

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

**Wednesday, April 8, 2009  
9:30 a.m.  
College Township Building**

**Minutes**

**Voting Members**

Bill MacMath	Spring Township
Karen Michael	PennDOT District 2-0
Dave Modricker	Ferguson Township
Amy Story	State College Borough
Sue Hannegan	Centre County Planning and Community Development
Kent Baker	College Township
Frank Hampton	PennDOT Central Office
Ray Hankinson	Penns Valley Planning Region
Paul Weener	Harris Township
Hugh Mose	Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA)
Michele Barbin	Mountaintop Planning Region
Doug Weikel	Benner Township
Bob Jacobs	Centre County Planning and Community Development
Brent Brubaker	Patton Township

**Non-Voting Members**

Teresa Davis	Penn State University
Dallas Gallo	Bellefonte Borough

**Others Present:**

Tom Zilla	Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)
Trish Meek	CRPA
Greg Kausch	CRPA
Lori Shingler	CRPA
Mike Bloom	CCPCDO
Vickie Rusnak	PennDOT District 2-0
Ken Roan	Marion Township Planning Commission
Brian McCauley	Marion Township Planning Commission
Ray Gutshall	Marion Township Board of Supervisors
Keith Hamilton	Centre County Office of Transportation
Rick Dillon	Marion Township Planning Commission
Doug Erickson	Patton Township

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Baker called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

*Mr. Mose made a motion to approve the February 11, 2009 minutes. Mr. Hankinson seconded and the motion carried unanimously.*

**3. Citizens' Comments**

There were no citizen comments.

**4. Assessment of Public Transportation Services**

Mr. Kausch reviewed that Centre County is served by two transit providers, Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) and the Centre County Office of Transportation. Several years ago, the Centre County Commissioners asked MPO staff to see how these two agencies might coordinate their efforts better. Supplemental planning funds were provided in the FY 2007-08 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to retain a consultant to complete the project. The contract was awarded to Abrams-Cherwony and Associates, part of Gannett Fleming. The end of Task I, the baseline operating conditions for each agency, has been completed. A copy of the report was included in the agenda packet.

Mr. Kausch reviewed findings from the report. The basic structure of the assessment is divided into five tasks: Baseline Conditions, Public Participation, Alternatives Identification, Alternative Evaluation, and Recommended Plan. The Baseline Conditions has just been completed, outlining the service levels, assets, organization, trends, sample logs and functional review. Task two will start at the end of April with three or four public meetings held throughout Centre County.

Mr. Kausch reviewed the five basic alternatives available:

- No action
- Coordination committee
- Partial consolidation
- Consolidation
- Broker

These alternatives will be evaluated based on a number of criteria, chief among them being effectiveness/efficiency, market responsiveness and quality of service.

Mr. Kausch also reviewed each agency in regards to the services they offer, staffing levels, physical resources, ridership and funding.

Mr. Baker asked if there seemed to be advantages to combining the two agencies at this point in the study. Mr. Kausch said he did not know if there would be a full consolidation, but there appeared to be some benefit to at least formally coordinating operations between the two agencies.

**5. I-80/Route 26 A18 Local Access Interchange**

Mr. Zilla provided background information, saying that there are two interchanges proposed to connect I-99 with I-80. The High Speed Interchange would be located at the current location of Exit 161 and the Local Access Interchange would be located approximately three miles north of that on Route 26. The interchanges have advanced through the design phase. The Local Access Interchange would have to be constructed first and was previously scheduled for a bid letting in 2009.

In September, Marion Township approached the MPO with their concerns related to the location of the Local Access Interchange and the impact on their community. This was discussed at the MPO meetings in February and the Coordinating Committee requested more information, which will be presented at the end of the April. In late March, staff received correspondence from Marion Township requesting information.

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Mr. Zilla said that staff and PennDOT are in the process of preparing the information. Mr. Zilla said that neither of these interchanges is on the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) or the TIP. They were removed from the LRTP due to fiscal constraints.

Ms. Michael reviewed the process that was used to select the location for the Local Access Interchange. A timeline of events was provided in the agenda package. The project started in 1999 as one project, with local and high speed access being provided at the current location. However, PennDOT found that this had a lot of environmental impacts. In addition, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) came out with the regulation that high speed and local interchanges must be separated by at least two miles. A series of public meetings were held, where maps, environmental constraints, and alternatives were presented. At public meeting #1 on 9/22/99, there were 214 people in attendance and their comments indicated that people in the area favored a local access, but as far west as possible.

