

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

**Wednesday, December 16, 2009
6:00 p.m.
Patton Township Municipal Building**

Minutes

Voting Members Present:

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

Non-Voting Members Present:

Frank Halderman	Bellefonte Borough
-----------------	--------------------

Others Present:

Jim May	Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)
Tom Zilla	CRPA
Trish Meek	CRPA
Greg Kausch	CRPA
Amy Dugan	CRPA
Mike Bloom	Centre County Planning/Community Development Office (CCPCDO)
Frank Hampton	PennDOT Central Office
Karen Michael	PennDOT District 2-0
Ken Roan	Marion Township
Brian McCauley	Marion Township
Michele Barbin	Mountaintop Planning Region
Lyssa Cromell	Centre Region Council of Governments
Mike Joseph	Centre Daily Times
Walter Cherwony	Abrams-Cherwony Group of Gannett-Fleming, Inc.
Lynn Herman	Citizen

CCMPO COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

Page 2

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Klees called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. and led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Minutes

Dr. Spsychalski made a motion to approve the November 24, 2009 CCMPO Coordinating Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Luck seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

3. Citizens' Comments

There were no citizens' comments.

4. 2011-2014 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Zilla explained that the highway element of the 2011-2014 TIP contains almost \$18 million less than the 2009-2012 TIP. The current version of the TIP does not include the full state funding allocation authorized by Act 44, nor does it include any federal stimulus funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). As a result of the reduction in funding, there are no new highway projects listed on the draft TIP.

He further added that the final 2010 federal appropriations bill includes a \$750,000 earmark for the Route 322 Safety Improvements Project. As a result, the current TIP may need to be amended.

Mr. Zilla also noted that this is the time to consider requesting "spike" funds from PennDOT. The Technical Committee has recommended that the Coordinating Committee request spike funds for the Route 322 Safety Improvements Project. The proposed TIP does include some funding for project construction, but not enough to complete the entire project, even with the recently-approved earmark.

Since the preliminary draft TIP was presented at the November meeting, there has been one revision to the highway element. It involves conversion of the funding in the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2011 Transportation Enhancements Line Item to the Centre Hall Sidewalk Phase II project, as approved by the Coordinating Committee at its November meeting.

Mr. Zilla explained that the funding source for each project was included on the Highway Element of the TIP, as requested by the Coordinating Committee at its November meeting. Adding each project's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) rank, however, was a bit more challenging. This is because some projects included on the LRTP were not ranked. Policy-level adjustments also caused the initial ranking of some projects to change.

Mr. Kausch explained that the Transit Element of the TIP differs from the Highway Element, because the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires that *all* transit projects be included on the TIP, regardless of how much of the project has already been completed. This causes the Transit Element to appear to have a very large number of projects in the early years, when in actuality many of these projects are carried over from a previous TIP but are close to completion.

The Transit Element of the TIP focuses on the rehabilitation of CATA's rolling stock, and also includes additional phases of CATA's advanced technology initiative. CATA has requested \$200,000 from the state for computer hardware and software upgrades. Moreover, the transit TIP also includes funding for new and replacement vanpool vans, and the expansion of CATA's operations and maintenance facility. CATA has requested \$468,000 for facility improvements, eighty percent of which would be federal funds. Building on efforts to better integrate the Centre County Office of Transportation (CCOT) with

CCMPO COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

Page 3

the MPO planning process, the TIP also includes funding for replacement vehicles and computer upgrades for the CCOT.

Mr. Zilla explained that in terms of the TIP preparation schedule, the MPO is currently at the stage where submission of the Preliminary Draft TIP to PennDOT is approved. He further noted that not all MPOs complete this step in the process. By February 2010, the MPO should receive PennDOT's comments and proposed revisions to the draft TIP. In March, a final draft TIP will be presented to the MPO, and TIP will then be advertised for public comment. In June, the final TIP will be adopted and submitted to PennDOT. By September 30, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and FTA will approve the TIP, so that it may take effect on October 1, 2010.

Mr. Lee suggested that the TIP should include annual expenditure totals. He added that it was helpful to have the funding sources for each project listed on the document. He did, however, express his disappointment that the LRTP rank for each project was not included on the TIP. Mr. Zilla replied that he is continuing to work on this issue and hopes to have it resolved soon.

