concurrent policy-level discussion of land use and transportation issues would take place. Mr. Zilla replied that absent a policy change with respect to oversight of such a forum, we must operate within the existing committee structure. This includes the Centre County Planning Commission (CCPC), County planning staff, the Comprehensive Plan process, the Centre Regional Planning Commission (CRPC), and the MPO.

Mr. Buckalew referred to the “Project Delivery” section of the UPWP, referring to completion of the high-speed and local interchanges between Route 26 and I-99, and the possible resumption of the SCCCTS and Corridor O1 projects. He expressed appreciation that the projects are still being considered.

Mr. Savage noted that under Public Transportation, it refers to “other transportation providers.” He asked if that includes providers such as Area Transportation Authority of North Central Pennsylvania (ATA) in Clearfield. Mr. Zilla responded that it does.

There was general agreement among Committee members that no additional supplemental planning funds be requested for new projects.

6. 2009-2012 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

a. Administrative Actions for the Highway Element

Mr. Zilla reported that several administrative actions were taken that did not require formal MPO approval. He reviewed the significant actions.

The first change shifts \$940,000 in funds to the Route 26 Pine Grove Mountain project. This action will allow two of the three elements of this project to proceed in FFY 2009. Federal funds will be shifted from the Route 45 Betterment project, because the cost estimate for that project is considerably less than the amount programmed. State matching funds will be shifted from the Old Fort Park and Ride project, which will not be ready for construction in 2009.

Mr. Lee asked if funds would be available in 2010 for Old Fort Park and Ride construction. Mr. Zilla replied that the next step would be to shift other funds into 2010 to ensure that construction can proceed.

The second action shifts \$157,279 to the SR 26 Pleasant Gap Betterment project in FFY 2009. This money comes from the Old Fort Park and Ride project so that it does not lapse, but rather can be sued by the MPO.

Mr. Lee asked why construction of the Old Fort Park and Ride project continues to be delayed. Mr. Kausch cited multiple issues resulting in delays. These include stormwater, historic, and archeological issues. Mr. Zilla added that the lease for the project involves several different parties. Mr. Kausch is working to extend that lease so that FHWA is comfortable with the return on their investment of federal funds.

The third action shifts \$500,000 from the Old Fort Betterment project to a reserve line item, and then converts funds from that line item into three new pavement restoration projects, which will allow design of the projects to begin in FFY 2009.

The last action adds \$51,000 to the Transportation Enhancements (TE) line item in FFY 2009. This money comes from the de-obligation of TE funds from a completed project that was completed under the bid amount.

b. Route 322 Corridor Safety Improvements Project

As the Route 322 Corridor Safety Feasibility Study has been completed, staff discussed what the next steps should be. The decision was to have the MPO recommend to PennDOT advancement of specific projects included in the Safety Study. At their January meeting, the Technical Committee recommended that the Coordinating Committee ask PennDOT to immediately advance two high priority projects identified in the Feasibility Study:

- Project F-MOD – Third lane near Shaner complex, and realignment of Taylor Hill Road; and
- Project I – Church Hill Road/Dogtown Road intersection improvements and road closure

Mr. Corman noted that Potter Township is in agreement with these recommendations, and has discussed the closure of Church Hill Road with PennDOT. He further explained that the Township is considering expanding the Prime Commercial –Industrial District (PCI) in the vicinity of the Shaner complex to support more growth.

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Mr. Eich made a motion to request PennDOT District 2-0 to immediately advance Projects F-MOD and I as identified in the Route 322 Corridor Safety Feasibility Study, and incorporate improvements recommended by Potter Township in locations east of Taylor Hill Road. Mr. Spsychalski seconded the motion.

Mr. Lee asked if these were the highest priority projects, or the highest value in terms of cost-benefit ratio. Mr. Zilla replied that these are the only two projects listed as high priority. Others projects either carry a very high cost, or are not listed as high in priority.

The above motion was voted upon and passed unanimously.

7. Federal Economic Stimulus Legislation

Mr. Zilla explained that not a lot is known about the specifics of a stimulus package at this point in time. Unknown issues include funding levels, funding distribution methods, special requirements, or the time period that will be given to advance projects.

Mr. Zilla noted that staff has been told that out of a potential \$825 billion in the bill, there would only be about \$30 billion allocated for highway and bridge projects. Based on PennDOT's calculations, about \$1.3 billion of this could be expected to come to Pennsylvania. This would be 100% federal funding that would not require a state or local match. Because projects can take a long time to move into the construction phase, there may be issues associated with obligating the money by a given deadline.

After the House Appropriations Bill was released on January 15, 2009, PennDOT released information including a list of candidate projects that could potentially move to construction within a six-month time frame. A list of these candidate projects in Centre County was included with the agenda. Many of these projects focus on system preservation. The estimated distribution of funds to each MPO and RPO was generally based on the 2009 TIP Guidance.

Mr. Zilla noted that there will be likely be negotiations in the Senate before any proposal is passed.

Mr. Klees noted that one of the candidate projects listed is the Pine Grove Mountain project. He asked what would happen to the funds already programmed for that project if it received money through the stimulus package. Mr. Kline replied that the TIP funds could then be reprogrammed to another project. Mr. Klees expressed concern that, through the stimulus process, some existing funds would lapse or disappear. Mr. Kline assured the Committee that the District is identifying other projects to which existing funds can be shifted if an infusion of stimulus money comes in.

