

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

**Tuesday, February 24, 2009  
6:00 pm  
College Township Municipal Building**

**Minutes**

**Voting Members Present:**

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
Jeff Luck	Patton Township
Steve Miller	Ferguson Township
Jadine Reese	Upper Bald Eagle Planning Region
Rich Rogers	Centre County
Frank Royer	Spring Township
Mike Savage	Moshannon Valley Planning Region
Barbara Spencer	Halfmoon Township
John Spsychalski	CATA
Larry Shifflet	PennDOT Central Office

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Matt Smoker	Federal Highway Administration
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**Others Present:**

Tom Zilla	Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)
Trish Meek	CRPA
Greg Kausch	CRPA
Bob Jacobs	CCPCDO – Secretary
Mike Bloom	CCPCDO
Mike Joseph	Centre Daily Times
Hugh Mose	CATA
Michelle Barbin	Mountaintop Planning Region
Michael Rose	Kerry Benninghoff's Office
Ray Gutshall	Marion Township Supervisor
Ken Roan	Marion Township Planning Commission
Brian McCauley	Marion Township Planning Commission
Tina McCauley	Marion Township
Irv Hoy	Howard Borough Council
Richard Watters	Howard Borough Council
Rick Sollman	Congressman Thompson's Office
Ann Glazier	Citizen
George Khoury	Citizen
Frank Hampton	PennDOT Central Office

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Karen Michael  
Bert Kisner

PennDOT District 2-0  
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. Approval of Minutes

*Ms. Goreham made a motion to approve the January 24, 2009 Coordinating Committee minutes. Mr. Corman seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.*

### 3. Citizen Comments

There were no citizen comments.

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

Mr. Zilla explained that the MPO adopts a UPWP every year, covering a time period of July 1 to June 30 of the following year. The UPWP lists work tasks for MPO staff, and important actions to be taken by the MPO. It must be adopted by February 28, 2009. Mr. Zilla reviewed the key tasks in the UPWP, and noted that there will be no increase in Federal Highway or Federal Transit funds for fiscal year 2009-10.

Mr. Zilla noted that the main issue for the current Work Program is how to address current and potential supplemental planning funds projects. He explained that the current UPWP includes funds to update the travel demand model and socioeconomic data for the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). An additional \$15,000 in supplemental planning funds was requested for software needed to complete that task. Because these funds are needed prior to the next UPWP taking effect on July 1, PennDOT Central Office decided to add them to the current UPWP. Therefore, there will not be any supplemental planning projects in the 2009-10 UPWP.

In response to a question by Mr. Lee, Mr. Zilla explained that the consultant selected for the LRTP technical work included in their scope of work a special module that will allow the MPO to look at intersections in a much greater level of detail. Because improvements to existing roads are harder to predict in a countywide model, this module should provide more information about the potential impacts of projects.

*Mr. Spsychalski moved to adopt the FY 2009-10 UWP, with no supplemental planning funds projects. Mr. Lee seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

*Mr. Eich motioned to amend the FY 2008-09 UPWP to include \$15,000 in additional funds for Task VII.A., comprised of software purchases needed to complete the LRTP socioeconomic data and travel demand model project. Mr. Luck seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

### 5. FY 2007-08 Supplemental Planning Funds Projects

Mr. Zilla explained that two supplemental planning funds projects are in the FY 2007-08 UPWP as follows:

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- Task VII.A. – Coordinate Land Use and Transportation Planning
- Task VII.B. – Assessment of Public Transportation Services in Centre County

Mr. Zilla noted that work has not commenced on Task VII.A. This task involved areas in Halfmoon/Patton Townships and in the Routes 550/64 corridor where there is a lot of future development activity anticipated. Task VII.B. is moving forward, and may be completed by the end of June.

To protect the funds that are committed for these two projects, the 2007-08 UPWP should be amended to extend the termination date for these two tasks.