Mr. Klees asked about the North Atherton Street Signal Coordination Project. Mr. Zilla explained that \$400,000 is committed to the project on the current TIP, so the project need not appear on the new TIP. Mr. Buckalew noted that the largest portion of the Transit Element of the TIP appears to be for CATA's operating assistance. Mr. Kausch explained that operating assistance is the portion of CATA's operating budget that is not recovered directly from fares and pass sales and that it provides for the normal day-to-day operations of the agency. Mr. Buckalew further noted that much of CATA's funding appears to be from the state. Mr. Kausch confirmed that this is the case.

With respect to spike funding, Mr. Lee asked how the dollar amount of \$8.8 million for the request had been calculated. Mr. Zilla replied that the figure represents the total construction costs for two distinct projects, referred to as "F-MOD" and "I." "F- MOD" involves the realignment of the intersection of Taylor Hill and Wagner Road and the addition of a center turning lane. "I" involves the realignment of the intersection at either Church Hill Road or Dogtown Road and closure of the other intersection. The project is currently in the preliminary engineering phase, so the total cost of the project may change as it moves toward final design. Ms. Reese asked if the \$1.7 million listed on the TIP included construction funds. Mr. Zilla replied in the affirmative, but the hope is that if spike funding is received, the money allocated in the TIP would be available for other projects.

Dr. Spsychalski made a motion to approve the Preliminary Draft of the 2011-2014 Centre County TIP and submit the TIP to the PennDOT Central Office. Mr. Buckalew seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Mr. Eich made a motion that the CCMPO request up to \$8.8 million in "spike" funds from PennDOT to be used for the construction phase of the Route 322 Safety Improvements Project. Mr. Corman seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

5. Assessment of Public Transportation Services (CATA/Centre County)

The CCMPO's 2007-2008 Unified Planning Work Program included supplemental planning funds for an assessment of the demand-responsive transportation services provided by both CATA and the CCOT. The purpose of the assessment is to examine the operations of both agencies and recommend a practical approach to integrate the services they provide. In this portion of the assessment, Mr. Kausch explained, the consultant has prepared a report that evaluates a series of five options for coordination. Mr. Kausch introduced Mr. Walter Cherwony from the Abrams-Cherwony Group of Gannett-Fleming, Inc. to present the findings of the report in further detail.

CCMPO COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

Page 4

Mr. Cherwony explained the types of transportation services that CATA and the CCOT provide. CATA offers the Shared Ride program, which is funded by the state lottery and provides transportation for individuals who are aged 65 or older. CATA is also required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide complementary paratransit within its fixed bus route area to individuals who are disabled and cannot utilize fixed routes. He explained that CATA has contracted with Handy Delivery, a local taxi service, to operate its demand-responsive services.

Like CATA, the CCOT participates in the Shared Ride program, but it is also responsible for providing transportation to individuals under the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP), the Rural Transportation Program for Persons with Disabilities (PwD). The CCOT also delivers Meals on Wheels for Centre County and provides transportation for other County agencies (such as Mental Health/Mental Retardation) under a fee for service agreement. Finally, the CCOT coordinates maintenance for all of the county's motor vehicles. During fiscal year (FY) 2008-2009, CATA provided about 41,000 paratransit trips, while the County provided over 91,000.

In terms of the magnitude of each operation, Mr. Cherwony explained that CATA's total budget is roughly five times that of the CCOT. Most of CATA's budget – approximately \$9.9 million out of \$10.3 million – is used to operate its fixed route service. The CCOT's annual budget is approximately \$2 million. The Medical Assistance Transportation Program is a major cost center for the CCOT, because offers clients wide latitude of choice in medical providers. The cost per passenger for the CCOT is slightly higher than that of CATA, but this can be attributed to the cost of MATP trips as well as longer trip lengths in the more rural portions of Centre County.

Mr. Cherwony noted differences in the span of service provided by each agency. The CCOT's hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. On the other hand, CATA operates seven days per week and up to 20 hours per day. Because CATA contracts with the taxi company to provide service, individuals are more likely to have a direct ride to their destination, whereas individuals using the CCOT must more often share a vehicle with other passengers, so the trip may not be as direct.

The CCOT provides approximately 339 trips on a typical weekday. Approximately 48% of the CCOT's daily trips have both an origin and destination within CATA's service area.

