



Lehigh Valley Transportation Study

C/O LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
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The Lehigh Valley Transportation Study Coordinating Committee met on Wednesday, July 16, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. in the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission conference room. In attendance were:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Craig Messinger**	City of Allentown
Michael Alkhal**	City of Bethlehem
George Kinney**	City of Easton
Richard Young***	County of Northampton
Armand Greco*	LANta
Becky Bradley*	LVPC
Michael Donchez	
Chris Mukkadan	
Larry Shifflet*	PennDOT Central Office
Lory Anderson*	PennDOT District 5-0
Dan Hartzell	Morning Call
Matt Malozi	Rettew
Lee Rackus	Whitehall Township
Matt Szuchyt	State Senator Pat Browne
Jeff Warren	Gilmore & Associates
Jeffrey J. Warren	Whitehall Township Resident

(*Denotes Voting Member and Number of Votes)

Mr. Shifflet chaired the meeting.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

None.

MINUTES

Mr. Greco moved for approval of the minutes from the June 4, 2014 Coordinating Committee meeting. Seconded by Mr. Young, the motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Draft 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program

Mr. Donchez directed the Coordinating Commission members to page 7 of the meeting packet for the Draft 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program. The TIP is a four year capital improvement program listing high priority highway, bridge and transit projects in the Lehigh Valley for the upcoming four year cycle which would be Federal Fiscal Years 2015–2018. It is a four year program, however, it is updated every two years. The TIP is fiscally constrained meaning that the value of the projects contained within the TIP cannot exceed the amount of revenue we can reasonably expect over the four year period.

Mr. Donchez said the TIP is growing as a result of the passage of Act 89 which brings in an infusion of additional funding into the Lehigh Valley. This is a change we have not seen in a while. It is a good change and it will be illustrated when we go through the list of projects.

Mr. Donchez said the projects start on page 7 of the meeting packet. The first project list is the highway element showing highway projects. The location map is on the reverse side of that page. The following page shows the bridge element/bridge projects in the Lehigh Valley followed the bridge location map.

Mr. Donchez highlighted a couple of the high priority projects that are on this TIP. Route 22 Section 400 Phase 2 project is included. The construction phase is included and includes the Lehigh River Bridge. Total construction costs are nearing \$56M over the four years for that project. The Route 22 Widening project is on this TIP – construction is not but pre-construction phases are listed for a total of a little over \$17M. The Route 412 project in Northampton County is on this TIP. That is currently under construction. Construction should last about another two seasons before that project is complete. Another large project is the Route 33/Freemansburg Avenue interchange which is on this TIP for construction in 2015 at nearly \$6M.

Mr. Donchez said, on the bridge side, we have a lot of high profile bridges that are going to be going to construction in this TIP cycle. The Cementon Bridge in Whitehall Township will go to construction for a total cost of a little over \$6M. Tilghman Street Bridge over the Lehigh River will also be going to construction. The Eighth Street Bridge, another very large project, is on the list. The rehabilitation of the Fahy Bridge in Northampton County is on this TIP. These

are a lot of large ticket bridge projects that will be moving through the process on this particular program.

Mr. Donchez said the Highway and Bridge Elements are followed by LANta's Transit Element on page 11 – a list of transit projects for the upcoming four year period. It addresses fleet replacement of their fixed route vehicles as well as their paratransit vehicles. Those are the larger items LANta has on their TIP plan in addition to updating the necessary technological improvements with their camera systems, radio systems, etc. The listing for LANta's Enhanced Bus/BRT program is included on the TIP but the finances for it are not included as part of the transit TIP. LANta will seek funding for that during this upcoming TIP cycle but it was an important enough project that it warranted mention on the program.

Mr. Donchez said the total value of the TIP over the four years is a little over \$382M. The breakdown is \$185,518,000 for the Highway Element, \$140,721,000 for the Bridge Element and just over \$56M for the Transit Element. It is a significant program over what we've seen in the past.

Mr. Donchez said spike requests were forwarded to the Secretary asking for funds to complete additional projects. The Lehigh Valley did not receive any spike requests in this cycle of the TIP. However, we retained a spike request for approximately \$5.7M for the Tilghman Street Bridge.