*Mr. Luck made a motion to amend the FY 2007-08 UPWP to extend the termination date for Tasks VII.A. and VII.B. from June 30, 2009 to March 31, 2010. Ms. Goreham seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

### 6. I-80/Route 26 Section A18 Local Access Interchange

Mr. Zilla reported that there are two interchanges proposed to join I-99, I-80, and State Route 26 in Spring and Marion Townships. The direct connection between I-80 and I-99 would be located at the current Bellefonte Interchange (Exit 161), with the connection between I-80 and Route 26 located approximately three miles north. At the September Coordinating Committee meeting, Supervisor Gutshall from Marion Township asked the Coordinating Committee to reconsider the I-80/Route 26 (Local Access) Interchange. Representatives from PennDOT and the MPO staff attended the Marion Township Board of Supervisors meeting in October, and the Nittany Valley Joint Planning Commission meeting in January, to discuss the project.

Ms. Michael reported on the status of projects B18 (High Speed Interchange connecting I-99 to I-80) and A18 (Local Access Interchange). Neither of these projects has construction funds programmed at this time. However, the design, right of way, and utility phases were fully funded through the previous TIP. PennDOT is proceeding with the Local Access Interchange design at this time, and trying to complete a bid package by this summer. Ms. Michael explained that final design for the Local Access Interchange is 95% complete, and final design for the High Speed Interchange is about 60% complete.

Ms. Michael noted that PennDOT's strategy is to complete the Local Access Interchange first, then bid the High Speed Interchange two years later. The Local Access Interchange must be constructed first to provide a connection between I-99 and I-80 while the High Speed Interchange is under construction.

Mr. Zilla quickly reviewed some of the issues involved, including:

- Traffic diversions from Route 150
- Truck traffic from quarries
- Access for emergency services
- Proximity to park/ballfields
- Pedestrian/bike traffic
- Access for businesses
- School bus traffic
- Roadway geometry

Mr. Zilla explained that other issues include funding, and the impact of changing the design after a substantial amount of money has already been spent on design activities.

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Mr. Gutshall, Marion Township Supervisor, asked about the process that led to the decision to locate the interchange at Shay Lane. Mr. Kline replied that the project started about 15 years ago. In looking at alternatives for High Speed Interchange, the question of local access to I-80 was raised. Environmental assessments and clearance were completed, and public meetings were held. From there, PennDOT moved into the final design phase. Mr. Kline noted that the final design, right of way, and utility phases for both interchanges totaled \$25 million. He further explained that the environmental documents contain background data on the identification of alternate locations for the Local Access Interchange. In addition to environmental factors and public input, PennDOT also considered movements along Route 26 and federal criteria mandating that local access be a minimum of two miles from the High Speed Interchange.

Mr. Luck asked for clarification that the Local Access Interchange cannot be co-located with the High Speed Interchange by federal mandate. Mr. Kline replied that interchanges in a rural setting need to be separated by at least two miles. Based on topography and geological features, these two interchanges could not be co-located.

Mr. Gutshall asked if there was any specific person who made this location decision. Ms. Michael replied that it was made jointly between PennDOT, FHWA, the local entities, and the MPO. Mr. Gutshall asked about the level of Marion Township's participation. Ms. Michael explained that the Marion Township Supervisors at that time signed off on and agreed to this location.

Mr. Gutshall asked how the information discussed during a project development process is disseminated to decision-makers, and if there is a way to change those decisions. Mr. Klees replied that due to the nature of the process and funding programs, it takes a long time for a project to come to completion. Conditions or opinions, however, can change; this is simply the plan that was presented at the time and is on the books. The question is whether the decision made previously is still valid. Mr. Gutshall questioned whether the decision was made using the proper documentation. A petition provided to decision-makers was not supportive of an interchange at Hublersburg or Sand Ridge Roads. However, the information also stated that it would be acceptable to build the interchange where it is currently planned. The signatures on that petition were to deny the interchange at Hublersburg and Sand Ridge Roads, not to accept the fine print that said it would be acceptable to place it in the currently planned location. Unfortunately, a lot of people did not read that fine print.

Knowing the opposition from Marion Township, if the interchange goes forward and there is a serious accident, Mr. Gutshall asked if PennDOT would be held liable. Mr. Klees responded that every situation is different, and PennDOT's level of liability would vary from case to case.