Ms. Goreham asked if the Federal Transportation Bill for 2009 would be passed before a stimulus measure. Mr. Kline replied that it is his understanding that a stimulus package is Congress' first priority. Mr. Zilla noted that there are actually four pieces of legislation in play with large transportation impacts: the stimulus package, the FFY 2009 Appropriations Bill, the FFY 2010 Appropriations Bill, and a new Authorization Bill that will take the place of SAFETEA-LU.

Mr. Lee asked how the list of candidate projects aligns with the LRTP. Mr. Zilla replied that all the projects are on the LRTP or TIP. Mr. Kline added that the first action taken to identify candidate projects was to look at these documents.

Mr. Mose reviewed his understanding related to transit projects. One key element is that on the transit side, half of the money made available will have to be obligated within either 90 or 120 days. The other half would have to be obligated within 180 days.

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Mr. Mose explained that the term “obligation” appears to mean that the project has to be under contract. Mr. Mose added that this package could mean an influx of as much as \$1 million for CATA.

Mr. Klees asked if all projects funded with economic stimulus money would have to come through the MPO and TIP processes. Mr. Kline replied that they would. Mr. Zilla added that telephone ballots may be necessary, as the time provided to obligate funds may be extremely short.

Mr. Eich asked if the time period to obligate funds would start at the time the legislation is passed. Mr. Zilla replied that, according to the FHWA website, it would start when the legislation was signed. Mr. Kline added that his understanding is that this was still being negotiated.

Mr. Zilla discussed the high speed and local interchanges between PA Route 26, I-80, and I-99. Neither of these projects is on the current LRTP or TIP, although they are in the end stages of final design. He noted staff’s request that the local access interchange be included on the list of candidate projects, but it did not make the final version. He surmised that high-level PennDOT officials view the two interchanges as a package, and therefore both need to be constructed within the same time frame. He also noted that the Secretary of Transportation was very clear that only projects on a TIP would be included on the candidate project list.

Mr. Lee explained that the local access interchange is an important project that cannot be constructed without a large influx of funds. He asked about the “shelf life” of the project engineering studies. Mr. Kline replied that from a design standard point, this information would never really expire, but FHWA requires that the project continues to show steady incremental progress.

Mr. Eich expressed disappointment that a project that is 95% complete and links two interstates would not be considered appropriate for stimulus funding. He did express encouragement that PennDOT was willing to invest in the two miles of PA Route 26 between the two interchange sites in order to be ready for interchange construction.

8. Member Reports

Halfmoon Township – Ms. Spencer reported that a portion of PA Route 550 has recently experienced quite a few accidents. She added that PennDOT is acting quickly to replace signage and guardrails.

Penns Valley Planning Region – Mr. Corman noted that the Spring Mills Bridge project is now complete and open to traffic.

Harris Township – Mr. Lee referred to Route 45 congestion in relation to the proposed Rockey Farm development. Part of a potential solution to this issue is lights that will create pulses in the traffic flow in the area.

Moshannon Valley Planning Region – Mr. Savage explained that a proposal has been made to reactivate the old Corman railroad line. The Surface Transportation Board has requested a full Environmental Impact Statement; therefore this is an opportunity for citizens to participate in the discussion.

CATA – Mr. Spychalski noted that despite the recent drop in gasoline prices, CATA ridership in all categories continues to grow significantly.

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Centre Regional Planning Commission – Mr. Buckalew reported that the CRPC considered a request to create a new Medical Campus Zoning District in the vicinity of Mount Nittany Medical Center. Moreover, the Centre Democrats received a presentation on Marcellus Shale gas drilling and the amount of water required for that process. The water requires a large number of trucks to transport, and these will certainly impact local highways and roads. Mr. Eich added that the truck trips are equivalent to 3.4 million car trips, and the majority of these trips will take place on rural roads.

Ferguson Township – Mr. Miller reported that the Township is considering improvements to Whitehall Road, including widening, bicycle access, and utility relocation. The biggest concern is that potential improvements might encourage traffic to move at a higher speed.

Upper Bald Eagle Planning Region – Ms. Reese noted that since the opening of I-99, she has noticed that truck traffic is still using the former US Route 220 corridor instead of the new road. She asked if PennDOT is considering ways to address that. Mr. Kline theorized that this may be an educational issue more than anything else.

College Township – Mr. Klees reported that the Township had received a land development plan for South Atherton Street across from Hills Plaza. The Township Traffic Engineer completed a study to determine the feasibility of relocating West Branch Road to line up with the Hills Plaza main entrance. The developer was initially not receptive to that concept, but has finally submitted a plan that reflects realignment of the road.

Centre County – Mr. Jacobs thanked PennDOT District 2-0 for their help to the County and municipalities in better coordinating the highway occupancy permit process. He surmised that this coordination would allow the County to complete more transportation/land use planning activity with respect to land development plans before highway occupancy permits are issued for driveways.

9. Announcements

Mr. Klees reviewed the schedule of upcoming MPO meetings.

Mr. Klees noted that a letter from Marion Township is included with the agenda. This letter requests that the location of the PA Route 26/I-99 local access interchange be reconsidered. Mr. Zilla added that Marion Township would like to see this issue discussed at the February MPO meetings. The consensus of the Coordinating Committee was that this discussion should be placed on the agenda.

There were 11 applications from Centre County for the new Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative (PCTI). Because of the high number of applications submitted statewide, the applications have not yet been provided to the PennDOT District Offices, MPOs and RPOs. No target date has been established for funding awards.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Shingler
Recording Secretary