Mr. Donchez said the Interstate Maintenance portion of the TIP is managed by PennDOT Central Office. If a project is identified as an interstate project needing maintenance, the notification will come from Central Office to the local MPOs. This year our TIP has one Interstate Maintenance project. It is the resurfacing of I-78. This runs from the Adams Road Overpass in western Lehigh County and terminates at Lehigh Street. The total project cost is about \$11.5M and it is scheduled for construction in 2017.

Mr. Donchez said the TIP underwent a 30 day public review and comment period. We sought comments on the TIP through various means: e-mail, phone, fax, etc. The public comment period began May 29, 2014 and closed June 27, 2014. We received comments primarily through e-mail but some through phone. We assembled a Response to Public Comments Document.

Mr. Donchez reviewed some of the comments. The first comment was clarification on whether or not the Route 22 Widening construction phase is on the current TIP. It is not. All the other pre-construction phases are on the current TIP.

Mr. Donchez said there is a letter from Whitehall Township regarding the Fifth Street Bridge and how that relates to the Route 22 improvements with regard to scheduling. The issue with the Fifth Street Bridge is the right-of-way has not yet been acquired to incorporate that into the earlier phases of Route 22.

Mr. Donchez said we had another comment from Upper Macungie/Lower Macungie townships regarding the Route 222 Bypass with regard to getting future projects on the TIP as it relates to their Act 209 Impact Fee Ordinance. We responded that, in order to get a project on the TIP, it has to be brought before LVTS MPO for consideration. Mr. Bradley said Mr. Gurinko also had a conversation with representatives from Upper Macungie/Lower Macungie townships

on how that process works. The two of us were with PennDOT 5-0 office yesterday (July 15, 2014) and met with both Upper Macungie and Lower Macungie townships to discuss how we collectively start to talk to some of their issues. It was a very good meeting.

Mr. Donchez said we received some other comments in regard to Route 22 being the top priority project in the region. We agree that it is the region's top priority. We also received some comments regarding LANta's Enhanced Bus/Bus Rapid Transit Study with regard to the need to implement a BRT study. We responded accordingly to that.

Mr. Donchez said we received a comment from PennDOT Central Office with regard to the Coplay/Northampton Bridge. There has been a change in the funding source for the bridge. It was more of an administrative change. The cost did not change. It is just a swap of funds. That has been noted.

Mr. Donchez said we received another comment regarding the Fifth Street Bridge and its scheduling with regard to the Route 22 project and that had a similar response to the earlier comment. We received a comment with regard to trail access at the PA 329/Cementon Bridge. Those comments will be forwarded to PennDOT Central Office for their consideration in design of the Cementon Bridge project.

Mr. Donchez said we received a couple basic comments on transportation terminology and definitions of "let". We received some comments to be put on additional mailing lists to receive future notices. We had a comment regarding how a borough would be able to submit projects to be included on the TIP, specifically a pedestrian related sidewalk project. We responded that they need to contact LVTS to discuss that. We mention that the Transportation Alternatives Program is the local vehicle for funding this type of pedestrian transportation type of improvements.

Mr. Donchez said we had some additional comments on the Fifth Street Bridge with similar responses. We received a comment regarding the Route 145/Route 329 intersection in the northern portion of Whitehall Township to remove the crest of the hill to improve visibility. We coordinated with PennDOT District Office on a response about limitations with grade and the fact that this is an existing project on the TIP which will add improvements for turning lanes and warning devices which will help the situation.

Mr. Donchez said we had a comment from the Coalition for Appropriate Transportation dealing with ride-sharing and car-sharing technologies, tailpipe emissions, and transit service issues. We responded appropriately in that regard. With regard to the wi-fi availability, car-sharing and ride-sharing, that is outside the purview of LVTS. LANta provided comments with regard to their provision of service which is addressed on the last page.

Mr. Donchez said that is a summary of the comments we received. It was a good year for comments. Typically we do not receive that many comments. We did not receive any comments during the two public meetings that we held. Most of the comments came in after the fact during the 30 day period.