Mr. Gutshall asked if the minutes could be obtained from this Committee, and any other meetings where the Local Access Interchange had been discussed. Mr. Klees replied that the Coordinating Committee meeting minutes are readily available. Mr. Kline further responded that the environmental documents and project history have been sent to the Township. Mr. Gutshall explained that it feels like residents are talking and not being heard.

Mr. Klees noted that he drove Route 26 over the weekend to examine the issues in question. If there were not a Local Access Interchange built, he asked what would happen to the local traffic and how people would move through the valley. Mr. Gutshall replied he would like to see the access where the current Exit 161 is located. He expressed understanding of the engineering issues with that scenario, but also an opinion that it would be a critical issue for residents to go a few miles either way to get to the interchange in return for the safety and rural setting that they want.

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Mr. Elnitski asked whether the traffic was going to be on the road no matter where the interchange was located. He further explained that if both interchanges were constructed near the current location of Exit 161, it would still attract more traffic to the Township, and that no matter where the Local Access Interchange is, it would still carry just the local traffic on Route 26. Mr. Gutshall replied that there would be a lot more traffic associated with local access because of traffic exiting I-80. Mr. Elnitiski responded that after construction of the High Speed Interchange, only the people who want to travel locally would use the Local Access Interchange. Mr. Klees noted there are two quarries that would use local access, and a concern is that a lot of people would come off Route 150, and travel through the valley over to the Local Access Interchange to reach I-80 and I-99.

Mr. Bert Kisner worked for PennDOT when the project was initiated. He explained that the municipality has copies of the draft and final Environmental Impact Statements for the project. These document the entire process and all decisions that were made. The final decision is made by FHWA and is contained in another document called the Record of Decision.

Mr. Kisner noted that the first activity was an inventory of all the environmental resources and fixtures in the project area. Looking at sign criteria for the connection of two interstates and the lay of the land next to Curtain Gap, it was immediately obvious that there was no room to provide any kind of configuration for local access at the current location. That was further confirmed during the final design process, when core boring was done and a vein of pyrite was found, meaning the design had to be compressed even further. PennDOT then looked at alternatives for how to connect the local roads and obtain some sort of access to the Interstates. Using the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and going through detailed alternative analyses, it was clear that something else had to be done. Given the requirement that interchanges must be separated by at least two miles from the beginning and ends of ramps, the current location was as close as they could get to the current location for the High Speed Interchange. Mr. Kisner explained that he personally met with Marion Township officials twice, and had two or three local public meetings at Marion Township. He recalled that the Board agreed that the interchange should proceed in the planned location, because there was nothing else that could be done to provide access nearer to the current location. Mr. Kisner noted again that all of these activities are documented.

Mr. Luck noted that these are not inexpensive projects. If there had been no constraint on cost, he asked if it would have been possible to design something different. Mr. Kisner replied that the constraints were not cost issues, they were the geological and environmental features.

Mr. Lee asked if Marion Township had a preferred alternative. Mr. Gutshall replied that the most popular sentiment is that the interchange be placed at Exit 161, but that does not seem possible. He has also heard that residents would rather not have the Local Access Interchange, and instead travel to Lamar or Milesburg to get on the Interstate. In a comprehensive study done a few years ago, 96% of the residents wanted to keep the community rural and 74% wanted to keep the interchange where it is currently located.

Mr. Lee asked what other purpose there is for the interchange if Marion Township prefers not to have it. Mr. Luck replied that the short-term purpose would be to provide access during the construction of the High Speed Interchange. Mr. Kline noted that emergency vehicle access is also a factor.

Ms. Reese asked about the distance between the two existing interchanges at I-99 and Lamar. Mr. Klees replied that it is about 11 miles. Ms. Reese noted that since I-99 opened between Bald Eagle and Grays Woods, Worth Township has a local access, but there is 11 miles between the exits. That distance concerns emergency service agencies. Worth Township wanted that road built quickly because they now have less traffic.

