

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

**Wednesday, November 12, 2008**

**9:30 a.m.**

**College Township Building**

**Minutes**

**Voting Members**

Bill MacMath	Spring Township
Michele Barbin	Mountaintop Planning Region
Karen Michael	PennDOT District 2-0
Josh Collins (for Dave Modricker)	Ferguson Township
Amy Story	State College Borough
Bob Jacobs	Centre County Planning and Community Development
Sue Hannegan	Centre County Planning and Community Development
Kent Baker	College Township
Frank Hampton	PennDOT Central Office
Doug Weikel	Benner Township
Brent Brubaker	Patton Township
Ray Hankinson	Penns Valley Planning Region
Paul Weener	Harris Township
Xochi Confer	Lower Bald Eagle Planning Region

**Non-Voting Members**

Teresa Davis	Penn State University
Matt Smoker	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

**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
Rob Watts	McCormick Taylor and Associates
James Tanner	Citizen

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Baker called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

*Ms. Story made a motion to approve the September 10, 2008 minutes. Mr. MacMath seconded and the motion carried unanimously.*

**3. Citizens' Comments**

There were no citizen comments.

#### 4. CCMPO/CATA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Mr. Kausch reported that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) does an assessment of transit agencies every three years to assure compliance with federal laws, regulations and policies. On this visit to CATA, the FTA found that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the transit agency and the MPO was missing. This is required under federal regulations. The MOU assigns responsibility to either the transit agency or the MPO in three key areas:

- Transportation systems planning
- Project planning
- Environmental planning and review

The CCMPO and CATA have already set and follow these delineations, but need to commit these to writing. Mr. Kausch reviewed the division of tasks in each of the key areas. He said there are common themes that come up, including collaboration on projects, shared responsibility for public outreach, regular briefings and opportunities for input, and consulting with adjacent agencies.

Language for the document was taken from MOUs that are already in effect in the Berks/Reading and Lackawanna/Luzerne areas and have been approved by the FTA. Mr. Kausch asked if there were any other suggestions or questions and, if not, that the Technical Committee recommend adoption of the MOU by the CATA Board and the Coordinating Committee.

*Mr. Weener made a motion recommending to the Coordinating Committee and CATA Board approval of the MOU between the CCMPO and CATA for transportation planning responsibilities. Ms. Barbin seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

#### 5. Route 26 Pine Grove Mountain Safety Improvement

Mr. Zilla noted that the TIP includes funds for safety improvements on Pine Grove Mountain on Route 26 above Pine Grove Mills. As reported earlier, PennDOT District 2-0 had gone to the Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors in June to talk about the conceptual designs for improvements. The biggest issue was that the cost of the three components will exceed what is currently programmed. There were other issues associated with environmental impacts and a property that would have to be taken for one of the elements. The Supervisors directed PennDOT to keep moving forward with the design of all three components and look to phasing the improvements. He said this will lead into a discussion of potential TIP amendments early in 2009.

Ms. Karen Michael reported on the three components included in the improvement project:

- Truck pull-off area at the Huntingdon/Centre County line at the top of the mountain
- Truck escape ramp above the S-curve at the bottom of the mountain
- Truck escape ramp below the S-curve, above the village at the bottom of the mountain

She said that the costs were discussed with the Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors. The top two elements would total approximately \$1.5 million and the bottom escape ramp would cost approximately \$1.4 million. There is currently \$1.1 million on the TIP.

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Ms. Michael said that PennDOT is going forward with all three elements. However, they are planning on combining the top two elements as one project and the third as a separate project. PennDOT is hoping to get the projects cleared environmentally by January and getting the first project out to bid in June or July. There is not enough money to finish the top two elements and PennDOT will have to look at other projects in Centre County that use the same type of funding and where they are in terms of their schedules.

Mr. Weener asked about the distance between the two escape ramps. Ms. Michael replied that they are approximately 3,000 feet apart.

Mr. Zilla noted that a lot of projects were put on the TIP a couple of years ago, but as they move toward construction there will have to be some maneuvering of funds based on the schedules and issues that may be associated with environmental clearance.

The owner of the house that would have to be taken for the lower escape ramp, Mr. James Canner, asked how further discussion about that ramp would be discussed and in what forum. Mr. Zilla said that PennDOT works closely with the municipality in which the projects are occurring. Discussion will also occur at the Technical and Coordinating Committees in regards to funding. Ms. Michael said PennDOT may be going back to the Ferguson Supervisors in January and can let Mr. Canner know when that happens.

Mr. Weener asked if other federal money was involved and if the MPO was the ultimate decision maker. Mr. Zilla said that it was a cooperative effort between the MPO and PennDOT.