Mr. Cherwony summarized key differences between the two agencies. CATA offers curb-to-curb service, while the CCOT offers door-to-door, and sometimes door-through-door, service. For those passengers aged 65 and older who utilize the Shared Ride Program offered by CATA, PennDOT reimburses CATA for 85% of the fare, so the rider is responsible for the remaining 15% of the fare. Those same passengers who choose the CCOT's Shared Ride program pay nothing, since PennDOT reimburses CCOT for 85% of the fare and the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) pays the remaining 15%. A rider aged 60-64 who does not qualify for ADA service pays 100% of the fare on CATA's system. The same rider pays nothing if he uses the CCOT's system, because the entire fare is subsidized by the AAA. In both agencies, those under age 60 must pay the full rate for transportation service. These policy differences will need to be addressed if full or partial consolidation occurs.

Based upon analysis conducted up to this point, there appears to be five basic alternatives for future service delivery:

- No action
- Coordination Committee
- Complete consolidation under CATA
- Complete consolidation under CCOT
- Trip broker

CCMPO COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

Page 5

The consultant evaluated each of these alternatives based upon the following criteria: efficiency/effectiveness, cost savings, responsiveness to the market, flexibility, quality of service, funding opportunities, compatibility, program coordination, governance, institutional, staged/modular implementation, and timeliness. Mr. Cherwony presented a brief description of every alternative, as well as some of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

No Action

Mr. Cherwony noted that because the agencies are already somewhat integrated by program type, this is not really a viable alternative. Although this option would be inexpensive and easy to implement, it does not address any of the issues that gave rise to the assessment in the first place.

Coordination Committee

In this option, both CATA and the CCOT would remain autonomous agencies, but a decision-making body would be formed to coordinate specific activities, such as procurement and public information. This alternative would require the active participation of both agencies, as well as the policy bodies of each. It would cost little or nothing to implement, staff time excepted. Moreover, a formalized coordination committee could potentially do quite a bit to integrate the efforts of both agencies, although it would not achieve the highest level of coordination. At a minimum, this option should be implemented, even if none of the other alternatives are deemed feasible by CATA and the CCOT.

Complete Consolidation under CATA

Under this alternative, all demand-responsive services in Centre County would be administered by CATA. With the exception of maintaining county-owned vehicles, the CCOT would cease to exist. CATA staff would administer all transportation programs, but a private contractor would continue to take reservations, schedule trips, and operate the service. A single set of transportation policies would need to be established to correct inequities in elements such as span of service and fares. The County would likely need to provide funding to CATA for services provided. A full consolidation option achieves the highest level of coordination, but would be more complex and costly to implement than a coordination committee.

Complete Consolidation under CCOT

In this scenario, all demand-responsive services in Centre County would be administered by the CCOT, with CATA no longer having responsibility for human service transportation in Centre County. The primary distinction between consolidation options is that service under the CCOT would be provided using County employees, similar to the CCOT's current operation. Some services could be operated under contract in order to fill gaps and/or improve cost efficiency. CATA would need to establish a reimbursement agreement with Centre County for persons transported under the ADA paratransit mandate.

Broker

Under this alternative, a third party would be responsible for scheduling all trips and assigning them to the CCOT or CATA's contractor. The two agencies would remain autonomous. According to Mr. Cherwony, a third separate agency involved in human service transportation within Centre County would only add to the complexity of the current situation.

Based upon the evaluation criteria, the consultant determined that full consolidation, either under CATA or the CCOT, would be the most beneficial option. Total consolidation under CATA carries a slight

CCMPO COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

Page 6

edge over the consolidation under the CCOT, mostly centered around the lower per-passenger cost of providing service and the longer days and hours of service. Regardless of whether total consolidation ultimately occurs, Mr. Cherwony noted that a coordination committee should be created immediately. He further explained that the final decision may not be based on numbers, but rather a qualitative policy decision on the part of the CATA Board and the Centre County Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Klees asked what the MPO's role is in this process. Mr. Kausch replied that the decision rests with CATA and the County Commissioners, but at some point in the future, the MPO may have to consider a funding request from one or both of these agencies, wherein the issue of service duplication comes into play. The information presented by Mr. Cherwony may be helpful in making that decision. Mr. Zilla added that this study was originally requested by the County Commissioners. He further stated that the MPO is serving as a mechanism to complete this study with supplemental planning funds.

