



Lehigh Valley Transportation Study

C/O LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
961 MARCON BOULEVARD, SUITE 310
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The Lehigh Valley Transportation Study Coordinating Committee met on Wednesday, February 3, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. in the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Conference Room at 961 Marcon Boulevard, Suite 310, Allentown, PA 18109.

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Name

Representing

Jennifer McKenna**

City of Allentown

Matthew Dorner**

City of Bethlehem

Richard Molchany

County of Lehigh

Stan Rugis***

County of Northampton

Owen O'Neil*

LANta

Becky Bradley*

LVPC

Michael Donchez

Brian Hite

George Kinney

Tracy Oscavich

Ray Green

PennDOT Central Office

Larry Shifflet*

Kerry Fields

PennDOT District 5-0

Marah Haddad

Derrick Herrmann

Christopher Kufro

Michael Rebert* (Chair)

Andrew Samy

PUBLIC PRESENT

Michael Dee

State Representative Dan McNeill

Kurt Derr

State Senator Liza Boscola

Kathy Dimpsey

FHWA

Marta Gabriel

U.S. Senator Pat Toomey

Carol Halper

U.S. Congressman Charlie Dent

Heather Heeter

Borton-Lawson

Chris Howsare

HNTB

Jay McGee

HNTB

Matt Malozi

Rettew

Matt Szuchyt

State Senator Pat Browne

(*Denotes Voting Member and Number of Votes)

Mr. Rebert chaired the meeting.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Ms. Bradley recognized Mr. McGee as the leader of the LVTS Technical Committee for 24 years. Mr. McGee has retired from PennDOT and is now with HNTB. Ms. Bradley presented Mr. McGee with a small token of appreciation. Mr. McGee thanked LVTS.

MINUTES

Mr. Shifflet moved for approval of the minutes from the November 30, 2015 Coordinating Committee meeting with one note – the spelling of Jessica Clark’s name on pages 3 and 8. Mr. Molchany seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Draft 2017 Transportation Improvement Program Status

Mr. Donchez reported on the LVTS’ update status of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is a locally endorsed list of high priority highway, bridge and transit projects for the two county region that utilizes Federal funding assistance. It is a Federally mandated program. Having the program in place ensures that the Lehigh Valley remains eligible to receive Federal funds for transportation improvement projects. TIP is a four year program but is updated every two years. It must be fiscally constrained. The value of the projects within the TIP cannot exceed the amount of resources available. It must consist of projects from the locally endorsed Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). It is a high priority list of projects that indicate the area’s priorities for transportation improvement.

Mr. Donchez said the projects within the TIP have to contain realistic cost estimates and projects deemed air quality significant have to go through an Air Quality Conformity Analysis process.

Mr. Donchez said there are funding “buckets” within the TIP and there are funds within each of the buckets that have to be programmed toward bridges which are on the National Highway System (NHS) and roadways which are on the National Highway System. The National Highway System is the network of roads that are deemed important for commerce and national defense. Those receive priority. Beyond that you look at bridges and roadways that are not on the NHS. They have priority after bridges and roadways on the NHS.

Mr. Donchez said there is spike funding and the FAST Act to provide additional funds.

Mr. Donchez said LVTS is working through the process of putting together the draft TIP. The schedule would have the Air Quality Conformity Analysis beginning in March 2016 which will take about 1.5 months to complete (middle of May 2016). We will embark on a 30-day public review and comment period in June 2016 with the exact dates yet to be determined. We are looking to adopt the MPO’s TIP by the end of July 2016. By August 12, 2016, the Governor

submits the statewide TIP (STIP) – all the statewide MPO TIPs come together in the statewide TIP. He will submit that to Federal Highways/Federal Transit for their review and approval. Between August 12, 2016 and the end of November 2016, Federal Highways/Federal Transit will review the STIP. They will do the approval on September 30, 2016. The 2017 TIP would go live on October 1, 2016.