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Mr. Klees said that a couple of years ago there were development plans for a tract along I-99 between I-80 and Route 550. Mr. Royer replied that the project is moving forward, but it will be located on the Bellefonte side of the High Speed Interchange. The residents will use either Route 550 or travel into Bellefonte.

Mr. Kisner said that since the final design is almost done, if there is reconsideration of the project location, there also has to be reconsideration of the environmental document. All activities will stop until that document is re-drafted. He suspected that in the end, the same conclusions would be drawn.

Mr. Elnitiski asked if there was ever consideration of elevating the High Speed Interchange and keeping the Local Interchange where it was. Mr. Kisner said there was, but it would not physically fit given the constraints in the area.

Mr. Eich referred to the section of Route 26 between the two planned interchanges. It would seem appropriate, as funding is sought for the interchanges, that Route 26 be brought up to a standard that would handle any additional traffic. He noted Ms. Michael's estimate that it would cost between \$3 and \$4 million to improve that road, and Mr. Eich thought that needed to be incorporated into any discussion about the I-99/I-80/Route 26 interchanges. Mr. Klees agreed with this concern. He explained that the impetus for improving the section between existing Exit 161 and the proposed interchange was to carry the current I-99 traffic to the new Local Access Interchange while the High Speed Interchange was being built. But once the High Speed Interchange is built, Route 26 would revert to a local road. He asked if the remaining section of Route 26 between Shay Lane and Howard would be something else that the MPO has to find funds for in the future because a new missing link in Route 26 has been created.

Mr. Eich explained that Route 26 improvements probably should have been part of the original project. Any remaining local and quarry traffic will have to be dealt with. There are businesses along Route 26 that will have continued demand for access. He explained that whatever could be done to make that road safer should be done.

Mr. Richard Watters, Howard Borough Council, said his first concern was increased traffic coming off Route 150 and down Route 26, which is a major hazard. Howard Borough is extremely concerned about the resulting traffic coming through their town, and putting the A18 interchange at its planned location will increase that traffic. Mr. Watters said that Howard Borough has never been consulted on this project, but will bear the impacts. He said the Borough would like to be included in discussions.

Mr. Brian McCauley, Marion Township Planning Commission, noted that the Commission's concern is that traffic using Route 26 South has three options – Forest Avenue, Musser Lane, or Jacksonville Road into Bellefonte, then Howard Road and Allegheny Street. He agreed with improvements to Route 26, but noted that Bellefonte Borough or Howard will be asking what will be done with 1300 trucks coming in if the High Speed Interchange is shut down. He added that Route 26 needs to be completely overhauled from the current I-80 exit all the way to Howard. The Supervisors in Marion Township requested that the Local Access Interchange not be open until Route 26 was improved.

Mr. McCauley noted that there has long been issues with the current interchange site. Marion Township asked PennDOT to look at cutting the hills back to get some sight distance to improve safety. He wondered if that was something the MPO needed to review, or if it was PennDOT's responsibility.

Mr. Klees noted that the request from Marion Township is before the MPO. As it currently stands, neither of the interchanges are on the LRTP or TIP because of fiscal constraints, and at present,

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PennDOT is working on the engineering study for the segment of Route 26 between the two interchanges. This is a project that will somehow have to be programmed on the TIP.

Ms. Spencer said there are a lot of things that need to be done before the interchange is even seriously considered. With so many concerns from different groups in the community, she said she was hesitant to put a stamp of approval on the project without studying it further.

Mr. Savage noted that it seems the intent of the recommendation from the Technical Committee as was to make improvements to Route 26 that will help between the two interchanges. He said there was nothing on the table at this time to reconsider the current status of either of the two interchanges. He noted that changing the interchange located at this date would be problematic, but might still be the right thing to do. Mr. Zilla replied that the Technical Committee was recognizing concerns about the existing roads and, absent a decision about the interchanges, they recognized that something had to be done there.

Mr. Klees explained that his concern was that if Route 26 improvements begin to move, those represent future commitments that the MPO will have to make. These are not inexpensive commitments, and they assume that money can be found for the two interchanges. He expressed a preference to have another meeting with a presentation from PennDOT to re-educate the current MPO on what activities have taken place to date. Nothing may change as a result of that, but the existing members should be informed before going forward.