Ms. Spencer noted that consolidating the two agencies would seem to be the best alternative, but asked Mr. Cherwony how unified policies would be determined. Mr. Cherwony replied that the County Commissioners and CATA Board would have to negotiate and approve policies. Mr. Kausch added that outside agencies may need to be involved in the policy decisions as well. For example, the Area Agency on Aging would have to determine a unified policy on fare reimbursement.

Mr. Luck asked if the same overall level of funding would be available should consolidation occur. Mr. Cherwony replied that it would. Mr. Luck further asked if one agency was better prepared than the other to handle an aging market. Mr. Cherwony replied that either agency would be equally capable of meeting the demands, although there would have to be modifications to either operation to accommodate consolidation. For example, if consolidation were to occur under CATA, the agency may have to contract with an additional taxi company if the current contractor can't handle the increased demand. If consolidation were to occur under the CCOT, that agency may need to add staff. Mr. Cherwony further noted that although the total cost of the Shared Ride program is increasing, the actual number of riders is decreasing.

Mr. Lee asked about measuring agency effectiveness by unit cost. Mr. Cherwony replied that the cost per trip can be used as a measure, but trips of equal length must be used to compare the two agencies. Mr. Lee referred to a conference that he attended at the Pennsylvania Transportation Institute where the speaker, Joseph Sussman, stated that transportation and land use should be coordinated by MPOs. Dr. Spychalski added that he also attended the conference, and that while Dr. Sussman's comments have merit, they must be qualified. Dr. Spychalski further explained that the consolidation option is not as simple as it appears. He noted there may be certain advantages to operating entities in parallel rather than merging them.

Mr. Eich explained that a time frame must be considered when reviewing the alternatives. He believes that a coordination committee should start immediately. He further noted that the CCOT is the only office to currently serve all of Centre County, but CATA is expanding. Dr. Spychalski added that the CATA Board will have to carefully consider the findings of the report and that the Board has not yet moved to act.

In response to a question from Mr. Klees, Mr. Eich explained that the goal of the CCOT is to break even in terms of the state and federal funding it receives balanced against the operating costs of the agency, and that it currently comes close to that goal. Mr. Eich considers overlap between the two agencies as the number of the CCOT's daily trips that have an origin or destination within CATA's service area. He further explained that a good starting point would be with something as simple as joint dispatching to prevent vehicles from both agencies driving to nearby locations at the same time.

CCMPO COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

Page 7

Ms. Goreham asked if any county funding would be in jeopardy if a consolidation occurs under CATA. Mr. Cherwony replied that if consolidation occurred, one could argue that the new agency would be more effective and thus be eligible for more funding. He confirmed that any transportation activities eligible for funding under the County should still be eligible under CATA.

Mr. Zilla noted that staff will now work to pull together all of the comments made by the MPO, CATA staff, and County staff regarding the consultant's evaluation report. Both policy bodies will then have to make their respective decisions regarding the prospect of consolidation or coordination.

6. Announcements

There will be a Technical Committee meeting on Wednesday, January 13, 2010 at 9:30 a.m. at the Patton Township Municipal Building.

There will be a Coordinating Committee meeting on Tuesday, January 26, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. The location is yet to be determined. Topics to be discussed at this meeting include the Centre County LRTP, the Fiscal Year 2010-2011 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and the election of officers.

Mr. Klees noted that a copy of the MPO's correspondence to US Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood was included in the meeting's agenda packet. Mr. Klees also expressed his appreciation to those who have served on the MPO this year.

Mr. Zilla noted that correspondence was mailed to the rural planning regions requesting appointments and reappointments to both MPO committees. Letters will also be sent to other member municipalities, CATA, Penn State, and the CRPC to request appointments.

Mr. Bloom announced that the deadline to submit projects for the LRTP was December 11, 2009, but additional projects are still being accepted. To date, 90 projects have been submitted, but additional submissions are anticipated. 21 of 35 municipalities have submitted projects. The LRTP Ranking Committee will meet during the week of December 21 to begin project evaluation, and the first public meeting for the LRTP will be held January 28, 2010.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Buckalew made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hall seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Dugan
Recording Secretary