Mr. Canner said that Route 26 connects with Huntingdon County and he asked if there was cooperation with that county. Mr. Zilla said one of the original studies for this area was done under PennDOT District 9, which is responsible for Huntingdon County. This was done in the mid-1990s and outlined a number of improvements from Huntingdon all the way into State College Borough. However, there was no money allocated for those on the TIP. Staff has been discussing what is being done with the RPO in that region. Mr. Zilla said it was up to each individual district to program and move projects on either side of those lines.

### **6. Route 322 Corridor Safety Improvements (Harris and Potter Townships)**

Mr. Zilla said this project has been programmed by the MPO and included on the TIP because the SCCCTS Project was stopped in 2004, along with Corridor O-1. With the accidents along this corridor, a number of comments were received from citizen about this area. PennDOT has completed a draft feasibility study with proposed projects.

Ms. Michael referred to a spreadsheet and a map during her presentation. The spreadsheet showed a description of the projects in the feasibility study, along with cost estimates, a benefit-cost ratio, and the project priority. Ms. Michael reviewed each of the proposed projects.

Several of the projects have already been completed. These include centerline rumble strips along the entire corridor, shoulder rumble strips from the Elks Country Club to Neff Road, and removal of two of the three passing zones.

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The feasibility study is in draft form right now and Ms. Michael said that PennDOT is interested in input about additional projects or the projects listed. She said PennDOT met last week with staff from Harris and Potter Townships, and attended the Board of Supervisor meetings for those townships. Input received from those meetings included closing the passing lane near Tait Farm, putting a right drop lane at Bear Meadows Road, closure of Church Hill Road versus Dogtown Road, turn lanes along the entire corridor and concern about the curve at Tom Kerr's farm. The State College Police and the State Police talked about enforcement along the corridor and the Smooth Operator Program, where money is provided to do more enforcement along certain highways. Other comments included making Cider Press Road a right turn out only, overhead signs, and school bus concerns.

Ms. Michael said there has been some discussion about a larger project and whether there was a way to bring vehicles out from the four-lane onto Route 322 more safely. Mr. Zilla said that with the SCCCTS project, all the alternatives connected through the gap in the same manner. Given that, the question was whether that part of the improvement could be made without precluding what would happen once you get through the gap near Potters Mills.

Mr. Zilla said that PennDOT would do a presentation for the Coordinating Committee later in the month. Input from the MPO, municipalities and citizens will help to identify a set of improvements. In the beginning of 2009, the MPO will discuss the funding for possible projects.

Mr. Baker asked how PennDOT measures Cost-Benefit. Ms. Michael stated that it is basically costs versus safety. Mr. Weener and Mr. Baker both stated that speed is a concern.

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

#### **a. Transit Element**

Mr. Zilla reported on the proposed amendments:

- Addition of \$220,000 in federal funds and \$55,000 in matching funds for improvements to the CATA Operations and Maintenance Facility
- Addition of \$540,000 in federal funds from the Clean Fuels Grant Program and \$60,000 in matching funds for a CATA bus replacement project
- Addition of \$278,400 in federal funds from the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) Program and \$69,600 in matching funds for the purchase of vans for the Centre Commute vanpool operation
- Addition of \$224,134 in state funds from the Community Transportation Section 1516 Capital Equipment Program for the replacement of transit vehicles by the Centre County Office of Transportation

Mr. Weener asked about the hybrid technology that the Clean Fuels Program will be funding. Mr. Kausch explained that this is a special grant that CATA pursued. CATA had an existing replacement purchase planned, using the standard Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) that is being used currently. This funding allows CATA to make up the cost difference between a CNG engine and a hybrid CNG engine, which would actually generate power to run.

*Mr. MacMath made a motion to recommend that the Coordinating Committee approve the proposed amendments to the Transit Element of the 2009-2012 Centre County TIP. Ms. Story seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

**b. Highway Element**

Mr. Zilla reported that there are several actions to the Highway Element that require approval by the MPO:

- Revise the amount of the Eastern Inner Loop earmark from \$4 million to \$400,000 and shift the funding to the North Atherton Street Corridor Signal Project. The change in the earmark amount was approved in the SAFETEA-LU Technical Corrections legislation, which was approved by Congress and the President in 2008.
- Addition of \$500,000 in earmarked funds to the University Park/Penn State Baseball Stadium Intersection Improvements, as provided for in the SAFETEA-LU Technical Corrections legislation. The project bid was significantly higher than the amount of funding programmed on the TIP and the new earmark will be added to the previous earmark of \$750,000 being utilized on the project.
- Addition of \$31,000 in federal flex funds administered through the Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association (PPTA) and \$7,750 in matching funds for improvements to the CATA Operations and Maintenance Facility, relative to the diesel and gasoline systems.