Public meeting #2, 152 people attended with 66% favoring local access. PennDOT showed a possible connection at Walnut Ridge Road and 80% of people at the public meeting approved of this option. At public meeting #3, with 73 people in attendance, the consensus of the group was in favor of a diamond interchange type. The Environmental Evaluation Report for the Local Access Interchange was completed in 2002 and provided to Marion Township. The final design phase began in August, 2004.

Mr. Zilla said that for this project to move forward, it will need to be on the LRTP and TIP for construction. The MPO has been actively involved in trying to fund it through spike fund and earmark requests. He said the recent economic stimulus legislation that was passed has a provision that provides FHWA the ability to fund projects on a discretionary basis. They have three months to develop guidelines for this funding and there will be a window of one year to submit requests. Mr. Zilla felt that the Coordinating Committee would be looking at that program as a funding source for this project. At the same time, the LRTP is being updated and there will be discussion about including these projects.

Mr. Zilla reviewed implications of not having a local access interchange:

- Access to I-80 limited, with travel necessary on other state and township roads
- Emergency access restricted
- Quarry and other large truck access
- Business deliveries
- Approximately \$5 million spent on the Local Access Interchange to date. FHWA may require payback of 80%
- Environmental document for the High Speed Interchange may need to be re-opened due to revised access

Mr. Zilla noted some of the key issues surrounding the interchange topic:

- Traffic diversions from SR 150
- Quarry truck traffic
- Emergency access
- Proximity to park/baseball field
- Pedestrian/bicycle traffic
- Amish traffic
- Access for businesses (campgrounds/RV traffic)
- School bus traffic
- Roadway geometry

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Mr. Zilla noted that if local access is removed, the environmental document will need to be reopened which could cause time delays and significant costs. He noted that FHWA does not approve of combined local and high speed accesses, nor do they like half interchanges. He noted that the ADT around the interchange area is approximately 2800-2900, with 150-200 of that being truck traffic. However, good traffic data is needed. Ms. Michael noted that a traffic analysis was done for the B18 interchange, and that PennDOT was working on a summary of those findings.

Mr. Weener asked if Marion Township was objecting to the construction of the Local Access Interchange. He said the presentation is pointing out the problems associated with not constructing it at all. Mr. Weener thought the objection was the location of the Interchange, which would cause other problems that need to be fixed at the time that the Interchange is being constructed. Mr. Zilla said that his interpretation is that Marion Township would prefer to not have local access at this location and prefer to have it in the location where it currently exists. If that cannot occur, then at least the roadway along existing Route 26 between the current interchange and the new local interchange should be improved and open before the interchange opens to traffic.

Mr. Gutshall, Marion Township Supervisor, said that Route 26 would have to be improved through Howard to Route 150 because of the additional traffic. He said this was a big safety issue. If Marion Township has no choice in the locating the Local Access Interchange where it is slated to be built, they do want to see the total improvement of Route 26 all the way through to Route 150. He asked if the two-mile separation rule for the interchanges was applicable in a rural area. Ms. Michael said this was a rule for rural interstates.

Mr. Baker asked if some of the problems with Route 26 would exist even if the Local Access Interchange could be accommodated at the current site. Mr. Gutshall said they would and cited a tractor-trailer accident two weeks ago. He said that the interchange would increase the traffic and the problem would be worse. Mr. Zilla said one of the problems seen on two lane roads is that improvements can make it safer, but the traffic tends to move faster. He added that right now there are preliminary engineering funds on the TIP to look at the stretch of Route 26 between the proposed interchange sites for improvements.

Mr. Baker thought it would make sense to find funding to make improvements to the length of Route 26 to Route 150 as part of the Local Access Interchange project. Mr. MacMath agreed, but noted that funding for any of the project is a problem right now.

Mr. Weener said that one cannot assume that the problems being pointed out warrant the expenditures because these are not new problems that emerged since the period of time when the Local Access Interchange was being discussed. He thought there were traffic studies done that assessed the impact of the interchange and the problems were incorporated into the decision back in 2002.

Mr. McCauley, Marion Township Planning Commission member, said that as far back as 1999 and 2003 they have had these concerns and PennDOT turned a deaf ear to them. This is well documented. He thought that a split intersection with three ramps would take care of a lot of problems. The only location that makes sense to put that is at the current location. Marion Township does not want to make Route 26 into a high speed road.

Ms. Michael noted that improvements to Route 26 through Howard would involve a more major project and there would be a lot of environmental impacts.

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Mr. Rick Dillon said he has been involved with this process since 1999. He said they worked with PennDOT quite extensively. At the time, they did want the interchange to be located at the proposed site and went through extensive negotiations to come with this alternative to keep traffic off of Sand Ridge and Hublersburg Road. If there is no interchange, the Route 550/I-99 interchange at Bellefonte will be worse. He distributed a letter to members. He said the traffic on Route 26 north is heavy and at a high rate of speed. His concern was that if there is no way to get the trucks and quarry traffic onto I-80, it will force all the traffic to the Bellefonte interchange. He thought it was imperative to look at what happens if there is no local access to I-80.