Mr. Lee said the MPO needs to consider access versus mobility. He explained that roads serve our communities and our land, not the other way around. Mr. Kline said this is exactly what NEPA is supposed to accomplish. He noted that 15 years and \$20 million have been spent to design a project in accordance with federal and state law. To go back now goes against the planning process. He said the MPO could be in a position five years from now questioning Whitehall Road in the same way.

*Mr. Eich made a motion requesting that PennDOT report to the MPO the planning process and history for the High Speed and Local Access Interchanges between I-80 and I-99. Mr. Miller seconded.*

Mr. Lee thought the Route 26 improvements should be a part of the presentation. Ms. Michael replied that the study is just beginning, but traffic counts and federal criteria could be included.

Mr. Rogers noted that re-education is what is being requested, but questioned whether the same conclusions would be reached because it was the same information. He explained that it did not seem the underlying issue was being addressed. Mr. Luck added that he did not know what the possible actions can be taken because he did not know enough about the issue. His understanding is that Marion Township would like the Local Access Interchange to go away. Improving Route 26 does not satisfy that desire. Mr. Rogers replied that if the same information is going to be presented, he did not see any change in the future for Marion Township, and he certainly did not see a way that Marion or Howard Townships could be involved in the process.

Mr. Miller said the real question here was how the conclusion was drawn. Maybe the MPO would come to the same conclusion, but if that is assumed at the outset, he questioned what the point of the whole discussion was. Mr. Rogers agreed. If no other alternatives or input is provided, how can a different conclusion be drawn? Mr. Miller replied that the motion was to learn more about the decision-making process, and questioned how the current MPO could make progress without first establishing that. The two choices are accept what was done before or to scrap that and start over.

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Mr. Elnitski noted that if members do not know how the decision was made, it will be difficult to change it. The MPO cannot address Marion Township's issues until they know which issues simply cannot be changed. Mr. Klees replied that this information will be part of the education process. He explained that knowing whether Route 26 improvements between Shay Lane and Howard are necessary is something the MPO needs to know.

Ms. Michael noted that when this project development process was started, the MPO was not countywide. The outline was handled by the Centre County Planning Office, as was the case with Corridor O1. The County Planning Office may be another place to get more of the political history.

*The above motion passed unanimously.*

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

Ms. Meek explained that staff wanted to start development of the guidelines that will guide project solicitation for the new LRTP update. In the past, planning staff has solicited projects as part of the Twelve Year Program (TYP), which is separate from the LRTP. Staff is hoping that the MPO can adopt guiding principles and the project solicitation process in April.

Potential guiding principles and a process for solicitation are listed in the agenda. Staff is asking for input on and possible revisions to these materials, although no formal action is required at this meeting. Ms. Meek started to review each of the principles:

- Projects on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will be included in the new LRTP and will not be ranked; and
- Project ranking criteria will be distributed to municipalities when projects are solicited.

Mr. Lee asked where in the process, from a policy perspective, the MPO considers Centre County geographic and environmental features along with present and anticipated development, then asks how candidate projects serve needs. Mr. Zilla replied that it is staff's intent to follow that model; this discussion is just concerning the process for doing so.

Mr. Lee asked when geographic and demographic information would be considered at the policy level, and whether this would happen before projects are solicited. Mr. Klees replied that traditionally, the municipalities have provided individual lists of projects important to them. The existing LRTP contains smaller projects, but new roads cost so much money that they cannot be ranked. He further explained that one of the ways the MPO could help elevate those concerns is with the ranking criteria, and weighting criteria to address planning issues. He noted that the MPO is not the County Planning Board, and does not make decisions that impact municipal-level zoning and land use decisions. Mr. Lee replied that by educating those officials here, with a comprehensive countywide point of view, it would save a lot of future time and effort. He agreed that ranking criteria are an important leverage, but they are applied to individual projects. Mr. Klees replied that if questions are asked in the right way during the input process, that will go a long way toward eliminating unrealistic projects or ones that are not based on good planning. Mr. Lee explained that the fundamental idea is starting with where we do and do not want growth, and serve these communities with transportation facilities, rather than the other way around.