Mr. Rebert said we at the PennDOT District Office have been working LVPC to come up with a list of projects and lay out a fiscally constrained program. Dollars and cents-wise, prior to the FAST Act, we were at about \$275M. With the FAST Act in place it will increase by about \$20.5M so we are at approximately \$296M over the four year period.

Mr. Molchany asked which portion is allotted to Lehigh and Northampton counties of the actual funds allocated. Mr. Rebert said it is \$296M for the Lehigh Valley, \$237M for the NEPA region (3 of the 4 counties are in District 5-0) and \$267 is for the Reading area. The Lehigh Valley receives over a third.

Mr. Molchany asked if the 30-day comment period is for the TIP or Air Quality Conformity Analysis. Mr. Donchez responded that it is for the TIP but the Air Quality Conformity Analysis will be part of the TIP during that period.

A discussion followed about State Police funding from Act 89 and other transportation funds and the ability locally to match federal funds for transportation project. The conclusion was that this is not a PennDOT versus State Police issue but the Commonwealth coming up with a plan to make sure every agency is funded at the levels they need moving forward. LVPC supports what PennDOT is doing for our infrastructure.

Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act Summary

Mr. Shifflet presented information on the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. It was signed by the President December 4, 2015, at \$305,000,000,000 over five years nationally. Of that, \$226,000,000,000 is highway, \$61,000,000,000 is for transit. There is a new program in the FAST Act for the National Freight Program for \$1,200,000,000 available annually. We are still waiting for guidelines. This means about \$210,000,000 over the new TIP period of four years. Those funds are in reserve until we understand what the rules of engagement are for the freight program.

The FAST Act means about \$20,500,000 over the Lehigh Valley TIP's four year period. Statewide it is about \$447,000,000 for the same four year period. The FAST Act continues most of what was in MAP-21. There are performance metrics that came out of MAP-21 and will continue in the FAST Act. When you look at Pennsylvania as a whole, we used to be 75% Federal and 25% State funded. We are probably 60%/40% as we stand now with the passage of Act 89.

A discussion followed about how the federal funds are allocated. Distribution is driven by formula. It is apportioned to the states by the formula. In Pennsylvania we have a group of planning organizations that meet and derives formula which takes into consideration population, road conditions, structurally deficient bridges, structurally deficient deck area of bridges, etc. It is very formula driven.

2016 Transportation Alternatives Program Update

Mr. Donchez said PennDOT announced a funding round for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) on November 2, 2015. TAP funds off-network type pedestrian/bicycle type improvements. It has been a popular program over the years. Since the early 1990s LVTS has awarded over \$20,000,000 in TAP or Transportation Enhancement funds. For this round, the allocation round closed on January 8, 2016. Statewide there were 128 applications. We received 23 applications within our two-county region. Those 23 applications are seeking about \$9,100,000 in funding but our available funds are \$1,270,000. It is a very popular and competitive program.

Mr. Donchez said the \$1,270,000 is just the money LVTS has available for successful applicants. On the other side of the coin, PennDOT has \$9,000,000 available for the statewide fund.

Mr. Donchez said we will review the applications and bring them back to LVTS for ultimate approval, probably in April 2016. Any applicants that are not awarded locally can be forwarded to compete statewide.

A discussion followed and it was explained that TAP funding is not grant money and there is no guarantee that every applicant will receive funding. Projects have to be compliant with the regional comprehensive plan, the Long Range Transportation Plan, etc. The LVPC and PennDOT will make the final decisions.

Federal Certification Review Preliminary Findings

Mr. Donchez said on December 3 and 4, 2015 LVTS went through a required Federal Certification Review process. This occurs every four years for our MPO. It is an audit of our transportation planning process. It looks at our products and outputs. It starts with a Federal Highway/Federal Transit Administration desk audit where they request various planning documents. We provide them and they do their desk audit that provides them information during the actual two-day onsite visit they can inquire about our policies and practices. Day 1 was December 3, 2015 at our office. It was a very good meeting. Some of the topics discussed were the *Long Range Transportation Plan*, TIP development, fiscal constraint, performance measures. We took a bit of a lead on performance measures and incorporated some of them into our *Long Range Transportation Plan* in advance of the guidance being issued. Environmental mitigation was addressed. Wetland banking was discussed. Transit planning was addressed. Title VI was discussed. Freight planning and congestion management process were also discussed. Day 2 was the public meeting with public officials. That culminated with a discussion on some commendations and recommendations that might be forth coming.