Mr. Donchez said we conducted an Air Quality Conformity Analysis and Determination on the projects on the TIP. The projects on the TIP, as a whole, cannot contribute to a worsening

of air quality within the region. They have to meet certain budget limitations for emissions that are set and established by EPA. We met those requirements.

Mr. Donchez said, in addition, there are the Self-Certification Resolution, the Air Quality Resolution and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU deals with a technical issue with regard to how LVTS processes changes to the TIP – whether or not a project is an amendment or an administrative action. If it is an amendment, it requires a vote. If it is an administrative action, it does not require a vote. The threshold to determine if it is an amendment or administrative action is \$2M. If a project has a cost increase that exceeds \$2M, it would require a vote of the Coordinating Committee for approval. If it is under \$2M, it would not require a vote.

Mr. Donchez said the Air Quality resolution states we are meeting the tenets of the Clean Air Act amendments. The Self-Certification resolution addresses the fact that LVTS is meeting all the federally required planning requirements within the region.

Ms. Bradley said the self-certification resolution has been reviewed by the LVPC solicitor but the MOU and Air Quality resolution are still being considered. There may be a change to those remaining resolutions because of LVPC's fiduciary and staffing responsibilities for LVTS. Mr. Shifflet commented that the intent of the document is not changing.

Mr. Shifflet said, in regards to the public comments, I had the opportunity to attend about two-thirds (of the 23) public hearings around the state. It is nice to see the Lehigh Valley has a base of a community that is better interested in transportation and what is going on in the Lehigh Valley and specifically within transportation. We do not see a body of work like this and the responses to this magnitude. In many areas they do not even receive any written comments. As far as the public hearings in other regions, they have the same or similar sparse turn out. We do not receive comments there but they receive maybe one or two public comments. It is good to see there is interest and that helps us moving forward and formulating future plans.

Mr. Greco asked if a motion to approve would include the probably that the Memorandum of Understanding would be modified. Mr. Shifflet said the content of the MOU would not be modified other than the naming of whether or not it is LVTS or LVPC. It is a matter of the solicitor determining the appropriate authority.

Mr. Jeffrey J. Warren asked, assuming projects are not in design yet, if there is component in the design that would require additional costs, are there means for the District to request additional funding? Mr. Shifflet said we have to live with fiscal constraint. That is handed down from the federal agencies – both FHWA and FTA – on the highway and transit side. This means to get funding from federal and state when we develop a plan we cannot have money above and beyond that unless there would happen to be something like a TIGER grant that comes in or some other federal earmark that may come in. That is additional funding to the region that would not be accounted for. Mr. Warren mentioned redistribution if a project comes in under bid and Mr. Shifflet said that is correct. If we have a savings on a construction or even design of a larger project, that money comes back to a line item. Then is redistributed as you have increases on other projects. There are administrative actions, and occasionally amendments, as money is transferred.

Mr. Greco moved to adopt the Draft 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Plan, the Draft Self-Certification Resolution, the Draft Air Quality Resolution and the Draft TIP Modification Procedures (MOU) including the probably of name changes between LVPC and LVTS. Seconded by Mr. Young, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Shifflet thanked PennDOT District 5 and the LVPC for their work on this TIP. The last few updates have been easy because there was no additional money. It was very bleak as far as looking forward to bigger, exciting or more projects showing up. With Act 89 coming on board, it was a lot more work to put this together. It was a good problem to have.

NEW BUSINESS

Federal Aid Classification Change – Center and New Streets, Bethlehem

Mr. Donchez said on page 23 of the meeting packet there is a letter addressed to PennDOT Central Office regarding the Federal Aid change and that is followed by a map. There was a revised map (attached) distributed before the meeting.

Mr. Donchez said it came to our attention that there is a fair amount of change to the funding sources depending on the Federal Aid Classification of a road. Under MAP-21, the higher order of roads that were funded under the National Highway Performance Program not only included the National Highway System but it also included Principle Arterial roads. That was a change from previous legislation funding sources. There has been a fair amount of transition in the way that highways have been funded for the years in this new program. That cuts down on the number of funding sources available at the federal level.