Mr. Eich noted that one question that can be asked as part of the ranking criteria is, "How does this project implement your Comprehensive Plan and other municipal goals?" He explained that this

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question would force the municipalities go back and identify any existing or future development that the project would serve.

Mr. Zilla noted that between now and next fall, staff will be talking about land use projections, with at least two MPO meetings scheduled during that time. As part of this process, staff will be looking at comprehensive plans in the different planning regions, and bringing that information to the MPO. Ms. Meek added that staff will also be talking to the municipalities about areas for future development because this information is necessary to build the travel demand model. As part of the last LRTP update, staff included water/sewer, agricultural and wetland, and floodplain maps. Staff can present those maps to the municipalities. Mr. Lee said that this information should then be brought back to the MPO for discussion in a comprehensive manner. Ms. Meek added that staff will be holding the municipalities to their zoning.

Mr. Lee explained that if the process is completed in the manner discussed, there will be fewer of the problems that are occurring now, because the MPO would be considering the communities and the environment as a whole.

Other principles include:

- A project data form must be submitted with each project request;
- For multi-municipal projects, all affected municipalities will review the project. If all affected municipalities support the project, it will be ranked. If support is not unanimous, the MPO will determine if the project will be considered;
- Municipal support is required for projects requested by entities other than municipal governing bodies;
- Allow large scale corridor projects to be considered as either one project or as a series of small scale projects; and
- The MPO may want to consider limiting the number and type of projects submitted to the MPO for consideration.

Mr. Lee asked if there was a way to advance some of the large projects that are currently on the list of Projects for Future Consideration. Ms. Meek replied that earmarks are traditionally the only way to move large-scale projects. Mr. Lee then asked if such projects would be ignored in this process. Ms. Meek replied that she hoped that will not be the case, but unless a large sum of money comes into the program, federal regulations say that they cannot appear on the LRTP.

Mr. Eich explained that the MPO needs a comprehensive list of projects. He noted that the Committee cannot establish priorities until it knows where all of the needs are. Ms. Meek asked if it would still be a good idea to ask for different categories of projects (municipality, planning region or county).

Ms. Goreham asked if the list provided by each municipality would be ranked by that municipality according to their own priorities. There was general agreement that this should be the case.

Mr. Eich asked who would be responsible for “sponsoring” the regional projects, such as the I-80/I-99/Route 26 interchanges. Ms. Meek replied that MPO staff should handle that responsibility. She committed to adding that into the guiding principles.

Ms. Reese noted that the smaller municipalities may only have one priority project and that is the one they are going to push forward. She asked how it would be assured that the local municipalities are not going to get lost in the shuffle, even if they choose to only put forward one project that is important to

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them. Ms. Meek replied that if the municipality is asked to rank their projects, more points could be given for a municipality's highest priority.

Ms. Meek said there are two potential options for the process of project solicitation. The first is to use the current LRTP project list as a starting point. Each municipality would get a list of the projects in their jurisdiction, and they would be asked to identify which projects they still want to be considered. They can also identify additional projects that they would like to be considered, in a ranked list.

Mr. Lee noted that this approach starts with a list of candidate projects. He said that ideally, before that happens, the MPO needs to talk about where they want growth and where they don't want growth, and how this fits into Comprehensive Plans. Mr. Elnitski replied that this is why members are here. He added that he knows where growth is in Benner Township and the location of projects that are listed. He explained that the Committee has to start somewhere, and the process should involve discussion among the elected officials. Mr. Lee replied that he was looking for geographic and demographic information early in the process. Ms. Meek said she could provide some of the mapping in the current plan as well as the data forms. Mr. Lee said it was important to have this discussion at the policy level.

The second option for project solicitation would not use the current project list as a starting point. Each municipality would be provided their list of current projects for information purposes only, and they would then provide a new ranked list of projects.