Mr. Donchez said for commendations we received high marks for our regional freight plan; our CMP; conducting post-improvement reviews; and an upcoming sidewalk inventory. We received recommendations to explore advanced mitigation opportunities through wetland banking; potentially developing a citizens' guide on transportation planning; making publicly available a list of annual obligated projects.

Mr. Donchez said the Federal Highway/Federal Transit Administrations will issue a report within a month or so.

Freight Advisory Committee Inaugural Meeting Announcement – February 3, 2016

Mr. Kinney said we adopted our first freight plan in 2015. Part of that speaks to some recommendations and improvements that might result from that planning process. One of those recommendations was the development of a Freight Advisory Committee. The first meeting of the Freight Advisory Committee will be today (February 3, 2016) immediately after this Coordinating Committee meeting.

Mr. Kinney said we plan on quarterly meetings: today, in June, in August and in December 2016. PennDOT Central Office and PennDOT District 5-0 have agreed to co-chair the meetings for the first year. LVPC staff will support the committee.

2016 LVTS Meeting Dates

Mr. Kinney presented the 2016 LVTS meetings. That information is available on page 39 of the LVTS Coordinating Committee packet for February 3, 2016.

Mr. Molchany moved to approve the 2016 LVTS meeting dates. Seconded by Mr. Shifflet, the motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS***Comprehensive Planning Efforts – Southwest Lehigh Comprehensive Plan***

Ms. Bradley said we are updating a six municipal comprehensive plan for the Southwest Lehigh region which includes the boroughs of Macungie, Emmaus and Alburtis and the townships of Lower Macungie, Upper Milford and Lower Milford. Transportation is at the center of a lot of their concerns so we will be talking through those as we go forward with the planning effort. The plan will be completed by June. We have a public meeting every month. What we learned from the stakeholder sessions and the associated public meeting is there is a real concern about truck traffic and freight in that region because of the growth of warehousing, logistics and manufacturing facilities.

Mr. Kinney said there was good conversation about local thru traffic and how to manage it. There was a good discussion about modern roundabouts and the acceptance/promotion of that came through in the meetings.

Ms. Bradley said the level of sophistication of the conversation amongst people who are not transportation professionals was very high.

Mr. Molchany said there are several congested areas but it is not totally congested in this area as some may perceive. Objectively the analysis you are working on will describe the areas that are considered congested but will also contain thoughts and ideas on how to manage that congestion. Ms. Bradley said the most congested corridor in all of Southwest Lehigh is Route 29 through Emmaus Borough. It takes more cars than Route 222. There is a spur that goes off Route 29 that goes partly through Emmaus and partly into Lower Macungie Township. Those are both noted as congested corridors in our *Long Range Transportation Plan*. In terms of our investment

strategy per Federal requirements, we are required to invest in those more congested areas first, especially if there are safety concerns.

A discussion followed about other multimunicipal comprehensive plans and how that works into transportation planning. Mr. Kinney said the advantage we have of being the MPO with the LVPC as the administrative function is that we can look at things holistically integrating land use and transportation planning. Ms. Bradley said there are bigger issues beyond transportation such as sewer and water.

Comprehensive Planning Efforts – Future Comprehensive Planning Efforts

.Ms. Bradley said we are in the process of gathering all the data so we can have a formal kick off to the update to the region's comprehensive plan in the second half of the year. We will dovetail that in with our LRTP; freight planning efforts; and parks, recreation and open space plans. If you keep all your plans consistent, you can be effective. The LVPC is committed to that.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

None.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, Mr. Molchany moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mr. Shifflet, Mr. Rebert adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by,

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

BAB:ajl
Finalized 04/04/16