*Ms. Story made a motion recommending that the Coordinating Committee approve the proposed amendments to the Highway Element of the 2009-2012 Centre County TIP. Mr. Hankinson seconded and the motion passed unanimously.*

Mr. Zilla said that there was a list of administration actions that were performed, as specified in the Procedures for TIP Modifications. One of these is the Whitehall Road Project, where additional funds are going in to the Preliminary Engineering stage. Mr. Zilla said that the MPO should expect to see the costs for improvements in this corridor continue to go up, as it will take three to five years to complete. Other amendments shift the type of funds on bridge projects.

**8. Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative (PCTI)**

At the Planning Partners Meeting in October, PennDOT announced a new program that is being offered in coordination with 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania. Mr. Zilla said that \$60 million is being set aside from the Secretary of Transportation's spike fund allocation for smart transportation initiatives. These funds are intended to be spent in federal fiscal year 2009-2010.

Mr. Zilla stated that initial applications for this program are due by December 15. He said up to \$5 million is available for construction and up to \$300,000 for planning. He said that applications are being accepted from anyone, including MPOs. Staff has discussed potential projects for this program with PennDOT, focusing on those that are on the TIP or LRTP that could advance quickly.

One of the candidate projects would be park and ride lots in Philipsburg. This is one of the highest regional commute areas and staff has been working with Moshannon Valley to get some kind of regional commuter bus service to this area. Formalizing one or two of the lots that are being used informally as park and ride lots could be a potential project. PennDOT has prepared cost estimates and environmental impacts for these lots.

A second project might be the Whitehall Road/University Drive Extension project, which is currently in the preliminary engineering phase. This project involves many different issues and a complete streets approach has been discussed.

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Mr. Zilla said there are other candidate projects that could be considered:

- Route 45 Betterment near Old Fort
- Route 550 Betterment (Bellefonte Borough and Spring Township)
- Centre Hall Sidewalk Rehabilitation
- Village of Boalsburg Streetscape
- West Beaver Ave./South Fraser St. Intersection Realignment

Mr. Hankinson asked if these funds could be used to add street lighting to an existing project. Ms. Michael said enhancement projects can be submitted, but the application will have to show what smart transportation principles are being met with the project.

Mr. Baker referred to the Pike Street traffic calming, saying that it had never been advanced. This could be a candidate for planning funds. He said it would involve relocating parking and creating pedestrian areas along Pike Street in Lemont.

Mr. Zilla said that projects do not have to come from the MPO, but can come from municipalities as well. He said that staff did not agree with PennDOT that everyone should be able to apply, especially when it has to come through the MPO to be put on the TIP. Mr. MacMath said the MPO has a TIP with projects that need funding. He thought those projects should be considered first instead of coming up with new projects.

Ms. Confer said that in other areas, the MPOs are not as strong as in Centre County so other municipalities in the state are being permitted to submit on their own. She thought municipalities should stick with the process that has been established and submit projects that are already on the TIP or LRTP. She said that if municipalities start submitting on their own, they are defeating the process that has been established here.

Mr. Brubaker asked if it is better to choose projects from the TIP or the LRTP. Mr. Zilla said it should be a project that can move in two years. He thought it would almost have to be something that is already started.

Ms. Confer asked what staff's recommendation was. Mr. Zilla said that the projects listed in the agenda, with the exception of the park and ride lots in Philipsburg, were underway. Mr. MacMath suggested choosing one where a smaller amount of funding would make a difference. Mr. Zilla said that staff needs to determine which projects meet the principles for the program.

*Mr. Weikel made a motion recommending to the Coordinating Committee that the Whitehall Road project be submitted for funding from the Community Transportation Initiative.*

Ms. Confer asked if staff wanted to look at the other projects to see which of those met the principles for the program. She suggested amending the motion to add the Route 550 and Route 45 projects, if these meet the criteria.

*Mr. Weikel amended his motion to include the Route 550 and Route 45 projects if those come up favorably after staff analyzes them. Mr. MacMath seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

Mr. Bloom said that if any of the projects discussed were to be submitted outside the MPO, Philipsburg would be most likely to do that. The reason that project was suggested was that it couples with potential services that ATA will be offering. Mr. Weikel agreed it was a good project, but feared that if it received money, it would come up short on the entire amount needed. It would then be adding to the monetary problems. Mr. Zilla said that staff would be looking at that project one way or another, perhaps using CMAQ funds.

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

Ms. Meek reviewed the schedule for the LRTP update, culminating in adoption in June 2010. Major milestones were identified. These include updating the existing conditions and trends, determining goals and objectives, project solicitation and ranking of the projects.