Mr. Donchez said it came to our attention, when you look at Bethlehem, you will see the principle arterial roads, designated in red. There are two coming in from the northeast – Linden Street and Easton Avenue. They meet Elizabeth Avenue which runs east-west. That ties in with Center Street which runs north-south. Center Street between West Broad Street and Fourth Street is shown as a minor arterial road in the mailing packet. This includes the Fahy Bridge. If you look at the guidelines for developing the Federal Aid Classification system, it is based upon the type of traffic that a road carries and the type of access that the road allows. The principle arterial roads are primarily designed to move traffic. They serve more of a traffic carrying function and less of an access to parcels function. The lower order roads tend to provide more access to parcels and less of a function for moving traffic.

Mr. Donchez said today we are considering changing the classification from Minor Arterial/Urban Arterial to Principle Arterial. One issue came up with regard to New Street between Third Street and Fourth Street. That portion was unofficially considered a Principle Arterial because Federal Highway Administration views it as being a Minor Arterial because of a logistical glitch. At the Technical Committee meeting in June 2014 a proposed change to the classification from Broad Street to Third Street was presented. We've revised that to extend down to Fourth Street. The proposal is to change the classification of the road from West Broad Street to East Fourth Street to make that a Principle Arterial. This is for the sake of continuity and it is to allow funding to be used for the Fahy Bridge because of the different category of funding under MAP-21.

Mr. Donchez said this request will go to PennDOT Central Office for their confirmation and then it will be forwarded to Federal Highway Administration for their consideration. New Street is one of the few Lehigh River crossings in this area with a fair amount of traffic (>20,000 vehicles per day). It is a significant traffic carrier between north and south Bethlehem.

Ms. Rackus asked if this is a process any municipality can go through and do you regularly distribute to the municipalities what the federal classification is for roads in their municipality? Ms. Bradley said that is not necessarily determined by us. We are allowed to recommend changes to the Department. Ms. Rackus said I just wanted to know who makes the changes and how we receive notification if these changes are being made by whom and how do we get a current listing. Mr. Shifflet said the Department should be able to provide a current listing. Ms. Rackus asked if the Department would know if a change is being made. Mr. Shifflet said we would know. Mr. Shifflet said the Department would get notification from the Planning Commission or a joint notification. The process is the municipality initiates the change to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will do what we did here today by voting to take action. Then it is forwarded to PennDOT's Bureau of Planning and Research which handles all our GIS and mapping. They do what they need to do within the system and then submit a revised map to the Federal Highway Administration for their review and approval. Eventually that comes back through from FHWA. Mr. Greco said this map and signatures might be helpful. Without that signature, you cannot proceed. Ms. Bradley said it would not be right without having the municipality involved. Mr. Donchez said we have a task on our action plan to review the Federal Aid System and to make recommended changes. We will probably work on that sometime next year. At that time we can coordinate if you are interested. Mr. Shifflet said that is happening in many areas throughout the state. Ms. Bradley said we may have more federal aid routes proposed because we've had a greater population increase than most other regions. We've gained about one percent per year for the last 30 years which means more traffic and congestion. Mr. Shifflet said the benefit of this is it allows the ability to tap into the federal funds because you are limited in what you can spend state highway dollars on with state funds – it has to be on a state road. If you have a local road and get it on the Federal Aid System, you can use federal funds on it.

Mr. Greco moved to accept the Technical Committee's recommendation for reclassification of Center Street/New Street between West Broad Street and Fourth Street (including the addition of New Street between Third Street and Fourth Street). Seconded by Mr. Alkhal, the motion passed unanimously.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Mr. Shifflet said in the back of the meeting packet, there is a six page spreadsheet of Administrative Actions. This is for the Committee's review. There are no amendments so there is no action required. If you have question, please contact Lory Anderson or someone else on the District 5-0 staff.