Mr. Lee explained that with the first option, the information from previous projects would not be lost. Ms. Reese preferred Option B, noting that there may no longer be a need for some of the current projects. Mr. Klees explained that the two options are not very different. He reasoned that this decision may not need to be made until the packages were put together to go out to the municipalities.

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Mr. Bloom reviewed the progress of the Project Ranking Committee (PRC) to date, noting that they have held two meetings so far. He reviewed some of the history of the PRC as well as individual ranking criteria. In November 2008, the MPO approved a new PRC with the same structure that was used for the last major update of the LRTP, adopted in 2006.

The initial meetings were based on the recommendations from an independent evaluation of the previous project ranking criteria and process. Mr. Bloom reviewed these recommendations.

The primary discussion at the first meeting involved bridge ranking. Bridges are classified as state and local, with local bridges broken down into three sub-categories. Those greater than 20 feet in length are required to be inspected. Bridges 8-20 feet in length are not currently inspected, but discussion is ongoing about requiring inspection. The last group is bridges less than 8 feet in length. Mr. Bloom explained that bridges greater than 20 feet in length are eligible for federal funding. The bridges that are 8-20 feet in length are eligible for both state and local funds.

The PRC discussed using a separate set of ranking criteria for bridges, and looked to PennDOT's Bridge Risk Assessment Tool that is currently used for state bridges. They proposed using a similar assessment for local bridges, pending PennDOT approval. The PRC also discussed the project solicitation process, and other project ranking criteria. The Coordinating Committee will need to adopt goals and objectives to be used as a foundation for the ranking criteria.

At the second meeting, the PRC continued their discussion about local bridge evaluation. The PRC recommends using PennDOT's assessment tool for bridges over 20 feet. Ms. Michael explained that,

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according to Central Office, there may be several options. One of the ranking criteria for state bridges is the network it is on, which does not apply to local bridges. Central Office staff is looking at how to tweak the assessment tool so that it would not use that criterion. Ms. Michael explained that this would provide for even comparisons between state and local bridges.

Mr. Bloom reported that the PRC proposed an MPO member survey to help guide the preparation of goals and objectives, and therefore serve as a foundation for the project ranking criteria. The survey would list any number of potential goals and objectives that MPO members could examine in development of the LRTP. The survey would ask what is most important to each member. This would support a weighting to delineate the most important criteria. Survey results will be discussed at the April meeting.

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Ms. Meek reported that a consultant agreement has been executed. Further LRTP discussion will take place at the April meeting.

### 8. FFY 2010 Federal Appropriations Legislation

Mr. Zilla explained that in February 2008, the Coordinating Committee discussed federal earmarks, with no conclusions reached regarding the Committee's level of involvement with these. Correspondence is included in the agenda that gives an idea of what federal elected officials are looking for in the latest round of applications. Also included is a letter that staff sent in support of an earmark request made by Centre County Government for the Route 322 project; staff felt comfortable preparing this letter given the high priority assigned to this project by the MPO.

Mr. Zilla asked for input and guidance regarding earmarks for the 2010 Appropriations Bill and the next Authorization Bill, which will take the place of SAFETEA-LU. The question is whether the MPO wishes to express support for earmark requests. He noted that CATA has already submitted requests for earmarks and that Penn State University likely has as well. Mr. Klees noted that members of the House and Senate have asked for input, and the opportunity exists for the MPO to make requests directly, should they decide to do so.

Mr. Spychalski explained that if the MPO is amenable to support for earmark requests, CATA would appreciate a formal letter of support for their earmark request to cover part of the plan to expand their bus storage and maintenance facility.

*Mr. Lee made a motion that the MPO Chair and staff work with CATA to write a letter in support of CATA's earmark request. Mr. Eich seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

Mr. Luck explained that there are parties in Patton Township interested in pursuing an earmark for the upgrade of the Waddle Road Bridge. Township staff and elected officials are not actively pursuing the earmark, but they are aware of it, and have committed to matching funds should the request be approved.