Mr. Zilla said he has not talked with the Coordinating Committee Chair about what he expects out of the April meeting, but suspected that he would want some direction from the Coordinating Committee no later than June. He added that due to the funding issues, he had asked about trying to extend the existing ramps a little bit and improve the situation at the intersections themselves. He said that did not get a good reception from anybody, but it is another option.

Mr. Baker asked if PennDOT could bring back cost estimates for what could be done with the current interchange and the costs of all the other alternatives. Ms. Michael said they could.

Mr. Weener said he would like to see the impact of putting the interchange in so that they could separate out the problems that exist today from what would happen with the interchange there.

Mr. McCauley asked who Marion Township would have to contact to pursue making the current interchange into three ramps, providing local access. Ms. Michael said she would have to find out from FHWA if they would even entertain that possibility. She has been told they will not, but she would look into exceptions. Mr. Zilla said something would have to come back through the MPO because it would be a revision to a project and would have to be included on the TIP.

Mr. Zilla noted that the majority of the money that comes from PennDOT to do roadway projects is actually federal dollars. That is why FHWA regulations must be followed.

### **6. 2009-2012 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) (formerly Item 7)**

Mr. Zilla said that with the stimulus package and other issues, there is money in line items that will have to be shifted into specific projects at some point. Most of those can be achieved by administrative action. However, this item needs action now.

Mr. Zilla explained that in July 2008, the MPO had to remove several projects from the LRTP because of fiscal constraints. One of these was improvements to the Waddle Road Interchange along Route 322. Patton Township has been working to develop a public/private partnership to try to advance these improvements in a fashion similar to what was used to advance the Western Inner Loop and Eastern Inner Loop projects. This approach involves local funds being used for the preliminary engineering phase and having those count toward the 20% non-federal share as the project moves to construction. Patton Township intends to pursue earmarks in the next federal authorization bill, but that request has to be submitted in the beginning of May. For the project to be considered, it has to be on the TIP.

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Mr. Erickson, Patton Township Manager, said Patton Township will be looking for economic development money in addition to requesting an earmark. This is the top priority project for Patton Township Supervisors and without it there are safety issues with traffic backing up on the ramp. He said that without improvements, the majority of Toftrees cannot be developed.

The Board of Supervisors has decided that if Patton Township does not take the lead on this project, it will be years before it is accomplished. Patton Township is asking that the preliminary engineering phase of the Waddle Road Interchange project be put on the TIP at zero cost for the MPO.

[Mr. Gallo left the meeting at this point]

Mr. Zilla said he talked to FHWA and he thought the preliminary engineering phase could be placed on the TIP without it being on the LRTP. However, FHWA will not give environmental clearance to the project until it is on the LRTP. With the update of the LRTP and the time it will take for preliminary engineering, the opportunity will be there for the project to be placed on the LRTP.

Mr. Baker asked if there were preliminary cost estimates for the project. Mr. Erickson replied that the total project will cost approximately \$17 million. This will include rebuilding and widening the bridge to six lanes.

*Mr. Brubaker made a motion to recommend that the Coordinating Committee approve an amendment to the 2009-2012 TIP to include the preliminary engineering phase of the Waddle Road Interchange project using 100% local funds. Mr. Modricker seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

Mr. Jacobs suggested that if Patton Township is pursuing economic development funds that they may want to look at the Toftrees Master Plan to allow for more office and technical space. Mr. Erickson said that the Master Plan has not been approved and they will work with Senator Corman's office on this issue.

[Messrs. Hankinson, MacMath and Weikel left the meeting at this point.]

### **7. Centre County Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) (formerly Item 6)**

Mr. Bloom updated the Committee on the project ranking element of the LRTP. At their first meeting, the Project Ranking Committee discussed using separate ranking criteria for bridges and using a tool similar to the Bridge Risk Assessment for local bridges. Project solicitation was also discussed. The Committee met again in February and continued their discussion of local bridge ranking criteria. They also proposed that an MPO member survey be used to guide the preparation of goals, objectives and project ranking criteria. At the next meeting they finalized the survey and this was sent out to Coordinating Committee members on April 3, 2009. The survey results will be discussed with the MPO in April.

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**8. Announcements**

Mr. Baker reviewed upcoming meetings. Mr. Zilla noted that a joint meeting may be held in May with the Coordinating Committee and Centre County Planning Commission to discuss the LRTP.

**9. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Z. Shingler  
Recording Secretary