Ms. Bradley expressed excitement about some new strategies for public participation for the Long Range Transportation Plan. LNAA has been kind enough to allow us a large booth space at the air show. We are going to have an interesting interactive exhibit that is designed to get information on what people think about the transportation future of the Lehigh Valley which will then go into the Long Range Transportation Plan. That effort is underway right now. We are

building a stage set. It will be like a traditional downtown storefront like you would see in any of the three cities and many of our boroughs with an outdoor café feel to it. On the storefront windows the public will have an opportunity to write what they want our transportation future to look like. We are excited about that. There is a potential to capture up to 30,000 people's engagement in our transportation planning for the region. If any of you would like to volunteer to be a part of those two days (August 23 and 24), we are willing to talk to you about that. We would love to have your help if you want to participate as part of LVTS.

Mr. Warren stated that there is an adjustment to funding and it looks like the 5th Street Bridge, where some of the preliminary design and right-of-way acquisition was to occur during the TIP, was now combined with the Route 22 Widening. Now Fullerton Avenue is being constructed in conjunction with the Lehigh River Bridge. My question is one of timing. If the 5th Street Bridge comes down with the Fullerton Avenue project, it could be down for an indefinite period of time. If acceleration and deceleration lanes will be extended for the Fullerton Avenue interchange, does that mean the 5th Street Bridge needs to be removed? And if so, it seems that those projects should be bundled together as to not leave that bridge down for a period of 7 to 8 years. Mr. Shifflet stated that we will get you an answer once we follow up with Jay McGee. When they were putting together the Route 22 plan, even in the bleakest of times when we were doing the interchange work that is out there now, and when they were designing the bridge and river crossings, it was all being put together with the anticipation that we are not going to do something that needs to be torn up if we get new money. Well, we got the new money. Mike Kaiser stated that we should not do something now that impedes the potential for six lanes in the future. Everything was being designed to accommodate six lanes.

Ms. Rackus stated that when PennDOT met with us, we were told the bridge is coming down and there is no timeframe for the replacement of the bridge. And that is part of our problem. Mr. Warren stated that with the talk of FedEx coming, that is great if you get a TIGER grant for FedEx. But then you are stuck with an underfed highway, 100,000 vehicles per day, and the reconstruction of it is years down the road. Then you will have thousands of vehicles and trucks. Route 202 from King of Prussia to Exton was widened to six lanes for 76,000 vehicles. We are already there. We are past that point. I would like to see the phasing of the 5th Street and Fullerton Avenue bridges so we don't lose that bridge because it provides vital access to a landlocked part of town. Mr. Shifflet stated that we will follow up to see if we can at least have a discussion about the proposed design. I know it seems like it is forever, but without the new money, it would be never. That is how bleak it was, so that needs to be kept in mind. We are now talking maybe five, six, or seven years for some of that work outside the Lehigh River Bridge. The widening work gets going, that is the good news. Ms. Rackus stated that from the Township's perspective, we are all supportive of the widening plan, but our concern is the bridge goes away and it won't be put back for another 12 years, and that is a problem. And we haven't received anything saying that is not going to happen. It will be demolished as part of the Fullerton Avenue interchange and is not proposed to be replaced until the next phase of Route 22 of which construction is not even on the TIP. Let's say 20,000 vehicles per day are impacted in their commute. Say you are an employee working for a company and that economic impact to you in lost time due to accidents and what not is \$5 per vehicle. That equals \$100,000 dollars per day of adverse economic impact. That adds up. So if you are thinking about a TIGER grant to support 500 new jobs over a year, you have an economic aorta of people getting from one side of the Valley to the other and this should be a priority.

Ms. Bradley said, for clarification about the TIGER grant, the TIGER grant is not about FedEx. It includes a whole series of system improvements around Airport Road, Schoenersville Road and Race Street including improvements to the Airport which would better support LANta service into the Airport, a new circulation pattern inside the airport, signal retiming and safety improvements along Schoenersville Road, some work on Airport Road and some work on Race Street. We are supposed to know if we are awarded the grant in the Fall.

Mr. Greco asked the District to make a presentation on this matter so we understand better what the timing will be regarding the concerns being raised.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, Mr. Shifflet adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by,

Alice J. Lipe for
Becky A. Bradley, AICP
Secretary
LVTS Coordinating Committee

BAB:ajl
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