### 9. Federal Economic Stimulus Legislation

Mr. Zilla explained that last week, the federal economic stimulus package was passed and signed into law. In January, the MPO discussed potential projects that could be funded with this money, assuming a certain total level of allocation. There are four highway and bridge projects that will move forward using economic stimulus funds, totaling \$7,925,000:

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- Marsh Creek Bridge Replacement;
- Tributary to Penns Creek Bridge Replacement;
- Bridge Preservation and Painting on the Mt. Nittany Expressway; and
- Pleasant Gap Betterment.

Mr. Zilla explained that these projects are all on the TIP and scheduled to move quickly. He added that there is about \$1.7 million for CATA in the stimulus package as well.

This item does not require MPO action because candidate projects are already on the TIP. The shifts of existing funds to other projects can be accomplished by administration action. Mr. Zilla noted that he received a question as to why the Pine Grove Mountain project is no longer on the candidate list. He explained that the amount of money allocated to Centre County was less than anticipated, so this project was dropped from the list, ostensibly it would have been the latest to go to construction. He emphasized that the project remains funded through other sources on the TIP.

Mr. Shifflet reported that the amount allocated nationally for highways and bridges is \$27.5 billion, with a little over \$1 billion for Pennsylvania. He further explained that \$8.4 billion is allocated for public transit, with \$343 million coming to Pennsylvania. Mr. Shifflet noted that there is an additional \$1.4 billion available in competitive grants, specifically for single projects greater than \$20 million and less than \$300 million. Any one state cannot receive more than 20% of these competitive grants. Mr. Smoker added that within 90 days of this program becoming law, the USDOT will issue program criteria and begin to solicit projects.

Mr. Luck asked if the I-80/Route 26 Local Access Interchange could possibly be eligible for this program. Mr. Smoker replied that one criterion of the program was that projects be “a priority [...] that would require an additional share of federal dollars in order to complete the overall financing package and that could be completed within three years of enactment.” He further explained that the federal government is looking to projects that are currently stalled for lack of federal funds to complete construction. He noted that, ultimately, depending on the timeframe for construction, the interchange may be eligible for stimulus funds.

Mr. Shifflet committed to report on new details as they emerge. He noted that the financial guidance for the 2009-12 TIP was used to determine how much each MPO received.

Mr. Smoker explained that the official name of the stimulus package is the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The two main objectives of the legislation are job creation and job preservation. The majority of funds provided therein must be spent within 180 days.

Mr. Zilla explained that CATA would likely use stimulus funding for projects already on the TIP as well. If for any reason the MPO would have to take immediate action, a telephone ballot will be utilized. In general, these projects need to move very quickly.

### **10. Announcements**

Mr. Klees noted that the next Technical Committee meeting would be held April 8, and the next Coordinating Committee meeting would be held April 28, 2009.

Mr. Klees referred to the Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative (PCTI) program, explaining that after initial screening by the Central Office to determine program eligibility, applications would be provided to PennDOT Engineering District Offices, MPOs and RPOs for review in February. He asked

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if that review had yet taken place. Mr. Zilla explained that this review would involve MPO and RPO staff, rather than the Committee. They had not received the applications from Central Office, but PennDOT District and MPO staff met and reviewed 11 of the 12 applications. Formal comments will be assembled when the applications are received from Central Office. Mr. Shifflet noted that staff would have the applications by the end of February.

Mr. Klees noted that the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) held a recent public information meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to receive input from the community about the scope of work of an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed reopening of the R.J. Corman Railroad Company Beech Creek Branch rail line in Clearfield and Centre Counties. Mr. Savage explained that many of the citizens attending that meeting were disappointed because they were not given the opportunity to participate or speak. His understanding is that the STB violated NEPA rules with respect to public involvement, because the 13 impact categories were not prominently displayed at the meeting, therefore attendees had no idea what they were supposed to respond to. He wrote a letter to the STB regarding this. Ms. Goreham also wrote a letter, reiterating the expenditure of a half million dollars on conversion of the line to a trail, and reinforcing the need to repay that money if the railroad is reopened.

Mr. Klees announced that SEDA-COG, PennDOT and Union County are sponsoring a Transportation Impact Fee training session on March 31, 2009. Information is included in the agenda.

**11. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Shingler  
Recording Secretary