Mr. Weener suggested that a new process for solicitation be developed, requiring municipal support for suggested projects. Ms. Meek said the Coordinating Committee discussed this as well.

Mr. Bloom reported on the project ranking criteria, saying that criteria were adopted in October 2004. The Project Ranking Committee that was formed at that time was composed of the following:

- 2 Technical Committee (Rural)
- 2 Technical Committee (Centre/Nittany Valley)
- 2 Technical Committee (PennDOT)
- 1 staff (CCPCDO)
- 1 staff (CRPA)

The criteria that were used were from the Harrisburg area and reduced down to seven that applied to Centre County. An additional three criterion were added to address air quality, community planning objectives and municipal/local sponsor priorities.

After the ranking was done, an independent analysis was performed to determine the validity of the ranking process. Several recommendations were made:

1. Reevaluate the Centre County community planning objectives criterion
2. Add more project impact statements for Intelligent Transportation Systems and Transportation Enhancements project types.
3. Use fewer raters on the Ranking Committee
4. Obtain input from raters on what items were confusing or difficult to use
5. Require the local governing body or sponsor to provide accurate information about each project

Mr. Bloom said that when PennDOT did its Bridge Assessment in 2006-07, they shifted from using a sufficiency rating to a structural deficiency rating. Ms. Michael explained the difference between these two ratings. Mr. Bloom said that the criteria were based heavily on sufficiency rating. The technical nature of bridge analysis does not lend itself well to this process, so there will need to be some evaluation of how bridges are ranked. Another question is how local bridges are assessed.

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Staff recommends forming a Project Ranking Committee, which would be charged with reevaluating project ranking criteria, evaluating the bridge ranking process, and ranking candidate projects. Coming from discussions at some of the Committee meetings, staff is proposing a potential committee makeup:

- Coordinating member (Rural)
- Coordinating member (Centre/Nittany Valley)
- Technical member (Rural)
- Technical member (Centre/Nittany Valley)
- PennDOT Central Office
- PennDOT District Office
- CCPCDO Staff
- CRPA Staff

Mr. Bloom said staff is requesting volunteers for these posts. Mr. Weener, Mr. MacMath, Ms. Barbin and Mr. Hankinson expressed interest.

Ms. Meek reviewed that when the current LRTP was developed, there were a number of mechanisms used to identify candidate projects. These included the Mobility Action Plan, municipal/organizational input, public input, FHWA pilot safety review, CATA Strategic Plan, and the travel demand model. At their last meeting, the Coordinating Committee discussed how the process should work for the next update. They decided that if a project was on the TIP, it would be included as part of the LRTP. Additional information will be requested for each project to make the ranking easier, along with the host municipality's priority and if there is a local match. Also requested will be municipal endorsement of suggested projects.

Ms. Barbin asked if what was on the current plan would be sent back to municipalities for prioritization or if it would start with a clean slate. Ms. Meek said that if it is on the LRTP, it should probably be a candidate for the next LRTP. Mr. Zilla did not think that projects on the list that are outside fiscal constraint should be included due to the financial situation. A municipality would have to identify those specifically.

Mr. Weener suggested that the criteria be provided to the municipalities as well. Ms. Meek said staff was hopeful that they will be prepared by that time. She said the Coordinating Committee discussed this, saying that the criteria should really generate the projects.

Ms. Meek recalled that supplemental planning funds were requested from PennDOT to update the travel demand model and the socioeconomic forecast data. She said that \$100,000 is available over two years. MPO staff will be working on the socioeconomic data, including updating the data to 2008 and forecasting the data to 2040. A consultant will be hired to design the forecast database, update the model and run the model. The model will provide level of service for the project ranking. Ms. Meek said that a request for consultant proposals will be sent out soon and a contract will be awarded in February 2009.

Mr. Weener asked if the entire model will be updated. Ms. Meek said the original model covers both a portion of Clearfield County and all of Centre County. Only the Centre County portion will be updated.

Mr. Smoker noted that a presentation was included in the agenda about SAFETEA-LU, reauthorization, and the Highway Trust Fund. The current administration has put out their reauthorization proposal.

They are basically stating that SAFETEA-LU needs to change dramatically. He thought the new administration would have another proposal in January to replace the current one.

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

Mr. Zilla said that because the meeting has run long, he would email members and ask for input concerning supplemental planning funds projects. Potential projects were listed in the agenda. The Work Program will not be acted on until January or February, so there is time to discuss this. Mr. Hampton said that the Planning Priorities letter will be sent shortly. He said there will be no increase in the funding for the base Work Program.

**11. Announcements**

The next Technical Committee meeting will be on January 14, 2009.

**12. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Z. Shingler  
Recording Secretary

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